
Buddhist Teachings for Achieving Success in Volunteer Work

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates how Buddhist teachings can foster success in volunteer work. The research had three objectives: (1) to define the key dimensions of success in volunteering, (2) to examine relevant Buddhist “peaceful means” that support successful volunteering, and (3) to propose a model that integrates those teachings into volunteer practice. Data were collected through documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with six key informants (experienced volunteers and Buddhist scholars). Using thematic content analysis, the study identified patterns that link inner development, ethical conduct, and sustained community engagement.

Findings indicate that success in volunteer work is a holistic construct encompassing personal growth, meaningful social contribution, and congruence with ethical values, rather than solely organizational metrics or external recognition. Buddhist peaceful means, especially mindfulness (sati), the Four Brahmavihāras (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity), and the Sangahavatthu (four bases of social harmony), emerge as both moral foundations and practical techniques that enhance emotional balance, compassionate action, and interpersonal harmony among volunteers. The study further proposes an integrative model that maps these Buddhist teachings onto Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, suggesting that addressing both psychological and ethical needs strengthens volunteer effectiveness, retention, and community impact.

Implications for practice include incorporating mindfulness and brahmavihāra training into volunteer preparation, designing organizational cultures that support ethical development, and adopting policies that nurture volunteer well-being. The paper concludes by recommending empirical testing of the proposed model across diverse volunteer settings.

Keywords: Volunteer Success; Buddhist Peaceful Means; Mindfulness; Brahmaviharas; Sangahavatthu; Volunteer Retention

Introduction

Volunteer work plays a crucial role in promoting social development, fostering civic engagement, and building cohesive communities. It serves as an essential bridge between individual altruistic intentions and collective societal needs, addressing diverse humanitarian issues while creating a sense of shared responsibility. Despite its importance, sustaining volunteer commitment remains a significant challenge. Volunteers often face burnout, emotional exhaustion, and a lack of recognition, which can lead to high turnover rates and a diminished organizational impact. Psychological factors, such as intrinsic motivation, personal fulfillment, and alignment with organizational values, are crucial in determining long-term volunteer engagement. Research suggests that when volunteers experience a sense of belonging, purpose, and recognition, they are more likely to maintain active and sustained participation (Wilson, 2012; Einolf, 2018). However, many organizations still rely heavily on operational incentives and overlook the deeper ethical and spiritual dimensions necessary for fostering resilient and motivated volunteer communities.

While frameworks such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provide valuable insights into volunteer motivation by addressing both basic and psychological needs, they often fall short in integrating ethical and spiritual components essential for holistic development. The absence of such frameworks risks reducing volunteer work to transactional exchanges, neglecting the cultivation of compassion, ethical integrity, and emotional resilience. This highlights a significant gap in existing research and practice: the need for a comprehensive approach that combines psychological theories with spiritual teachings to support volunteer success.

Buddhist teachings offer a profound foundation for addressing these gaps. If these teachings are not incorporated, volunteer programs may fail to nurture the inner development necessary for sustaining engagement and fostering compassionate service. Buddhist principles, particularly Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Sangahavatthu (Generosity, Kind Speech, Beneficial Action, and Impartiality), provide a holistic ethical framework that complements psychological needs and strengthens volunteer motivation and resilience. Mindfulness enhances self-awareness and emotional stability, enabling volunteers to manage stress and avoid burnout. The Four Brahmaviharas promote

unconditional goodwill and empathetic connections, fostering inclusive and supportive volunteer environments. The Four Sangahavatthu encourage ethical social interactions and cooperation, essential for building cohesive teams and sustaining long-term engagement.

The selection of these specific teachings is grounded in a thorough literature review. Scholars such as Nakarit (2022) and Karunadasa (2013) emphasize that Mindfulness fosters inner calm and ethical decision-making, while the Brahmaviharas develop emotional intelligence and moral integrity. The Sangahavatthu principles guide individuals toward social harmony and collective well-being, aligning with the deeper objectives of volunteer service. By integrating these teachings, volunteers can transcend superficial motivations and cultivate a deeper commitment rooted in ethical values and compassion.

