

Examining the Influence of Volunteer Motivation and Civic Engagement on Well-Being Among NSS Volunteers

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ABSTRACT

Volunteerism plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, personal growth, and psychological well-being. The National Service Scheme (NSS) in India provides structured opportunities for students to engage in community service, enhancing their leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. This study examines the influence of volunteer motivation and civic engagement on the well-being of NSS volunteers in Tamil Nadu. Utilizing Clary and Snyder's (1999) functional approach to volunteer motivation and Putnam's (2000) framework on civic engagement, this research explores how these factors contribute to emotional, social, and psychological well-being. A quantitative research design was employed, with a sample of 312 NSS volunteers selected through purposive sampling. Standardized psychometric tools, including the Volunteer Functional Motivation Scale (Clary et al., 1998), Civic Engagement Scale (Doolittle & Faul, 2013), and the Adult Mental Health Continuum (Keyes, 2002), were administered. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships among the variables. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between volunteer motivation, civic engagement, and well-being. Specifically, values, understanding, and enhancement motivation factors showed moderate effects on well-being, while social and career motivations had minimal impact. Civic engagement dimensions namely attitudinal and behavioral were also positively associated with well-being. The findings highlight the importance of structured volunteer programs in enhancing youth mental health and civic responsibility. The study provides valuable insights for institutions and policymakers to develop targeted interventions that maximize the psychological benefits of volunteerism while fostering long-term community engagement among students.

Keywords: Volunteer Motivation, Civic Engagement, Wellbeing, NSS

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Introduction

Volunteerism plays a pivotal role in fostering social integration, personal development, and psychological well-being. The National Service Scheme (NSS), established in 1969, is one of India's most prominent youth development programs, promoting social service and civic engagement among students. It provides students with structured opportunities to engage in community service, fostering leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills (Sharma,

2020). The role of NSS volunteers extends beyond service to encompass a holistic framework for youth empowerment, promoting psychological resilience and civic awareness (Chakraborty & Basu, 2018). As of March 31, 2023, the National Service Scheme (NSS) in India has enrolled a total of 3,987,781 volunteers across various states and union territories. Tamil Nadu has the highest number of NSS volunteers, totalling 442,700, which accounts for over 10% of the national count. Other states with significant

NSS participation include Maharashtra with 387,115 volunteers and Uttar Pradesh with 331,300 volunteers. These figures highlight the extensive involvement of students in community service initiatives through the NSS program, fostering civic engagement and social responsibility among youth (National Service Scheme, 2023).

Given that volunteering involves emotional labour and personal commitment, understanding the psychological well-being of NSS volunteers is essential. Volunteer motivation, based on Clary and Snyder's (1999) functional approach, influences the extent of engagement and the perceived benefits of volunteering. Furthermore, civic engagement has been associated with enhanced social connectedness, self-efficacy, and mental health (Putnam, 2000; Doolittle & Faul, 2013). Studying these variables is crucial in the context of youth development, as sustained volunteerism has long-term benefits for both individuals and society.

Psychological well-being is a critical aspect of youth development, particularly for volunteers who juggle academic responsibilities and social commitments. Theories of volunteer motivation, such as the functional approach proposed by Clary and Snyder (1999), suggest that individuals engage in volunteering for various reasons, including value expression, social connections, career development, and personal enhancement. Furthermore, civic engagement defined as active participation in community and social initiatives has been positively associated with mental health and well-being (Putnam, 2000). Engaging in volunteer activities allows individuals to foster a sense of purpose, strengthen their interpersonal relationships, and develop skills that enhance both their professional and personal lives (Wilson & Musick, 1999).

Empirical studies suggest that volunteerism contributes to enhanced self-esteem, reduced stress levels, and improved life satisfaction (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Volunteering not only

provides individuals with opportunities for skill enhancement and social networking but also fosters emotional resilience by instilling a sense of accomplishment and societal contribution (Musick & Wilson, 2003). Moreover, structured volunteer programs such as the NSS serve as a platform for youth empowerment, enhancing their civic responsibility and overall psychological resilience (Omoto & Snyder, 2002).

