

STRATEGIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTARISM IN NORTH-EAST INDIA: *A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK*

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ABSTRACT

Voluntarism has played an important role in human civilization. Voluntarism is cross cutting social phenomenon that involves all groups in society. It has a strategic role in community development processes and in strengthening community resilience. The nature of voluntarism has been changing and newly emerging trend of voluntarism are creating new situation, which requires new approaches and tools.

In North East India, a substantial number of people are marginalized and deprived from basic needs of life. Needless to say, there are many social crimes and human rights violation. The government alone cannot solve all the social problems and this is where voluntarism becomes vital. The voluntary organization and volunteers can contribute immensely for the well being of the society and the country as a whole. Voluntarism in development and social welfare demands motivated leadership, professionalism and volunteer participation to sustain and to meet the social goals. For this a strategic approach is required both at the organizational and volunteer level. A more formalized structure of voluntarism is required for the voluntary organization to sustain, and to motivate voluntarism.

This paper is an attempt to develop a conceptual framework for conducting research on the strategic dimension of voluntarism in North East India. The paper is based on extensive literature review whereby a conceptual model is developed to guide the fruitful conduct of research and thus the paper is conceptual in nature.

Key Words: Voluntarism, volunteers, community, social.

1.INTRODUCTION

The term voluntarism comes from the Latin word “Voluntas” meaning will or freedom. It is typically oriented to the service of the community or the civil society. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Voluntarism is the principle or system of doing something by or relying on voluntary action or volunteers” and “Volunteerism is the act or practice of doing volunteer work in community service”. Voluntarism has played an important role in human civilization. Voluntarism is about people helping, learning and actively participating in communities. Voluntarism has no borders. It is a cross cutting social phenomenon that involves all groups in society and all aspect of human activity. It can take many forms, depending on cultural and economic circumstances. Volunteering is participation or civic engagement. This refers to the role played by individuals in the governance process, from representation on government consultation bodies to use involvement in local development projects. Forms of voluntarism are found in all countries with a strong tradition of civic engagement. The end results of the terms voluntarism and volunteerism relate to existential amelioration of the community or the society, as such, for the purpose of the study the two terms are used interchangeably.

Voluntarism is a powerful means of engaging people. It has a strategic role in community development processes and in strengthening community resilience. The nature of voluntarism has been changing. The newly changing trends of voluntarism are creating new situations, which require new approaches and tools. Voluntarism in development and social welfare demands for motivated leadership and professionalism to sustain the autonomy, values and culture.

In North East India, a substantial number of people are marginalized and deprived form basic needs of life. The big question today in front of voluntary agencies is to invent methods to raise financial resources for innovation rights based intervention. Not only there is a need to conduct public awareness campaign within North East to mobilized local funds, but also advocate for change in regime to facilitate volunteers. The gravity of deprivation is increasing day

by day whereas the support to the marginalized is depleting. So ensuring effective participation of the people or volunteerism at the grassroots level in planning is an underlying cause for concern for creative responses.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Papadakis, Griffin, and Frater (2004) say that volunteers are an essential human asset for some associations. Motivations to volunteers are ascribed to elements, for example, the expanding number of not-for-profit associations, diminishing pool of volunteers, rivalry for volunteer enlistment among associations, and issues in volunteers' maintenance to an association. Volunteering is a movement that is attempted by a person for no money related reward and advantages somebody other than the individual who volunteers. Consistently, a great many individuals commit imperative measures of time and vitality to volunteer in various associations. Volunteer exercises take numerous structures; contribution in deliberate affiliations, activism concentrating on social change or gifts of cash, supplies or blood gifts. Different articulations of volunteering are common help in the wellbeing and social welfare field, generosity to others inside deliberate or group associations. In this manner, from a connected point of view, it is critical to find out about the variables that lead individuals to volunteer in various associations, to comprehend these components and utilize them effectively in the arranging, enrolling, and overseeing process.

Widjaja (2010) says that the functional motivation hypothesis has got from speculations concerning disposition and influence. Key to the functional motivation hypotheses are two fundamentals: people participate in intentional exercises to satisfy a specific objective and people can play out similar exercises to serve distinctive mental capacities.