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This research addresses the critical problem of how to support and sustain volunteer success through an integrated ethical and spiritual framework. By demonstrating how Buddhist teachings can fulfill both basic and higher-level needs of volunteers, the study offers a holistic strategy for cultivating compassionate, resilient, and ethically grounded volunteer communities. Ultimately, this approach aims to advance both theoretical understanding and practical applications, contributing to more inclusive, effective, and sustainable volunteer programs that benefit individuals and society as a whole.

Research Objectives

1. To study the key concept of success in volunteer work.
2. To examine the Buddhist peaceful means related to become success.
3. To propose Buddhist peaceful means teaching for achieving success in volunteer work.

Literature Review

The success of volunteer work has been explored through various theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and Buddhist teachings. While significant research has been conducted on volunteer motivation, retention, and management, there remains a knowledge gap in understanding how Buddhist peaceful means can be systematically integrated into volunteer work to enhance both individual fulfillment and organizational effectiveness. This research aims to fill that gap by examining the intersection of Buddhist teachings and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success to develop a sustainable and ethical volunteer model.

1. Key Concepts of Volunteer Work and Success

Volunteerism has been widely studied in social sciences, focusing on its role in community engagement, individual well-being, and societal transformation. Research highlights that success in volunteer work is a multidimensional concept, involving personal satisfaction, organizational stability, and broader societal impact (David, 2024). Scholars define success in volunteer work through various indicators such as motivation, leadership opportunities, skill development, and long-term engagement (Springer eBooks, 2022). The study by Zainea, Toma, and Tohănean (2019) emphasized that volunteer work also plays a significant role in preparing individuals for the workforce by developing transferable skills and social networks. However, gaps remain in understanding how spiritual and ethical frameworks contribute to volunteer effectiveness and sustainability.

Buddhist teachings provide a holistic framework that addresses these gaps. Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas, and Sangahavatthu emphasize self-awareness, ethical engagement, and compassion, which align with modern theories of volunteer motivation. Integrating these principles can create a value-driven, resilient, and ethically grounded volunteer culture. While studies on Buddhist teachings and organizational ethics exist, limited research has

systematically linked Buddhist principles to volunteer success using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a structural foundation.

2. Buddhist Teachings and Volunteer Success

Existing literature on Buddhist teachings demonstrates their effectiveness in promoting personal growth, ethical leadership, and sustainable social change (Nakarit, 2022). Mindfulness has been widely recognized as a tool for reducing stress, increasing self-awareness, and improving emotional resilience among volunteers. Additionally, the Four Brahmaviharas, Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha), provide an ethical foundation for volunteers, ensuring that they engage in service with sincerity, patience, and emotional balance.

Studies on Buddhist economics and ethical leadership (Springer eBooks, 2022) have also shown that integrating generosity, fair treatment, and selflessness into organizations improves team dynamics, reduces burnout, and fosters long-term commitment. However, while Buddhist teachings have been studied in workplace settings, research on their application in volunteer organizations remains scarce. This research will bridge that gap by demonstrating how Buddhist peaceful means can systematically address volunteer challenges while aligning with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

3. Challenges and Knowledge Gaps

While existing research on volunteerism and Buddhism provides valuable insights, there remains a significant gap in studies that systematically apply Buddhist teachings to enhance volunteer success. Buddhist principles such as mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity), and the Four Sangahavatthu (generosity, kind speech, beneficial action, and impartiality) have been widely recognized for their role in ethical leadership and harmonious social interactions. However, their structured integration into volunteer training programs and organizational management has yet to be fully explored. While some research has discussed the moral and spiritual benefits of Buddhist teachings in fostering altruism and community service, there is still a need to demonstrate how these principles can be systematically applied to support and sustain volunteer engagement.

At the same time, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has been extensively used to analyze workplace motivation and human behavior in professional settings, but its application in the context of volunteer success remains underexamined. Unlike traditional employment, where financial incentives and career growth play a central role in motivation, volunteerism is largely driven by intrinsic factors such

as fulfillment, purpose, and ethical alignment with organizational values. Understanding how volunteers progress through Maslow's motivational stages—from ensuring basic physiological needs to achieving self-actualization—can provide deeper insights into how organizations can better support, retain, and empower their volunteers.

