The Effect of Social Network Size on the Perspectives of Volunteering

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This study aims to determine the effect of social network size on the perspectives of volunteering. Three hundred and five volunteers who participated in both informal and formal community activities in rural communities of five sub-districts in Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Province, Thailand, were included in this study. These participants were divided into three groups of social network size: small, medium, and large. The perspectives of volunteering were assessed by four dependent variables: individual values, community benefit, place attachment, and social inclusion. This study used multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for analyses. The findings indicate that individual values, place attachment, and social inclusion were significantly affected by the social network size. The comparison between the small and the large social network size shows that it had a statistically significant effect on the perspectives of volunteering. The creation of social networks can promote voluntary work in rural communities.

Key words: *Volunteering, social network, individual values, community benefit, place attachment, and social inclusion.*

Introduction

In Thailand, the movement and growth of people in voluntary activities occurred during in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, that inspired individuals to participate in voluntary activities to help support tsunami victims and enhanced the collaborations in various sectors, such as public, private, and civil society (International Association for Volunteer Effort, 2019). However, the number of people volunteering has risen once again in the last few years because there has been the King's Private Offices to establish the Royal Initiative Volunteers in paying tribute to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej Rama IX and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit for their contributions to the Thai nation (The Bureau of the Royal Household, 2019).

The Royal Initiative Volunteers Project aims to promote national harmony and happiness among the people.

According to the voluntary activities, individuals can offer and obtain assistance across socioeconomic backgrounds based on their social networks that play a crucial role in helping people in their immediate networks (Hawkins & Maurer, 2009). Especially when communities have a diverse volunteer pool, social networks are enable to extend very more extensively into society (Van Overbeeke et al., 2017). Volunteering is significantly related with social networks in many studies (Ajrouch, Antonucci & Webster, 2016; Southby & South, 2016; Cramm & Nieboer, 2015; Wilson, 2012; Paik & Navarre-Jackson, 2011; Degli Antoni, 2009; Lee & Brudney, 2009; Schneider, 2009; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Many volunteers are unified in their interactions and their dependence on others to give each other access to useful resources or help with personal problems (Kadushin, 2012). However, volunteers have to practise different approaches to building and maintaining their social networks (Lu et al., 2009).

However, little research has explored the impact of social network size of volunteers. In many studies, the differences in volunteer age, sex, and race account for the differences in self-understanding, human capital, and social resources (Wilson, 2000). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of the size of the social network on the perspectives of volunteering. It draws from a variety of concepts and previous empirical evidence. This study proposes and tests four key hypotheses concerning the size of the social network on the perspectives of volunteering.

Literature Review
Perspectives of Volunteering

This study focuses on four main perspectives: individual values, community benefit, place attachment, and social inclusion, which are divided into two levels; at the individual level and the community level. At the individual level, individual values might motivate volunteering in community services and activities. On the other hand, the community level includes community benefit, place attachment, and social inclusion that may encourage individuals to participate in community services and activities. This section draws upon existing research in various fields of the study of volunteering to develop a conceptual framework for the study. It starts at the individual level and moves to the community level.

The Individual Level
Individual values

Meier and Stutzer (2008) propose that voluntary work can positively influence the well-being of individuals, based on the study of Menchik and Weissbrod, for several reasons. These explanations are: 1) voluntary work promotes personal well-being, as helping others gives an intrinsic benefit, and 2) not inherently voluntary work, but volunteering is an instrument through which their usefulness improves, and which provides an external reward. People hold volunteer values, and these beliefs influence the willingness of individuals to work (Rochester et al., 2016).

According to the explanation by Rochester and colleagues (2016), four main sets of values have a significant impact on voluntary work. First, the idea of altruism or charity relies on the moral imperative of kindness or caring towards others. Second, the notion of solidarity represents a sense of community or society association, including a commitment to contributing to the good of the group and the other participants. Third, reciprocity is a concept that helping others can contribute to their return if necessary, in some way and for some time. Last, the ideals of fairness and social justice are based on the idea that inequality and injustice are ethically and socially unacceptable to remove such inequities.

Furthermore, Wilson (2012) states that volunteers have a more favourable feeling because they have more friendship networks, but that benefit may be on the encouragement of volunteers. Regarding Degli Antoni's (2009) research, extrinsic motivation is a fundamental element that influences an individual's decision to become a volunteer; in particular, the desire to be of service to others. Thus, individuals can add value not only for themselves in voluntary work such as enhancing self-development, self-esteem, and social skills, but also for communities such as promoting social equality and building social networks.

