

**Disaster Relief Volunteers and their Continued Service:
Why Volunteer in the Face of Trauma?**

By

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Abstract

Volunteering is an often overlooked yet critically essential force of labor that aids in maintaining normalcy and order in many societies across the world. These labors are often deemed dangerous, taxing, and a catalyst for future traumatic disorders. Despite this, however, volunteers are always readily available and more often than not continue to volunteer again and again. The focus of this study is to understand the minds of these volunteers that knowingly work in the face of trauma and continue to do so. In hoping to understand, I focused my attention on understanding the function and predictability of compassion fatigue, a commonly associated derivative of trauma that many front-line workers and volunteers face due to experiencing overwhelming amounts of caring for others. With this knowledge I hoped that filling the rest of the lines in would help understand the motivations of chronic volunteers. Results show that specific motivations and a perspective change on the aftermath of trauma may yield relevant results in understanding volunteers at a much stronger level.

Key terms: volunteering, disaster relief, altruism, post-traumatic growth, compassion fatigue

Introduction

As an adult I'm able to see the general kindness in the world. Coworkers carpool, people share clothes, youths give up their subway seats for the elderly, and people hold doors for one another. Friends offer valuable presences in times of need, and celebratory gestures are a staple of our culture. But now, I can also differentiate this general kindness, rather uniform and massively understood, from the absolute selfless person, absolutely willing and able to help, advocate, share, donate, and ultimately sacrifice their needs for others without a sliver of hesitation. I find myself harking back to my mother in certain situations, and I have no doubt that she instilled these qualities upon me but I think they are manifested very differently. The most overt difference is our motivation to do kind things; I find her "style" to be very dire, high-staked, and intense, as if all of her eggs are placed into this kindness basket. From a strictly observational standpoint, I don't find this to be very healthy because there isn't enough emphasis on caring for the self. I try to lean into doing nice things with thoughts such as "this won't take much of my time away" or "this is easy for me, but could mean a great deal to someone else", along with having a naturally large amount of patience. Essentially, I try not to become extremely emotionally invested and keep my kindness low-stake while also maintaining my sense of self. For me, I feel at ease and balanced despite not every equation being absolutely perfect (we always feel like we can do more).

This is why the idea of volunteer service enticed me. I started volunteering in college in an attempt to "do" something, such as joining a club. For my first trip, I was selected to be one of eleven students to accompany a group on its way to Colombia in order to tend to children from low-income families, where I was able to teach children mathematics, English, science, and even sports (although

they essentially taught me). The trip broadened for me so many different perspectives of life just from being physically present, doing what I know how to do, and taking my time to fulfill this duty.

Inspired, I began to pursue volunteer trips and landed multiple that were based in Puerto Rico and its struggles with the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. The bulk of my volunteer experience is in Puerto Rico, spending months at a time repairing homes from the roof to the doors. These were times of hardship, loss, and tragedy for some folk; many families lost precious belongings, vehicles, and even loved ones in the destruction of the storms. In January of 2020 I went back for another month and experienced unexpected political unrest, more festering devastation, and a myriad of powerful earthquakes that quickly altered the mindset of the island from hopeful to beaten down and apathetic. It was a tumultuous time, and I found my patience being tested simply from the influx of negativity and true hardship others around me were facing. I was not alone, my volunteer organization would prioritize “self-care” during briefings, acknowledging that these were harder than usual times and that burnout may be possible. “Please take at least ten minutes of your day away from others to reflect on things. This can be a lot to take in.” I began to notice the different reactions among my volunteer group, which remained within a range of 80 to 90 people. Some seemed completely unaffected or unbothered, maintaining a consistent “chill” level and even providing comfort for those who, conversely, were clearly affected by the current situation.

It was in this moment of witnessing and even experiencing a level of this emotional burnout from an unexpected and troubling situation where the idea of “volunteer” intrigued me, the selfless human being capable of selfless acts. Volunteers willingly commit themselves to stressful situations, coming back to each devastating event that happens. These situations undoubtedly must have some

sort of correlation to emotional health and determination to help others. Through this emotional burnout, also known as compassion fatigue, I believe a better understanding can be made about the motives and goals of volunteers.