This study seeks to address these gaps by integrating Buddhist peaceful means into volunteer training and management structures while using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a framework to analyze volunteer success. By demonstrating how Buddhist teachings can fulfill both basic and higher-level needs of volunteers, this research provides a holistic approach to enhancing engagement, fostering ethical leadership, and ensuring long-term sustainability in volunteer organizations. Furthermore, the study offers practical recommendations for organizations seeking to cultivate a compassionate, inclusive, and effective volunteer environment that aligns with both spiritual and psychological well-being. Through this approach, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how Buddhist teachings and motivational theories intersect to create a meaningful and transformative volunteer experience.

This research draws from prior studies on volunteer motivation, Buddhist teachings, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to propose a structured framework for Buddhist-based volunteer success. It expands existing knowledge by linking Buddhist peaceful means with modern psychological theories, demonstrating how organizations can cultivate ethical, resilient, and highly motivated volunteer teams. By filling the gap in research, this study contributes to both academic discourse and practical applications for enhancing volunteer success through Buddhist teachings.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research integrates Buddhist peaceful means with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to analyze and promote success in volunteer work. Buddhist peaceful means, specifically Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Bases of Social Harmony (Sangahavathu: Generosity, Kind Speech, Beneficial Conduct, and Impartiality), are central to cultivating ethical awareness, emotional balance, and compassionate engagement among volunteers. These teachings support the development of intrinsic motivation, foster strong interpersonal relationships, and enhance the sense of purpose and fulfillment in volunteer activities.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offers a psychological perspective on volunteer motivation, explaining how addressing basic physiological and safety needs paves the way for social connection, esteem, and self-actualization. By aligning these psychological needs with Buddhist ethical and spiritual principles, this framework provides a comprehensive approach to sustaining volunteer commitment and enhancing well-being.

Through this integration, the conceptual framework highlights the importance of addressing both external and internal dimensions of volunteer work, ensuring not only operational effectiveness but also ethical integrity and personal growth. It offers a holistic path for creating resilient, motivated, and compassionate volunteer communities that contribute meaningfully to societal well-being.

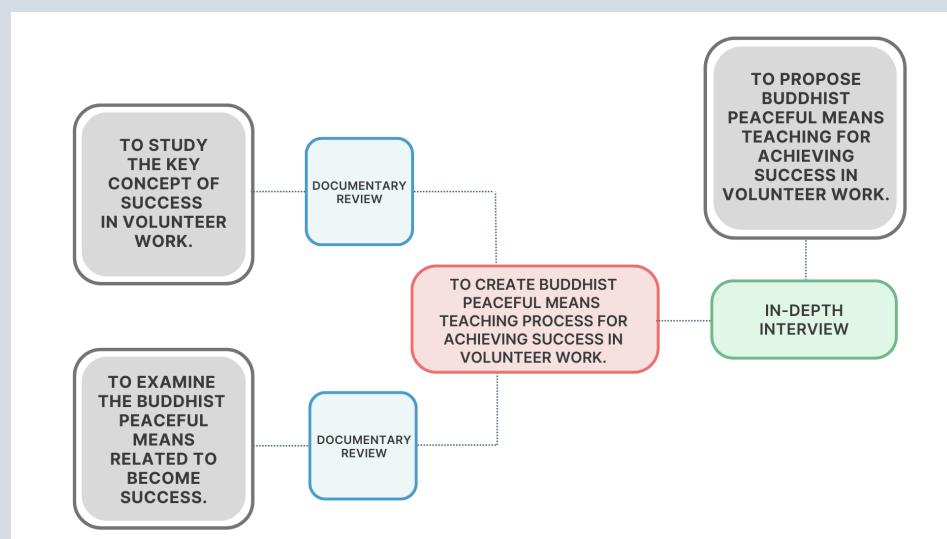


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach aimed at analyzing Buddhist teachings and their application to achieving success in volunteer work. The research area focused on Buddhist organizations, volunteer networks, and individuals with in-depth knowledge of Buddhist principles and volunteer experiences. The research process was divided into three main steps as follows:

Step 1: Documentary Research on the Key Concepts of Success in Volunteer Work

The initial phase involved reviewing and analyzing documents, academic studies, and theoretical frameworks related to success in volunteer work.