Given that NSS volunteers are actively involved in addressing social challenges, their psychological well-being becomes an essential aspect of study. Young individuals who engage in civic and volunteer activities often experience a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, and social connectedness. However, the extent to which these factors influence their overall psychological well-being requires deeper exploration.

This study aims to investigate the influence of volunteer motivation and civic engagement on the psychological well-being of NSS volunteers in Tamil Nadu. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of targeted interventions that can further enhance the mental health benefits of structured volunteer programs. By understanding the psychological impact of civic engagement and motivation, institutions and policymakers can design more effective programs that not only benefit communities but also promote the mental well-being of student volunteers.

Method of Investigation

This study employed a quantitative approach to examine the relationships between volunteer motivation, civic engagement, and well-being among NSS volunteers. Standardized psychometric tools were used to measure each variable, ensuring reliability and validity. Data were collected through self-report questionnaires and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between

- volunteer motivation and well-being.
2. To investigate the relationship between civic engagement and well-being.
 3. To determine the predictive role of volunteer motivation and civic engagement in well-being.
 4. To examine the influence of age and years of participation on the civic engagement, volunteer motivation and well-being levels

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Volunteering motivation dimensions would be related to wellbeing of NSS volunteers
- Hypothesis 2: Civic engagement dimensions would be related to wellbeing of NSS volunteers.
- Hypothesis 3: Civic engagement and volunteering motivation would significantly predict well-being.
- Hypothesis 4: There would be significant differences in Well-Being, volunteering motivation and Civic engagement based on age.
- Hypothesis 5: There would be no significant influence of Participation in NSS on Well-Being, Volunteer motivation and Civic engagement

Research Design

An ex post facto research design was adopted for this study. This design is appropriate for investigating pre-existing relationships between variables without experimental manipulation. Given that volunteer motivation, civic engagement, and well-being are naturally occurring phenomena, this design allows for an in-depth examination of their associations within the NSS context.

Sample and Sampling Method

The study sample comprised 300 NSS volunteers from various colleges and universities in Tamil Nadu representing diverse demographics in terms of age, gender, education, and socio-economic

background. Participants ranged from 17 years to 22 years, with a mean age of 18.9 years ($SD = 1.09$). The sample included 22% male and 78% female participants. Most were undergraduate students 92.2%, while a smaller proportion were diploma students. NSS experience spanned from 1 yr to 3.2 years, with an average tenure of 1 year and 6 months. Many volunteers had prior engagement in community service, reflecting their commitment to civic involvement. This diverse sample provides a comprehensive foundation for analysing the impact of civic engagement and volunteering motivation on psychological well-being. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants actively engaged in NSS activities for at least one year. This criterion ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to volunteer experiences, allowing for meaningful insights into their motivations, engagement levels, and well-being.

Tools Used

Validated psychometric instruments were employed to assess the key variables:

1. Volunteer Functional Motivation Scale (Clary et al., 1998): Measures six motivational functions—values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement. The scale has demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.80 to 0.89.
2. Civic Engagement Scale (Doolittle & Faul, 2013): Assesses civic attitudes, participation, and activism. The scale comprises multiple dimensions, each exhibiting strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85).
3. Adult Mental Health Continuum (Keyes, 2002): Evaluates well-being across emotional, social, and psychological dimensions. This instrument has been widely validated, with internal consistency values exceeding 0.87.

