

Volunteering Activity during Pandemic: Challenge and Involvement from UUM Students
(*Aktiviti Sukarelawan semasa Pandemik: Cabaran dan Penglibatan Pelajar UUM*)

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented global challenges impacting students' volunteering activities. This paper highlights the factors, challenges, and advantages of volunteering for Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) students during the pandemic. The study explores students' experiences and contributions to volunteering factors. The questionnaires were distributed to 103 university students online using quantitative methods. The findings highlight the internal factors influencing students' involvement in volunteering during COVID-19: self-enhancements, social, interpersonal, and career. In contrast, the external factors were peer influence, recognition from society, feeling responsible for society, additional income, free time, and gaining experience. Furthermore, the questionnaire results show that students face challenges carrying out volunteer activities during COVID-19. Lastly, the findings highlight the advantage gained by doing this volunteer activity. These aim to inspire further engagement, research, and recognition of volunteers' vital role in combating the pandemic and building resilient communities by examining the experiences and impact of UUM student volunteers.

Keywords - Volunteerism, COVID-19, UUM students, Factors, Challenges, Advantages.

ABSTRAK

Pandemik COVID-19 telah membentangkan cabaran global yang belum pernah berlaku sebelum ini yang memberi kesan kepada aktiviti sukarelawan pelajar. Kertas kerja ini mengetengahkan faktor, cabaran dan kelebihan menjadi sukarelawan untuk pelajar Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) semasa pandemik. Kajian ini meneroka pengalaman dan sumbangan pelajar kepada faktor sukarela. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada 103 pelajar universiti secara dalam talian menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif. Penemuan ini menyerlahkan faktor dalaman yang mempengaruhi penglibatan pelajar dalam kesukarelawanan semasa COVID-19: peningkatan diri, sosial, interpersonal dan kerjaya. Sebaliknya, faktor luaran ialah pengaruh rakan sebaya, pengiktirafan daripada masyarakat, perasaan bertanggungjawab terhadap masyarakat, pendapatan tambahan, masa lapang, dan menimba pengalaman. Tambahan pula, hasil soal selidik menunjukkan pelajar menghadapi cabaran menjalankan aktiviti sukarelawan semasa COVID-19. Akhir sekali, dapatan ini menyerlahkan kelebihan yang diperolehi dengan melakukan aktiviti sukarelawan ini. Ini bertujuan untuk memberi inspirasi kepada penglibatan, penyelidikan dan pengiktirafan selanjutnya terhadap peranan penting sukarelawan dalam memerangi wabak dan membina komuniti yang berdaya tahan dengan mengkaji pengalaman dan kesan sukarelawan pelajar UUM.

Kata kunci - Kesukarelawanan, COVID-19, pelajar UUM, Faktor, Cabaran, Kelebihan.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 first appeared in Wuhan, China, in late December 2019, caused by SARS-CoV-2. In January 2020, the WHO declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. COVID-19 cases had nearly 5 million by May 2020, with over 300,000 confirmed deaths in over 200 countries (World Health Organization, n.d). The first COVID-19 case in Malaysia was confirmed on January 25, 2020, when a passenger from China, traveling via Singapore, tested positive for the virus (Harapan et al., 2020). Many efforts have been taken worldwide to control the spread of COVID-19. Due to COVID-19, many volunteers came forward to assist during the pandemic. These efforts have led to the establishment of volunteers from various agencies to help everyone affected by the pandemic (Miao et al., 2021). The scope of volunteer work has grown significantly over time as it is no longer restricted to just fundraising or charitable endeavors but has now broadened to include exposure to the employment sector to reach out to students in the future. The introduction of volunteer programs in primary education has been followed by steady expansion into secondary and tertiary education. Volunteering practices were introduced early on and are expected to continue growing. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in various volunteer activities. Knowing what drives students to volunteer is essential for anyone organising a program, event, or charity. The organiser would be more successful if more volunteers participated in the events (Bang et al., 2012).

Previous research by Bang et al. (2012) clearly indicated that students' involvement in volunteer work is motivated by various factors. Two main factors that motivate students to volunteer during the pandemic are internal and external. From this study, the internal factors identified include self-enhancement, social, interpersonal, and career motivations. The external factors encompass peer influence, societal recognition, a sense of responsibility towards society, the pursuit of additional income, the desire to fill up free time, and the aim to gain experience.

Apart from that, this study also brings out the challenges that were faced by UUM students when carrying out volunteer activities during COVID-19. The challenges identified in this study included concerns about the virus, limited time, lack of training, and no experience. This paper also discusses the advantages of this volunteer activity. The advantages will be discussed deeply in the analysis part of this paper. The study hypothesised that involvement in volunteer work by UUM students during the pandemic will lead to

positive personal development, strengthened ties to the community, and a greater sense of social responsibility, all of which will improve their general well-being and the welfare of the communities they serve. The paper will then explore and validate this hypothesis through the experiences and insights shared by UUM students volunteering during the pandemic. A sociological sample of a Google form questionnaire was distributed to 103 UUM students as part of the quantitative methods. In conclusion, this paper summarises the research findings on the experiences of UUM students while volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The findings of "Volunteer Activities during COVID-19: An Experience from UUM Students" show that a few factors contribute to student involvement in volunteering activities during COVID-19. The study will determine the internal and external factors of a student's involvement. Besides this study also highlights the challenges the students face when carrying out volunteer activities. The challenges students face expose them to a wide range of new experiences. Lastly, this paper also highlights the advantages gained from this volunteer activity. This paper will give a better understanding of the factors, challenges and advantages of volunteering activities based on the experience of UUM students. Furthermore, it offers the organisation a consistent method for involving volunteers throughout the entire organisation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach to identify the factors influencing students' involvement in volunteering, as well as the advantages and challenges they faced during COVID-19.

