

Hospitality in volunteer engagement: navigating complexities in residential care facilities for children

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the multifaceted realm of volunteer engagement in orphanages and residential care facilities for children, as places of hospitality towards volunteers, in low- and middle-income countries. While the positive outcomes of such engagements, including assistance, economic contributions and personal growth, are acknowledged, the study critically examines the potential ethical challenges inherent in these settings. Drawing from a theoretical framework developed by Duursma and colleagues on motives for volunteering, the research focuses on 25 volunteer applications submitted to a residential care facility in Bali, Indonesia. The qualitative analysis, guided by thematic analysis, explores motives, exchanges, individual behaviour, place and space considerations, time-based dimensions and outcomes and impacts. Ethical considerations, including data anonymisation, were rigorously implemented to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of potential volunteers and child-related data. The findings reveal diverse motives among potential volunteers, encompassing moral imperatives, leisure needs, personal interests and a genuine desire to care for others. The emphasis on non-monetary exchanges and a commitment to the community echoes Duursma and colleagues' framework, aligning with concepts of voluntary exchange, individual behaviour and place/space considerations. The study underscores the transcendence of empathy and compassion in motivating volunteers to engage with orphanages and residential care facilities for children, reflecting a dedication to making a lasting impact, and fostering substantive connections within the community. The discussion integrates the empirical findings with the theoretical framework, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding hospitality volunteering in orphanages and residential care facilities. The study acknowledges ethical concerns and calls for continued scrutiny, ethical considerations and collaboration to ensure that volunteerism remains a force for positive change and authentic care.

KEYWORDS: altruistic motivations, orphanages, moral considerations, ethical volunteering, volunteerism

Introduction

The multifaceted nature of volunteer involvement in the realm of hospitality in orphanages and residential care facilities for children yields both positive and negative impacts. This study specifically addresses the dimension of hospitality in such institutions situated in low- and middle-income countries. While the potential benefits of volunteering at these facilities can be evident, including the assistance provided, economic contributions to local communities and the personal growth of volunteers, the negative ramifications must also be acknowledged. One significant issue to consider is the temporal nature of volunteer engagements, typically lasting only a few days, weeks or (at most) months. This short-term involvement can intensify attachment issues that vulnerable children often face, potentially leading to them becoming overly attached to transient volunteers. Guiney (2017) posits the anticipation that children will engage with tourists in specific ways. There is an expectation for children to embody a "poor-but-happy" demeanour, actively interacting with

volunteers and visitors to enhance tourist satisfaction, elicit sympathy and encourage donations. Guiney (2017) notes that volunteer tourism has transformed children into a tourist commodity, leveraging their emotions and affection, and creating opportunities for exploitation. The potential for psychological, physical or even sexual abuse by "volunteers" in orphanages and residential care facilities for children is therefore a grave concern. Inadequate screening of volunteers can open the door for individuals with malicious intent to gain access to vulnerable children (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Westerlaken, 2021).

Furthermore, volunteer travel may unintentionally perpetuate the existence of orphanages and residential care facilities for children and indirectly contribute to the commodification of these children as "marketing tools" for the institute (Westerlaken, 2021). The link between orphanage tourism and orphanage trafficking, where children are knowingly or unknowingly separated from their families for profit, is a disturbing facet of this phenomenon (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Westerlaken, 2021). Additionally, volunteerism can have

broader societal implications by disrupting local labour markets in receiving countries and reinforcing neo-colonial stereotypes, portraying a privileged Western group providing aid to vulnerable populations in low- and middle-income countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

Orphanages and residential care facilities transform into places of hospitality by welcoming volunteers who wish to positively impact the lives of children in need. Volunteering in orphanages embodies the essence of hospitableness, as discussed by Lashley (2015), extending beyond commercial hospitality to a genuine willingness to host and care for others without expecting compensation. In the context of orphanages, hospitality takes on a profound moral and cultural significance, aligning with the historical and global themes explored in the study of hospitality. The act of providing shelter, care and support to orphaned individuals reflects a commitment to the broader human value of hospitality, transcending commercial considerations and contributing to the well-being of those in need. Volunteers are invited to play a vital role in enhancing the quality of care and supporting the children and the facilities themselves. These experiences can be enriching and transformative for volunteers, enabling them to contribute to the perceived well-being of children, and fostering a sense of fulfilment and cultural exchange for themselves.