Jansson and Sorensen (2015) say that since volunteers work inside a large number of various associations it is to a great degree difficult to give an exact meaning of what a volunteer truly is. In any case it is regular that volunteers contribute their chance with no compensation as remuneration. By having a comprehension for what motivates the volunteers the associations can have a more noteworthy accomplishment in both holding and enlisting volunteers. Numerous volunteers pick up a compensating knowledge from the action itself yet individuals additionally tend to follow up on narrow minded intentions, for example, fulfilling essential mental and social objectives. A significant resource inside non-benefit associations are eager and conferred volunteers. A man's ability to give a significant time and exertion without financial rewards in connection to one's mentality towards an association can be considered as volunteer authoritative responsibility. Characteristic motivation exists inside people and in addition in the connection amongst exercises and people. The natural motivation that exists between one individual and a specific movement does not really need to exist for someone else. This sort of motivation is made in light of the fact that a man finds an action testing or fun; it is essentially the action itself that is the reward. The inborn motivation factor is a critical one however the greatest part of the exercises individuals perform are because of outward motivation. The outward motivation is that sort of motivation which gives individuals some kind of instrumental esteem. The essential explanation behind people's conduct and the readiness to perform undertakings depends on the esteem that is included by others, for example, family, companions and the general public to which the individual wishes to feel belongingness to.

Ferreira et al (2009) say that for some, associations, volunteers speak to a huge piece of the workforce and littler associations now and again depend only on humanitarian effort. A few associations don't have to endeavour to pull in volunteers, in spite of the fact that this procedure is troublesome for the larger part. As indicated by similar creators, associations with some esteem just need to issue a challenge to rapidly get volunteers. These creators likewise specify that different gatherings where enrolment speaks to no trouble are those where there is a conclusive quantifiable advantage, for example, music shows. In any case, the correspondence assignment that the association needs to create keeping in mind the end goal to pull in and hold volunteers must think about the assortment of elements that impact people and influence them to give their opportunity to voluntarism programs. Tending to state government organizations, demonstrate that there is failure to pull in an adequate number of volunteers to address office issues. Different investigations of volunteer use in the general population part concur that drawing in volunteers is the most genuine deterrent to the fruitful usage of the approach. In this way, when an association comprehends the intentions that influence a person to give his/her chance, volunteer experience may be enhanced. Motivations identified with unselfishness are the most as often as possible referred to in the writing: the reasons are identified with "helping other people", "feeling of mission" or "to accomplish something advantageous".

Noordegraat and Celebi (2015) explored the difficulties of volunteers at different stages in their volunteering exercises amid universal game associations/occasions and how these are interlinked with their own advantages. Volunteerism is a powerful methods for drawing in individuals in handling improvement challenges and that it can change the pace and nature of advancement. Volunteerism benefits both society, everywhere and the individual volunteer by fortifying confide in, solidarity and correspondence among residents, and by deliberately making open doors for cooperation. Volunteers can make a particular commitment to occasions yet that they additionally present particular challenges. The main challenges in volunteering include 1) *Field of Expertise*: Selecting the ideal individual for the work and polished skill. 2) *Volunteer Training*: Volunteer preparing (outside dialect abilities, instruction, mastery, and so forth). 3) *Structure of the association*: Structure of the association, sort of association and the level of trouble of the association. 4) *Management procedure of the association*: *Organization*: readiness, application, directing, detailing and being beginner. 5) *Budget*: Financial issue and Lack of dependable brand or establishment. 6) *Sustainability*: Lack of qualified volunteers (remote dialect abilities, skill, instruction, and so forth.), organize, bolster from the legislature, and comprehension being proficient.

The overall scope of volunteer involvement in an organization is jointly determined by decisions made by the host organization and by the individuals volunteering for the organization. This distinction is critical because important volunteer-related challenges arise when volunteers' and host organizations' decisions operate at cross-purposes. The organization's decisions narrowed the scope of volunteer involvement, despite the fact that volunteers preferred an expanded scope of involvement. Volunteers' decisions also affect the scope of volunteer involvement. Still, the distinction between organizational decisions about volunteer involvement and the volunteers' decisions is important because they jointly determine the scope of volunteer involvement.