Sources of Data

According to Cooper et al. (2014) and Bouchrika (2024), there are six research methods: experiments, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, case studies, and observation trials. For this study, questionnaires were used. The questionnaire was built with four sections. Section A is the demographic of the respondents, Section B is the factors of student involvement in volunteering during COVID-19, Section C is the challenges faced by the students when carrying out volunteer activity during COVID-19, and last is Section D, which is

the advantage gained by doing this volunteer activity. This questionnaire was created to collect information on UUM undergraduate students from three colleges: College of Business (COB), College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and College of Law, Government, and International Studies (COLGIS). The questionnaire was distributed to 103 UUM students via social media, facilitating the response process by allowing them to participate at their convenience without time constraints. The collected data were summarised and presented in tables, graphs, and charts to enhance understanding of the demographics, factors, challenges, and benefits associated with volunteer activities. Descriptive analyses were used in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and data collected from 103 UUM students through the questionnaire. Utilising this method, all the problem statements were addressed.

Demographic Section

Gender

Figure 1 displays the gender distribution of the respondents, clearly indicating that females constituted the majority at 58.3%, while males represented 41.7%.

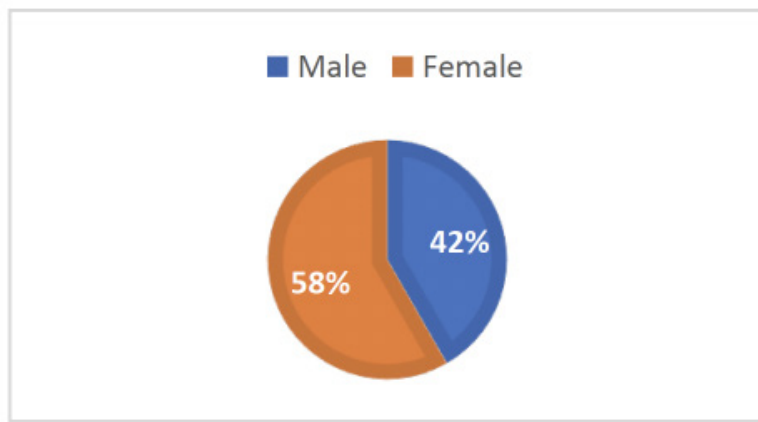


FIGURE 1. Gender of the respondent

TABLE 1. Gender of the respondent

Gender	N	(%)
Male	43	41.7
Female	60	58.3
Total	103	100

Age

The most respondents were around 22- 25years old

(65%), and the least respondents were around 30-35 years old (3%). The other respondents were around 19-21 years old and 26-29 years old.

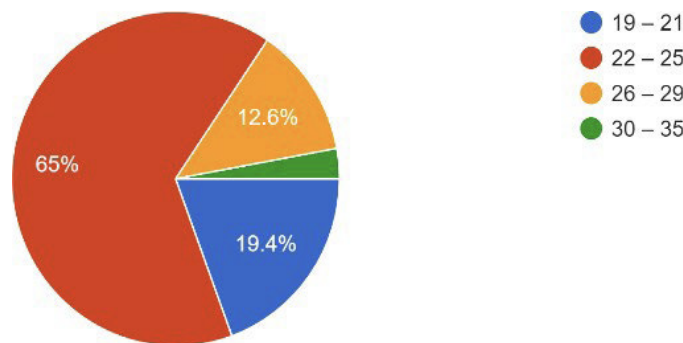


FIGURE 2. The age of the respondent

TABLE 2. The age of respondent

Age	N	(%)
19-21	20	19.4
22-25	67	65
26-29	13	12.6
30-33	3	3
Total	103	100

Ethnicity

The figure and table below describe the ethnicity of the respondents. It clearly shows that most of the

respondents were Malay, with 80.6%. However, there are also Chinese (12.6%) and Indian (6.8%) students involved in the volunteer activity.

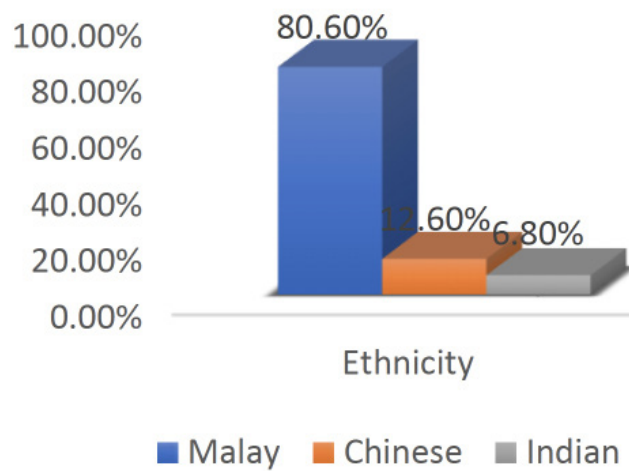


FIGURE 3. Ethnicity of the respondents

TABLE 3. Ethnicity of the respondents

Ethnicity	N	(%)
Malay	83	80.6
Chinese	13	12.6
Indian	7	6.8
Others	-	-
Total	103	100

Current year of study

Most of the respondents were in Year 4, which is 40.8%.

8.7% of respondents had just graduated from UUM. This shows that most of the respondents were in their final year.

