



Sustainable Senior Volunteerism

Singapore Healthcare Management 2017



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RESEARCH AIM

This research aims to identify factors affecting long term commitment among senior volunteers in a healthcare setting.

BACKGROUND

With reduced birth rates and increased longevity, Singapore faces the challenge of an ageing population and higher dependency ratio. Nevertheless, older adults are enjoying a longer healthy life expectancy. The notion of encouraging senior volunteerism was mooted in the Action Plan for Successful Ageing in 2016

EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

- Senior volunteerism is said to have positive impact on seniors' overall wellbeing.
- It could potentially mitigate a human resource crunch brought about by our demographic changes.
- Long term commitment by senior volunteers can result in lower training cost, service continuity and provides a higher sense of belonging for the senior volunteers.

METHODOLOGY

Case Study: KKH-RSVP Senior Guiding Programme started September 2010, where concierge service was identified as an area that volunteers can make a meaningful contribution.



Research Design:	Exploratory
Research Method:	Qualitative
Sample size:	21 (= total no. of volunteers under the programme)
Data collection method:	Focus group discussion (17) Open-ended survey (4)
Dependent variable:	Long term commitment
Independent variables:	Motivation factors



Preliminary Discussion with RSVP

- Identifying issues and challenges for volunteer retention

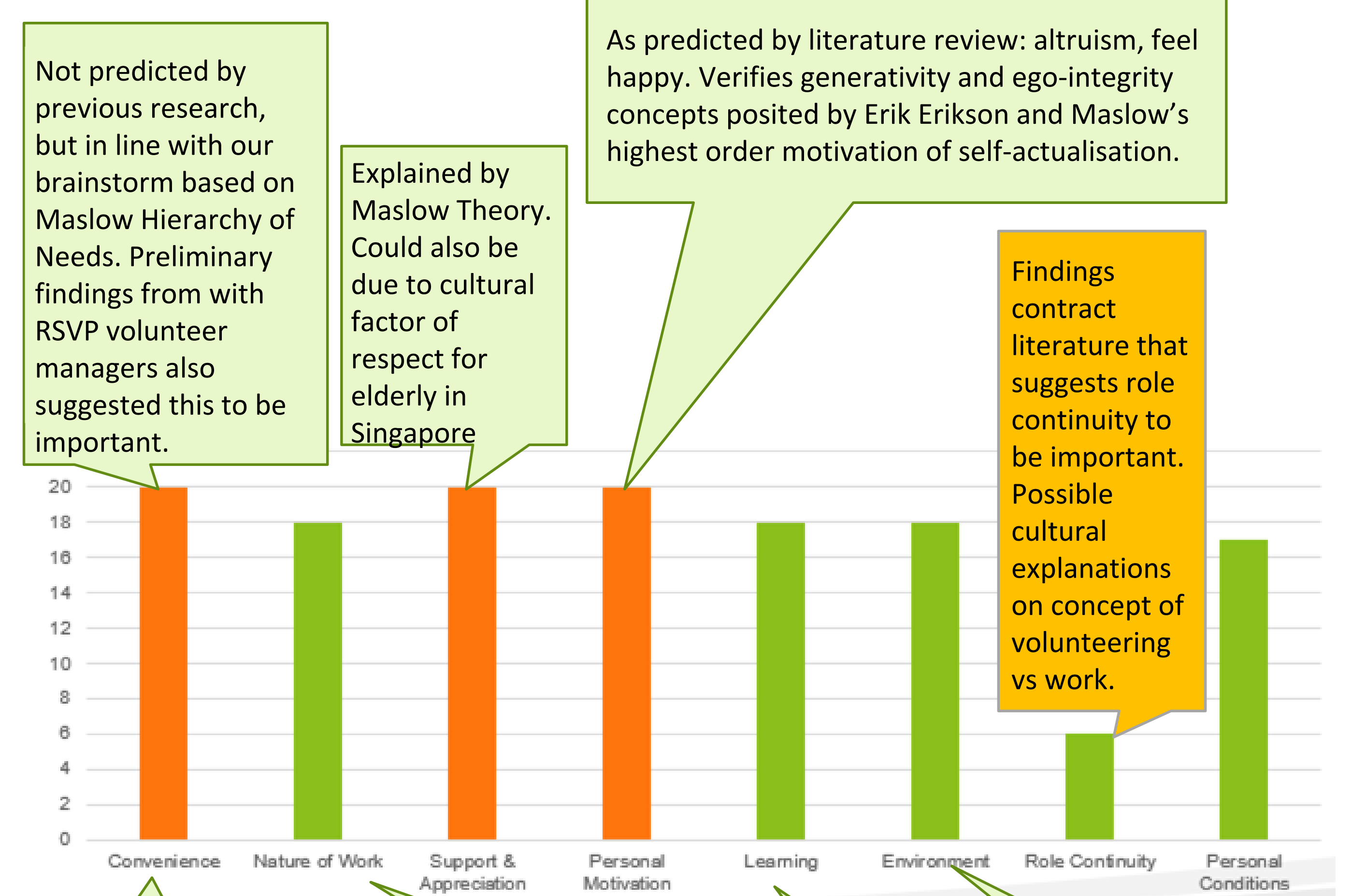
Operationalising the research

- 3 focus groups were conducted with 17 senior volunteers from the RSVP-KKH programme.
- 4 surveys were handed out to the remaining volunteers who could not make it to the face-to-face meetings, ensuring a 100% participation rate.
- The facilitator for all 3 sessions of the focus group was the same person and there was a note-taker present for each session as well. With consent, the sessions were voice recorded. Confidentiality was sought and assured.
- The transcripts for all sessions and survey results were subsequently coded for common themes and analysed.

