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Intentions to work with older adults:

Intentions to work with older adults: A critical exploration of Psychology students' motivations and ambitions.

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Introduction

Self versus Other focus

- Volunteer motivation has been split into two categories. 'Self-Focused Motivations' such as employability, skills and personal growth and 'Other-Focused Motivations' such as belonging, helping and being valued (Bromnick, Horowitz & Shepherd, 2012)

Employability

- Students are encouraged to volunteer as a form of work experience to improve career prospects
- Volunteering has been integrated into a number of curricula and extra-curricular programmes within HEIs (Holdsworth, 2010)

Aims

- Little is known about intentions to volunteer with specific groups or projects
- With the growing ageing population and the likely demand on health and public services, this research investigates attitudes towards older adults amongst Psychology undergraduates and their intentions to volunteer and work with this group

Method

Psychology Second Year Undergraduates (N=188)

Measures:

- A modified version of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI); (Clary *et al.*1998)

- Kogan's Attitudes toward Older People Scale (KAOP)

- Additional items on volunteer status, career aspirations and likelihood of seeking future employment with older adults

Positive Statements	• Most old people are cheerful, agreeable, and good humoured
Negative Statements	• Most old people are irritable, grouchy, and unpleasant.

Fig. 1 Examples of Positive and Negative statements on KAOP

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

References

Bromnick, R., Horowitz, A., & Shepherd, D. (2012). The benefits of volunteering for Psychology students. *Psychology Teaching Review*, 18 (2), 47-51.

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Kogan, N. (1961). Attitudes towards old people: The development of a scale and an examination of correlates. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* , 62, 44-5

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Results

- Only 26.6% were current volunteers (national average = 40%)
- Career enhancement given as the biggest potential overall motivation to volunteer
- Current volunteers (n= 49) were significantly more likely to be motivated by Social Aspects (U=1933, p<.001) and Values (U=2360, p=.003) than non-volunteers (N= 147)

Career	• Volunteering will help me succeed in my chosen profession
Understanding	• I can learn how to deal with a variety of people
Values	• I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving
Enhancement	• Volunteering increases my self-esteem
Protective	• Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles
Social	• My friends volunteer

Fig. 2 VFI motives by rank order for whole sample

- Students held significantly higher positive attitudes to older adults than negative ones: t (177) = 11.59, p<.001 But the total positive attitude score was not high (m= 42.46, SD= 6.74, min = 13, max = 78)

- Career Goals:
  - 42% aspired to work in the applied psychologies (e.g. Clinical Psychology)
  - 25% indicated a career where psychology could be useful (e.g. Police)
  - 26.6% didn't know or didn't answer
- Only 5 students (2.7%) thought it would be highly likely that they would work with older adults in the future

Discussion

Naivety

- The sample showed an encouraging absence of negative attitudes to older adults, however there was an evident lack of positive attitudes. Few had plans to work with this demographic group. Given the ageing population and the types of work people aspired to, this may show a worrying naivety regarding the likelihood of working with older adults

From employment to enjoyment

- The results of this study supports previous research that suggests motivation may change over time (Bromnick, Horowitz & Shepherd, 2012). It is implied that when you become a volunteer, social interaction and intrinsic passion for the project becomes important for the individual
- Volunteering should be promoted beyond the proximal goal of skills development and employability

Further research

- Analysis of competing definitions of volunteering is needed together with a more fine-tuned analysis. Students may hold multiple simultaneous motives or be involved with multiple projects with differing motivations for each
- More research is needed looking at barriers to volunteering

Acknowledgements