

A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION IN VOLUNTEER SERVICE ACTIVITIES AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN HENAN PROVINCE, CHINA

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Abstract: This study explored the relationship between motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership. A questionnaire survey was conducted with 560 university students involved in volunteer service activities in four universities in Henan Province, China, and 536 valid questionnaires were collected. Descriptive analysis was conducted on university students' motivation in volunteer service activities and the current status of university student leadership through SPSS, to explore the differences and relationships between the two under different demographic backgrounds. The research found that the motivation in volunteer service activities of university students was moderate, and university student leadership was high. There were no significant differences in motivation in volunteer service activities among university students under different demographic backgrounds. Still, there were significant differences in university student leadership under different demographic backgrounds. Meanwhile, there was a significant positive correlation between motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership. Finally, recommendations were made based on the research findings.

Keywords: Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities, University Student Leadership

Introduction

With the continuous development of globalization, the country and society have given widespread attention to developing the comprehensive quality and ability of young university students. More and more education goals and reforms in higher education institutions have also moved towards comprehensive quality education to enhance students' comprehensive ability. The quality level of university students determined the quality of social development. Compared to other major abilities, university student leadership played a leading role in cultivating university students' abilities. University student leadership was the collection of students' multiple abilities, representing comprehensive literacy.

Leadership, as a collective force and a discipline on how to lead (Wang, 2022), could better help university students improve their abilities and enhance competitiveness (Chen, 2021). In recent years, as a type of composite university student competence and literacy (Zhou, 2019), university student leadership has received widespread attention. Its rich connotation and extension were, to some extent, a microcosm of the comprehensive quality of university students. Improving university student leadership was important to enhance university students' comprehensive ability and literacy (Fu, 2019).

College student volunteer service served as a society in the new era that shaped moral character and promoted the latest trends. The development of practical activities thrived under the leadership of the Chinese government (Wei, 2019). In China, since the reform and opening up, the CPC had attached great importance to the cultivation of university student's sense of social responsibility, which was not only a topic closely concerned the whole society but also a life test that many university students needed to think deeply about and practice. In the "Opinions on Promoting the Reform and Development of Youth Volunteer Service Work". The Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China (2018) continued to promote the volunteer service work of university students, hoping that youth volunteer service activities would be based on the new era and achieve new development. As of August 2023, there were 231 million real-name volunteers in China, with a total service time of 530 million hours (China Volunteer Service Network, 2023). Among these young volunteers, university students were the main participants in the activities. While participating in volunteer service activities, university students received spiritual baptism, which helped them establish a correct outlook on life and values, improve critical thinking, and accumulate life experience for personal growth (Zhang, 2022).

There were still many problems in the cultivation and education of university student leadership, from the perspective of the development of university student leadership, such as deviation in training goals, single training methods, and lack of value education (Wang, 2022). Chinese universities developed relatively late in terms of leadership education for university students. Many universities have not attached enough importance to leadership education for university students. Some universities that had already carried out leadership education tended to cultivate elite and small-scale content. As a comprehensive quality of college education, university student leadership should have been popularized among ordinary university students, just like promoting volunteer service activities.

At present, compared to previous studies, it could be found that current research on motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership mainly focused on the influencing factors of volunteer service activities and theoretical research on university student leadership. However, there was little research on the relationship between motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership. Therefore, it was necessary to research the relationship between motivation in volunteer service motivation and leadership education for university students. This study mainly discussed the relationship between motivation in volunteer service activities and university

student leadership, enriching the relevant empirical research on leadership. Through theoretical analysis and empirical research methods, it played a specific role in cultivating university student leadership and popularizing leadership education among university students.

Research Objectives

- (1) To understand the current status of motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership.
- (2) To understand the current status of university student leadership.
- (3) To determine the differences in motivation in volunteer service activities, under different demographic backgrounds (gender, grade, political party, and different universities).
- (4) To determine the differences in university student leadership, under different demographic backgrounds (gender, grade, political party, and different universities) .
- (5) To analyze the relationship between motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership.