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Fewer people volunteering and fewer volunteers doing more work are cause for concern and underline the need for creative responses. Strategy in the direction and scope of an organization over the long term to achieve advantage for research addressing trends in voluntarism, volunteer recruitment, retention, motivation in order to develop a more formalized structure of voluntarism is required. Besides, voluntarism is a fertile field for research. Voluntarism remains a critical and functioning part of our social fabric. Not only is the subject of academic interest, it is also of immediate usefulness to practitioners in volunteer programs. Very few researches have been done in the field of voluntarism in North East India.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The main objective of the study is to understand how the elements of strategic management are linked to dimension of volunteerism and with what outcome. This paper contemplates to develop a model incorporating dimensions and the concept of overall scope of volunteer involvement. The study proposes to present a comprehensive framework synthesizing the vast literature on volunteer involvement, parsing relationships among key concepts and integrating the various elements into a unified framework.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method followed is survey of literature and heavily depends on secondary data. Numerous journals, books and other online resources were reviewed to have a clear understanding of the concept of volunteerism.

6. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

This article, based on the voluminous literature on volunteerism, contemplates to develop a comprehensive framework explaining the overall scope of volunteer involvement in community service and nonprofit organizations. Important concepts and relationships among the major concepts identified in scholarly and practitioner literature as relevant to organizational use of volunteers are identified and highlighted. The framework may serve several practical purposes clarifying and organizing the major elements affecting volunteer involvement in an organization. Organizations seeking to increase their volunteer involvement can use the framework to think through issues pertaining to developing a strong volunteer program. Likewise, organizations struggling to create a sustainable volunteer program can use the framework to help assess organizational weaknesses and environmental threats that might lead to an unproductive cycle of problems in volunteer retention (Rehnberg et al. 2009)

Volunteer involvement is a multidimensional concept that also incorporates its contributions to an organization's mission. Organization's decision has a big role to play in volunteer involvement. Not only organization's decision, volunteers' decisions also affect the scope of involvement. The distinction between organizational decisions about volunteer involvement and the volunteers' decisions is important because they jointly determine the scope of volunteer involvement. Taking into consideration the organizational and volunteer dimensions and also the environmental context, the study proposes a conceptual model for effective volunteer involvement. The figure below depicts the model.

