

# TRU Student Motivations to Volunteer

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## **Economics**

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### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of this study is to try to determine what main factors motivate a university student to engage in volunteer activities and with what frequency they will volunteer. University campuses have always been a good place to find volunteers; however, it is commonly known that students have little extra time for extracurricular activities, and must also juggle with work, family, studying and assignments, among many other variables. This study has been done to gain a better insight into why students are so willing to volunteer their time. This study looks into 8 different motivation factors based on a sample size of 88 university student volunteers. An analysis has also been done against certain demographic features of the respondents such as gender, year of study, academic program, and residential status (international or domestic student status). By discovering the characteristics of the student volunteers we may be able to support them and encourage more students to participate in volunteerism. If we discover that volunteering is based on a certain motivation, we may be able to reduce barriers and support the volunteers, thereby sustaining them and encouraging them to continue to provide assistance as volunteers. This study found that second -year students are more predisposed to volunteering based on overall samples, international samples, domestic samples and female samples. International students increase their volunteer frequency during the second and fourth years of study. The motivation factor 'Value' scored high for the overall sample and male sample categories, and the motivation factor 'Career' scored high for females. These results should be considered when volunteer activities are being created to increase the likelihood of volunteer frequency.*

## **Introduction**

Volunteering can have numerous benefits for the individual, such as networking opportunities (personal and non-personal), new skills development, leadership opportunities, resumé references, better job offers, confidence, chances to make new friends and self-satisfaction.

However, the individual is not the only one who benefits from volunteering; the entire community can gain by promoting volunteerism. Volunteer opportunities provide a scenario for people to meet others in the community while, at the same time, bettering the community in some way. Volunteering promotes cohesion, unity, and leadership within society. Volunteers are important for society's well-being.

On the TRU campus you will notice that many students volunteer; and some students are very dedicated volunteers spending most of their weekends working hard for no payment. But why do students decide to volunteer? Students are encumbered by numerous difficulties and time constraints so why do they give their time and energy away so readily?

## **Purpose of Study**

Using data that was collected in a primary fashion from eighty-eight TRU students, this study examines the following research questions.

- 1: What are the main motivating factors of a university student volunteer?
- 2: Is there a difference in motivation and frequency to volunteer between domestic and non-domestic students?
- 3: Is there a difference in motivation and frequency to volunteer between academic programs?
- 4: Is there a difference in motivation and frequency to volunteer between the genders?
- 5: Is there a difference in motivation and frequency to volunteer between students in different years of study?

## **Methodology**

Several studies have been done around the topic of volunteer motivations (Clary, Copeland, Haugen, Miene, Snyder & Stukas, 1998; Clary, Snyder & Stukas, 1996; Finkelstien, 2009; Gage & Thapa, 2011; Carlton, Jacobsen, & Monroe, 2012; Liao-Troth, 2005). However, very little research has been done on the motivations of, specifically, university students. “In 2010, about 58% of adults with a university degree reported doing volunteer work” (Crompton & Vezina, 2012) and this is the reason why I believe that university student motivations need to be studied. Gage et al. state that “[...] further examination of the motivations and constraints of undergraduate college students is needed.” (Gage et al., 2011). Volunteerism can be a very important function of a community, and can lend to the prosperity of social order. Studies have been done on volunteer motivations and many factors have been pinpointed. Katz (1960) theorizes that there are six main factors that stimulate a person to volunteer: Values, Understanding, Social, Career, Protective, and Enhancement. The six motivations created by Katz are collectively called the Functional Approach to Motivation and are referenced and used in many of the other articles I have reviewed (Clary et al., 1998; Clary et al., 1996; Carlton et al., 2012; Gage et al., 2011). The Functional Approach to Motivation Theory has led Clary et al. (1998) to create a Volunteer Functions Inventory which includes five questions/statements for each function, totalling at 30 questions. However, six categories is hardly exhaustive; therefore Carlton et al. (2012) have added the Factor of environment, and Gage et al. (2011) have added two statements that were not originally included in the Clary et al. (1996) model: “Volunteering is a way for me to help the natural environment” and “I feel volunteering is a religious duty” (pg. 414) which brings the total to 32 questions.