The Community Level
Community benefit

The United Nations Development Program (2003) shows that voluntary action has a significant social benefit. The voluntary action also forms a network that enhances social standards and encourages a sense of belonging and public accountability. Generally, volunteers freely spend their time to benefit others (Wilson & Musick, 1997). There are three main universal voluntary principles: 1) actions are free and without coercion; 2) financial gains are not the primary motivating principle, and 3) beneficiaries other than volunteers are available (United Nations Development Programme, 2003). Volunteering is vital to promote civic engagement, social inclusion, community participation, and ownership of development outcomes. In practice, volunteering encourages individuals, groups, and organisations to take

root in communities (United Nations Volunteers, 2018). Therefore, voluntary action can provide benefits to people in the community that people receive and give assistance to others across their socio-economic backgrounds, promote community participation and help within the community.

Place Attachment

The place attachment or sense of place is described as a positive emotional relation to familiar places, which are correlated with the duration of the stay and have social and physical substructure, leading finally to individual and collective action (Clarke, Murphy & Lorenzoni, 2018; Devine-Wright, 2009). Through social connections and interactions, people can develop a sense of place that builds significance and identity (Larson, De Freitas & Hicks, 2013). Volunteering about places may happen in various forms, for example, through certain kinds of organisational communities or networks (Wiles & Jayasinha, 2013). According to a study by Amsden, Stedman, and Kruger (2013), volunteers build unique position significances based on their experiences, such as the activities in which they participate, the organisations in which they are involved, or the combinations of them. The place attachment, therefore, enhances a sense of community belonging that is a powerful resource of motivation for civic engagement in community activities to improve better community outcomes in the long term.

Social Inclusion

Within the context of voluntary work, social inclusion ensures that volunteers should engage in community groups that are disadvantaged, which come from political, economic, and social systems so that their voices can be heard (United Nations Volunteers, 2018). Volunteering is a primary tool for promoting social inclusion because it offers potential avenues for people to discover a way out of isolation. For instance, volunteering offers everyone the opportunity to take part in and play influential roles in their communities by using their skills and ability to fight discrimination regarding economic status, sexual orientation, lack of education, and poor health (United Nations Volunteers, 2014). Volunteering thus creates acceptance and inclusion of diversity in communities and improves social capital in the community by volunteering, which strengthens bridges between diverse groups and creates a more inclusive society in the long term (Miller et al., 2011).

Social Network and Volunteering

The social network represents an essential element of social capital in the voluntary world, which is seen as a powerful resource for fostering engagement, collaboration, and trust (Ajrouch, Antonucci & Webster, 2016; Andronic, 2014; Schneider, 2009). The organisations

recruit volunteers to utilise the social networks of their members (Andronic, 2014). Grant (2001) suggests dividing social capital into two types of relationships–horizontal and vertical–that are created from different resources. Horizontal relationships relate to social support between community members, families, employers, friends, and neighbours. Vertical relations–a hierarchical system–, by contrast, relate to interactions between communities and institutions.

These relationships not only create the social fabric of communities, but they also contribute to the development of community development strategies. In exchange, social networks improve volunteer work by encouraging principles of general reciprocity, inspiring people to trust, and growing their credibility (Wilson & Musick, 1997). Ajrouch, Antonucci, and Webster (2016) believe, based on voluntary literature, that social networks are typically calculated by affiliation, group linkages, and frequency of contacts. Wilson and Musick's (1997) study shows that people who have a vast social network based on their household numbers have a higher likelihood of a positive impact on voluntary work. Similarly, the 2015 study by Cramm and Nieboer indicates that social capital is correlated with participation in formal voluntary work. People with high levels of social capital have a greater chance of volunteering because they have more contact with various individuals and organisations that offer volunteer opportunities (Southby & South, 2016).

These previous research results are in line with Lee and Brudney (2009)'s clarification that people with a high level of social embedding and trust tend to believe that each other is cooperative and can share the advantages of other volunteers. Thus, people who feel socially engaged in their communities are more likely than people who do not feel the advantages of volunteering. Wilson (2012) interpret Lee and Brudney's description of social relations between individuals making a difference in voluntary work, because people tend to meet other volunteers when they are socially integrated or socially connected with a broad array of diverse others and feel others will share their desire to volunteer. Wilson (2012) also proposes two aspects of the role of the social network in volunteering. First of all, social resources influence voluntary work based on the nature of the task. For example, social ties with volunteers already provide an excellent opportunity to volunteer if the work requires significant involvement. Second, diverse and heterogeneous social networks do not contribute to volunteerism but rely on social interactions within the network. For example, people are asked to volunteer by close friends or relatives and are referred to as social ties which connects social ties while bridging social links, for example, they are of the highest importance when volunteers take the initiative to contact a volunteer organisation (Ajrouch, Antonucci & Webster, 2016; Kadushin, 2012; Grant, 2001).