Important sources included literature on volunteer motivation, psychological theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and previous research on volunteer retention and satisfaction. Data collection centered on synthesizing core concepts and extracting key themes related to personal fulfillment, organizational impact, and social contribution as measures of volunteer success. Content analysis was used to systematically identify patterns and definitions that inform the concept of success in volunteer work.

Step 2: Documentary Research on Buddhist Peaceful Means Related to Volunteer Success

In the second phase, the focus shifted to analyzing Buddhist teachings relevant to volunteer engagement and success. Key teachings, including Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Bases of Social Harmony (Sangahavatthu), were studied through Buddhist scriptures, commentaries, and academic interpretations. This analysis aimed to understand how these teachings support volunteer motivation, emotional resilience, and ethical service. Data was categorized to show the application of these teachings at personal, interpersonal, and organizational levels in volunteer settings.

Step 3: In-Depth Interviews Combined with Documentary Research

The third phase integrated findings from documentary research with qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews. Six key informants—including Buddhist scholars, experienced volunteers, and leaders within volunteer organizations—were selected through purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews explored their insights on the integration of Buddhist teachings in volunteer work, emphasizing practical experiences and ethical considerations. Thematic analysis was applied to identify shared patterns, insights, and recommendations. The findings from interviews and documents were synthesized to develop a Buddhist-based model for volunteer success, aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

This comprehensive methodology ensured an in-depth exploration that combined theoretical perspectives, textual evidence, and empirical insights. It provided a holistic understanding of how Buddhist teachings can enhance volunteer engagement, foster ethical leadership, and promote long-term sustainability in volunteer work.

Research Results

Objective 1. The research results for Objective 1 were derived through comprehensive documentary analysis and synthesis, based on primary and secondary sources, including academic articles, research reports, and theoretical frameworks on volunteerism. According to Zinea et al. (2021), success in volunteer work involves achieving a positive social impact and fostering both personal and community-level development. Volunteers who perceive their contributions as meaningful experience higher levels of satisfaction and are more likely to continue serving. Springer (2015) highlights that a sense of belonging and alignment with organizational values is critical for retaining volunteers, while Wilson (2012) emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is a fundamental factor for sustained volunteer engagement.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) provides a psychological foundation for understanding volunteer success, outlining how volunteers' needs range from basic physiological and safety needs to higher-level needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. When these needs are fulfilled, volunteers develop a deeper sense of purpose and commitment. Einolf (2018) further underscores the importance of ethical leadership, structured support systems, and emotional recognition in preventing volunteer burnout and promoting long-term participation.

Through an in-depth analysis and synthesis of these various sources, it is evident that the key components of success in volunteer work include personal fulfillment, social contribution, organizational support, and ethical engagement. Personal fulfillment refers to the sense of self-worth and personal development that volunteers gain through service (Springer, 2015; Wilson, 2012). Social contribution emphasizes the importance of making meaningful contributions to society, which strengthens a volunteer's sense of impact and value (Zinea et al., 2021). Organizational support highlights the role of supportive environments, clear communication, and recognition systems in creating a sense of belonging and increasing volunteer retention (Einolf, 2018). Lastly, ethical engagement involves aligning with ethical and moral values, which enhances long-term motivation and reduces the risk of disengagement (Maslow, 1943; Jinadasa & Lanka, 2014).

To further illustrate these findings, the researcher created a visual representation based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success. This diagram organizes volunteer needs into five hierarchical levels:

physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. The bottom levels emphasize basic support—such as providing meals, accommodations, and a structured environment—to reduce stress and enable focus on service. The middle levels highlight the importance of community bonds, teamwork, recognition, and opportunities for skill development. At the highest level, the focus shifts to leadership, mindfulness, mentorship, and ethical awareness, empowering volunteers to create meaningful societal change. This visual model (as shown in the accompanying figure) was designed by the researcher to clearly convey the integrated psychological and ethical factors essential for volunteer success, serving as a practical tool for organizations to better understand and address the diverse needs of volunteers, thereby fostering sustained engagement and holistic development.



Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success

In conclusion, this study defines success in volunteer work as the holistic integration of personal growth, social contribution, and ethical alignment, supported by psychological needs and organizational structures. This comprehensive understanding provides a strong foundation for exploring the application of Buddhist teachings to volunteer motivation and sustainability in the following research objectives.

