

## Individual Difference Factors and Volunteer Willingness to be Trained

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### Introduction

The need for effective training programs for volunteers is great because (a) skills and abilities are not the basis for recruitment of volunteers; (b) several volunteers share or rotate in a task; and (c) such work is carried out with much less supervision (Wymer, & Starnes, 2001). Thus, it is necessary to design and implement training programs appropriate to a given volunteer context so that the quality their services could be enhanced. However, the success of a training program is dependent on the extent to which the volunteers are willing to be trained.

Focusing on volunteer willingness to be trained, we proposed a model incorporating the relevant individual difference variables that influence such willingness. In addition, a training program's success would also be based on whether the trainees prefer the type of training program that is offered. Thus, the current study included volunteers' attitudes toward two different training methods (i.e., presentation methods, hands-on methods). The Individual difference variables included in the study were (a) *goal orientation*, (b) *commitment*, (c) *self-efficacy regarding the task*, and (d) *motivation to volunteer*. These are described in Table 1. The present report is based on the results of the pilot study to be followed by a larger one.

Table 1. Description of the Individual Difference Variables of the Study

Variable	Description
<i>Goal Orientation</i>	In achievement situations (i.e., training in our context), individuals may judge their success by two different goal orientations: <i>learning</i> or <i>performance</i> (e.g., Ames, 1992). Because individuals high on a learning orientation see effort as an effective way to develop the ability necessary for future task mastery while those high on performance orientation perceive ability as a fixed attribute and effort is viewed as an indicator of low ability by performance. Thus, it was expected that volunteers high on learning orientation would be more willing to be trained than those high on performance orientation.
<i>Commitment to Organization or Volunteering</i>	While commitment (i.e., a mental binding) to the organization is critical, it is equally important to consider commitment to the job at hand and the occupation (e.g., Blau, 1995). In our context, this refers to one's commitment to the organization as well as to volunteering itself and such commitments were expected to influence willingness to be trained.
<i>Self-Efficacy</i>	Self-efficacy defined as one's "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p3) influences task choice, task effort, persistence in task, and performance achievement (e.g., Bandura, 1997). Keith (2000) found that self-efficacy of volunteers was related to their attitudes toward training. Thus, it was expected that volunteers low on self-efficacy regarding their volunteer work would be more willing to be trained.
<i>Motivation to Volunteer</i>	Motivation to volunteer was included because one's desire to help others would impel the individual to learn more about how to help others. We employed Clary et al.'s (1998) six functions of motivation— <i>value</i> , <i>understanding</i> , <i>social</i> , <i>career</i> , <i>protective</i> , and <i>enhancement</i> with the expectation that they would be differentially related to willingness to be trained and preferences for each training method.

### Methods

#### *Participants*

The participants were 89 volunteer youth soccer coaches (female=14, male=74, no answer=1) who attended the volunteer coaches meeting of a recreational youth soccer organization in a Midwestern city in the US. 90% of respondents were between 29 and 46 years old and almost 80% of respondents had 4-year college or higher degrees.

### *Instruments*

Mastery and performance goal orientations were measured by two 8-item scales of Button, Mathieu, and Zajac (1996). Self-efficacy regarding volunteer work was measured by modified General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Commitment to organization was assessed using the 9-item version of OCQ (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982) and commitment to volunteering was measured using 6 items from Blau (1985) and 1 item from Landy and Gvion (1970). Motivation to volunteer was measured by Clary Snyder, Ridge, Copelande, Stukas, Haugen, and Miene's (1998) 6-dimensional scale. Willingness to be trained was measured by 3 items and preference for training methods was assessed by 2 items.

### *Analyses*

After assessing the internal consistency of the subscales, the means and standard deviations for the variables of the study were computed. Repeated measures ANOVA and t-tests tested the significance of differences among variables of the study.

### **Results**

The internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for the variables of the study ranged from .71 to .95 for a mean value of .84. t-tests showed that the mean of *Mastery orientation* ( $m = 5.46$ ;  $SD = .82$ ) was significantly higher than that of *Performance orientation* ( $m = 4.22$ ;  $SD = .88$ ) ( $t = -12.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the mean of *Commitment to volunteering* ( $m = 5.21$ ;  $SD = .83$ ) was significantly higher than that of *Commitment to organization* ( $m = 4.63$ ;  $SD = .96$ ) ( $t = -5.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Repeated measures ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences in the means for the six dimensions of motivation ( $F(5,502) = 147.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Fisher's protected post-hoc test showed that the mean of *Values* ( $m = 4.89$ ) was significantly higher than the means of other five motivation dimensions ( $m = 4.09, 3.44, 2.01, 2.39$ , and  $3.38$  respectively), the mean of *Understanding* was significantly higher than the means of other remaining four dimensions, the mean of *Social* was significantly higher than the means of *Career* and *Protective*, and the mean of *Enhancement* was significantly higher than the mean of *Protective*. However, respondents' preferences for two different types of training methods, *Presentation methods* ( $m = 4.03$ ;  $SD = 1.76$ ) and *Hands-on methods* ( $m = 4.21$ ;  $SD = 1.90$ ) were not significantly different ( $t = -6.05$ ). Correlations showed that willingness to be trained was positively correlated with commitment to organization ( $r = .39$ ,  $p < .01$ ), commitment to volunteering ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and self-efficacy ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Preference for presentation methods was significantly correlated with willingness to be trained ( $r = .56$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### **Discussion**

It is encouraging that the volunteers in the study were more focused on personal mastery of the task at hand than on demonstrating the superiority of their skills over those of others. Further, they viewed concern for others and learning new things as more important than other functions in volunteering. It is noteworthy that their commitment to volunteering was greater than their commitment to the organizations. This suggests that managers should make their experiences more meaningful to ensure their continued involvement in their organization. In so far as commitment to organization and volunteering were related to willingness to be trained, managers may be more focused on cultivating those antecedent factors than on the choice of methods of training as the respondents were indifferent towards them.

### **References**

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