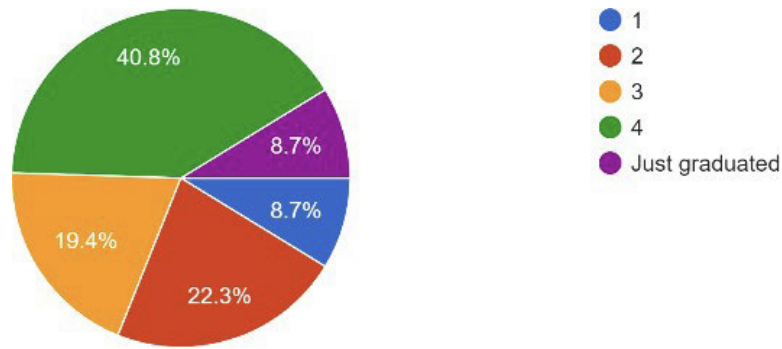


FIGURE 4. Current Year of Study

TABLE 4. Current Year of Study

Year	N	(%)
1	9	8.7
2	23	22.3
3	20	19.4
4	42	40.8
Just graduated	9	8.7
Total	103	100

College

From this analysis, it clearly shows that the percentage of College of Business (COB) got a higher percentage

(56.3%) compared to the other two colleges, Collage of Arts and Sciences (CAS) (25.2%) and Collage of Law, Government, and International Studies (COLGIS) (18.4%).

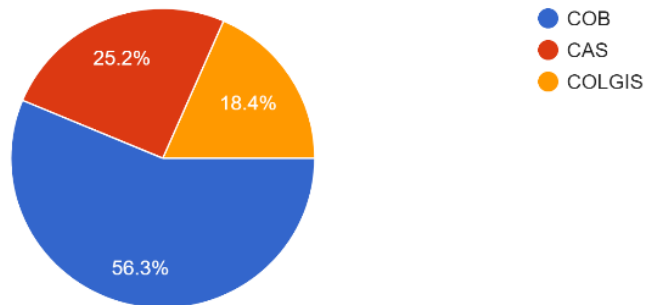


FIGURE 5. College

TABLE 5. College

College	N	(%)
COB	58	56.3
CAS	26	25.2
COLGIS	19	18.4
Total	103	100

School

Based on Figure 6 below, it can be concluded that most participants were from the School of Economics, Finance and Banking (SEFB), with a percentage of 37.9% compared to the other schools. From the questionnaire structure, the authors found out many

students under SEFB were from the Bachelor of Science Agribusiness Management program (29.1%). This figure also shows that the few participants were from the School of Computing (SOC), School of International Studies (IBS) and School of Creative Industry Management and Performing Arts (SCIMPA), with a percentage of 1% each.

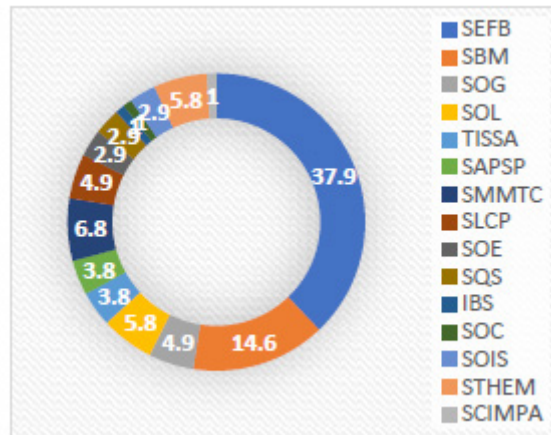


FIGURE 6. School

TABLE 6. School

School	N	(%)
SEFB	39	37.9
SBM	15	14.6
SMMTC	7	6.8
SOG	5	4.9
SOL	6	5.8
TISSA	4	3.8
SAPSP	4	3.8
SLCP	5	4.9
SOE	3	2.9
SQS	3	2.9
IBS	1	1.0
SOC	1	1.0
SOIS	3	2.9
STHEM	6	5.8
SCIMPA	1	1.0
Total	103	100

Involvement in volunteer activities during COVID-19.

66% of UUM students were involved in volunteer activities during COVID-19. Most of the respondents were involved in vaccine volunteering during the

pandemic. Additionally, some students engaged in remote volunteering, tutoring, teaching, online fundraising, and serving as runners for grocery shopping.

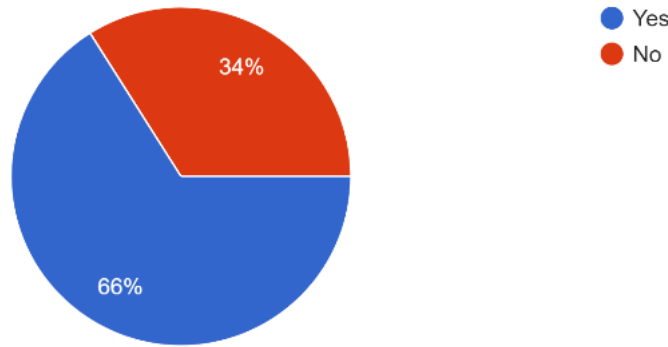


FIGURE 7. Involvement in volunteer activities during COVID-19

TABLE 7. Involvement in volunteer activities during COVID-19

Involved	N	(%)
Yes	68	66
No	35	34
Total	103	100

Enrolled in a Volunteerism class at the School of Applied Psychology, Social Work, and Policy.

Most respondents (79.6%) did not enrol in volunteerism classes under the School of Applied Psychology, Social Work and Policy because they did not know about that.

The respondents who took a volunteerism class were mainly from that school. Based on the analysis, the respondents who did not take the volunteerism class said they planned to take it because they just knew about it.