Objective 2. The research results for Objective 2 were derived through in-depth documentary analysis of Buddhist teachings, focusing on Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas, and the Four Sangahavatthu, and examining their connection to psychological frameworks and volunteer success concepts. According to Payutto (1997) and Karunadasa (2013), Mindfulness (Sati) cultivates self-awareness and emotional stability, enabling volunteers to manage stress, reduce burnout, and maintain consistent engagement. This practice directly supports the psychological needs of volunteers at the personal level by enhancing inner calm and resilience, aligning with Maslow's safety and self-actualization needs.

The Four Brahmaviharas—Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha)—strengthen emotional intelligence and promote ethical relationships among volunteers. As noted by Somboon (2018) and Nakarit (2022), these principles encourage empathy, forgiveness, and inclusivity, which are vital for fostering a supportive community environment. At the organizational level, these teachings help build cohesive teams, enhance volunteer satisfaction, and contribute to the creation of a nurturing atmosphere that increases retention and reduces conflict.

The Four Sangahavatthu, Generosity (Dana), Kind Speech (Piyavaca), Beneficial Conduct (Atthacariya), and Impartiality (Samanattata), guide ethical social interactions and strengthen collective bonds. As explained by Cholvijarn (2019) and Payutto (1997), these principles facilitate open communication, mutual respect, and cooperation within volunteer organizations. On a societal level, the Sangahavatthu support the extension of volunteer impact beyond organizational boundaries, fostering public trust and encouraging broader community participation in volunteer initiatives.

Through text analysis and categorization, it becomes clear that Buddhist peaceful means influence volunteer success across three levels: personal, organizational, and societal. On a personal level, they promote inner growth, self-mastery, and emotional balance, directly addressing psychological needs and supporting sustained engagement. At the organizational level, these teachings cultivate ethical leadership, inclusive environments, and strong interpersonal relationships, thereby enhancing team dynamics and organizational sustainability. Finally, on the societal level, Buddhist peaceful means inspire a spirit of altruism and social harmony, expanding the impact of volunteer programs to the wider community and contributing to long-term societal development.

In conclusion, the integration of Buddhist peaceful means with psychological needs provides a comprehensive ethical-spiritual framework for volunteer success. This synthesis demonstrates that Buddhist teachings not only complement psychological theories like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but also enrich volunteer programs by promoting compassion, resilience, and shared social responsibility. These findings establish a solid foundation for proposing an integrated model of volunteer success in the next research objective.

Objective 3. The research results for Objective 3 focus on developing a Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model by integrating Buddhist teachings with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, using both documentary research and in-depth interviews. This integration was essential in transforming conceptual insights into a practical model for fostering ethical engagement, resilience, and long-term volunteer commitment.

Documentary analysis established that Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas, and the Four Sangahavatthu cultivate motivation, ethical leadership, and emotional well-being. These teachings align with Maslow's framework, addressing basic needs such as safety and belongingness, as well as higher-level needs like esteem and self-actualization.

The qualitative interview data reinforced and deepened this understanding. The analysis involved identifying key themes from the interviews with six key informants, categorizing these themes, and then comparing and integrating them with the documentary findings. For example, as shown in Table KI1 (Key Informant 1), the informant emphasized that mindfulness helps volunteers develop patience and manage stress, enabling them to handle challenges calmly and maintain clarity. This perspective aligns with documentary sources, including Payutto (1997), who discusses mindfulness as a foundation for mental stability and ethical awareness.

In Table KI4 (Key Informant 4), the informant highlighted that loving-kindness (metta) and compassion (karuna) promote inclusivity, teamwork, and a sense of mutual support, which motivates volunteers to continue serving. These themes support documentary evidence from Somboon (2018) and Nakarit (2022), who note that the Brahmaviharas enhance interpersonal relationships and foster inclusive, harmonious environments. By integrating these insights, the model incorporates practical applications of loving-kindness and compassion into organizational practices, such as creating team-building activities and recognition programs grounded in empathy and inclusivity.

Other tables, such as KI2, KI3, KI5, and KI6, similarly contributed additional themes, including the importance of generosity (dana), kind speech (piyavaca), and impartiality (samanattata), which support the development of a positive and ethical volunteer culture. These informants emphasized that Sangahavatthu principles promote ethical communication, mutual respect, and strong community bonds, reinforcing the documentary findings from Cholvijarn (2019) and Karunadasa (2013).