Social networks can integrate social cohesion and support into the communities through voluntary work because communities are shaped by the agency of the talented individuals

that connect with others (Kadushin, 2012). Kadushin (2012) asserts that people close to each other have a higher likelihood of having the same characteristics, values, and social status, and a supporting network. It is, however, very different if people are strangers to each other. Therefore, volunteering through a social network does not only support unsuited communities but also includes those who do not volunteer (Miller, Simpson & Lieben, 2011).

In this study, the conceptual framework represents a proposed model to examine the effect of social network size on the perspectives of volunteering. As figure 1, the social network size is divided into three sizes: small, medium, and large, which is expected to have an impact on the perspectives of volunteering. For the perspectives of volunteering, they are classified into two levels, which are the individual level (e.g., individual values) and the community level (e.g., community benefit, place attachment, and social inclusion).

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study
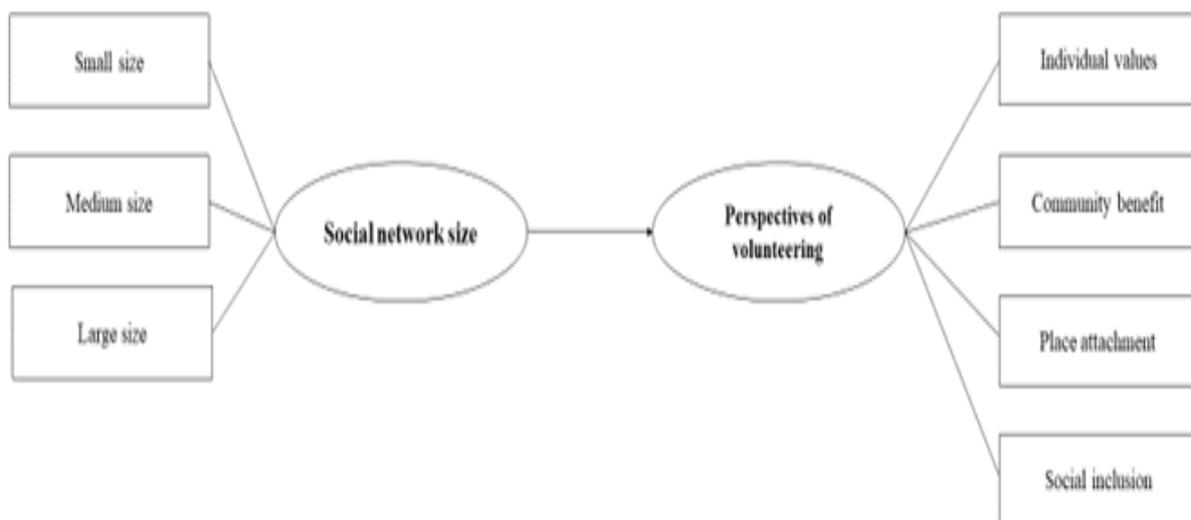
Hypotheses of the study

This study has four main assumptions relating to the effect of social network size (the independent variable) on the perspectives of volunteering (the combined dependent variables). The MANOVA procedure allows this study to test hypotheses for all four dependent variables at once.

Hypothesis 1: The social network size affects the perspectives of volunteering.
Hypothesis 2: There are no differences between the small size of social network and the medium size of social network on the perspectives of volunteering
Hypothesis 3: There are differences between the small size of social network and the large size of social network on the perspectives of volunteering

Hypothesis 4: There are no differences between the medium size of social network and the large size of social network on the perspectives of volunteering

Research Methodology
Study Area

This study was conducted in rural communities of five sub-districts in Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Province, Thailand (See Figure 2). These rural communities of five sub-districts were representative of various economic factors such as agriculture, handwoven basketry products and accessories, fisheries, and homestay hospitality, to promote local economic development in their areas. The sub-district A has a population of 6,442, with 60% of people working in an agricultural sector and a mix of employment options such as manufacturing, services, and retails. The sub-district B has various groups of small enterprises such as a handicraft group, a carved wood group, and a bakery group. Handicraft products from the sub-districts B have received the provincial star "One Tambon (meaning sub-district) One product" to ensure the local product quality. This sub-district B has a current population of approximately 9,145. Most people in the sub-district C work in the agricultural sector and are employed in services and retail. The current population of sub-district C is 11,187. The sub-district D has a current population of approximately 4,129, with most people working in an agricultural sector such as farmers. The sub-district E has a population of approximately 3,593, with the majority of people working as farmers. Besides, both the sub-district D and E have promoted the homestay hospitality in their areas to expand their economic development (Department of Local Administration, 2019).