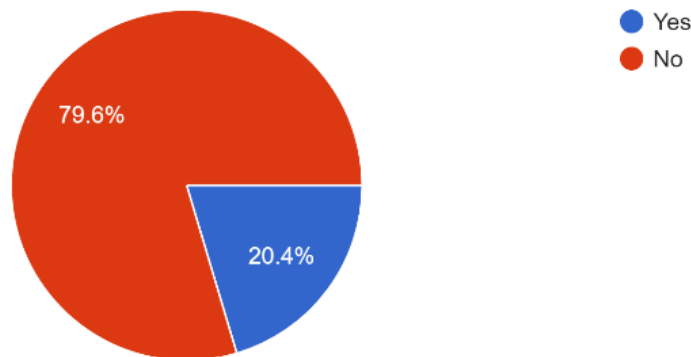


FIGURE 8. Enrolled in a Volunteerism class at the School of Applied Psychology, Social Work, and Policy

TABLE 8. Enrolled in a Volunteerism class at the School of Applied Psychology, Social Work, and Policy

Enrol	N	(%)
Yes	21	20.4
No	82	79.6
Total	103	100

Enroll in the Volunteerism curriculum offered by the Co-curriculum Centre.

Most respondents (68.9%) did not take a volunteerism curriculum under the Co-Curriculum

Centre. This is because many curriculum programs are available, and students can only choose one. Therefore, while students may select other programs, they might still be interested in this field.

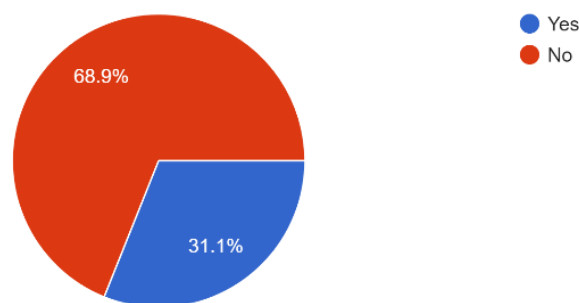


FIGURE 9. Volunteerism curriculum offered by the Co-curriculum Centre

TABLE 9. Volunteerism curriculum offered by the Co-curriculum Centre

Enrol	N	(%)
Yes	32	31.1
No	71	68.9
Total	103	100

Type of volunteer activities that the student participated in.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 65% of the respondents participated in environmental volunteering. None of the respondents were involved in animal volunteering. Other volunteers participated in activities related to poverty alleviation.

Figure 10 shows the type of volunteer activity that the students participated in during COVID-19.

Mode of volunteer program that involved.

There were two modes of the volunteer program: online and face-to-face. 63.1% of respondents participated in

the face-to-face mode, while 36.9% were online.

Role when volunteered.

Based on the involvement of the students as volunteered during COVID-19, there are some roles that they were assisted as a volunteered. Figure 12 shows the role of students when volunteered. 22.3% of UUM students were being a participant in volunteers' activities such as vaccines and online tutoring. There are also 14.6% of UUM students who are assistants at Vaccines volunteer. 3.9% of UUM students got no roles during the volunteer's activity.

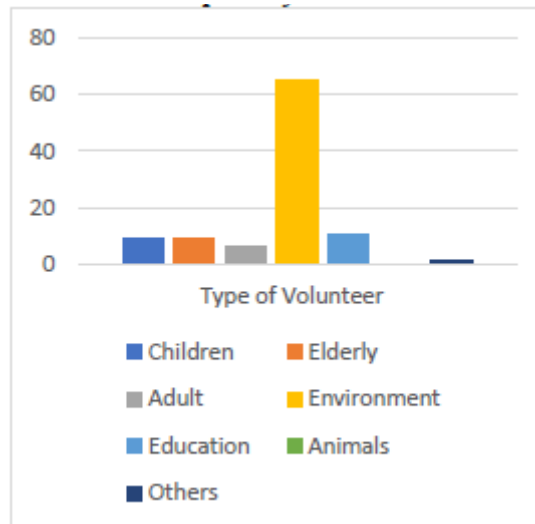


FIGURE 10. Type of volunteer

TABLE 10. Type of volunteer

Type	N	(%)
Children	9	8.7
Elderly	9	8.7
Adult	6	5.8
Environment	67	65
Education	11	10.7
Animals	-	-
Others	1	1.0
Total	103	100

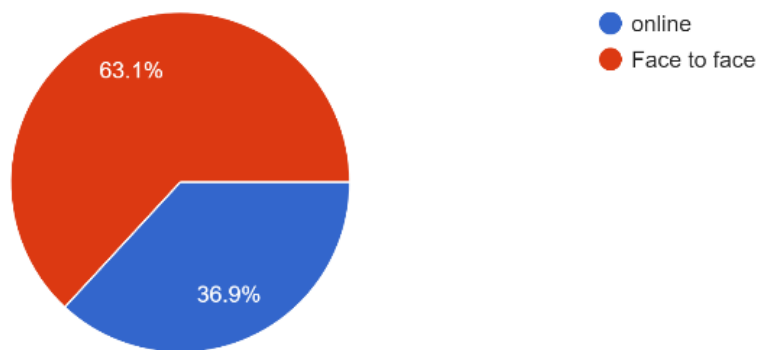


FIGURE 11. Mode of volunteer program that involved

TABLE 11. Mode of volunteer program that involved

Mode	N	(%)
Online	38	36.9
Face to face	65	63.1
Total	103	100

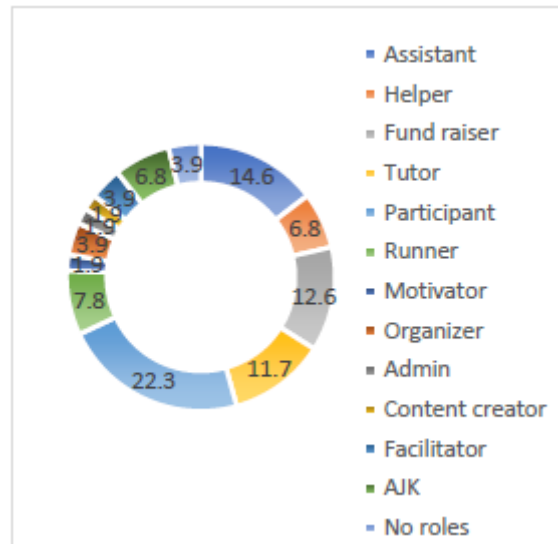


FIGURE 12. Role when volunteered

TABLE 12. Role when volunteered

Role	N	(%)
Assistant	15	14.6
Helper	7	6.8
Fund raiser	13	12.6
Tutor	12	11.7
Participant	23	22.3
Runner	8	7.8
Motivator	2	1.9
Organizer	4	3.9
Admin	2	1.9
Content creator	2	1.9
Facilitator	4	3.9
AJK	7	6.8
No roles	4	3.9
Total	103	100