Statistical Tests

Pearson correlation analysis is employed to examine the strength and direction of

relationships between volunteer motivation, civic engagement, and well-being. Multiple regression analysis is performed to determine the predictive power of volunteer motivation and civic engagement on well-being. ANOVA is used to compare differences in well-being based on demographic characteristics namely, age, and Years of participation

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Relationship between dimensions of Volunteer motivation dimension and dimensions of Well-Being among NSS volunteers

S. No	Variables	Emotional Well-Being	Social Well-Being	Psychological Well-Being
1	Protective factor	.269*	.426**	.353**
2	Values factor	.347**	.361**	.333**
3	Career factor	.255*	.373**	.352**
4	Social factor	.171*	.243*	.222*
5	Understanding factor	.350**	.376**	.346**
6	Enhancement factor	.317**	.387**	.375**

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

This segment examines the connection between volunteer motivation dimensions and various aspects of well-being: Emotional, Social, and Psychological. Karl Pearson's correlation method was employed to investigate the relationship between Volunteer motivation and dimensions of Well-Being. Table 1 reveals significant positive correlations among Volunteer motivation dimensions and all three types of well-being. Hence, the hypothesis 1 was accepted. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Windsor et al. (2008) and Yo et al. (2012). The data indicates that enhanced Volunteer motivation dimensions correspond to increased Emotional Well-Being in NSS volunteers. Specifically, Values, Understanding, and

Enhancement factors show a moderate boost to Emotional Well-Being, while Protective, Career, and social factors demonstrate a minimal increase. Similarly, improved Volunteer motivation dimensions correlate with higher Social Well-Being among NSS volunteers. Protective, Values, Career, Understanding, and Enhancement factors moderately enhance Social Well-Being, whereas the social factor has a minimal impact. It is concluded that increased Volunteer motivation moderately enhances the Psychological Well-Being of NSS volunteers. Protective, Values, Career, Understanding, and Enhancement factors show moderate improvements in Psychological Well-Being, while the social factor exhibits a minimal effect.

Table 2: Relationship between dimensions of civic engagement and dimensions of Well-Being among NSS volunteers

S. No	Variables	Emotional Well-Being	Social Well-Being	Psychological Well-Being
1	Attitude factor	.348**	.330**	.373**
2	Behavior factor	.231*	.392**	.362**

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

This segment examines the connections between dimensions of civic engagement and dimensions of well-being, including emotional, social, and psychological. To investigate these relationships, Karl Pearson's correlation method was employed, with the findings presented in Table 2. The results reveal positive and significant correlations between civic engagement dimensions and all three types of well-being. Hence, the hypothesis 2 was accepted. This outcome is consistent with prior research conducted by Marciniak et al.

(2022). The data suggests that enhancements in civic engagement dimensions correspond to increased emotional well-being among NSS volunteers. Specifically, the attitude factor shows a moderate improvement in volunteers' emotional well-being, while the behavior factor demonstrates a minimal increase. Additionally, both attitude and behavior factors are found to moderately enhance the social and psychological well-being of NSS volunteers.

Table 3: Impact of dimensions of Civic engagement and Volunteering motivation on wellbeing

Predictor	Beta	't value'	p
(Constant)	1.853	3.179	.002
Protective factor.	.178	.895	.374
Values factor	-.139	-.541	.590
Career factor	.127	.649	.519
Social factor	-.138	-.945	.348
Understanding factor	-.080	-.295	.768
Enhancement factor	.167	.707	.482
Attitude factor	.166	.890	.377
Behavior factor	.110	.698	.487
R ²		0.192	
F		2.162	

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

The regression analysis examines the impact of civic engagement and volunteering motivation on well-being. The overall model explains 19.2% ($R^2 = 0.192$) of the variance in well-being, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.103. The F-value of 2.162 ($p = 0.040$) suggests that the model is statistically significant, though the effect size remains modest. Among the independent variables, none exhibit a statistically significant relationship with well-being, as indicated by their p-values exceeding 0.05. The protective factor ($\beta = 0.178$, $p = 0.374$) and enhancement factor ($\beta = 0.167$, $p = 0.482$) show positive associations but are not statistically significant. Similarly, the career factor ($\beta = 0.127$, $p = 0.519$) and attitude factor ($\beta = 0.166$, $p = 0.377$) indicate weak positive relationships. On