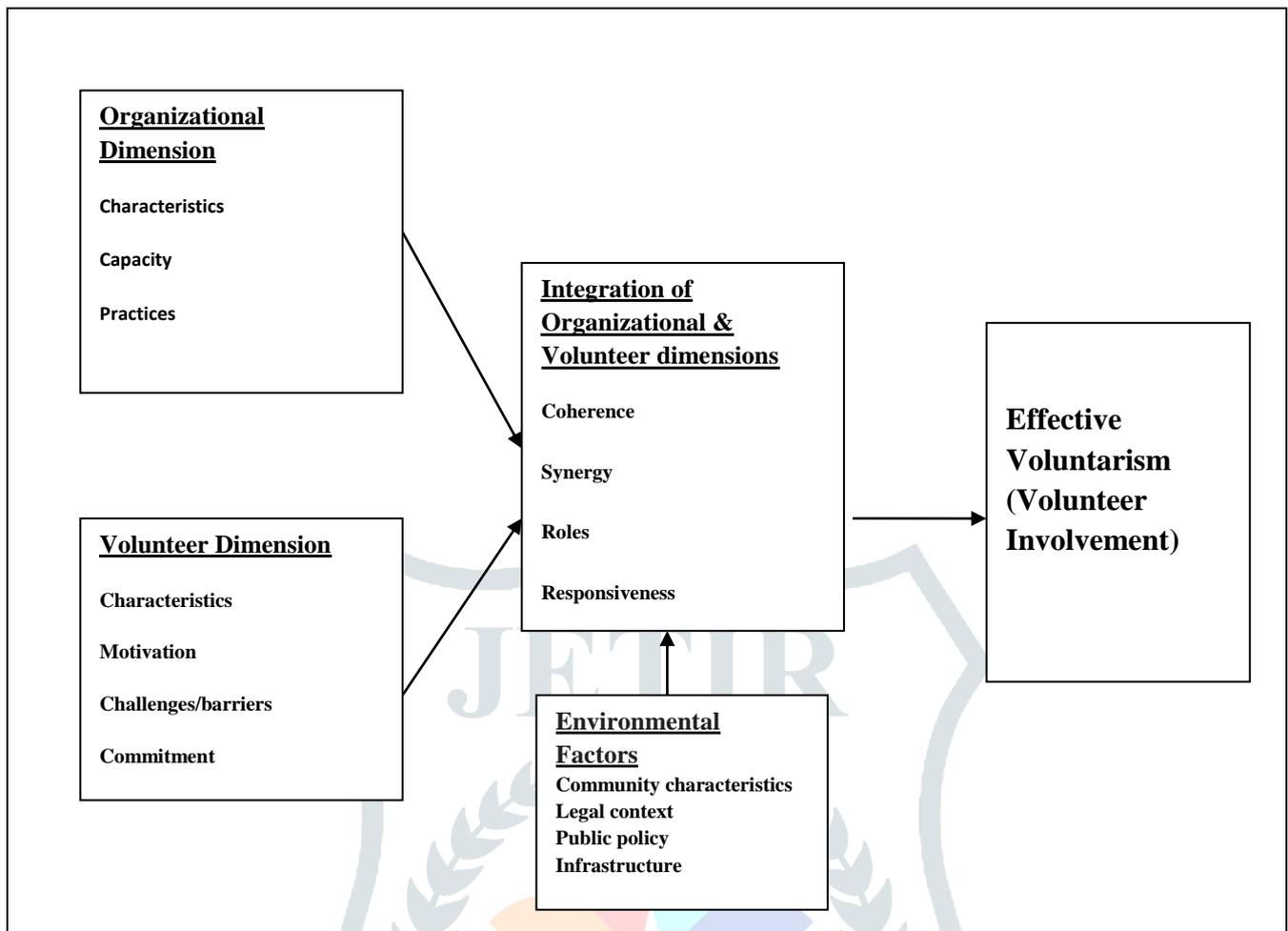


Fig. 1: Framework for Factors Affecting Effective Volunteer Involvement

7. DISCUSSION

We draw heavily on the study by Nesbit, Christensen and Brudney (2018), in building the conceptual model for effective volunteer involvement. The conceptual framework shown in figure 1 highlights important factors that influence the scope of and effective volunteer involvement. These broad factors encompass organizational dimensions, volunteer dimensions and environmental factors. The overall scope of volunteer involvement in an organization is jointly determined by decisions made by the host organization and by the individuals volunteering for the organization.

7.1 Organizational Dimensions

Organizational characteristics affect volunteers' organizational behavior and their experience in the organization (Pearce 1993). Many researchers agree that most volunteers find heavily bureaucratic structures rigid and alienating, and volunteers tend to thrive in more adaptive structures (Meijs and Brudney 2007; Stirling, Kilpatrick, and Orpin 2011; Tang, Morrow-Howell, and Hong 2009). Following Hager and Brudney (2011) organizational characteristics is differentiated into two: nature and nurture. Nature refers to innate organizational characteristics that are enduring and difficult to change and nature conotes organizational characteristics stemming from organizational culture and processes that can be manipulated through effective management. We consider resources and capacity, source of funds, structures, outputs or services, mission, and location as elements of an organization's nature whereas , nurture characteristics of organizations include leadership, culture, staff and communication. Organizational leaders also affect volunteers' status and integration in the organization. Tangible efforts by top leadership to support the organization's volunteer program can dramatically alter how volunteers are used and whether they are welcomed or marginalized (Ellis 2010). The availability of financial resources and the organization's capacity to deliver services affect decisions about volunteer involvement. Organizational capacity also includes staff skills, education, knowledge, training, and experience. Organizational structure affects decisions about volunteer work and volunteers' experiences in the organization (Taylor, Mallinson, and Bloch 2008). Structural characteristics, such as the level of hierarchy, formalization, and rules, guide organizational decisions concerning volunteer roles in the organization (i.e., direct service, leadership, general support, advocacy) (Heidrich 1990; Rochester et al. 2010; Walter 1987). Closely related to leaders' values and attitudes are the larger organizational philosophy, values, and culture pertaining to volunteers. The organization's philosophy about using volunteers, its values about

volunteerism, and its larger culture reflect how supportive and open the intra organizational environment is to volunteers. These perspectives make organizations more or less receptive places for volunteers (Hobson and Heler 2007).