Many of the resources I reviewed concluded that, although career was an important factor, and worthy of mention, it was not the most important factor which motivates a student to volunteer (Carlton et al., 2012; Handy et al., 2010; Finkelstien, 2009; Holdsworth, 2010). It is uncertain if a similar result should be expected in this study, as this study will be surveying only a student population.

## **Variables**

The dependent variable is the intensity of the student's volunteer-activity participation which has four ordered categories: 10 or more times in a year, 7-9 times in a year, 4-6 times in a year, or 1-3 times in a year.

The primary independent variable in this study was motivation to volunteer. This variable was constructed based on the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) created by Clary et al. (1996) and has also been used in many other studies which investigate volunteer motivation (Clary et al., 1998; Carlton et al., 2012; Gage et al., 2011). The VFI has six components (Values, Understanding, Social, Career, Protective, and Enhancement); I have included three statements for each of the six components, reaching a total of 18 statements. This study will have an additional two factors which were similarly included by Gage et al. (2011). The first of the factors is a religion factor, and the second is an environmental protection factor; these factors were included with the other four, and three statements from each of the factors were used. The respondents rated their agreement with the statements on a Likert scale of 0 to 4 (0= Strongly agree, 1= Agree, 2=Neutral, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly disagree).

This study had the following control variables: gender, year of study, academic program, and residential status (International or domestic status).

## **Variable Interactions**

Students have a purpose when they volunteer; they are motivated by a certain reward that is provided to them when they carry out a volunteer activity. The volunteer will not receive payment in a tangible way, but rather, will receive an intangible payment or reward which they may not even realize. The volunteer is motivated to perform these actions because of eight main motivations which I have determined the strength of. Although I can pinpoint eight main motivating factors, I have also looked into some other variables in order to determine if they are also reasons that are important in determining a student's likelihood of volunteering; these include gender, academic program, residential status (Domestic or International), year of study, and religion.

### *Residential Status*

As a whole, students are educated, but inexperienced in their fields. Volunteer work is often seen as a way to gather experience which can be put onto their resumes. Non-domestic students may use volunteering as a way to gain work experience within the country.

### *Year of Study*

I will be looking into the correlation between a student's year of study and their volunteer motivations, and hopefully answering these questions: are students more likely to volunteer in their last year of their program in order to gain more experience before entering the work force, or are students more likely to volunteer in their first year of study because they have more time?

### *Religion*

Religion is an important factor in determining motivations of volunteers because often volunteering is synonymous with religion and religious acts. Many different religions are based on volunteering and providing a service for free.

### *Academic Program*

Within Thompson Rivers University, there are some academic programs which encourage volunteering more than others. For example, TRU has Enactus, which is predominantly made up of Business students who volunteer their expertise to an organization for free.

### *Gender*

I will be trying to determine whether or not one gender is more likely to volunteer than another. I am unable to find a study that looks into this type of gender related studies. I am unable to predict the outcome or result of my study, as very few studies have focused on the difference between male and female propensity to volunteer.

## **Estimation Method**

The study will estimate the following model:

Frequency of Voluntary Activity= f (values, understanding, social, career, protective, enhancement, environment, religion, gender, year of study, academic program, residential status).

The study will use an Ordered Probit Method to estimate the intensity of the volunteering model where intensity is represented by 4 categories ordered response variable (10 or more times in a year, 7-9 times in a year, 4-6 times in a year, 1-3 times in a year).

## **Sampling Design**

The survey included thirty one questions. Twenty four of the questions were taken from the Volunteer Functions Inventory, including the two statements which were used by Gage et al. (2011). The other seven questions were demographically focused. The twenty-four statements taken from the VFI were randomized on the survey as they were similarly done in the research of Clary et al. (1998) and Katz D. (1960). Using a Likert scale of 0-4 for each of the motivational statements, I have determined how much the respondents agree or disagree with each statement.