Hypothesis

In researching a topic that heavily coincides with psychological characteristics, I hypothesize that the results will be rather complicated and multi-faceted, sifting through the research and gaining perspective by connecting the dots in a perspective that may not have been explored before. With risk comes reward; it may be likely that volunteers are very much so aware of the potential risk factors involved with volunteering, but continue to do so due to the basic idea that helping others is a good thing to do. Whether this idea delves into more abstract ways of thinking is yet to be explored, but my guess is that most volunteers may not know what they are signing up for when they volunteer for intense work loads such as disaster relief; regardless of the type of motivation, the experience of taking on a task that, in consequence, aids to a concept much larger than the self (for example, the repairing of a community, an entire ecosystem, a singular person whose wellbeing permeates through vast social networks unfathomable to the naked eye) may not be palpable until partaking in the work first hand, witnessing the trauma, and reflecting on it later. And despite these traumas, whose potential to instill compassion fatigue and other trauma may be significant, these larger concepts further aid in future attempts to volunteer.

Review of Literature

Compassion Fatigue in Volunteers and its Implications

Compassion fatigue has been a carefully studied problem in the fields of many modes of volunteering as well as healthcare facilities and other caregiver professions. Otherwise known as the cost of caring for others in emotional and physical pain, compassion fatigue is characterized by deep physical and emotional exhaustion that compromises the ability of the caregiver to feel empathy for the care recipient (Martins, Nicholas, Shaheen, Jones & Norris, 2013). In short, exposure to patients or clients experiencing trauma or distress can negatively impact professional's mental and physical health, safety and wellbeing, as well as that of their families, the people they care for, and their employing organizations (Cocker & Joss, 2016). There are many factors considered when discussing compassion fatigue and those within which it has the potential to manifest; some of these factors include motives for volunteering, organizational factors, and the individual's subjective well-being, with many of these factors intersecting at specific points. Understanding the multiple areas in which compassion fatigue appears may give a glimpse into understanding the true limit of selflessness that the volunteer possesses.

Motives for Volunteering

Generally, the terms "intrinsic", "extrinsic", and "empirical" are used to categorize the different motives for volunteering. Intrinsic motives pertain to primary rewards, such as enjoying helping others, feeling important to others, and overall a better outlook on the self. Extrinsic motives benefit the self in secondary ways such as monetary, social, or occupational; there is less of an interest in benefiting others, instead focusing heavily on the ways one's status may be positively affected. Finally, empirically

motivated volunteers tend to only be interested in the benefits of the performed studies or research.

With these terms defined, the conversation can more easily be understood.

People who are more extrinsically oriented benefit less from volunteering than people who put more importance on intrinsic life goals (Meier & Stutzer, 2006). If one is primarily motivated to enhance his or her future career, it is likely that this individual lacks other motives and is thus less likely to volunteer (Handy et al., 2010). Volunteers with extrinsic motivations have expectations of added personal benefits; thus, they might find their tasks less useful, and therefore less satisfactory, and of less value and interest (Moreno-Jimenez & Hidalgo, 2010). Hence, extrinsic motivations predicted higher levels of compassion fatigue.

Organizational Factors

Factors pertaining to occupational and corporational needs also are considered in the discussion of compassion fatigue, and it is also in this conversation where formal (organization-based) and informal (outside of organizations) volunteering are discussed, for charities and organizations differ in location, capacity, accessibility, and goals. Regarding the model of volunteering, while a statistically insignificant association between formal volunteering hours and wellbeing was found, an increase in the number of hours spent volunteering informally is associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing was discovered (Appau & Churchill, 2018). It can be implied that formal volunteering, with its insignificant association with individual wellbeing, is associated with greater chances for compassion fatigue.

On an organizational level, there could be many reasons for this. Role ambiguity was associated with poor outcomes, as were certain tasks; managers can work to mitigate the effects of this by, for

example, ensuring role clarity, giving clear instructions, providing feedback and support, and preparing workers for the lack of control beforehand (Brooks et al., 2016). Togetherness in the workplace also affects well-being, therefore burnout. Hence, training them concerning the ways in which combined efforts can increase their effectiveness could reduce the potential for volunteers to become overwhelmed by problems they might face in intensive service and promote teamwork (Cheek, Piercy & Kohlenberg, 2015). Training and preparedness for potentially traumatic experiences has also been noted. Many studies found that provision of pre-disaster training and information enabled individuals to be emotionally and cognitively ready for the realities of what they may face, leading to better wellbeing outcomes (Brooks et al., 2016). These results highlight that integration in the organization—where volunteers accept and understand their role, have good relationships with other volunteers, and are committed to carry on with their role—may inhibit the burnout process (Moreno-Jimenez & Hidalgo, 2010). Determining how individuals decide to volunteer, as it relates to the studied expectations of burnout, may contribute to the understanding of the selfless volunteer.