However, as noted by Westerlaken (2021), there are instances where the noble intentions behind volunteering can be overshadowed by unethical practices by the orphanage or residential care facility, or by volunteers with ulterior motives. Some organisations may exploit volunteers by extorting money from them or exploiting their good intentions for financial gain. This unfortunate reality can undermine the genuine care and support that volunteers could provide to the children in these facilities. Therefore, it is essential for both volunteers and institutions to maintain transparency, ethical standards and proper oversight to ensure that volunteering remains a true act of compassion and a source of genuine care for the children in these settings. Prominent organisations, such as UNICEF (2019), strongly advocate against engaging in volunteer activities at orphanages and residential care facilities for children. Cultural sensitivity and respect for local customs are essential to create a harmonious environment for interaction.

In this context, this article aims to provide a comprehensive framework for guiding volunteer engagement in orphanages and residential care facilities for children, drawing from the insights presented in a theoretical framework by Duursma et al. (2023) on motives for volunteering, by analysing 25 applications for volunteering in a residential care facility for children in Bali, Indonesia.

Context in literature

The surge in orphanage tourism, also known as voluntourism, has sparked a growing academic interest, raising ethical, social and legal concerns. The connection between volunteering in orphanages and the concept of hospitality is intricate, and the existing literature on this topic remains insufficient. Voluntourism has witnessed remarkable growth, attracting volunteers from developed nations (Tomazos & Butler, 2012; Rogerson & Slater, 2014; Turker et al., 2022).

Available literature consistently underscores the ethical and social complexities surrounding orphanage tourism.

Many children residing in orphanages are not orphans; they have been separated from their families for various reasons, including profit (Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2014; van Doore, 2016; Westerlaken, 2021). These concerns raise questions about the impact of voluntourism on these children and host communities. Illustrating this concern, Westerlaken (2021) investigated the political economy of orphanage tourism in Bali, Indonesia, concluding that there are ethical concerns related to the institutionalisation of children for the sake of poverty or education. This study accentuates the risk of children becoming commodities for institutions, raising a plethora of problems. This dimension is globally significant in the relationship between orphanage volunteering and hospitality. Available research investigates the legal implications of child trafficking for the purpose of orphanages, emphasising the importance of international law in addressing the removal of children from their families and their categorisation as orphans (van Doore, 2016).

Analysing hospitality volunteering

Duursma et al. (2023) compiled a comprehensive theoretical framework that examines the dynamics of hospitality volunteering in the tourism industry. While their research focuses primarily on volunteer engagement in museum contexts, the theoretical framework outlined for this study offers a compelling perspective that extends beyond the specific setting, providing valuable insights into broader themes prevalent in scholarly literature concerning volunteerism in a general context. This section therefore provides an integrated analysis of the framework, offering insights into various interconnected elements, including motives, exchange, individual behaviour, place and space, time, outcomes/impact and organisation/management.

Motives and exchange

The framework by Duursma et al. (2023) categorises the motives driving hospitality volunteers, highlighting the diversity of motivations. Some volunteers are motivated by moral imperatives, while leisure needs, personal interests, or a sense of obligation and altruism drive others. Simultaneously, the framework acknowledges the multifaceted nature of exchange in hospitality volunteering. It encompasses voluntary exchange, monetary exchange, as well as functional, transactional and emotional exchange, underscoring the importance of the intended benefits for both volunteers and beneficiaries.

Individual behaviour and place/space

Duursma et al. (2023) explore the behaviour of hospitality volunteers, considering their characteristics, attitudes and roles. Additionally, they emphasise the demographic changes in the volunteer pool, particularly the impact of an ageing population. Furthermore, the framework extends its purview to encompass non-traditional commercial settings like hospitals and airports. In these settings, the concept of "sovereignty of space" is introduced, highlighting the influence of the setting on the volunteering experience.