In order to qualify for the survey, the respondents were asked two questions: if they are current students at TRU, and if they have volunteered in the past year. The sample included student volunteers at Thompson Rivers University only. The sample also contained students from all years, all disciplines, any nationality, culture, race, background or age.

Surveys were administered in paper format and electronic format. The paper surveys were distributed and collected in classes with prior approval from the instructor, and electronic formats were sent using email and by using *Vovicii* survey software.

## Findings

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b>How often have you volunteered in the past 12 months?</b>	2.125	1.784
<b>Female</b>	0.472	.503
<b>Male</b>	0.528	.478
<b>International</b>	0.486	.503
<b>Domestic</b>	0.514	.493
<b>Value Factor</b>	2.181	1.841
<b>Protective Factor</b>	5.444	2.331
<b>Social Factor</b>	4.194	2.256
<b>Environment Factor</b>	2.931	2.203
<b>Enhancement Factor</b>	2.639	2.085
<b>Career Factor</b>	2.069	2.098
<b>Religion Factor</b>	7.056	3.184
<b>Understanding Factor</b>	2.014	1.631
<b>First Year</b>	0.223	0.418
<b>Second Year</b>	0.250	0.436
<b>Third Year</b>	0.222	0.419
<b>Fourth Year</b>	0.236	0.428
<b>Fifth Year</b>	0.069	0.256
<b>Arts Program</b>	0.181	0.457
<b>Science Program</b>	0.083	0.278
<b>Business Program</b>	0.583	0.496
<b>Tourism Program</b>	0.028	0.165
<b>Other Program</b>	0.125	0.333
<b>Volunteer Frequency</b>	2.500	1.343

## **Descriptive Statistics Results**

In this study, 88 samples were collected, 47% of which were female, and 53% of which were Male. Among the sample of students, 48% were international or study abroad students and 51% were domestic (Canadian) students. Low mean scores for the factor variables indicate that on average, the students agreed with the questions in that factor. The understanding factor was rated as the lowest mean, and the second lowest mean factor was career. The highest mean factor was religion, which shows that the average respondent had disagreed with the questions within the factor. Year of study was evenly proportioned between years one to four; however, year five had a very low sample size -- only 6%. There is a high disproportion within the academic programs, with business having 58% of the sample size and the next largest being only 18% from the arts program.



Table 2 Frequency of volunteering activity by Academic Program, Residence, and Gender

Frequency of volunteer activity		10 or more times/ year	7-9 times/ year	4-6 times/ year	1-3 times/ year	Total
Program of study?	Other	4 (44.4%)	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)	3 (33.3%)	9 (100%)
	Business	8 (38.0%)	4 (19.0%)	1 (4.7%)	8 (38.0%)	21(100%)
	Post Baccalaureate	6 (28.5%)	3 (14.2%)	4 (19.0%)	8 (38.0%)	21 (100%)
	Tourism	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
	Science	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2(100%)
	Computing Science	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (75%)	4 (100%)
	Arts	6 (46.1%)	2 (15.3%)	0 (0%)	5 (38.4%)	13(100%)
<b>Total</b>		27 (34.5%)	10 (13.8%)	7 (9.7%)	28 (38.8%)	72 (100%)
Current student status?	Domestic	18 (48.6%)	5 (13.5%)	2 (5.4%)	12 (32.4%)	37 (100%)
	International or Study Abroad	9 (25.7%)	5 (14.2%)	5 (14.2%)	16 (45.7%)	35 (100%)
<b>Total</b>		27 (37.5%)	10 (13.8%)	7 (9.7%)	28 (38.8%)	72 (100%)
Gender	Male	16 (42.1%)	5 (13.1%)	2 (5.2%)	15 (39.4%)	38 (100%)
	Female	11 (32.3%)	5 (14.7%)	5 (14.7%)	13 (38.2%)	34 (100%)
<b>Total</b>		27 (37.5%)	10 (13.8%)	7 (9.7%)	28 (38.8%)	72 (100%)