The Factors of Student Involvement in Volunteering During COVID-19.

Self enhancement

Based on figure 13, the factors of student’s involvement

in volunteering during COVID-19 were due to self-enhancement. The figure clearly shows that most of the respondent agreed with all the statements that refer to self enhancement as one of the factors of student involvement in volunteering during the pandemic.

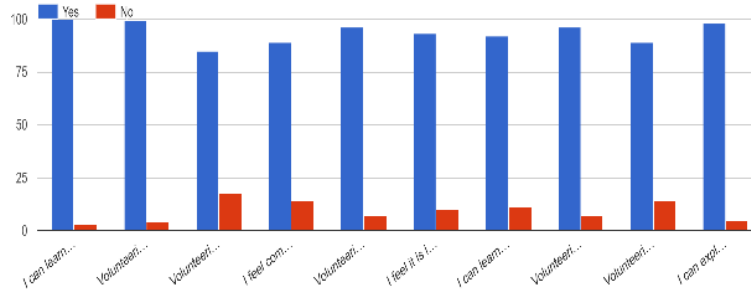


FIGURE 13. Self enhancement

Social

The respondent majority agreed with all the statements that describe social as one of the factors of student’s involvement in volunteering during pandemic.

with all the statements.

Interpersonal

Figure 15 shows that the statement related to the interpersonal factors. Most of the respondents agreed

Career

Figure 16 shows that the respondents mostly agreed with the statement that refers to career factors but there are a few respondents who did not agree with the statement that volunteering allows me to explore different career options.

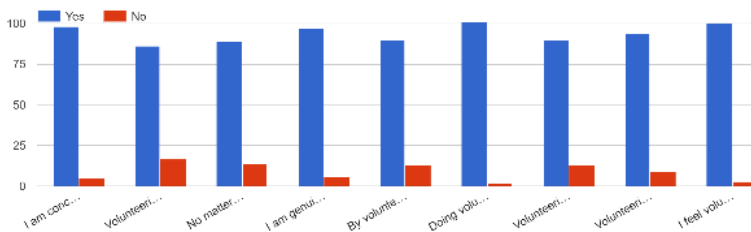


FIGURE 14. Social

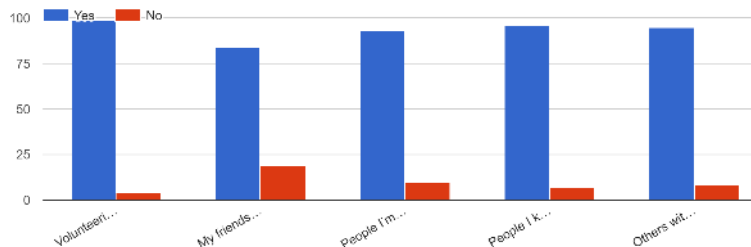


FIGURE 15. Interpersonal

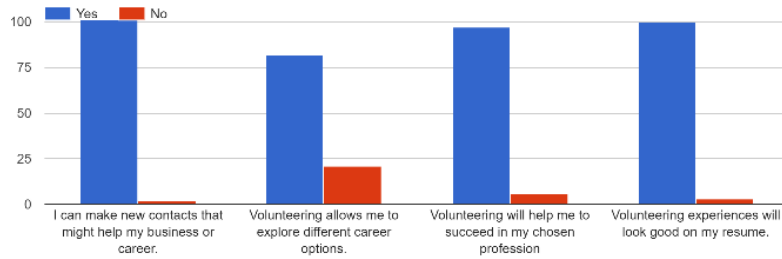


FIGURE 16. Career

External factors that bring student involvement in volunteering activities during COVID-19.

Figure 17 despite the external factors that bring student involvement in volunteering activities during COVID-19. It shows that 43.7% of UUM students involved in volunteering activity due to feel responsible

for society. Besides, 15.5% of UUM students joined because they want to find additional income. This is due to COVID-19, the economy has become worse cause nobody can go out for work. The least external factor was recognition from society which only 5.1% of UUM students were influenced by that factor.

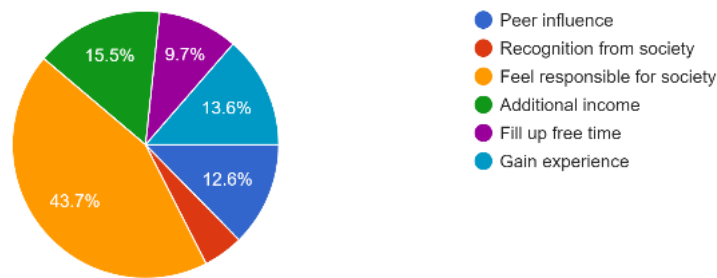


FIGURE 17. External factors that bring student involvement in volunteering activities during COVID-19

TABLE 13. External factors that bring student involvement in volunteering activities during COVID-19

External Factors	N	(%)
Peer influence	13	12.6
Recognition from society	5	5.1
Feel responsible for society	45	43.7
Additional income	16	15.5
Fill up free time	10	9.7
Gain experience	14	13.6
Total	103	100

Challenges Faced by Students When Carrying Out Volunteer Activity During COVID-19.