Time and outcomes/impact

The temporal dimension of volunteering is addressed in the framework, recognising the challenges posed by decreasing the available time for volunteering. Simultaneously, the

authors emphasise the outcomes and impacts of hospitality volunteering. These encompass consumer satisfaction, the provision of additional services, skills development, competitive advantage and the creation of community connections. It is evident that volunteering has multifaceted benefits, both personally and organisationally.

Organisation/management

Duursma et al. (2023) discuss various facets of organisational culture, recruitment and management in the context of hospitality volunteering. These include standard operating procedures, training and the influence of a top-down corporate approach.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach used to investigate and analyse 25 volunteer applications (July 2017 to May 2019, pre-COVID-19) submitted to a residential care facility for children in Bali, Indonesia. Saturation was reached after 20 applications. The research design was guided by the theoretical framework developed by Duursma et al. (2023), encompassing various themes related to volunteerism, hospitality and motivations. In terms of research design, the study adopted a qualitative approach underpinned by thematic analysis, focusing on the systematic identification, analysis and interpretation of patterns and themes in the volunteer applications. The collected data underwent thematic analysis, allowing for a structured exploration of the framework's themes, and extracting significant findings and insights. Ethical considerations were paramount in this research given the sensitive nature of working with volunteer application forms and child-related data. Stringent measures, including data anonymisation and the removal of identifying information during the analysis process, were employed to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of the volunteers involved.

Findings

Examining a set of anonymised applications centred around volunteering at a residential care facility for children in Bali, Indonesia, this study investigated the motivations, commitments and interactions expressed by individuals interested in volunteering. In this section, a thorough exploration is conducted to unveil the prevalent themes that emerged, elucidating the intricate interplay of motives, sincere concern, non-monetary transactions and a profound dedication to fostering community and cross-cultural connections among the (potential) volunteers. In accordance with privacy and anonymity considerations, the original contents of the application forms are not reproduced in this document. Through an academic lens, 25 applications inquiring about volunteer work at a residential care facility in Bali were analysed to derive insights contributing to a more nuanced comprehension of volunteerism.

Motives

The analysed application forms exhibit a multifaceted array of motives. These stem from deeply personal and diverse sources. Several individuals express their past experiences, such as being adoptees themselves or having engaged in prior volunteer work with children. These motives underscore a profound sense

of empathy and a resolute commitment to the well-being of underprivileged children. Notably, a recurring theme pertains to introducing their own children to alternative world perspectives, reflecting the desire to instil gratitude and empathy in the younger generation. This aligns with the overarching objective of nurturing global citizenship.

Genuine desire to please and care for others

The style and tone in the applications exemplify an authentic yearning to care for others. The individuals behind these applications are not merely seeking superficial volunteering engagements, but are pursuing meaningful connections and experiences that can foster positive impacts. Furthermore, the willingness to partake in a spectrum of activities, encompassing playing games, preparing meals and providing English lessons, signifies a holistic approach to caring for the children's physical, emotional and educational needs.

Monetary exchange

While certain applications allude to monetary donations, the primary emphasis remains on non-monetary exchanges. The emphasis is on volunteering, bringing vital supplies, and extending support without financial expectations. This underscores the selflessness of these individuals, motivated by intrinsic rewards and altruistic intentions.

Exchange/voluntary exchange

The notion of voluntary exchange is exemplified by the willingness to procure specific items stipulated on an online wish list. This exchange proves beneficial for both parties involved – the volunteers find fulfilment in contributing, and the residential care facility receives essential supplies, signifying a sense of cooperation and mutual satisfaction in the sphere of volunteering. Moreover, the idea of visitors dedicating their time and efforts without formal contracts or obligations underscores these interactions' genuine nature.

Commitment and connection to the community

The commitment echoed in these applications transcends mere visits or short-term volunteering (two to three days). This reflective connection to the community signifies a protracted commitment to making a lasting impact. The passion to understand and respect the local culture and the readiness to partake in cross-cultural exchanges underscores the commitment to nurturing substantive connections in the community.