### Frequency of Volunteering Results

This table provides descriptive statistics for the frequency of volunteering by gender, residence status, and academic program. The frequency for all groups seems to be similar; most of the sample will either choose to volunteer more than 10 times in a year or 1-3 times in year with the two alternate choices in between chosen to a lesser degree. Within the programs, Tourism had two samples and both indicated that they volunteer 10 or more times in year. In the Business program, 38% of the sample chose “10 or more times in a year”; however, 38% of the

business sample chose “1-3 times in a year”. 45% of the International students indicated that they volunteer 1-3 times in a year, and only 25% chose “10 or more times within a year”. 48% of the domestic students within the sample indicated that they volunteer more than 10 times in a year. For the males, 42% of the sample indicated that they volunteer more than 10 times in a year while only 32% of females chose that option.

Table 3 Regression

Variable	Overall Coef. (SE)	Domestic Coef. (SE)	International Coef. (SE)	Male Coef.(SE)	Female Coef. (SE)
<b>Female</b>	-0.091 (0.305)	0.396 (1.814)	-3.788** (0.538)	-----	-----
<b>International</b>	-0.088 (.494)	-----	-----	0.318 (.664)	-0.065 (1.177)
<b>Business</b>	0.251 (0.447)	0.193 (5.848)	7.016 (.548)	0.912 (.704)	-0.135 (1.174)
<b>Science</b>	-0.090 (0.699)	-20.219* (2.510)	1.830 (2.125)	0.323 (1.209)	-0.686 (1.256)
<b>Tourism</b>	8.28* (0.919)	-3.975*** (3.600)	12.404* (2.033)	7.155* (1.268)	7.932* (2.427)
<b>Other</b>	-0.064 (0.577)	-2.139** (6.709)	-16.005** (1.029)	0.378 (0.839)	-0.923 (2.104)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year</b>	1.430* (0.472)	9.897* (4.662)	11.311** (1.589)	0.998 (0.640)	2.421* (0.942)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Year</b>	0.876 (0.567)	-0.867 (6.522)	10.642 (1.153)	1.543*** (0.919)	1.451*** (0.865)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Year</b>	0.611 (0.598)	-1.459 (8.309)	15.085*** (1.102)	0.541 (0.840)	0.477 (1.212)
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Year</b>	1.211 (0.862)	-0.712 (3.378)	-3.506 (1.474)	0.592 (0.951)	11.006* (1.970)
<b>Value Factor</b>	-0.299* (0.120)	0.103 (0.574)	-0.881 (0.214)	-0.468** (0.187)	-0.394 (0.278)
<b>Protective Factor</b>	0.027 (0.082)	-0.134 (0.203)	-0.076 (0.121)	-0.016 (0.133)	0.131 (0.146)
<b>Social Factor</b>	0.008 (0.087)	0.072 (0.572)	-0.645 (0.125)	-0.012 (0.144)	0.072 (0.157)
<b>Environment Factor</b>	0.032 (0.088)	-0.120 (0.449)	-1.020** (0.163)	-0.029 (0.154)	0.200 (0.188)
<b>Enhancement Factor</b>	0.054 (0.111)	0.259 (2.718)	-4.417 (0.180)	0.361** (0.202)	-0.086 (0.186)
<b>Career Factor</b>	-0.146 (0.110)	-0.254 (0.913)	0.551 (0.167)	0.047 (0.152)	-0.740** (0.319)
<b>Religion Factor</b>	0.018 (0.058)	-0.065 (0.427)	1.147* (0.088)	0.064 (0.095)	0.130 (0.126)
<b>Understanding Factor</b>	0.118 (0.143)	-0.198 (1.861)	3.878** (0.253)	-0.208 (0.201)	0.734* (0.284)
<b>Sample Size</b>	72	37	35	38	34

\* = Significance at a p&lt; .01

\*\* = Significance at a p&lt; .05

Variable	Overall Coef. (SE)	Domestic Coef. (SE)	International Coef. (SE)	Male Coef.(SE)	Female Coef. (SE)
***= Significance at a $p < .10$ Due to the reverse coding, (0= Strongly agree, 1= Agree, 2=Neutral, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly disagree) a negative sign indicates a positive relationship for the factors only.					