Individual Subjective Wellbeing

Scattered throughout this conversation is the topic of wellbeing and life satisfaction, for it plays a crucial role in the prediction of compassion fatigue in the volunteer. It seems that no matter what the statistics show, there is a positive association between volunteering/charity and subjective wellbeing (Appau & Churchill, 2018). However, within the lens of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, people who put more emphasis on extrinsic goals than on intrinsic goals are less satisfied with life (Meier & Stutzer, 2006). As extrinsically motivated individuals are more likely to volunteer under formal organizations, research has identified lack of time, lack of interest, health and social network and

capital as possible barriers in explaining this (Appau & Churchill, 2018). Poor individual wellbeing, aligned with both motivation and organizational factors, are predicting factors of compassion fatigue.

There have been many preventative measures taken to heighten wellbeing in the face of compassion fatigue. At the individual level, the most promising trend was for the effectiveness of interventions involving an element focused on teaching and/or bolstering resilience, all of which showed improvement in burnout, and two of which demonstrated a reduction in secondary traumatic stress and burnout, and an improvement in compassion satisfaction (Cocker & Joss, 2016). On an organizational level, many issues concerning volunteer safety, social togetherness, acknowledgement, and more have been brought to attention that may ensure a stronger sense of wellbeing. Managers should ensure that employees are trained in safety measures beforehand and know which precautions to take, and also that all safety equipment is of adequate quality (Brooks et al., 2016). In terms of social integration, support from the organization negatively predicted the exhaustion component of burnout, suggesting that support from the organization's members in the context of "support in overall life" is important for volunteers. This shows the need for participants to have a personal relationship with workers and managers in the organization (Moreno-Jimenez & Hidalgo, 2010). Clearly there is a growing concern for volunteer wellbeing, and the prediction and prevention of when and where burnout occurs can offer insight to how the mind of the volunteer works pre, during, and post-compassion fatigue.

Conclusion

Compassion fatigue is a psychological issue that many volunteers face when put on the front lines of disaster relief, health care emergencies, and other physically taxing duties, both locally run or

government-funded, and based on characteristics involving motivation, organizational factors, and subjective individual wellbeing, it may be possible to predict and therefore prevent compassion fatigue in volunteers before they have long-standing psychological consequences. The literature effectively surveyed, plotted, and analyzed the data that garnered these conclusions in the various topics discussed, paving a healthy step forward into what I aim to understand; the minds of the volunteers who continue to volunteer despite the risk of compassion fatigue. Someone like myself may have their entire lives and perspectives changed by just a single volunteer trip that just beckons them to return to servicing as soon as they muster up even an ounce of free time. The newfound understanding of compassion fatigue, its predictability within specific sects of volunteering in regards to motivation, organizational factors and wellbeing, will hopefully guide me to a better understanding of this; in a volunteering world, moments can become really heavy, really quickly. Volunteers working far from home may be hindered further by feelings of being trapped or stuck. Despite this, volunteers actively come back to perform the jobs necessary in potentially guaranteeing a better future for harshly impacted groups and communities around the world. With this lens of risk factor, I can't help but ask myself what keeps people coming back nowadays.

Method

Materials

The methods and materials I'm using to conduct my research are rather standard. I used the internet to find myself at Google Docs, where I began searching via key terms related to my research question. Various articles turned up which required much sifting through and analyzing before

determining whether the article was conducive to my research. Ten articles fit the bill, from which I handwritten in a journal notes both individually about each article and correlations between multiple articles. Without wasting printer paper, I gathered each downloaded PDF of each article and sifted through them again, making sure to digitally highlight the important sections for fast thumbnailing in the future. With handwritten syntheses and digitally marked articles, I felt prepared to embark on the project of organizing my studies within an academic setting.