Challenges that were experienced when carrying out volunteer activities during pandemic.

Figure 18 shows the challenges that were experienced

when carrying out volunteer activities during pandemic. The most 8 challenging thing that was experienced by UUM students were worried about viruses (73.8%). This is because the virus can easily spread to others. 63.1% of UUM students said that no proper equipment to protect from virus also the challenges when carrying out volunteer activities. There were others challenges

that were experienced by UUM students which are hard to reach people. This is due to the standard operating

procedure (SOP) which has been set by Malaysian Ministry of Health is very strict.

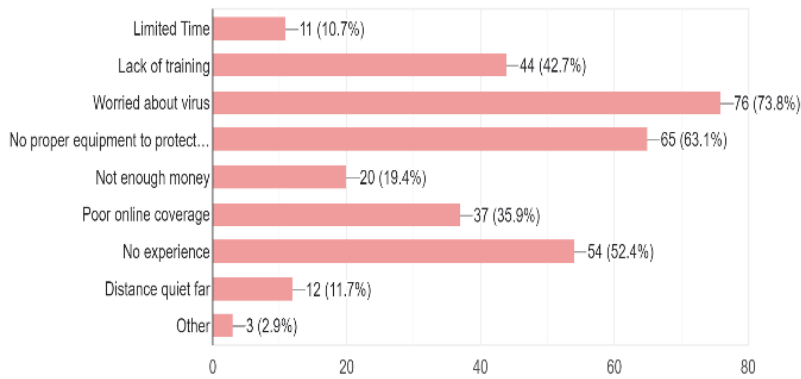


FIGURE 18. Challenges that were experienced when carrying out volunteer activities during pandemic

TABLE 14. Challenges that were experienced when carrying out volunteer activities during pandemic

Challenges	N	(%)
Limited time	11	10.7
Lack of training	44	42.7
Worried about virus	76	73.8
No proper equipment to protect from virus	65	63.1
Not enough money	20	19.4
Poor online coverage	37	35.9
No experience	54	52.4
Distance quite far	12	11.7
Others	3	2.9
Total	103	100

Are you involved as a volunteer in a new agency or organization while carrying out volunteer activities during the Covid 19 pandemic?

as a volunteer in a new agency or organization during pandemic. The rest of UUM students which is 38.8% did not involved in any new agency and just doing the volunteer by themselves.

Figure 19 shows that 61.2% of UUM students involved

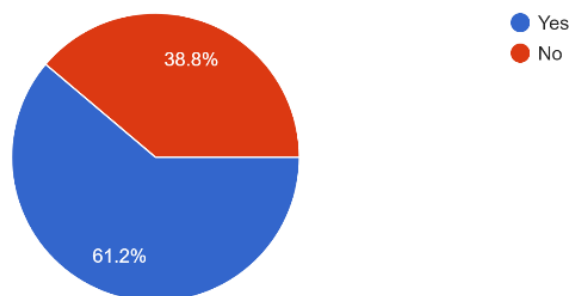


FIGURE 19. Involvement as a volunteer in a new agency or organization

TABLE 15. Involvement as a volunteer in a new agency or organization

Involved	N	(%)
Yes	63	61.2
No	40	38.8
Total	103	100

Is there a selection session for you to join any organization to do volunteer activities during Covid-19?

Based on Figure 20, there were 19.4% said that the volunteer should have selection session before can

join any organization to do volunteer activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection that was done are through interview, online assessment, editing and examination. But most of the participants (80.6%) said that there were not any selection sessions.

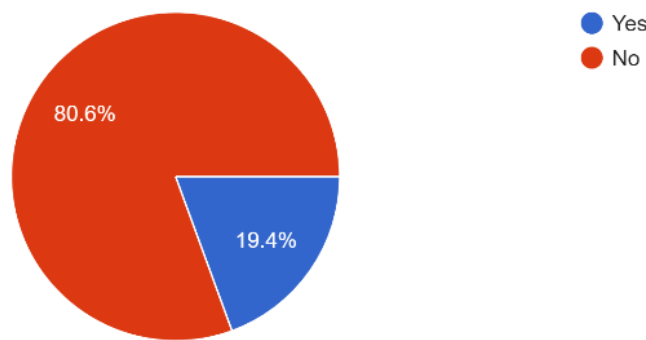


FIGURE 20. Selection session

TABLE 16. Selection session

Selection	N	(%)
Yes	20	19.4
No	83	80.6
Total	103	100

Does the way of doing volunteer activities during COVID-19 differ from previous volunteer activities?

Referring to Figure 21, 66% of respondents said that the volunteer activities during COVID-19 differed from previous ones. This is because during COVID-19, there were numerous SOPs to follow, necessitating precautions such as consistent mask-wearing, limitations on physical meetings, communication difficulties, restricted movement and the overarching challenge of combating the virus.

What are the biggest challenges you faced by volunteering during this pandemic?

Social distancing was identified as the most significant challenge for volunteers during the pandemic, affecting

33% of participants. Reaching hard-to-reach individuals was a notable challenge, impacting 13.6% of UUM students. Further details on the challenges faced are illustrated in Figure 22.

The Advantage Gained by Doing This Volunteer Activity.

What are the advantages gained from participating in volunteer activities?

30.1% of UUM students said that by participating in volunteer activities, they can gain new experiences. Besides, 9.7% of UUM students said they can boost self-confidence. There were also other advantages gained by participating in these volunteer activities, as shown in Figure 23.