Literature Review

Research on Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities

With the deepening of research, many researchers have given a broader definition. Volunteer service organizations were a special type of organization that included capital and labor elements and had the characteristics of free and low prices. They were an indispensable part of human civilization and society. They referred to individuals who, without any material rewards, contributed time and energy to promote human development, social progress, welfare undertakings, and social construction to provide free service activities for the country and society (Zhang, 2019). A good volunteer service atmosphere was a symbol of social civilization development. College students have always been key participants in volunteer service. In the process of volunteer service, it was possible to strengthen students' service and civic awareness and improve the comprehensive quality of volunteer teams (Williamson, 2018). Different scholars had different interpretations of volunteer service activities from different perspectives. Volunteer service activities originated in the West and developed in-depth through the research of different scholars. Penner (2002) believed that volunteer service behavior belonged to the behavior of long-term welfare for society, which could promote social development. Grano (2005) believed that volunteer service had a highly public welfare nature and was a voluntary activity where volunteers sacrificed energy and time to serve others. Soldavini (2021) believed that when students participated in volunteer service activities, they could enhance their knowledge and skills, gain career-related experience, and enjoy the pleasure of volunteering. Ben (2023) believed that the altruism of volunteers could make voluntary service benefit others. Most volunteers were more or

less helped by other participants in voluntary activities in youth so that voluntary service activities could create a virtuous circle. Tong (2016) believed that volunteer service activities among university students referred to the collective term for various activities carried out by university students on and off-campus, with the spirit of dedication and the purpose of helping others and serving society. The researcher also pointed out various volunteer service activities by university student volunteers.

Clary (1998) analyzed the functions of volunteer service from the perspective that different motivations of volunteers had different impacts on the process and results of volunteer service. The researcher divided the motivation of volunteer service activities of university students into six categories based on functional types: value expression, university students achieve self-value identification through volunteer service. Value expression: using volunteer service as a means of learning new things. Social interaction: things that had an impact on volunteer participation in volunteer services. Career development: improving one's employment ability through participating in volunteer services. External factors: volunteers adjust emotions through volunteer service. Ability enhancement: volunteers met needs through volunteer service. Ma (2019) divided the motivation in volunteer service activities into five aspects: self-improvement, external environment, seeking pleasure, career development, and material reporting through literature research and corresponding expansion. In this study, referring to Zhang's (2021) study on volunteer service motivation, volunteer service motivation was divided into five aspects: value expression, social interaction, ability enhancement, career development, and external factors.

Research on University Student Leadership

Regarding leadership, scholars at home and abroad had different definitions of it. Leadership was ability, strength, the ability to become a leader, and the attitude and behavior exhibited during leadership activities. Leadership combined multiple factors, consisting of various abilities such as self-awareness and management, interpersonal relationship processing, thinking, and decision-making (Zhou, 2019). Leadership was also a process of jointly initiating a vision to make changes, which could help those who possessed it increase value. Everyone was a potential future leader, and leadership was also a collective process that influenced organizational groups to achieve common goals (Janke, 2016). Leadership was also an art that encouraged everyone to strive for a common ideal (Zhou, 2015). Ruggieri (2023) believed that leadership self-sacrifice was one of the most important characteristics of leadership, and self-sacrifice was mainly discovered through team identification and self-efficacy. To a certain extent, excellent leadership would determine the height of one's life. By reviewing the literature of domestic and foreign scholars on leadership research, it could be seen that the definition of leadership was formed by the intersection of multiple disciplines, and with the development of leadership theory, leadership was constantly being endowed with new internal meanings. Most scholars believed leadership was a collection of specific abilities and other elements. It resulted from individuals using

abilities, practices, personality charm, and other resources to influence others to work hard and realize ideals in social life. Based on this research, Posner (1983) conducted a simple survey of different individuals and summarized the five practices of leaders: Set an example, leaders gain power and respect by set an example. Inspire people: Had confidence in realizing one's dreams. Challenge the status quo: No one believed that the best leadership experience was to maintain the status quo. Enable others to act: Success requires the efforts of a team, not the actions of one person. Jointly initiate a vision: Encourage team members on the road to success. Kuze & Posner (1992) adapted the Student Leadership Survey, stating that university student leadership also comprised the five dimensions mentioned above. After more than 20 years of research, Kuze & Posner believed that the five leadership practices were precise for most cases. Set an example: Leaders earn power and respect by setting an example. Inspire people: Had confidence in realizing one's dreams. Challenge the status quo: No one believed that the best leadership experience was to maintain the status quo. Enable others to act: Success requires the efforts of a team, not the actions of one person. Jointly initiate a vision: Encouraged team members on the road to success.