7.2 Volunteers' characteristics

Curtis, Baer and Grabb (2001) have mentioned that several factors underpin the decisions of people to volunteer. These involve traditional socio-demographic features such as education, health and income but also subjective attitudes, social roles and dispositions. The propensity to volunteer differs over various lifecycle stages. Women and men tend to volunteer at cheap rates with respect to formal volunteering even though they involve in various kinds of activities for instance men are much interested than women to volunteer in association of sports while women volunteer in social and health sectors predominantly. Age has an influence on both the decision to volunteer and commitment of time. Those aged 25 to 34 volunteer the least followed by adults aged 55 to 65. This recommends an inverted u-shape for the link between volunteering and age up to 65 years of age from youth childhood the volunteer work incidence develops reaching a peak between the ages of about 35 to 55 and then reduces again among pre-retires. Karsten and Elinghagen (2010) have stated that volunteering develops strongly with education of people. Many factors contribute to this pattern. First education offers cognitive skills that are essential for several tasks of volunteering but also develops civic values. Secondly the highly educated have greater social networks and are much probable to know association members. People with a university degree are twice likely to volunteer as those with primary education. Vezina and Crompton (2012) have described that income and education are related strongly hence it follows that involvement in formal volunteering develops with household wages. Additionally people performing full time or part time volunteer in greater ratio than inactive individuals. The full time or part time employees tend to volunteer reduced amount of time on average than unemployed or those not in labour forces.

7.3 Volunteer Commitment and Motivation

Martinez and McMullin (2004) distinguished three purposes behind nonparticipation of volunteers: (a) people did not have the ability to volunteer, (b) people needed motivation, or (c) people had not been inquired. This inferred both access to assets and ability to partake, in conjunction with motivation to participate, is important for individuals to end up dynamic. They additionally depict five qualities of volunteerism: (a) People volunteer to fulfill individual and social objectives and necessities, (b) the people who volunteer ordinarily do as such after precisely measuring options, (c) the domain of willful activity is mind boggling and multifaceted in which distinctive authoritative errands offer to various motivational powers, (d) worry for others, in spite of the fact that not simply benevolent, remains a vital power among volunteers, and (e) the motivation to give is moulded by more extensive social substances (e.g., to leave the world a superior place).

7.4 Challenges

For volunteers, essential desires include: adaptability of commitment, the nature of individual connections, acknowledgment for their commitment, and a reasonable correspondence of what they are required to do. The main challenges in volunteering includes:

- 1) *Field of Expertise*: Selecting the ideal individual for the work and polished skill.
- 2) *Volunteer Training*: Volunteer preparing (outside dialect abilities, instruction, mastery, and so forth).
- 3) *Structure of the association*: Structure of the association, sort of association and the level of trouble of the association.
- 4) *Management procedure of the association*: *Organization*: readiness, application, directing, detailing and being beginner.
- 5) *Budget*: Financial issue and Lack of dependable brand or establishment.
- 6) *Sustainability*: Lack of qualified volunteers (remote dialect abilities, skill, instruction, and so forth.), organize, bolster from the legislature, and comprehension being proficient.

7.5 Environmental Factors

Environmental factors consist of community characteristics, the legal context, the volunteer management infrastructure, and public policy. Important community characteristics pertaining to volunteering include societal/community values, socioeconomic conditions, demographic homogeneity, population size, and other demographic characteristics (Rotolo and Wilson 2012). Societal values and norms and local socioeconomic conditions can affect volunteering (Eckstein 2001; Haski-Leventhal and Cnaan 2009; Musick and Wilson 2008; Putnam 2000). Racial homogeneity affects volunteering rates and the type of volunteer work people choose (Portney and Berry 1997; Rotolo and Wilson 2012; Sundeen and Siegel 1987). Community size, population density, and growth rates are related to volunteerism and the types of roles organizations provide for volunteers (Eckstein 2001; Gazley and Brudney 2005; Putnam 2000; Salamon 2003; Smith 1994; Sundeen and Siegel 1987). Thus, we expect different community

profiles to affect the scope of volunteer involvement in local organizations.