In summary, the applicants exceed the role of casual tourists, embodying compassionate and dedicated volunteers who aspire to enrich the lives of children and communities. Their motives, genuine empathy and willingness to engage in non-monetary exchanges exemplify the essence of making a positive impact through genuine human connections. These correspondences serve as a testament to the transcendent nature of empathy, compassion and the yearning to care for others, unifying individuals in the spirit of altruism and goodwill (Figure 1). Additionally, they underscore the anticipated reciprocity of hospitality from orphanages and residential care.

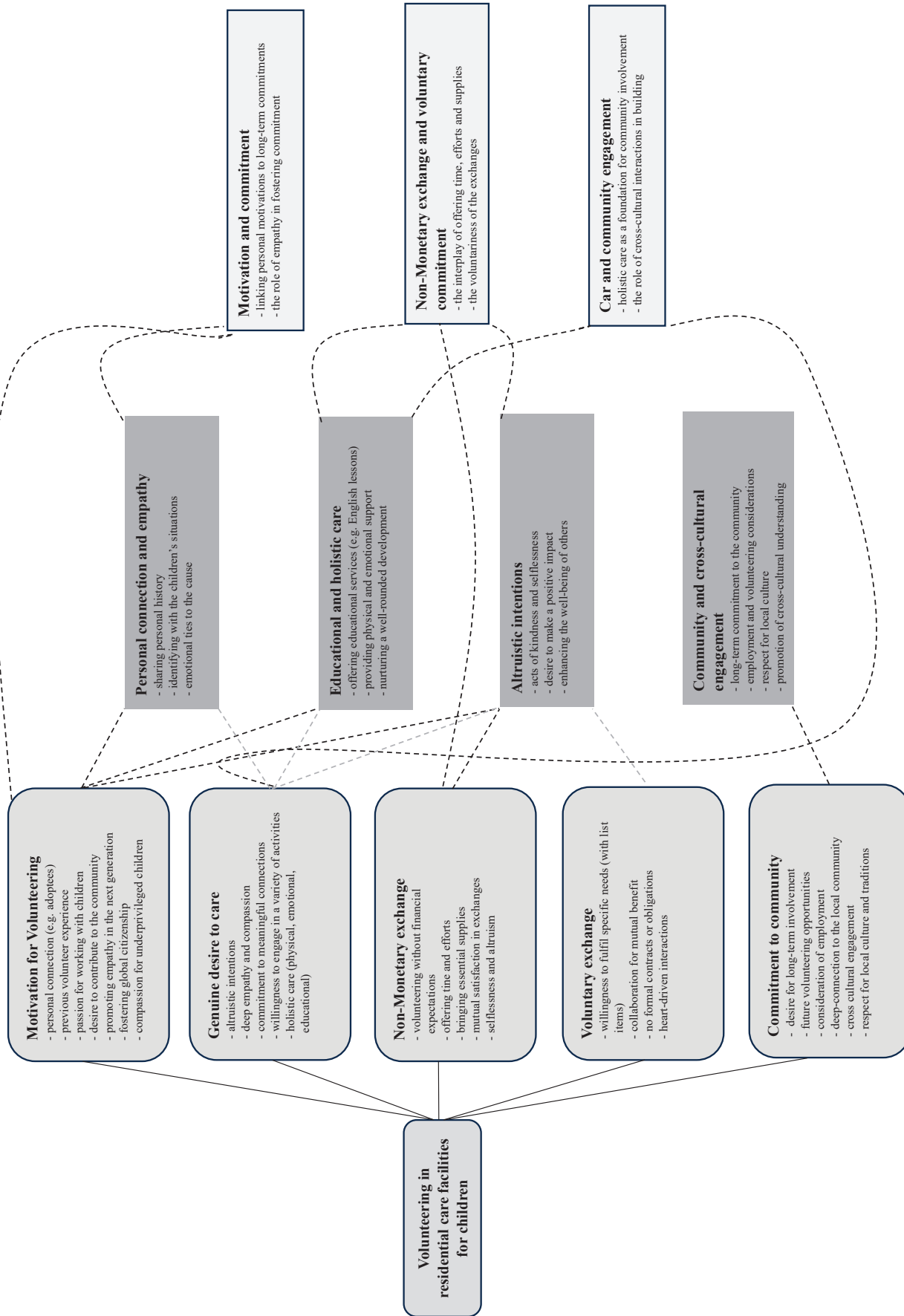


FIGURE 1: Thematic map

Discussion

Duursma et al. (2023) have presented a comprehensive theoretical framework for analysing hospitality volunteering, whose applicability extends beyond museums, offering valuable insights into volunteerism and hospitality in a broader context. This discussion integrates this theoretical framework with the data gathered from 25 volunteer applications to a residential care facility in Bali, Indonesia. The analysis of these applications reveals several key themes that align with the framework's elements, providing a deeper understanding of the motivations and commitments of potential volunteers.

Motives

The analysis of applications unveils diverse motives among potential volunteers at the orphanages and residential care facilities. The motivations align with Duursma et al.'s (2023) framework, encompassing moral imperatives, leisure needs and personal interests with varying degrees of obligation and altruism. The framework's emphasis on economic aspects, such as unpaid workers and the absence of monetary stimuli, aligns with the non-monetary exchanges highlighted in the applications.

Exchange

Duursma et al.'s (2023) framework on hospitality volunteering provides a lens to understand the various dimensions of exchange. The study of the applications emphasises non-monetary exchanges, with volunteers showcasing a genuine desire to please and care for others. The voluntary exchange, exemplified by the procurement of specific items from wish lists, reflects mutual satisfaction and intended benefits for volunteers, the orphanages and residential care facilities. The absence of reward or reciprocity in the applications aligns with the framework's emphasis on unpaid work and the lack of concern for remuneration.

