PSYCHOSOCIAL TRAINING MANUAL (PSYCOT-M): A NEW APPROACH FOR MALAYSIAN VOLUNTEERS

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ABSTRACT

Volunteering activity is the appreciation and inspiration to the idea of forming the noble values of the multi-racial society, which often manifested through contributions, giving and sharing for the benefit and priority of society as a whole. Most of nongovernment agencies in Malaysia have designed volunteer activities and programs that involved Malaysian community where this activity is to inspire volunteerism spirit among Malaysian. Unfortunately, many volunteers who are involved in those volunteer activities are not equipped with psychosocial training that specifically designed for volunteers. In fact, the purpose of this research is to design a new psychosocial training manual for volunteers in Malaysia that may enhance the psychological and social dimensions based on the traditional concept of humanitarian aid. This study is a qualitative design, which consists a focus-group discussion and structured interview response. The thematic analysis was analyzed and findings indicated that this manual consists five elements in promoting the psychosocial elements among volunteers. This manual will be divided into: 1) Volunteer’s self-preparation; 2) Crisis events and mental health issues; 3) Community-based psychosocial support; 4) Psychological support and intervention; and 5) Supporting volunteers and staff. The output of this study is a pioneering attempt to contribute towards improvement the volunteer training skills among the young generation by developing a manual training for the volunteers. This training manual will be expected a novel mechanism for promoting and improving the quality of volunteer services in Malaysia.

Keywords: volunteers, elements, psychosocial support, training, PsyCoT-M.

I. INTRODUCTION

Voluntary organizations and movements in Malaysia, can be traced back as early as British colonial period. During that time, any form of community organization, labor movement, political organization, magazine and newspaper as well as progressive Islamic movements were controlled and governed by the colonial rules (Azizan, 2010). Even though some of the voluntary movements were detained and banned by the British colonial, Singapore Malay Union and Young Malay Union were successfully established in 1920 and 1937. These two organizations were the first two registered voluntary organizations formed during the British colonial period (Azizan, 2012). The establishment of these two earliest voluntary organizations showed that the spirit of helping and assisting others has been inculcated in the heart of the Malaysian community even at the time of British colonization.

Since the establishment of the earliest voluntary movement and organizations, volunteerism has taken roots in every aspects of community development. The spirit of volunteerism portrayed by voluntary practice does not only represent multi-culturalism and diversity among Malaysian community, but at the same time serves to strengthen social bondage across geographical, political, and ideological boundaries (Azizan, 2011). It has become one of the main aspects in Malaysian community development. Thus, to support the goal of inculcating strong values in Malaysian’ multi-racial and multi-religious society, volunteering activities is have been actively promoted among Malaysian multi-racial society.

Volunteering activity refers to the appreciation and inspiration to the idea of forming the noble values of the multi-racial society, which often manifested through contributions, giving and sharing for the benefit and priority of society as a whole. In other words, the principles of sharing and the pure values of community members in...
Malaysia cover a wide variety of forms and contexts of voluntary work. For example, the aspects of hygiene, environmental conservation, first aid to disaster victims, the fight against universal human rights, poverty alleviation, democratization and security aspects of any criminal element. In a broader context, volunteerism is also a practice and a patriotic act. Besides forming the spirit of patriotism among the multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysians, Azizan (2010) emphasized on the fact that, volunteerism can also refer to closer cooperation, social concerns and national security from any criminal elements in the country.

In order to benefit the advantages of doing volunteering activities, we certainly need to reflect and consider various dimensions, perspectives, concepts, and the dynamics of the contexts of volunteerism as well as some possible volunteering opportunities for Malaysian community (Azizan, 2009 & 2008). In this regard, the government should give special attention to young generation involvement in volunteering activities because they are a very significant population (Nazilah, Rozmi, & Fauziah, 2014). They are future leaders who will continue the development and well-being of a society and nation (Azizan, 2004; Jdaitawi, 2020; Jdaitawi, Al-Mutawa, & Talafha, 2014; Jdaitawi, 2020; Al-Mutawa, Jdaitawi, et al., 2014; Jdaitawi, 2013; Jdaitawi et al., 2020; Al-Nabrawi, Jdaitawi, & Talafha, 2015). Presently, according to the Ministry of Youth & Sports Malaysia (2013), the Malaysian government had launched 1M4U and provided special grants for the youth including college students to organize volunteering activities. The government has also embedded volunteerism element in the Malaysian national education policies (Ministry of Education, 2013). This is very significant because voluntary volunteerism is key, being one of the pulses, to help realize the goal of an organization. As emphasized by Azizan (2010), volunteerism upon its formation not only can lead to greater co-operation, social security and resilience in the country but also inaugurating the spirit of patriotism among the multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysians because in a wider context, voluntary activities are not only a practice but is also a patriotic act.