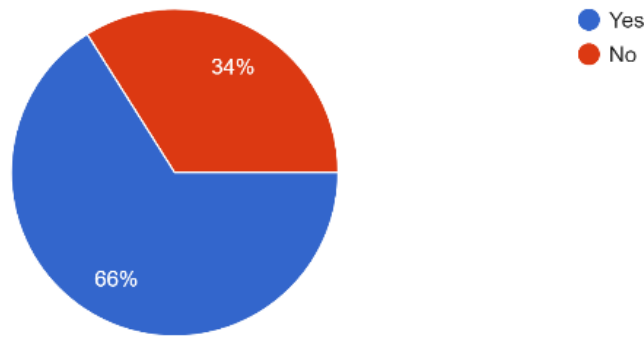


FIGURE 21. Volunteer activities during COVID-19 differed from previous volunteer activities

TABLE 17. Volunteer activities during COVID-19 differed from previous volunteer activities

Different	N	(%)
Yes	68	66
No	35	34
Total	103	100

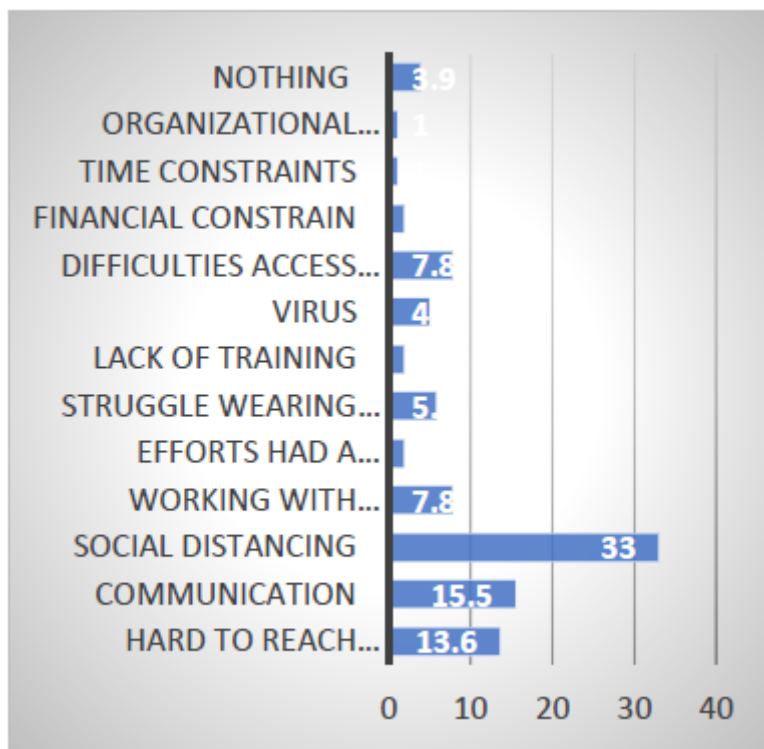


FIGURE 22. Challenges that were faced by doing volunteer activities during this pandemic

TABLE 18. Challenges that were faced by doing volunteer activities during this pandemic

Challenges	N	(%)
Hard to reach people	14	13.6
Communication	16	15.5
Social distancing	34	33.0
Working with vulnerable people	8	7.8
Efforts had a limited impact	2	1.9
Struggle to wear PPE	6	5.8
Lack of training	2	1.9
Virus	5	4.9
Difficulties access necessary service	8	7.8
Financial constrain	2	1.9
Time constraints	1	1.0
Organisational challenges	1	1.0
Nothing	4	3.9
Total	103	100