7.6 Legal context

The legal context influences the scope of volunteer involvement, especially the organizational decision dimensions. Laws or policies can prohibit the use of volunteers in public organizations (Brudney 1990c). Legal constraints also affect the roles of volunteers in relation to paid staff roles (Brudney and Gazley 2002). Many recommend that organizations use volunteers to complement staff activities rather than substitute for paid staff (Handy and Brudney 2007; Handy and Srinivasan 2004). However, honest confusion and overlap occurs in activities performed by volunteers and paid staff (Handy, Mook, and Quarter 2008; McCurley and Lynch 2011). The legal context can also affect the scope of volunteer involvement through volunteers' decision dimensions. The federal Volunteer Protection Act (1997), preceded by similar legislation in many states (e.g., Horwitz and Mead 2009; Martinez 2003), provides general legal immunity for volunteers acting within the scope of their volunteer responsibilities (Kramer 1997). Horwitz and Mead (2009) offer some evidence regarding the implications of these policies, in particular, a positive correlation between tort immunity and volunteering—that is, rates of volunteering are higher in jurisdictions with policies that offer greater legal protection to volunteers. Thus, supportive legal environments can lead to a broader scope of volunteer involvement.

7.7 Politics and public policy

Volunteerism generally enjoys bipartisan political support in the United States (Sagawa 2010). Volunteering is viewed as a pathway for greater citizen participation, an approach to create more responsive bureaucracies, a method to reduce the role of government, and a support for citizenship and democracy (Brudney 1990a, 1990b; Hilger 2005). Much of U.S. public policy regarding volunteerism focuses on national service programs, such as AmeriCorps (Reingold and Lenkowsky 2010). Although little evidence affirms that public policy affects volunteering rates (Chambré 1989; Reingold and Lenkowsky 2010), a decrease in government support could have a negative effect on volunteering (Bartels, Cozzi, and Mantovan 2013). Thus, the greatest potential for public policy is to provide more support for organizations that want to use volunteers by encouraging the development of volunteer management capacity within organizations and the volunteer management infrastructure of a community (Nesbit and Brudney 2010).

CONCLUSION

The conceptual model has been framed by reviewing various literatures and it is contemplated that the framework may provide steps for the fruitful conduct of the research on voluntarism in North East India. By distinguishing between two types of organizational characteristics - nature and nurture the framework would help organization leaders understand where to focus their efforts and resources to have the greatest impact. Some challenges in volunteer involvement, such as recruitment and retention, stem from an organization's "nature" characteristics and might lie outside the organization's control or may require greater resources to overcome, such as the organization's location. On the other hand, organizational "nurture" characteristics, such as staff receptivity to volunteers, might be easier to influence. In this way, the framework can be used as a diagnostic tool to identify both strengths and critical weaknesses in a volunteer program and to highlight how to correct any deficiencies. Seven dimensions of volunteer involvement—three involving organizational decisions and four involving volunteers' decisions have been identified. Our conceptualization of the scope of volunteer involvement, which is determined by seven dimensions, can help in understanding that organizations should be deliberate, thoughtful, and strategic in the ways they engage volunteers. When strategies are properly conceived and implemented, volunteer involvement in an organization can be seen as strategic deployment to achieve the greatest impact on the organization's mission. The framework offered in this article can help managers think more strategically about how and where they involve volunteers, and the factors that affect the overall scope of volunteer involvement in the organization. The framework may enable leaders and managers through effective program design and management to bring about volunteer contributions in a more compelling and encompassing way. The framework is meant to be descriptive rather than prescriptive while a broad scope of volunteer involvement might make sense for one organization, that same level of volunteer involvement might not be a good fit for another organization. Ultimately, the framework can contribute to strategic managerial decisions that allow for the scope of volunteer involvement that fits the organization and maximizes its ability to accomplish its mission.

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