However, there is no scientific research specifically investigating the type of effective training to train professionals and professionals who are unprofessional. Therefore, the Malaysian government needs to be aware and take caution to the importance of having professional and unprofessional volunteer training in helping and developing volunteers who can provide effective services to the community.

Indeed, the trained volunteers with psychosocial skills will consistently demonstrate and deliver high achievements in helping the community regain their relationships, their voices, their wisdoms and resources so they can decide on their future. Through psychosocial support, the community defines a common goal so that they can take care of themselves (Ng, Ma, Raphael et.al, 2009). Otherwise, the proper effort to be a well-trained volunteer may not be honored and trusted from within the disaster community, local departments and stakeholders. The question is how do we distinguish trained expert volunteers from ordinary good volunteers? To ensure we promote the right people to become an expert volunteer, we need to understand what characterizes volunteer experts in providing community services. Therefore, this article discusses several aspects of the volunteer training meet the individual and community needs in the Malaysia context, in response to the need to improve the quality of volunteers in providing their services.

Therefore this article discusses a manual development of Psychosocial Training Manual (PsyCoTM) Recently, in response to the need to improve the quality of volunteering in providing their services. Unlike other training manuals, PsyCoTM will be drawn not only based on basic knowledge in volunteer work and skills training, but also from growing expectations and various NGOs that can increase the involvement of uneducated volunteers to carry out their duties and enhance stakeholder support towards their professionalism in carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

**II. LITERATURE REVIEWS**

**Volunteer**

Volunteer, in my opinion, is the person or the people or groups of them who gives willingly without any thoughts of remuneration, compensation and/or accolades for being the hero of the day but just assist and aid those who were in or had undergone a disaster situation, anywhere in this world. Volunteering, as described by Minjeong (2016), is providing unpaid help in an organized manner to parties whom the worker has no formal obligations and gains no direct tangible benefits such as salaries or compensations for the donated time by a volunteer. From this, one can infer that it (volunteering) is the action or the act of a person who gives willingly or not being paid for in helping or ease a traumatic experience. As many non-profit organizations struggle to serve their specific causes with such limited financial resources, they rely heavily on volunteers to provide sustainable service to their constituents (Minjeong, 2016).
Nur Qurratul et al. (2012) and Leverett and Sullivan (2010) identified that, there are two concepts of volunteerism as outlined in the Volunteering Australia, namely, (1) official volunteerism and (2) non-official volunteerism. As further clarified by Leverett and Sullivan (2010), the official volunteerism is an act of unpaid, voluntary assistance in the form of time, service or expertise of an organization, club or association that does not include the humanitarian work carried out either in the country through donating goods or money. Whilst, the non-official volunteerism is an act of assistance that is not compensated and given directly to others through their own initiative, voluntarily, and not through a group or organization.

Volunteer Australia (2009), outlines volunteerism as an activity undertaken by institutions or communities intended to benefit society voluntarily without coercion, without the payment of salaries with the positions already set. Maniam (2004) also noted that volunteerism is beneficial to all groups in society including youth, students, non-profit organizations and communities. However, there are many obstacles that it becomes a constraint in volunteerism for instance language differences, cultural differences, recession, physical impairment, time constraints, barriers sense of belonging and distance factor (Nur Qurratul, Kamarudin & Jamaludin, 2018; Maniam, 2004). While Bobo, Kendall and Max (1996) define volunteerism as a collective enterprise with every industry, individuals or groups take their responsibilities.