### **Regression Results: Over-all Samples and frequency to volunteer**

Through the regression over all of the samples, I discovered that there is a high positive correlation between the tourism program at TRU and the frequency of volunteering. A possible reasoning for this is that the tourism program often requires their students to participate in volunteering activities whereas other programs do not necessarily encourage their students. A cautionary aspect to note is that, out of the seventy-two participants, only two were from the tourism program so this may have also led the results to high significance due to a low sample size. I also discovered that there is a positive correlation between students in their second year and the frequency with which they volunteer. As students go from first year into the second year of their program, they become more likely to volunteer. Twenty five percent of the respondents were enrolled in their second year when they filled out the questionnaire, which I believe is a good representation of the total population on campus. The value factor, which I have used as a variable, refers to the respondent's personal moral values. I have found that students who have scored high in the value factor are more likely to volunteer at a higher frequency than those who have scored low in the value factor. The reason for the positive correlation is something I am unable to explain.

### **Regression Results: Female gender and frequency of volunteering**

I discovered that female students in the second, third and fifth year of their programs have a higher propensity to participate in volunteer activities when compared to students in their first year. Additionally, I learned that there is a positive relationship between the career factor and female frequency of volunteering. This indicates that females are more likely to volunteer based on career building motivations. However, a highly negative correlation was found between females and their understanding factor scores. This could possibly indicate that females, rather than volunteering for the purposes of gaining a greater understanding of themselves or the

perspectives of others, could be motivated by building a career, making connections, or gaining experience.

### **Regression Results: Male gender and frequency of volunteering**

A positive correlation was found between third -year male students and the increased frequency in which they participate in volunteer activities. This is different from females, who, I have discovered, increased their volunteer frequency during the second, third and fifth years of study.

The value factor and a male student's propensity to volunteer have been found to have a positive relationship. This information indicates that as a male student scores higher up on values, his frequency for volunteering will increase. Alternatively, a negative relationship was found for male students and the enhancement factor, which may indicate that males who are more focused on enhancing themselves mentally may volunteer less regularly.

### **Regression Results: Domestic students and frequency of volunteering**

A highly negative relationship was discovered between domestic students who were also enrolled in science programs. This information indicates that domestic Science students will volunteer much less than domestic students studying in the Arts program.

A negative correlation was found between students who study in other programs (other than Business, Arts, Science and Tourism) and the frequency in which they volunteer. This information may imply that students who are not in Business, Arts, Science, or Tourism are less likely to volunteer than students who are -in those programs. A possible explanation for this negative relationship could be attributed to instructor and school encouragement for students in these other programs to volunteer.

A high positive correlation was discovered between second -year domestic students and their propensity to volunteer. Domestic students in their second year are more likely to volunteer than those in first year. I believe this is because new students are busy becoming acclimated to their new surroundings and the challenges that university life may bring them.

## **Regression Results: International students and frequency of volunteering**

A negative relationship between female international students and their propensity to volunteer indicates that female international students are less likely to volunteer frequently. The decrease in likelihood of volunteering for female international students may be due to some cultural barriers or negative cultural views about volunteering.

International students in the second and fourth year of their programs have been revealed to volunteer more frequently than students in their first year of study. This is different from the information collected regarding domestic students. These findings may indicate that international students in their second year may have become more comfortable in their surroundings and coursework, and therefore have allowed themselves time for volunteering. In addition, fourth year students may feel more obliged to participate in volunteer activities when their required study time is coming to an end; this may explain the higher likeliness to volunteer in their fourth year.