Procedure

This research was completed via library research. As defined by the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, library research involves the step-by-step process used to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project (2018). This is synonymous with how this project was tackled; to understand the specific scopes of the topic I'm researching, I searched key terms such as "compassion fatigue", "selflessness in volunteering", and "post-traumatic growth" into the Google Docs search bar and began to analyze studies while also searching for primary sources. I made sure topics correlated with one another, an example being the research of compassion as a subject and then compassion as it relates to volunteering, for modern studies of compassion may shed light into relevant questions pertaining to compassion fatigue, volunteering, and overall the continual drive individuals feel to volunteer despite the potential for compassion fatigue. The research I mainly focused on pertained to studies regarding compassion, empathy, compassion fatigue, post-traumatic growth, and subsequently nitpicking through articles that discuss these topics in relation to high-intensity volunteering. Through these topics, I feel as though the knowledge gained will ultimately uncover my main research topic: why do people continue to volunteer in relation to the risk of trauma and the

witnessing of trauma. Research was conducted throughout the majority of April into early May of 2021.

Results

Altruistic Motivations and Transformations

Simply put, *altruism* is when we act to promote someone else's welfare, even at a risk or cost to ourselves. Conversations about altruism are synonymous with the action of volunteering; one of the important aspects of human altruism is long-term and organized activity for the benefit of others, that is, formal volunteering. Not every act of volunteering is altruistic and not every altruistic act is volunteering, but the connection between the two concepts is so strong that one cannot speak of the one without the other (Haski-Leventhal, 2009). In a study centered around student motivations to volunteer, students around the world agreed more strongly with altruistic reasons as their motivations to volunteer than any other motivations (Handy et al, 2010). Furthermore, volunteers who are intrinsically motivated find more meaning in the activities they perform, therefore experiencing lower levels of burnout (Moreno-Jimenez & Hidalgo, 2010). This finding is telling, for it explains what students most commonly believe about volunteer activity: it is to help others at a personal cost to themselves (Handy et al, 2010). A surveyed group of volunteers who served in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita further demonstrate altruistic motivations cultivating meaning in the activities they performed; all respondents reported that doing volunteer work at the disaster sites was a meaningful experience, and most reported that this experience had a profound impact on them and that it caused them to reflect on what was meaningful in their own life, noting that while they had been

aware of some stress reactions initially, having found the experience so meaningful seemed to mitigate the stress reaction (Clukey, 2010).

Post-Traumatic Growth

It is commonplace to assume that post-traumatic stress is a negative association of dealing with emotionally taxing, physically dangerous, or otherwise intensely overwhelming circumstances and events. Tedeschi and Calhoun, however, sought to flip this narrative and investigate the potential long-term benefits of dealing with trauma, coining the term *post-traumatic growth*, and with their original conception of the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI), an instrument in measuring this phenomenon is now realized, donning five categories in Relating to Others, New Possibilities, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change, and Appreciation of Life. While it may be impossible to process Clukey's research directly through the PTGI, it is clear that her reports are evidence of post-traumatic growth; here is a brief excerpt of her study that highlights the traumas experienced by the volunteers in explicit, vivid detail:

Feelings of shock and grief were identified by most of the informants as common emotional reactions to observing the extent of the devastation and loss. They described how extensive and complete the destruction was. Participants reported: 'You can see it on TV but until you go there and see some of the devastation and the power of water and wind. . .' and 'There were a lot of questions [like] why some people lived.'...Grief was borne of compassion for families that lost everything. Workers related stories of serving food to victims while hearing sad stories about loss of friends and memories of watching dead bodies of neighbours floating past them in the water. Informants reported having talked to people who had no clothes to wear, had lost everything and were now dealing with infections and sores as a result of standing in fetid water for long periods of time. (Clukey, 2010)

In the face of this aforementioned trauma, a common experience of all respondents was that providing services was a life-changing experience. All but one respondent reported that they would

return again. The one respondent who would not consider returning had found the fatigue after service so profound and thus no longer felt in possession of the physical stamina necessary to provide services in the future (Clukey, 2010). Despite this study not having direct correlation to post-traumatic growth, there does exist data of disaster relief experiences that has in fact been run through the PTSI, focusing on medical student volunteers aiding in the relief of the “triple disaster” (earthquake, tsunami, nuclear accident) that occurred in Fukushima, Japan during March of 2011 (3/11). Many students reported witnessing the events of 3/11 in person, which may have further fueled their desire to jump onto the volunteer project; bearing witness to such destruction of the confines of your own environment may place a personal point of interest in the project. The results were very clear that post-traumatic growth plays a hand in the experiencing of traumatic experiences; in the month prior to the administration of the [post-volunteer] survey, volunteers were less likely to feel guilty than non-volunteers. These findings underscore that the act of volunteering can have a lasting positive effect, boosting students’ confidence levels. The findings from the PTGI reinforce this: there was a positive correlation between the number of volunteer activities a student was involved in and the likelihood of experiencing growth, particularly in the realm of Personal Strength (Anderson et al., 2015).