RESULTS

Coding of answers to questions of "What matters to you when considering volunteering?", "What keeps you going in volunteering in KKH?", etc.:

- Convenience:** location, timing, mode of transport, duration, etc
- Nature of Work:** emotional affect, cognition requirement, interest, variety etc
- Support & Appreciation:** stipend, appreciation gestures, sense of belonging, respect, be heard, etc
- Personal Motivation:** to do good, contribute to the society, feels good, stay active, etc
- Learning:** training, RSVP courses, KKH talks
- Environment:** physical, T-shirt, etc
- Role Continuity:** sense of responsibility, routine, etc
- Personal Conditions:** health status, family and other commitments, etc



Not predicted by previous research, but in line with our brainstorm based on Maslow Hierarchy of Needs. Preliminary findings from with RSVP volunteer managers also suggested this to be important.

Explained by Maslow Theory. Could also be due to cultural factor of respect for elderly in Singapore

As predicted by literature review: altruism, feel happy. Verifies generativity and ego-integrity concepts posited by Erik Erikson and Maslow's highest order motivation of self-actualisation.

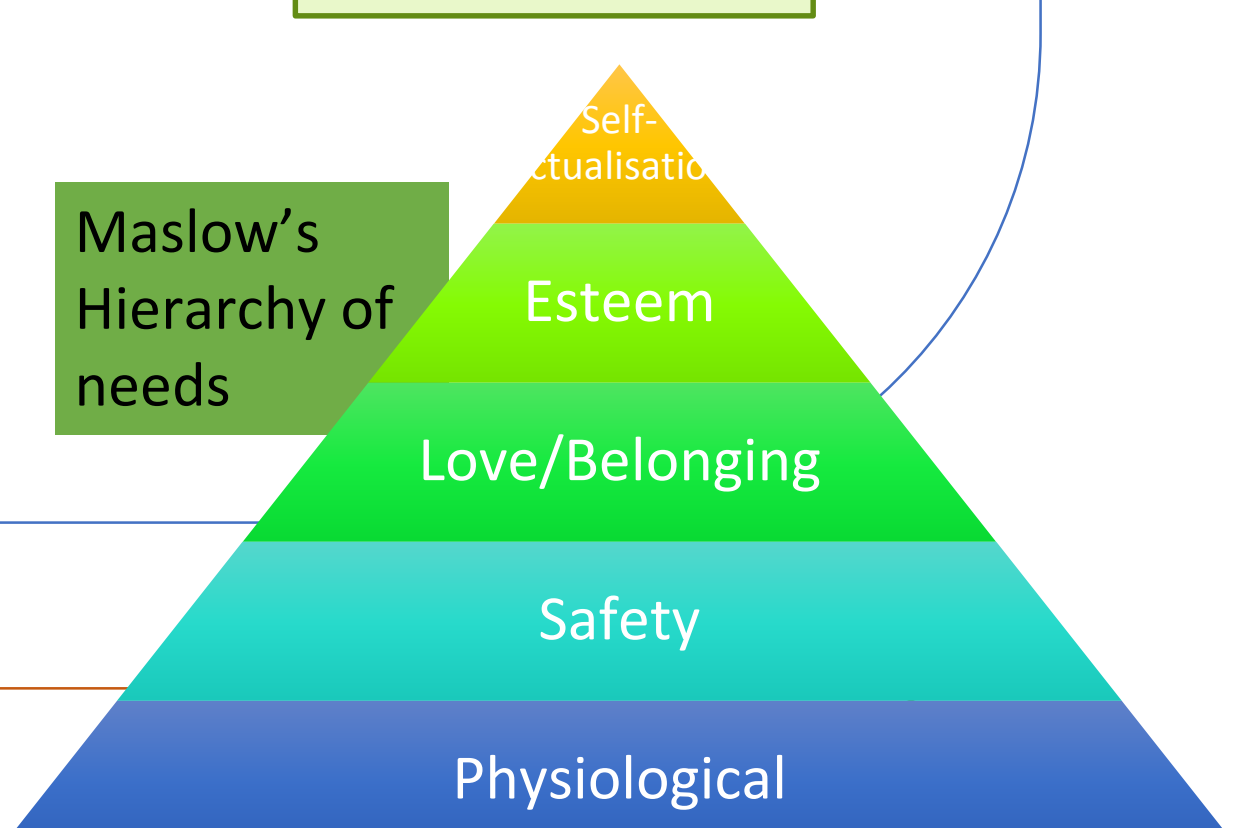
Findings contrast literature that suggests role continuity to be important. Possible cultural explanations on concept of volunteering vs work.

As explained by Maslow, other informal caregiving roles can affect. So flexible timing become an important factor. Flexibility of morning or afternoon shift, short 3hr, allows those with grandchildren to go home to look after kids

Nature of work is safe, positive environment, not depressing, not stressful, simple, not too difficult to handle. Could be "embarrassing" (mentioned by one)

Maslow: learning and personal growth

Though not high, is basic physiological level – addressing it can fulfil higher order (love) need



ADDITIONAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **For RSVP:** the range of courses and trainings was a strong attraction factor. The seniors appreciated the variety of volunteering projects. The stipend is seen as a form of organisation's "appreciation" of seniors' "retired" and "no income" status. Seniors also mentioned that there was no need to give them certificates as "(they) have so many".
- **For KKH:** the hot temperature and the vehicles' fumes were common complaints. Seniors appreciate the convenience of having shuttle bus to the doorstep. They would appreciate more support from staff, proper channels for feedback, and if KKH could demonstrate more appreciation for their contributions as "staff" towards the hospital's image.