Individuals

In parallel with the framework by Duursma et al. (2023), the analysis illustrates potential volunteers expressing a genuine desire to form meaningful connections and engage in holistic caregiving, reflecting characteristics, attitudes and behaviour consistent with the hospitality volunteering context in other segments.

Place and space

While the primary focus is on orphanages and residential care facilities, the study indirectly aligns with the framework by Duursma et al. (2023) by acknowledging the impact of non-traditional settings on volunteering experiences. The concept of "sovereignty of space" is echoed in both the study and the framework, emphasising the influence of the setting on the volunteering experience, especially in non-traditional commercial hospitality settings.

Time

The temporal dimension in the study aligns with Duursma et al.'s (2023) framework's recognition of decreasing available time for volunteering. The study emphasises understanding the evolving nature of volunteer time commitments, a concept mirrored in the framework's acknowledgement of measurable and virtuous time given freely for volunteering.

Outcome/impact

The multifaceted outcomes and impacts of volunteering highlighted in the applications resonate with Duursma et al.'s (2023) framework's emphasis on consumer satisfaction, additional services and competitive advantage.

Organisation/management

Duursma et al.'s (2023) framework provides a comprehensive perspective on organisational and management aspects. The informal recruiting mentioned in their study corresponds with the analysis of applications of potential volunteers.

In conclusion, the study's findings, connected with the insights from Duursma et al.'s (2023) framework, provide a nuanced understanding of the motives, exchanges, individual aspects, place and space considerations, temporal dimensions and outcomes/impacts of volunteering at orphanages or residential care facilities. Incorporating the framework enhances the depth of analysis, offering a broader perspective on the complexities of hospitality volunteering in orphanages or residential care facilities.