Research on the Relationships between Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities and University Student Leadership

As early as the end of the 20th century, some Western universities deeply integrated the theoretical teaching of leadership into practical projects, such as actively carrying out relevant practical activities, developing new leadership teaching methods, and developing student leadership in various aspects such as classroom teaching and club activities. While participating in volunteer service activities, students learned and practiced leadership hands-only. With the development of volunteer service activities, the increase in the number of volunteers also put pressure on volunteer organizations. Combining university student leadership with volunteer service could prevent volunteers from stopping volunteer service due to poor leadership (Lantz, 2021). In terms of motivating and retaining volunteer personnel, a large amount of research has proven the important role of leadership in a paid employment environment. Team leaders could shape the work environment by cultivating a culture of collaboration and trust and providing guidance and opportunities for employee development. At the same time, employees could bring more positive organizational results (Cheng, 2019). Combining volunteerism with leadership theory could better help scholars and practitioners understand how to apply leadership to volunteerism, helping organizations and leaders use or hone behavior as a trigger to attract more volunteers and get them to volunteer longer (Tsai, 2023).

Scholars generally believed that there was a certain relationship between Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities and University Student Leadership. Tao's (2014) study on the development and education of university student leadership in China showed that participating in organizational activities positively and significantly correlated with university student leadership. The higher the

university students' score participating in volunteer service activities, the higher the leadership level, which was consistent with Yang's research results.

According to Zhuang's (2022) research data, there was a positive and strong correlation between outdoor sports and the leadership level of university students. Among them, university students who had experienced outdoor sports scored higher in leadership and overall dimensions than those who had not participated in outdoor sports. College students who had participated in outdoor sports had achieved good results in conducting leadership training. In Zhang's 2020 study, it was found that whether or not to participate in student clubs significantly impacted various dimensions of university student leadership ($P < 0.05$). Among them, the university student leadership who did not participate in student clubs was lower than that of students who participated in student clubs. It further indicated that participating in various clubs, outdoor activities, and practical activities during university could actively showcase themselves, which was beneficial for cultivating leadership abilities. Based on the analysis of the results of this study, it was first found that there was a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.690$, $P < .001$) between the participation in volunteer service activities and the leadership level of university students in four universities in Henan Province. That is, the higher the university students' score participating in volunteer service activities, the higher the leadership level. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between participation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership in four universities in Henan Province reached a significant level.

Methodology

This research surveyed four universities in Henan Province, China (Zhengzhou University, Henan University, Henan Polytechnic University, and Zhengzhou Technology and Business University). The research subjects were university students who participated in volunteer service activities in the four universities. According to statistics, the number of students who participated in volunteer service activities in the four universities was 5100. According to the Morgan Table, 560 university students were selected for testing, and the survey method was mainly conducted through electronic questionnaires, and 560 questionnaires were distributed. Processing missing values involved deleting the entire column of data, excluding other questionnaires with unreasonable data, and collecting 536 valid questionnaires, the effective return rate of which reached 95.71%. Subsequently, data statistical analysis was conducted.

The researchers used mature scales as the basis for the questionnaire survey on motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership. The motivation in volunteer service activities is divided into five aspects: value expression, social interaction, ability enhancement, career development, and external factors. Zhang (2021) developed a method to measure university students' motivation in volunteer service activities. The Student Leadership Practice Behavior Scale developed

by Kouzes and Posner (2006) translated by Tao was chosen, and its reliability and validity could be effectively guaranteed. All these scales had Cronbach α coefficient over 0.77, the KMO value was 0.77, thus, the reliability and validity were at a good level.

Results

Demographic Analysis of Questionnaire Participants

In this questionnaire survey, a total of 536 male and female university students in the gender demographic backgrounds of this study, of which 277 were female, accounting for 51.68%, and 259 were male, accounting for 48.32%. There were 136 students in freshmen, accounting for 25.37%. There were 152 students in 2nd year, accounting for 28.36%. There were 130 students in junior, accounting for 24.25%. There were 118 students in senior, accounting for 22.01%. Among the participants in the questionnaire survey, 78 university students had a political party as party members, accounting for 14.55%. 312 university students had a political party as Communist Youth League members, accounting for 58.21%, and the masses accounted for 27.24%, with a total of 146 students. 146 students from Zhengzhou University, accounting for 27.24%. 139 university students from Henan University, accounting for 25.93%. 130 university students from Henan Polytechnic University, accounting for 24.25%. 121 university students from Zhengzhou Technology and Business University, accounting for 22.57%.