Discussion

Throughout the country, volunteers work with congregations, charities, and other nonprofit organizations to provide needed services of all types to people and communities. However, while people, communities, and organizations all rely on the work provided by volunteers, volunteering also generates indirect positive benefits for communities and for volunteers themselves (Grimm & Dietz,

2018). These benefits have been broadly researched throughout the years, and they do serve a purpose in the findings of this study. However, my aim was to shift the focus from general analyses of the benefits of volunteering to looking at these benefits of volunteering with a specific lens regarding the potential threats of compassion fatigue, incorporating conversations about resilience and growth and anything else that may be relevant to this conversation. It is clear that despite the awareness of danger, trauma, grief, and sadness, the majority of volunteers seemed unperturbed by this and will continue to volunteer anyway. While it's not to be understated the real potential for the development of disorders post-trauma, it is worthy to discuss and answer the question of the benefits of volunteer as it pertains to the importance of the practice; volunteering makes up an indeterminable amount of the labor performed in the world, and with most of the work costing, potentially time-extensive, and more often than not unpaid, there are valid reasons not to volunteer. But for those who do, and continue to do so despite these issues, their ways of thinking may be beneficial in many departments of the world that associate themselves with psychology as a whole. As for my hypotheses, I believe they remained consistent to the findings; the results were multi-faceted and complex, and the benefits of trauma is actually a valid discussion. However, I don't believe I learned anything new when it comes to actually answering my question; instead, I gained a new perspective on data that had already been around and known for some time. Many studies have been conducted about benefits of volunteering, and the answers to my question honed back in on these answers.

Motivation remained a strong influence in the success of volunteers. This conclusion has already been a widely regarded fact when it comes to the general conversation about volunteering, but even in my attempt to whittle down the conversation in order to keep within the confines of trauma,

stress, and compassion fatigue, the answers to this conversation remain the same. It seems generally clear that altruistic motivations greatly benefit individuals, very clearly more-so than motivations shrouded in extrinsic values such as money and status. Upon reflecting on my own experience as a volunteer, I see these conclusions as valid. Volunteering for months on end, it becomes hard to maintain a strictly extrinsic motive for being there; even if I were to start volunteering as a means of fortifying my resume, one can't possibly act accordingly in such volatile environments with these sole motivations. There was no money to be gained from the experience, rather a spending of my own money on plane tickets and sustenance. Many of the volunteers—many of them coming in volunteer “groups” from specific places, but many of them also come from many places all around the world—recalled their families and friends who have been in need, their hometowns that have their own communal issues, and even on themselves, reflecting on the times they've received help and appreciated it. These feelings eventually translate into altruism, having personal connections that proceed to bolster the overarching human nature of helping others, even when there are other factors such as money, time, and other social factors. While it's impossible to not think about the extrinsic positives volunteering comes with, it's no surprise that altruism and intrinsic motivation remains the top reason why people are motivated to volunteer.

It was a surprise to enter the conversation of post-traumatic stress and begin to discuss benefits instead of negatives. Volunteering in disaster relief, medical responses, and other front lines that deal with direct trauma is a daunting venture that has its fair share of associated post-traumatic stresses, but there is a significant percentage of volunteers who actually benefit greatly from the experienced trauma. Clukey's recount of the experiences had in response to the devastating Hurricanes of Rita and Katrina

proved to be some of the most telling evidence of this, having volunteers undergo such trauma from an event that was highly publicly broadcasted and come out with a new lease on life. These new perspectives, this new appreciation for things that may have gone underappreciated before such as health, the health of your social circle, and overall security in the not-bad things in life, and the motivation to continue to do volunteer projects like this in the future are significant not only in the discussion of volunteering, but also in many other facets of life in which traumatic experience plays a crucial role.