My analysis indicates that international students enrolled in programs other than business, arts, science, or tourism, have been found to have a negative propensity to volunteer. The negative relationship could be a factor of other circumstances such as instructor encouragement to volunteer.

A positive relationship was also discovered between international students and the environmental factor, which indicates that international students will increase the amount they volunteer if the activity is based on environmental factors. It is possible that international students have greater commitment to the natural environment than domestic students.

International students were discovered to have a negative correlation with the religion factor. This shows that if a student scores highly on the religion factor, they will volunteer less frequently. This result nullifies my hypothesis that international students volunteer more frequently based on religious beliefs than domestic students.

The understanding factor had a high negative correlation with international students and their motivations to volunteer. As the understanding scores increased the frequency for

international students to volunteer decreased. This may indicate that international students are not volunteering in order to gain a better understanding of themselves or others.

## **Conclusions**

In order to support student volunteers and encourage their participation in volunteer activities, volunteer program administrators should consider the results of this study.

This study examines the factors that determine frequency of volunteering for undergraduate students at Thompson Rivers University. This study's findings indicate that second year students will volunteer more frequently than students based on over all samples, for international and domestic students and for females. Therefore, it is recommended that requests for volunteers should be promoted to the second year student base in order to amplify the amount of volunteerism on campus.

My findings also indicate that the motivations for volunteering differ between the genders, and that the females in this study will volunteer more frequently based on the career factor, and the males in this study will volunteer more based on the value factor. With this information, volunteer activities can be specialized to accommodate the needs of the students on campus. In addition, volunteer opportunities that are related to career enhancement should be created to meet the needs of the female student volunteers who have indicated their predisposition towards that factor.

Through the analysis, it has been determined that international students volunteer more frequently during their final year of study It is recommended that volunteer administration create volunteer opportunities to encourage fourth -year international students. The value factor scored high over all the samples; therefore, volunteer administration should create volunteer opportunities that correlate with student values in order to increase volunteerism.

## **Limitations of study**

The sample population was made up of only Thompson Rivers University students and cannot be generalized to the entire student population. The sample size that was wanted was around 300. However, that number proved to be difficult to obtain; because of this, I believe that if a larger sample size was able to be acquired, the results would be more representative of the

population on campus. This study did not discover the motivational differences between volunteers and non-volunteers, or compare the dependant variables between non-volunteers and volunteers. I believe that if non-volunteers were included in this study the sample size would have to be increased in order to get enough information to solve the research questions and the Volunteer Functions Inventory would need to be altered; therefore, I recommend that other studies be done to include non-volunteers in this type of research. This study could also be enlarged to gain information about non-volunteers and the differences between their motivations and those of the volunteer population.