Many volunteers indicated that receiving specialized training is an incentive for choosing to be a volunteer. Gaining experiences in developing volunteer skills is not only a chance known to prolong work experiences in new areas but also there are major motivators for volunteers. Some people are particularly motivated by the work-related aspects of volunteering as they are fascinated in volunteer work that supports them to gain work experiences and allows them to try out the skills that they may have developed and benefits in learning from the non-government institutions, or on their own. They may have very limited work experiences but as pointed out by Gaskin (1998), they also need the chance to learn the social aspects of work behavior such as communications, cultural norms, local environment and time management.

Most literature on volunteerism underlines the salient aspect of volunteer’s willingness or desire to give themselves to others in need (Wilson, 2000). This is a selfless action and is mainly motivated to give their free service to people they feel so strongly about. A well-trained volunteer can be defined as an individual who has shown high-quality performance according to the standard volunteering training skills. Siti Hawa (2004) highlighted on the fact that many scholars had accentuated a crucial point where a well-trained volunteer are valued through their awareness of any related problems, increases empathy, and builds self-confidence.

This is because the volunteerism of the individual involved can contribute to higher job satisfaction and at the same time increase their pride as well as reduce stress. For any organization involved in voluntary programs, the benefits of their organization's volunteer programs include the potential for greater corporate image, a more financially positive corporate culture (Angela, Matthew & Colin, 2010; Ellis, 2004). Azizi (2006) also stated that the factor of satisfaction is important in maintaining a volunteer body. On the voluntary basis, it is not only an income-generating field but it can give a strong appeal to a person who has the motivation and inner confidence to ensure self-fulfillment in doing volunteer work (Azizi, 2006).

Psychosocial Training Manual and Volunteering

Wan Salmi (2012) and Muisener (1994), described the psychosocial aspects of the individual as a state of psychological development within the individual (level of denial, self-control) and interaction with the environment (family, peers, society).

The psychosocial interventions according to Sida (2009), have become increasingly recognized as a valued and important dimension of immediate and long-term disaster response. The Community Based Psychosocial Approach adds a mental and social dimension to the traditional humanitarian aid since it assumed considerable significance as a focus for relief efforts along with material support of food, water and shelter.

Since the basis of all community-centered psychosocial work is the belief in the affected community’s capacity for recovery and resilience, thus all communities and individuals have the necessary resources and strategies for handling any difficulties, illness and distress they encounter.

This PsyCoT-M training manual meant to be a helping tool for the trainer to develop his or her own curriculum and sessions for psychosocial training. It is meant to give ideas, inspiration, basic facts and central concepts when preparing a basic introduction to Community-based Psychosocial Support. This manual does not provide the
trainer with ready-made training modules but expects each trainer to develop his or her curriculum and session plan according to the specific context and training situation. However, there are examples given for different kind of sessions (Sida, 2009).

According to Sida (2009), psychosocial interventions have become increasingly recognized as a valued and important dimension of immediate and long-term disaster response. Even though the Community Based Psychosocial Approach adds a mental and social dimension to traditional humanitarian aid, it has assumed considerable significance as a focus for relief efforts along with material support such as food, water and shelter. The foundation of all community based psychosocial work is the belief in the affected community’s capacity for recovery and resilience since all communities and individuals have resources and strategies for dealing with difficulties, illness and distress. This PsyCoT-M new training manual is meant to be an assisting instrument for the trainer specifically to produce and create his or her own curriculum and sessions for the psychosocial training so that it will offer ideas, inspiration, basic facts and central concepts when preparing a basic introduction to the Community-based Psychosocial Support. This manual will not provide the trainer with a ready-made training modules but believes that each trainer will develop his or her curriculum and session plan according to the specific context and training situation even though, as caution by Sida (2009), there may be different kinds of sessions and examples facing them.

Volunteering is an emerging and a positive trend for Malaysian. The experience from the various type of disasters has shown that volunteers are often the only readily available human resource for psychosocial response in a disaster situation (Clary & Snyder, 1999). It is possible and necessary to develop and train a group of volunteer disaster mental health workers, who can provide simple but effective psychological first aid measures to the survivors and the broader community following a disaster. Psychosocial training is defined as training that emphasizes psychological or social factors rather than the biological factors (Forsman, Schierenkeh, Wahlbeck, 2011). This definition allows for the inclusion of psychological therapies and health education as well as interventions with a focus on social aspects such as social support and networking. The psychosocial training could appear in various forms such as in groups or individually, as long as they were described in the study and would allow for replication.