Descriptive Statistics the Current Status of Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities among University Students, and the Current Status of University Student Leadership

1) On the scale of motivation in volunteer service activities among university students, $M=3.831$, $SD=0.568$, indicating a moderate score on the scale of participating in volunteer service activities. It could be seen that the current status of motivation in volunteer service activities among university students was relatively good. The highest score for "external factors" ($M=4.01$). Secondly, the motivation in volunteer service activities of students' value expression ($M=3.93$). The social interaction ($M=3.76$), and the ability enhancement ($M=3.70$). Finally, the career development ($M=3.65$) The scores in each dimension were still good.as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities among University Students (N=536)

Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities	Mean	SD
Value expression	3.93	0.79
Social intercourse	3.76	0.86
Ability enhancement	3.70	0.87
Career development	3.65	0.94
External factors	4.01	0.77
Motivation in volunteer service activities	3.83	0.56

2) This study found that the overall university student leadership from four universities in Henan Province, mean was 3.876, SD=0.583, indicating that participation in volunteer service activities was high. It could be seen that the current status of university student leadership was relatively good, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of University Student Leadership (N=536)

University Student Leadership	Mean	SD
Set an example	3.86	0.81
Inspire people	4.00	0.76
Challenge the status quo	4.06	0.76
Enable others to take action	3.63	0.99
Jointly initiate a vision	3.81	0.82
Overall university student leadership	3.87	0.58

Differences Analysis on the Levels of Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities, University Student Leadership Compared with Demographic Factors

There were some significant differences in demographic factors of motivation in volunteer service activities, and university student leadership in Henan Province. Among them,

Correlation Analysis between the Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities among University Student Leadership

In this study, the Person correlation coefficient is used to analyze whether there is correlation between the two main variables. It was found that there was a significant relationship between motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership. All correlation coefficient values were greater than 0.00, indicating that university student leadership was positively correlated with volunteer service activities, value expression, social interaction, ability enhancement, career development, external factors, set an example, inspire people, challenge the status quo, enable others to act, and jointly initiate a vision. The overall relevant situation was shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Correlation Analysis of Variables

Correlation	Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities	University Student Leadership
Correlation Coefficient	0.569	0.584
<i>P value</i>	0.000	0.000

Discussion

About Basic Status of Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities

On the scale of motivation in volunteer service activities among university students, M=3.831,

indicating a moderate score on the scale of participating in volunteer service activities. It could be seen that the current status of motivation in volunteer service activities among university students was relatively good. Research has shown that the dimensions of the scale for motivation for participating in volunteer service activities ranged from 3.654 to 4.018. The external factor dimension scored highest, followed by value expression, social interaction, ability enhancement, and career development.

About Basic Status of University Student Leadership

This study found that the overall university student leadership from four universities in Henan Province, mean was 3.876 indicating that participation in volunteer service activities was high. It could be seen that the current status of university student leadership was relatively good.

About the Differences of Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities and University Student Leadership Under Different Demographic Factors

There were some significant differences in demographic factors of Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities and University Student Leadership. Among them, there were significant differences in motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership with different political parties. The demographic factors of gender, grade, and different universities showed no significant differences in the motivation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership. These findings were consistent with the research results of Zhang (2021), Gong (2020), Tao (2014), and Wang (2022), and Zhuang (2022).

About Relationship among Motivation in Volunteer Service Activities and University Student Leadership

In the correlation between university student leadership and the motivation in volunteer service activities, there was a significant positive correlation between university student leadership and the motivation in volunteer service activities, This is consistent with the research results of Tao (2014), Zhuang (2022), and Zhang (2020).

In addition, the survey results showed a significant difference ($P < 0.001$) in leadership practice behavior between university students who participated in student organizations and those who did not participate in student organizations. The comparative analysis found that university students who participated in student organizations scored higher than those who did not. It indicated that universities should encourage university students to participate in various student organization activities during university, which was conducive to developing leadership., the level of boredom tendency and academic burnout may also be reduced to a certain extent. The higher the university students' score participating in volunteer service activities, the higher the leadership level. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between participation in volunteer service activities and university student leadership in four universities in Henan Province reached a significant level.

Conclusions

1) This study found that the motivation in volunteer service activities among university students was high, and the current status of university student leadership was relatively good.

2) There were some significant differences in demographic factors of motivation in volunteer service activities and university students' leadership among university students. Among them, the motivation in volunteer service activities and university students' leadership showed significant differences in political party. And the three demographic factors of gender, grade, and different universities showed no significant differences in the motivation in volunteer service activities and university students' leadership.

3) There was a significant relationship between university student leadership and the motivation in volunteer service activities. There was a positive correlation between value expression, social interaction, ability enhancement, career development, external factors, set an example, inspire people, challenge the status quo, enable others to act, and jointly initiate a vision. The survey results showed a significant difference ($P < 0.001$) in leadership practice behavior between university students who participated in student organizations and those who did not participate in student organizations. It indicated that universities should encourage university students to participate in various student organization activities during university, which was conducive to developing leadership. In other words, the higher the motivation in volunteer service activities level of university students, the higher the university student leadership level.

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