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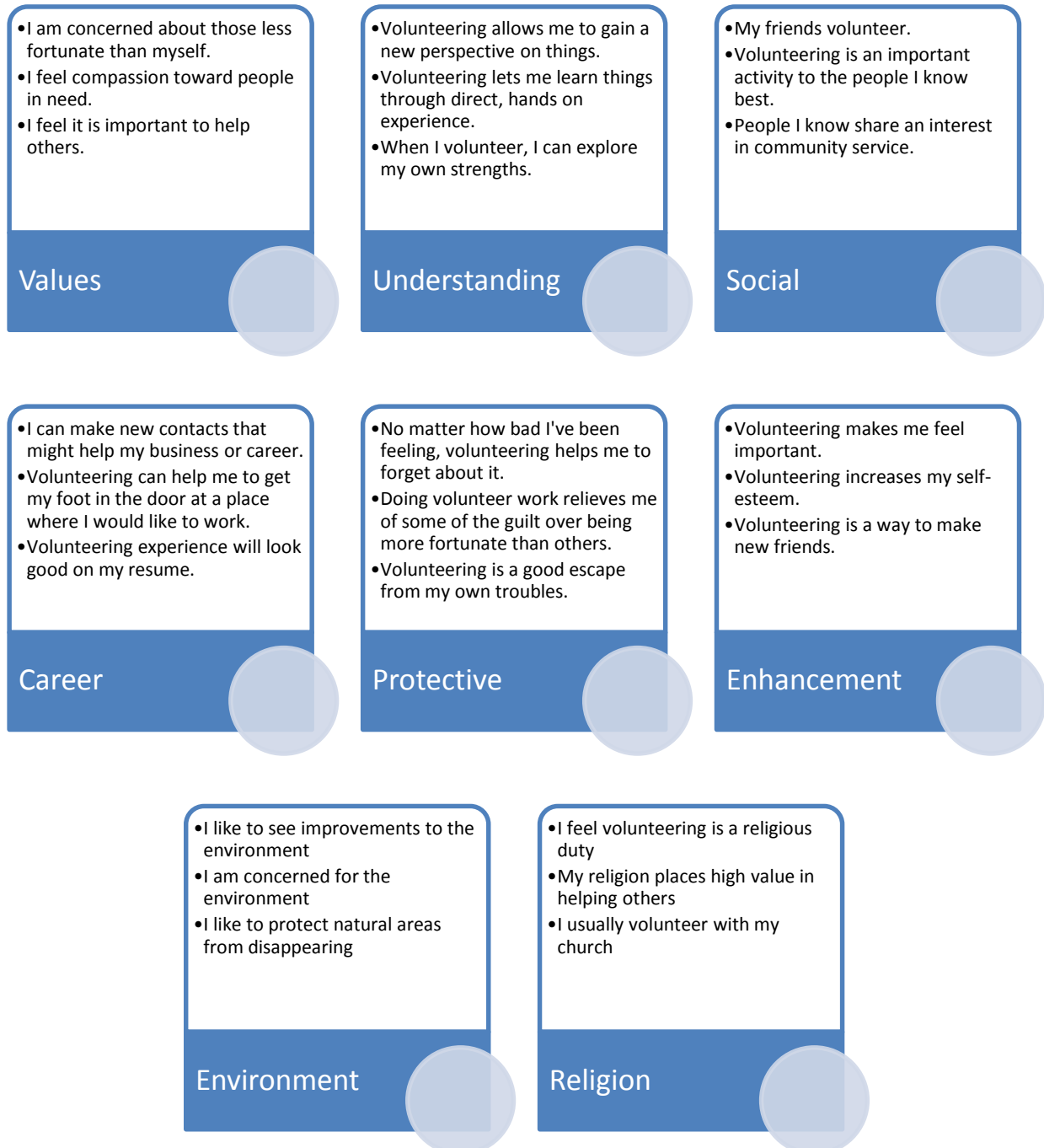
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## Appendix

Image 1 Factors and related statements



Appendix Table 1 Frequency of motivation factors

<b>Volunteer Frequency</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	1-3 Times a Year	28	38.9%	38.9%
	4-6 Times a Year	7	9.7%	48.6%
	7-9 Times a Year	10	13.9%	62.5%
	10 or More Times a Year	27	37.5%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	Male	38	52.8%	52.8%
	Female	34	47.2%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Current student status?</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	Domestic	37	51.4%	51.4%
	International or Study Abroad	35	48.6%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Second Year</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	No	54	75%	75%
	Yes	18	25%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Third Year</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	No	56	77.8%	77.8%
	Yes	16	22.2%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Fourth Year</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	No	55	76.4%	76.4%
	Yes	17	23.6%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Fifth Year</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	No	67	93.1%	93.1%
	Yes	5	6.9%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Business Program</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	No	30	41.7%	41.7%
	Yes	42	58.3%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Science Program</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>

Valid	No	66	91.7%	91.7%
	Yes	6	8.3%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
<b>Tourism Program</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	No	70	97.2%	97.2%
	Yes	2	2.8%	100%
	Total	72	100	
<b>Other Program</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	No	63	87.5%	87.5%
	Yes	9	12.5%	100%
	Total	72	100%	
All observations are valid, no missing data.				