In the previous study, the performance of volunteer was normally measured through active participation in any volunteering activities. Although volunteer work is widely believed to be beneficial not only for the community but for the individuals who perform it, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the actual consequences of volunteer service for individuals’ physical and/or psychological wellbeing.

According to Gaskin (1998), there are eight (8) characteristics of volunteer interests, which are: i) flexibility, ii) legitimacy, iii) ease of access, iv) experience, v) incentives, vi) variety, vii) organization, and viii) laughs, or its acronym of FLEXIVOL. These characteristics might be considered as added values for the volunteer services among volunteer. In this regard, providing a specific training manual including the personal characteristics for the volunteers are meant to improve the quality of volunteer services and spirits.

III. METHOD

Design in the study methodology is very important to ensure the effectiveness of a study. The design of this study uses a qualitative approach. According to literature (Patton, 2010; Silverman, 2009; Rababah, Bani-Melhem, Jdaitawi, et al., 2012) qualitative studies have a quality of 'undeniable' because they have more than one concrete word and are clearly more convincing to readers than numbered pages. This study uses a focus group design using structured interview methods. According to Silverman (2012) some of the benefits of using these interviews are to allow interviewees to use their own way of presenting opinions and answering questions and there is no fixed sequence of questions for respondents to be interviewed and it allows respondents to be interviewed to raise important issues that are not. is in the research plan. In addition to the appropriateness of the interview it is able to collect descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can formulate an overview of how the subject interprets aspects of the phenomenon being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The respondents' population in this study was voluntary. The number of respondents who were sampled in this study were 11 professionals and nonprofessionals. In the study involving qualitative interviews for sample selection is limitless. As noted by Patton (2002) and Connaway and Powell (2010) in a qualitative study, the size of the sample size of interviews was not one specific rule can be used to determine the sample size for interviews. This is because the main purpose of this study is to understand the social process rather than to obtain a sample of respondents. The analysis of this study uses the software Nvivo 10. The use of this software aims to obtain a
comprehensive overview of issues and themes based on quantitative analysis. As suggested by Mohd Hilmi et al. (2013) and Miles and Huberman (1994), the formation of an important category in qualitative approaches to perfecting data up to several categories can illustrate the actual situation occurring in the case studied and further elaborated on the basis of quantitative study results.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the tree nodes in Figure 1, positive integration is seen between the exercises received by theoretical and practical volunteers as it complements each other. Aspect of volunteer training acceptable training, theories related to knowledge is mainly the basic introduction of a volunteer that focuses on various skills on how to deal with the problems that occur. All the training was provided by the speakers that motivate volunteers to be able to do the job perfectly and excitedly. In terms of practical, the respondents stated that they followed a gotong royong program, management in disaster, caring for the aged and disabled.

![Figure 1: Aspect of Volunteer Training](image)