Limitations

There were many limitations to my research. The most prominent of these limitations was the lack of access to survey-related data and the effects of COVID-19; although I could have acquired special allowance to survey conduction via in-advance request, this was a shot in the dark. I also considered conducting a survey in a world riddled by a pandemic, specifically nearly a year since the closures of volunteer organizations and other large congregate efforts around the world. Whether this amount of time would have affected my hypothetical survey in a relevant way is debatable; on one hand, a freshly released volunteer may have real, raw feelings about what was just experienced in the line of duty, with vivid and expressive tales of events that had just happened with little chance of misconstruing. On the other hand, a full year out of the practice may act like a metaphorical sieve; the feelings that are the strongest may stick the longest to the volunteer while filtering through potential unimportant or useless information. Other limitations revolved around the lack of data on this specific subject; only recently has discussions about post-traumatic growth as it relates to these fields have emerged, so the need for further research is necessary.

Further Research

Discussing the need for further research is important, and this topic is no exception. Upon conducting the research for this project, I came across a study that outlines a potential fallacy in the discussion of compassion fatigue, a commonplace in the discussion of the negative aftermaths of volunteering. In this study, the topic of empathetic distress is explored and how it often coincides with compassion fatigue. To begin, the comparison of empathy and compassion is frequent, but different: in short, empathy is the ability to feel others' pains and feelings via the pains and feelings we've suffered ourselves, while compassion rests as the warm feelings and motivations we have towards helping others. This difference is important to understand, for what may have been deemed as "compassion fatigue" may actually be what is called "empathetic distress". Empathetic distress is the strong aversive and self-oriented response to the suffering of others, accompanied by the desire to withdraw from a situation in order to protect one's self from excessive negative feelings. Chronic depletion of dopamine from repeated episodes of empathetic distress is what leads to burnout, characterized in health care professionals as emotional exhaustion, withdrawal, depersonalization, and a decreased sense of personal accomplishment due to work-related stress (Dowling, 2018). Hence, because compassion generates positive emotions, it counteracts negative effects of empathy elicited by experiencing others' suffering. Even with short periods of compassion training, participants continue to feel empathy for the suffering of others, but gain the capacity to feel positive emotions without feeling distress (Dowling, 2018). With the roles of empathetic distress and compassion fatigue becoming somewhat enhanced with more modern approaches to problems, it may be a good idea to revisit some of the studies shown in this research with this new lens of understanding.

The topic of post-traumatic growth also may need to be further discussed. While the idea of trauma potentially lending itself to benefits in one's future is interesting, there are a few caveats; due to the PTGI being an interview-based study that calls on the self-reflection and identification of its subjects in the aftermath of adversity, there may exist potential problems. Retrospective self-perceived measures such as the PTGI may reflect meaningful personality change to some degree but also maladaptive reality distortions, selective appraisals, coping strategies, personality characteristics, ways of explaining emotion levels, reflections of people's implicit theories of change, and beliefs that their past selves were worse than they actually were (Tennen & Affleck, 2009). Therefore, there may be needed an assessment of post-traumatic growth that optimizes in specific sects, or perhaps one that simply addresses these potential issues. Lastly, however, further research will be needed if one would like to delve deeper into specific areas of volunteers, for this conversation is rather broad and wide-reaching; there isn't much discussion surrounding gender, age, race, and class backgrounds, which may indeed crack open more facets of this conversation if explored more in depth.

Conclusion

Volunteering has been something I've deemed a quintessential aspect of my life since 2017, when I embarked on my first volunteer trip. I learned a lot about myself in these years since, but when reflecting even further, I realized that I actually had no idea why I liked to volunteer nor did I have a honed-in understanding of the implications of these feelings. This ultimately led to my question and ultimately my research, which partially answered this question for me. I love what I do because I have a vast majority of altruistic motivations and outlooks on life, which I've always had. This lends to the

beautiful pairing of my personality with this line of work, which was a concept I never knew held relevance to the psychological conversation of volunteering and its implications. I'm proud of this research, which holds much significance in the world today as trauma due to COVID-19, political and civil unrest, and all of the implications of these problems have shifted the landscape of the country. With vaccines being readily available in such a short amount of time due in part to the presence of readily willing participants, countless of essential workers in various fields who risked their livelihood to keep the country from truly collapsing, and hospitals becoming places of unfathomable grief, tragedy, hardship, panic, and trauma, I feel like many millions of people became volunteers over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, whether they realize this or not. The conversation of trauma, burnout, and fatigue may inevitably change drastically due to these factors, but it can become an extraordinary thing if we as humans are able to gather research from this extremely trying and unanimously shared time.

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