the other hand, values factor ($\beta = -0.139$, $p = 0.590$) and social factor ($\beta = -0.138$, $p = 0.348$) suggest negative relationships, though not statistically meaningful. These findings imply that while civic engagement and volunteering motivation may contribute to well-being, the measured variables in this model do not significantly predict well-being outcomes. Hence, hypothesis 3 is rejected. The relatively low R^2 suggests that other unexamined factors, such as personal resilience, social support, or intrinsic motivation, may play a more substantial role. Future research could explore additional psychosocial factors or employ a larger sample size to better understand the intricate relationship between volunteering and well-being.

Table 4: Influence of age on Well-Being, Volunteer motivation and Civic engagement among NSS volunteers

Variable	Groups	Mean	SD	F	p
Well-Being	17 years	4.38	1.24	0.498	.522
	18 years	3.74	1.34		
	19 years	3.94	1.30		
	20 years	4.00	1.33		
Volunteer motivation	17 years	5.24	1.47	0.411	.603
	18 years	4.83	1.43		
	19 years	5.16	1.21		
	20 years	5.28	1.04		
Civic engagement	17 years	5.33	1.35	1.022	.269
	18 years	5.03	1.60		
	19 years	5.64	1.24		
	20 years	5.70	1.35		

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

In this section, the influence of age on well-being, volunteer motivation and civic engagement among the NSS volunteers studying in colleges in Chennai is identified. To study the significant influence of age on Well-Being, Volunteer motivation and civic engagement, One-way ANOVA is applied and the results are provided in the Table 4. From table 4, it is noted from the F-values 0.498 ($p = .522$), 0.411 ($p = .603$) and 1.022 ($p = .269$) are not significant at 5% level, hence the hypothesis 4 was rejected. Age of NSS volunteers is not having significant influence on well-being, volunteer motivation and civic engagement. Hence it is concluded that the level of psychological well-being, volunteer motivation and civic engagement is observed as same among different ages.

Table 5: Influence of Participation in NSS on Well-Being, Volunteer motivation and Civic engagement

Variable	Groups	Mean	SD	F	p
Well-Being	Up to 1 year	3.76	1.38	1.528	.223
	1-2 years	4.17	1.11		
	3 years and above	3.48	1.70		
Volunteer motivation	Up to 1 year	4.93	1.26	.430	.652
	1-2 years	5.19	1.37		
	3 years and above	4.89	1.13		
Civic engagement	Up to 1 year	5.04	1.46	1.272	.286
	1-2 years	5.57	1.40		
	3 years and above	5.49	1.33		

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

In this section, the influence of participation in NSS on well-being, volunteer motivation and civic engagement among the NSS volunteers studying in colleges in Chennai is identified. To study the significant influence of participation in NSS on well-being, volunteer motivation and civic engagement, One-Way ANOVA is applied and the results are provided in the Table 5. From table 5, it is noted from the F-values 1.528 ($p=.223$), 0.430 ($p=.652$) and 1.272 ($p=.286$) are not significant at 5% level, hence the null hypothesis 5 was accepted. Participation in NSS is not having significant influence on well-being, volunteer motivation and civic engagement. Hence it is concluded that the level of well-being, volunteer motivation and civic engagement is observed as same among the NSS volunteers over the time period.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of volunteer motivation and civic engagement in enhancing the well-being of NSS volunteers. The correlation analysis revealed positive associations, particularly with values, understanding, and enhancement factors, which moderately improved emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Similarly, civic engagement contributed to well-being. However, regression analysis showed that volunteer motivation and civic engagement together explain only 19.2% of the variance in well-being, suggesting that other factors like personal resilience and social support may play a stronger role. These findings underscore the need for structured interventions to strengthen volunteer motivation and civic engagement. Future research should explore additional psychosocial variables and help develop targeted programs that enhance both civic responsibility and mental well-being among student volunteers.

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