Figures 3 and 4 (from the thesis) visually represent the integration process, showing how themes derived from interviews were synthesized with Buddhist teachings and Maslow's framework to build the final model. The Buddhist Peaceful Means (BPMs) highlighted in the model include Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmavihāras (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Sangahavatthu (Generosity, Kind Speech, Beneficial Conduct, and Impartiality). These BPMs provide the ethical and spiritual foundation for fostering emotional resilience, promoting inclusive teamwork, and cultivating ethical leadership among volunteers. Through this rigorous analysis and integration, the study developed a holistic volunteer success model emphasizing psychological needs, ethical alignment, and spiritual development.

Integration of BMPs, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success from In-Depth Interview (Part 1)			
KI	BPMs	MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS FOR VOLUNTEER SUCCESS	KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO VOLUNTEER SUCCESS
KI 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MINDFULNESS (SATI) FOR EMOTIONAL STABILITY. LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR TEAMWORK AND SINCERITY. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAFETY NEEDS: EMOTIONAL STABILITY THROUGH MINDFULNESS. BELONGINGNESS NEEDS: SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT. ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION AND FULFILLMENT THROUGH HELPING OTHERS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MINDFULNESS (SATI) FOR EMOTIONAL STABILITY. LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR TEAMWORK AND SINCERITY.
KI 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR KINDNESS AND SHARED GOALS. EQUANIMITY (UPEKKHĀ) FOR EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BELONGINGNESS NEEDS: FOSTERING COMMUNITY AND TEAMWORK. ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION FOR EFFORTS AND SHARED VALUES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STRENGTHENS COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. HELPS MANAGE GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN TEAMS. ENCOURAGES FAITH AND MOTIVATION IN SERVICE.
KI 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COMPASSION (KARUNĀ) FOR ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT. MINDFULNESS (SATI) FOR BALANCE AND EMOTIONAL CLARITY. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAFETY NEEDS: STABILITY THROUGH ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT. ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION THROUGH MEANINGFUL SERVICE. SELF-ACTUALIZATION: ALIGNMENT WITH CORE VALUES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENCOURAGES SELF-GROWTH AND TRANSPARENCY. HELPS VOLUNTEERS ALIGN SERVICE WITH PERSONAL VALUES. ENHANCES ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION.

Figure 3: Integration of Buddhist Peaceful Means, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success (Part 1)

Integration of BMPs, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success from In-Depth Interview (Part 2)			
KI	BPMS	MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS FOR VOLUNTEER SUCCESS	KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO VOLUNTEER SUCCESS
KI 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUANIMITY (UPEKKHĀ) FOR OVERCOMING CHALLENGES. • SYMPATHETIC JOY (MUDITĀ) FOR TEAM COHESION. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BELONGINGNESS NEEDS: STRENGTHENS UNITY AND PURPOSE. • ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION THROUGH HARMONY AND TEAMWORK. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HELPS VOLUNTEERS MAINTAIN EMOTIONAL BALANCE. • ENHANCES COMMUNICATION AND PREVENTS CONFLICTS. • STRENGTHENS GROUP COHESION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.
KI 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAṄGAHAVATTHU (DĀNA, PIYAVĀCĀ) FOR ETHICAL COMMUNICATION. • LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR GRATITUDE AND FAITH. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESTEEM NEEDS: SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH. • SELF-ACTUALIZATION: STRENGTHENED FAITH AND PURPOSE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOSTERS FAITH-DRIVEN MOTIVATION. • STRENGTHENS VOLUNTEER RETENTION THROUGH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP. • PROVIDES EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE FOR LONG-TERM SERVICE.
KI 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAITH AND GENEROSITY (DĀNA) AS CORE VALUES. • IMPARTIALITY (SAMĀNATTATĀ) FOR FAIRNESS AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION THROUGH FAITH-BASED SERVICE. • SELF-ACTUALIZATION: LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO SELFLESS SERVICE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENCOURAGES SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP. • STRENGTHENS LONG-TERM DEDICATION TO VOLUNTEERING. • ENHANCES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION.