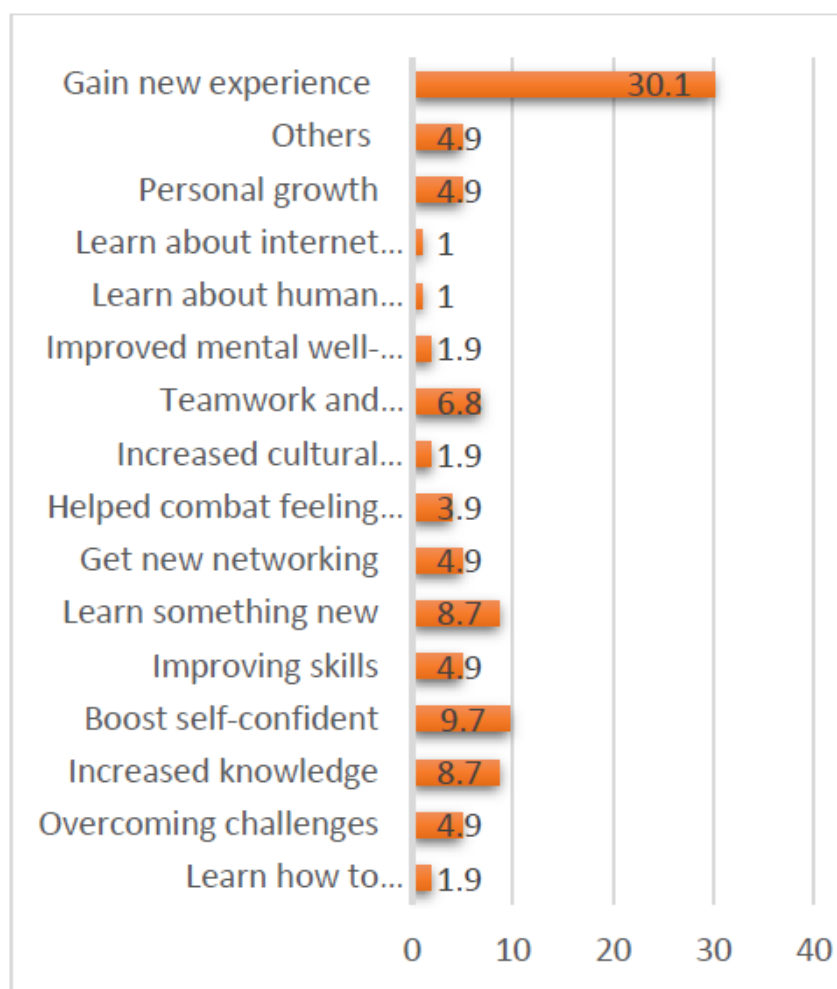


FIGURE 23. Advantages gained from participating in volunteer activities

TABLE 19. Advantages gained from participating in volunteer activities

Advantages	N	(%)
Gain new experience	31	30.1
Learn how to communicate	2	1.9
Overcoming challenges	5	4.9
Increased knowledge	9	8.7
Boost self- confident	10	9.7
Improving skills	5	4.9
Learn something new	9	8.7
Get new networking	5	4.9
Helped combat feeling of isolation during the pandemic	4	3.9
Increased cultural awareness	2	1.9
Teamwork and leadership	7	6.8
Improved mental well-being	2	1.9
Learn about human behavior	1	1.0
Learn about the Internet and online platform	1	1.0
Personal growth	5	4.9
Others	5	4.9
Total	103	100

What skills have you gained after participating in volunteer activities during COVID-19?

Communication skills were the main skills that were gained after participating in volunteer activities during

COVID-19 with the percentage of 22.3%. Besides by participating in volunteer can gain self enhancement skills (13.6%), self- discipline skills (12.6%) and the others skills that were show in Figure 24.

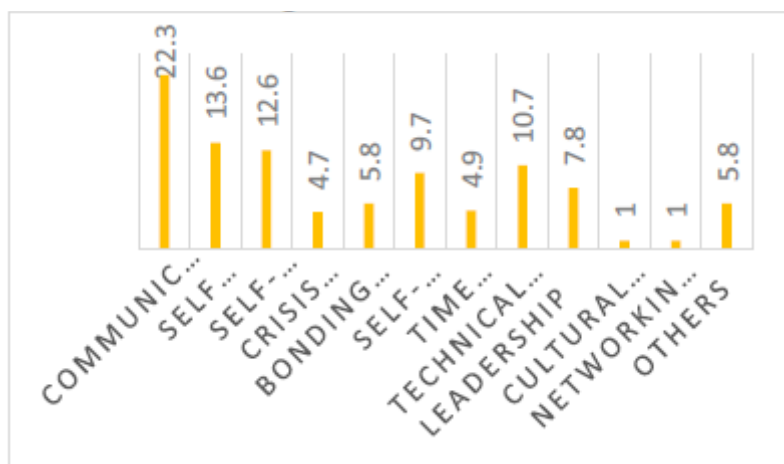


FIGURE 24. Skills that have gained after participating in volunteer activities

TABLE 20. Skills that have gained after participating in volunteer activities

Skills	N	(%)
Communication	23	22.3
Self-enhancement	14	13.6
Self-discipline	13	12.6
Crisis management	5	4.7
Bonding skills	6	5.8
Self-growth	10	9.7
Time management	5	4.9
Technical management	11	10.7
Leadership	8	7.8
Cultural sensitivity	1	1.0
Networking skills	1	1.0
Others	6	5.8
Total	103	100

Would you encourage other students to get involved as a volunteer?

Based on Figure 25, 85.4% of UUM students were encourage other students to get involved as a volunteer.

They said that by joining this volunteer activity can develop new skills, can improve inner skills, gain new experience, high chance to get jobs after graduate and can feel the real-world experience.

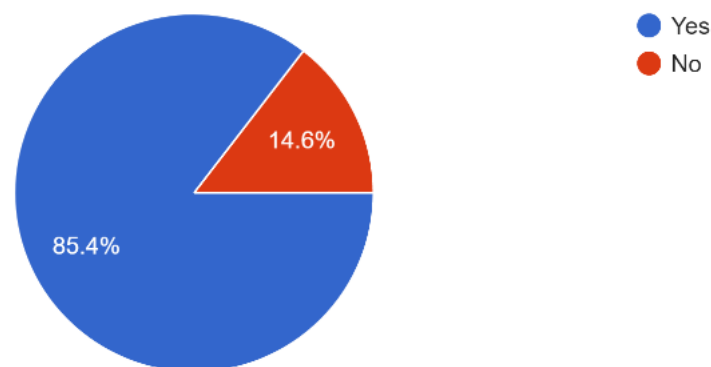


FIGURE 25. Encourage other students to get involved as a volunteer.

TABLE 21. Encourage other students to get involved as a volunteer.

Encourage	N	(%)
Yes	88	85.4
No	15	14.6
Total	103	100

CONCLUSION

This paper provides a brief overview of the experiences of UUM students while engaging in volunteer activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. It discusses the activities undertaken, the factors influencing student involvement, the challenges faced, and the benefits of these volunteer activities.

By using the quantitative method, which is distributing the questionnaire online to 103 UUM students, the author gets to answer all the problem statements of this paper.

The experiences discussed by UUM students in this paper highlight the beneficial effects of volunteering for both the volunteers themselves and those who receive their assistance. This underscores the potential for a collective effort to drive positive change, even under challenging conditions. Furthermore, this study's conclusions can help institutions, organisations, and policymakers foster a culture of volunteerism and community engagement in times of stability and during crises. As a narrative of inspiration, hope, and community in the face of unimaginable challenges, this paper ultimately contributes to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of volunteering.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors acknowledge Miss Sharima Ruwaida

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Binti Abbas and Associate Professor Dr. Rohani Binti Abdullah, lecturers at UUM, for their insightful comments and leadership during the study's development.

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