Conclusion

In examining the complex interaction between volunteerism, hospitality and the care of vulnerable children in residential facilities, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of engagements in low- and middle-income countries. The positive potential of such volunteer involvement, including assistance, economic contributions and personal growth, is contrasted with significant ethical and social concerns. It is important to note that these aspects are not the primary focus of this article. The time-based nature of volunteer engagements emerges as a critical issue, with short-term involvement potentially intensifying attachment issues for vulnerable children. The risks of abuse and exploitation by immoral individuals highlight the need for stringent screening processes. Volunteer travel is implicated in perpetuating the existence of care facilities and commodifying children as marketing tools, raising alarming connections between orphanage tourism and trafficking. Despite these challenges, orphanages and residential care facilities transform into places of hospitality. The theoretical framework presented by Duursma et al. (2023) on hospitality volunteering, while originally focused on museums, proves adaptable to the context of orphanages and volunteering. The alignment of motives, exchanges, individual behaviours, place and space considerations, time dimensions and outcomes/impacts with the framework enhances comprehension of volunteerism in this unique setting. As revealed in 25 applications, potential volunteers' motivations mirror the diversity outlined in the framework, encompassing moral imperatives, personal interests and a genuine desire to care for others. The emphasis on non-monetary exchanges and voluntary engagement resonates with the framework's perspective on hospitality volunteering. The commitment and connection expressed by potential volunteers extend beyond short-term visits, reflecting a dedication to making a lasting impact and fostering substantive connections within the community. The findings underscore the transcendent nature of empathy and compassion, central to the spirit of genuine care and support. However, as highlighted by Westerlaken (2021), ethical concerns indicate the potential for exploitation by host institutions, demanding

a commitment to transparency and ethical standards from both volunteers and organisations. Prominent organisations, such as UNICEF, caution against volunteering at such facilities, emphasising the importance of cultural sensitivity and respect for local customs. While this caution is highlighted, it prompts reflection on whether alternative avenues for meaningful contributions aligned with these concerns could be explored or recommended.

In conclusion, bridging theoretical insights and empirical findings, this study provides a comprehensive context for volunteer engagement in orphanages and residential care facilities. The synthesis of Duursma et al.'s (2023) framework with analysing volunteer applications contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding hospitality volunteering in these unique settings. Navigating the delicate balance between genuine compassion and potential exploitation, this research calls for continued scrutiny, ethical considerations and collaboration to ensure that volunteerism remains a force for positive change and authentic care.

Recommendations

The research conducted for this article leads to a number of recommendations:

Implement stringent screening procedures

To mitigate the risks of potential abuse and exploitation, it is crucial to establish rigorous screening processes for volunteers. This should include background checks, references and assessments of their suitability to work with vulnerable populations.

Promote ethical standards and transparency

Both volunteers and hosting institutions should adhere to high ethical standards and maintain transparency in their interactions. This includes clear communication about expectations, responsibilities and potential financial contributions.

Understanding motivations for volunteering

We need to acknowledge and appreciate the diverse motivations that volunteers may have. While some volunteers may be motivated by altruism, others may have personal connections to the cause. Understanding these diverse motivations can help tailor volunteer engagement strategies.

Continuous scrutiny and collaboration

We should review and scrutinise volunteer programmes to address emerging ethical concerns and challenges. Collaboration between organisations, governments and NGOs is essential to create a collective effort to ensure the positive impact of volunteerism.

Limitations

When it comes to generalisability, this research centres on volunteer applications specific to a residential care facility in Bali, Indonesia. Caution is advised when extending the findings to volunteer engagements in different geographical locations, cultural contexts, or types of care facilities, as the results may not be fully representative.

Sample size and selection bias

The analysis is based on a small sample size of 25 volunteer applications. While saturation was reached, the individuals who

submitted applications may not accurately reflect the broader pool of potential volunteers. This introduces a potential selection bias.

Limited time frame

The study examined volunteer applications submitted between July 2017 and May 2019, predating the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the evolving nature of volunteer dynamics and motivations, the findings may not capture the current state of volunteerism in orphanages and residential care facilities. Post-COVID-19 changes in volunteer practices and dynamics may not be adequately accounted for.

Limited exploration of host institution perspectives

The research predominantly focuses on the viewpoints of prospective volunteers. To comprehensively understand the dynamics between volunteers and the host institution, further research could include perspectives from the residential care facility staff or administrators, or from past volunteers.

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