Figure 4: Integration of Buddhist Peaceful Means, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success (Part 2)

In conclusion, this integrated framework demonstrates that Buddhist peaceful means serve as a powerful tool for structuring ethical, impactful, and sustainable volunteer programs. By effectively addressing all five levels of Maslow's Hierarchy, providing safety and security, fostering belongingness, promoting esteem, facilitating growth, and enabling self-actualization, volunteers develop long-term commitment and a profound sense of purpose. This approach not only strengthens individual and organizational outcomes but also contributes to broader societal transformation through compassionate and sustained volunteer service.

Discussions

The research results demonstrate that the success of volunteer work is a multidimensional concept involving personal fulfillment, social contribution, organizational support, and ethical engagement. This aligns with the principles outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which states that individuals are motivated to fulfill basic needs before progressing to higher-level psychological and self-fulfillment needs (Maslow, 1943). When volunteers' foundational needs, such as safety and belonging, are addressed, they are more likely to develop

esteem and achieve self-actualization through their service (Springer, 2015; Wilson, 2012). The findings also support Einolf (2018), who emphasizes that a sense of purpose and value alignment significantly impacts volunteer retention and long-term commitment.

The integration of Buddhist peaceful means further strengthens this framework. Mindfulness (Sati) is crucial in helping volunteers develop self-awareness, patience, and emotional resilience, enabling them to manage stress and avoid burnout (Payutto, 1997; Karunadasa, 2013). The study's interview data confirm that volunteers practicing mindfulness are better equipped to maintain clarity and inner peace during challenging tasks. This is consistent with research by Nakarit (2022), which found that mindfulness enhances mental stability and ethical decision-making among community workers.

The Four Brahmaviharas, Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha), play a pivotal role in fostering positive interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence among volunteers. According to Somboon (2018), these teachings cultivate empathy, forgiveness, and inclusive attitudes, which help maintain harmonious volunteer communities. The interviews further reveal that practices based on Metta and Karuna encourage teamwork and ensure that volunteers feel valued and supported. These insights align with Cholvijarn (2019), who asserts that the Brahmaviharas are essential in developing altruistic behavior and ethical service mindsets.

The Four Sangahavatthu, Generosity (Dana), Kind Speech (Piyavaca), Beneficial Conduct (Atthacariya), and Impartiality (Samanattata), serve as practical guidelines for promoting ethical communication and strong organizational cultures (Payutto, 1997). The findings show that when organizations apply these principles, they foster an environment of mutual respect and trust, enhancing volunteer motivation and retention. This is consistent with Karunadasa (2013), who notes that the Sangahavatthu strengthen social bonds and collective harmony, which are critical for sustainable volunteer programs.

Moreover, integrating Buddhist teachings with Maslow's framework creates a comprehensive approach that fulfills both psychological and ethical needs. This dual emphasis addresses not only external motivators but also the intrinsic values that inspire volunteers to continue their service despite challenges. The study highlights that volunteers who internalize Buddhist

peaceful means experience personal growth and a profound sense of purpose, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and sustained engagement. Similar findings were reported by Springer (2015), who emphasized the importance of ethical alignment in volunteer retention and satisfaction.

In conclusion, the discussion supports that the combination of Buddhist peaceful means and psychological frameworks offers a holistic model for volunteer success. By addressing needs from basic security to self-actualization and incorporating ethical-spiritual development, organizations can foster resilient, compassionate, and ethically driven volunteer communities. This approach not only benefits individual volunteers but also enhances the collective impact on society, contributing to sustainable community development and social harmony.

Knowledge from Research

This research explores the integration of Buddhist peaceful means into volunteer work, aiming to enhance volunteer success and long-term commitment. The study synthesizes theoretical insights from Buddhist teachings, particularly mindfulness (sati), the Brahmaviharas (Four Sublime States), and the Sangahavatthu (Four Bases of Sympathy), alongside empirical findings from qualitative interviews. The results demonstrate that Buddhist principles provide a structured framework for fostering ethical leadership, emotional resilience, and volunteer engagement. When aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success, these teachings ensure that volunteers receive both psychological and self-fulfillment support, reinforcing long-term motivation and organizational sustainability.