In addition to this aspect (please refer to: Figure 2), the respondent’s mental health preparations among volunteers also need to be emphasized in dealing with survivors/clients. According to the respondents interviewed, the most important criteria of mental health should be emphasized is on personal emotion. This self-emotion in helping the community has to be calm and ‘cool.’ This means that when looking at situations of suffering or distress, volunteers should be prepared to be able to control themselves. In addition, the current stress on duty should be avoided. This means that the when on duty, the self-stressed situation, should be avoided based on the training given so that work can be done perfectly. Human qualities of being courageous also needed to be present when facing survivors/clients in volunteering. This trait is vital as well as important in dealing with difficult situations such as in making decisions and facing challenging challenges. In being a volunteer, a good and sincere nature must also be present and inherent in facing challenging situations. This redha (steadfast) and sincere nature is not only in terms of training but also in dealing with the client itself. The psychological aspects also play an important role in preparing survivors/clients for a person who wants to become a volunteer. This is because the survivors/clients do not want to receive help and do not cooperate in overcoming a problem. Hence the psychological aspect that is applied during the training will help to solve the problem for the sake of being homemade. According to another respondent, the aspect of keeping the body fit with healthy eating should be within a volunteer. In becoming a volunteer, this aspect is important in dealing with survivors/clients.
Based on the tree nodes analysis on the support needed by volunteers, Figure 3 below, demonstrated the five (5) supporting elements needed namely: 1) organizational support, 2). family support, 3). community support, 4). media support and 5). academic support. In the areas of organizational support, the needs and encouragement of top organizers and colleagues are essential in serving the community. In addition, the organization also volunteered to undergo training and courses aimed at strengthening themselves in carrying out this volunteer work. According to the respondents, this support is very important to ensure that any work is done in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives. As family support, volunteerism was necessarily indispensable. This is because in voluntary tasks, the family must understand the degree of involvement and commitment put in because the voluntary purpose is to serve the community. It is always the uncertainty of time and works to be implement without thoughts and regrets. Therefore, the role of the family is very important to volunteer in carrying out the task. If the family does not support this, it will be difficult to give service to the community. In addition, the community must always back the voluntary support. This means that the community should always cooperate, encourage and help volunteers to work together in providing assistance to the needy community. On media support, the media should always publish and regularly circulate about voluntary roles that serve the community both in the traditional media and the social media. This is with the intention that more communities will be interested in joining volunteers to help the community. Support from the academic agencies especially students is very much needed by the volunteer services. This is because students are able to help and serve the community and at the same time, this activity is a learning process for them that will be the future platform of new volunteers and relocating existing volunteers. With the involvement of students or young people, the volunteer service will ease the existing volunteers as there are individuals who help with it to work together with the community.
Based on these findings, this study found that exploring professional and non-professional experiences would lead to a new Psychosocial Training Manual in different contexts. Knowing the experience of this group, researchers are able to identify some components that need to be improved from previous training manuals. This component includes aspects such as shown in Figure 4 below, which it explains five (5) themes for the psychosocial manual development.

Module 1: Self Preparation for Volunteers which discusses the initial preparation for volunteers especially for individuals who have just ventured into this field. This module also emphasizes a wide range of communication skills, policies and procedures related to volunteers’ activities.

Module 2: Mental Health and Crisis Events are important issues that need to be addressed by each individual involved in the activities of the volunteers. Each volunteer must always be prepared to deal with various crisis issues and it is important for them to maintain their mental health levels respectively. This module will discuss some techniques and role play about several crisis situations and how to overcome them.

Module 3: Psychosocial-community Support Module is used to introduce support activities using the psychosocial-community approach. This module will help volunteers in implementing the activities of the community. Guided by the psychosocial model, volunteers will be able to apply various methods that can help victims in terms of psychological and social support.

Module 4: Psychological Support and Intervention is an intervention model which is designed specifically for Malaysian volunteers who involved directly and indirectly with various volunteer activities and crisis. The Intervention model used in this module has been empirically tested and proven that it can assist volunteers in carrying out their responsibilities in helping victims of various crises.

Module 5: Support for Volunteers and Staff is a module that emphasizes types of supports required by each volunteer involved in various voluntary activities, particularly in situations of crisis. Support for volunteer is very important as it can assist them to continue the activities assigned to them and develop their commitment in every activity.

V. CONCLUSIONS

One of the agenda in the National Transformation Policy is to transform or change the social developmental program among the Malaysian population. In line with this agenda, most of the non-government agencies have
designed many volunteer activities and programs involving the Malaysian community. This kind of programs would instill the volunteerism spirit among the Malaysian people. So, volunteering is an emerging and positive trend for Malaysian. The experience gained from various type of disasters has shown that volunteers are often the only readily available human resource for psychosocial response in a calamity situation. Unfortunately, those who are involved with these volunteer activities are not equipped with specific training such as the psychosocial training. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the elements of the psychosocial training that meets the individual and community requirements in the Malaysia context. Only 10 professional and non-professional volunteers who were voluntary participation in the focus group technique are respondents of this research. This study is a pioneering attempt to contribute towards the improvement of the volunteer training skills among the young generation by promoting and improving the quality of volunteer services in Malaysia.

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