A key contribution of this study is the development of a Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model. This model illustrates how Buddhist teachings align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to address the well-being and motivation of volunteers at different levels:

Physiological and Safety Needs: Organizations must provide volunteers with a stable environment, structured roles, and emotional security, ensuring their basic needs are met.

Belongingness and Social Needs: Compassion, ethical communication, and supportive teamwork create a sense of belonging and connectedness among volunteers.

Esteem Needs: Recognition, leadership opportunities, and moral integrity enhance volunteer motivation and reinforce their sense of purpose.

Self-Actualization: Mindfulness, equanimity, and selfless service enable volunteers to reach the highest level of personal and social fulfillment, driving long-term engagement and meaningful contributions.

The study concludes that organizations that integrate Buddhist teachings into their volunteer programs can establish sustainable, ethical, and impactful initiatives. By addressing all five levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, they foster an environment where volunteers feel supported, valued, and empowered, leading to successful and sustainable community development.



**Figure 5: Buddhist Peaceful Means and Maslow's Hierarchy:
A Framework for Volunteer Success**

The diagram illustrates how Buddhist Peaceful Means align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to foster volunteer success. It shows that meeting basic needs (stability and security) supports well-being, while ethical communication,

teamwork, and leadership enhance commitment. At the highest level, mindfulness and selfless service drive meaningful contributions and lasting community impact.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that success in volunteer work is a multidimensional, holistic phenomenon that combines personal growth, meaningful social contribution, and alignment with ethical values. In relation to Objective 1, the research identifies four interlocking drivers of volunteer success: intrinsic fulfilment (a felt sense of purpose), measurable social impact, sustained organisational support, and ethical engagement. Volunteers who experience purpose, belonging, and value congruence are more likely to sustain long-term commitment and report higher satisfaction.

Addressing Objective 2, the analysis shows that Buddhist peaceful means, particularly mindfulness (sati), the Four Brahmavihāras (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity), and the Saṅgahavatthu (four bases of social harmony), function both as ethical frameworks and practical technologies for human flourishing in volunteering contexts. These practices cultivate emotional regulation, empathetic responsiveness, and cooperative relations, thereby strengthening individual resilience and group cohesion.

For Objective 3, the study advances a Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model that overlays these teachings onto Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The model illustrates how meeting volunteers' basic and psychological needs while intentionally cultivating ethical and spiritual capacities produces greater effectiveness, retention, and community impact. Practically, the model implies that volunteer programmes should combine needs-sensitive policies (e.g., clear role design, supportive supervision, development opportunities) with training in mindfulness and brahmavihāra practices to nurture compassionate, resilient volunteers.

Integrating Buddhist peaceful means into volunteer development offers a coherent pathway to enhance individual well-being, organisational performance, and sustainable community benefit. Future research should empirically validate the proposed model across diverse cultural and organisational settings and examine implementation strategies that balance ethical cultivation with operational demands.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the researcher proposes suggestions for practical application as well as future research to further enhance the development of volunteer work grounded in Buddhist peaceful means. On the practical side, it is recommended that government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) incorporate Buddhist peaceful means, including Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmavihāras, and the Four Sangahavatthu, into their volunteer development policies and training programs. By formally integrating these teachings, policies can promote ethical leadership, emotional resilience, and long-term volunteer commitment, ultimately contributing to sustainable social development and stronger civic engagement. In terms of organizational practice, volunteer organizations should adopt the Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model developed in this study to design activities and support systems that address both the psychological and spiritual needs of volunteers. This could include mindfulness training sessions, compassion-focused workshops, and ethical communication practices, which help build cohesive, motivated, and resilient volunteer teams. Furthermore, establishing recognition programs that emphasize ethical contributions and personal growth can enhance volunteer satisfaction and retention, ensuring ongoing engagement and community impact.

For future research, it is suggested that studies expand the sample size and include a broader range of volunteer organizations to validate and further refine the proposed model. Comparative research examining differences between organizations that implement Buddhist frameworks and those utilizing secular approaches could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of integrating spiritual teachings into volunteer development. Additionally, future studies could employ quantitative methods to measure the impact of Buddhist peaceful means on volunteer retention rates, psychological well-being, and social outcomes. These insights would offer valuable evidence to support wider implementation of this integrated model and contribute to the advancement of ethical and sustainable volunteer practices.

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