Figure 2. Rural communities of five sub-districts in Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Province

No. 9 = Sub-district A
No. 8 = Sub-district B
No. 7 = Sub-district C
No. 13 = Sub-district D
No. 14 = Sub-district E

Source: Adapted from Map of Nong Khai Sub-District, Nong Khai Province

Participants

The total number of participants in this study was 305 volunteers that were generated through participating in both formal and informal agencies for community services and activities. They were randomly selected from rural communities of five sub-districts in Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Province, Thailand. (See Table 1). Of these, 215 (70.5%) were females, while 90 (29.5%) were males (See Table 1). Almost 40% were 46 – 55 years old (N = 120, 39.3%), followed by 56 – 65 years (N = 103, 33.8%). A majority of the participants completed education at a primary school level (N = 102, 38.7%), followed by a high school level (N = 102, 33.4%). There were 82.6% (N = 252) married participants, followed by 7.2 % (N = 22) single and 7.2 % (N = 22) divorced. The average length of residency in a community was 46.4 years (SD = 14.15). Most these participants were farmers 75.7% (N = 231), followed by housewives 9.2 % (N = 28). The average monthly salary was 5,188.06 THB (SD = 8096.04).

Table 1: Participant distribution in five sub-districts in Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Province

Sub-district*	Males (N=90)	Females (N=215)	Total (N=305)
Sub-district A	18 (20.0%)	43 (20.0%)	61 (20.0%)
Sub-district B	20 (22.2%)	41 (19.1%)	61 (20.0%)
Sub-district C	16 (17.8%)	47 (21.9%)	63 (20.7%)
Sub-district D	11 (12.2%)	49 (22.8%)	60 (19.7%)
Sub-district E	25 (27.8%)	35 (16.3%)	60 (19.7%)
Total	90 (100.0%)	215 (100.0%)	305 (100.0%)

** The name of each district represented in the table is an acronym.

Measure

The study consisted of the combined variables and the groups of the independent variables to test the effect of social network size on the perspectives of volunteering. The combined variables included the four dependent variables representing perspectives of volunteering: individual values, community attachment, community benefit, and social inclusion. The independent variable represented the three different groups of social network size: small, medium, and large size.

The Combined Dependent Variables

The combined dependent variables included the four perspectives of volunteering in this study (See Table 2).

1. Individual values index: this perspective focused on the values of individuals volunteering for working in community services and activities. The individual values contained the six measured items using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the six measured items of the individual values was 0.666. The index of individual values based on the six measured items had a mean score of 4.500 (SD = 0.402).

2. Community benefit index: this perspective focused on all benefits from volunteering toward community development in the future, such as community problems, which were solved by working together. The community benefit consisted of the five measured items with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.790. The index of community benefit based on the five measured items had an average 4.316 (SD = 0.470).

3. Place attachment index: this perspective highlighted the reflections on the place attachment of volunteers such as community sentiment and social bonds. The community attachment included the six measured items using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). The index of community attachment with the six measured items had an average score of 4.600 (SD = 0.423), with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.826.

4. Social inclusion index: this perspective concentrated on bringing disadvantaged individuals or groups in the community to participate in community services and activities. Furthermore, it was against discrimination in the community based on age, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic level. The social inclusion consisted of the six measured items using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the six measured items of social inclusion was 0.838, with an average score for the index of social inclusion was 4.281 (SD = 0.517).

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the perspectives of volunteering by individual measured items

Variables	N	M	SD
Individual values index (accumulated with six measured items)	305	4.500	0.402
- Increase a sense of pride and value	305	4.660	0.564
- Develop skills and capability	305	4.310	0.673
- Enhance morale and ethical behaviour	305	4.490	0.634
- See their parents' role modeling as a voluntary behaviour	305	4.370	0.801
- Promote beneficiaries in the community	305	4.500	0.703
- Feel good and happy	305	4.680	0.528
Community benefit index (accumulated with five measured items)	305	4.316	0.470
- Promote self-reliance in the community	305	4.390	0.685
- Increase a livable community	305	4.400	0.594
- Solve community problems	305	4.160	0.594
- Feel sympathy to other people in the community	305	4.210	0.665
- Promote community collaborations for great benefits	305	4.420	0.644
Place attachment (accumulated with six measured items)	305	4.600	0.423
- Show appreciation for and to return kindness to the community	305	4.480	0.639
- Strengthen social bonds in the community	305	4.670	0.543
- Boost a better community development	305	4.660	0.546
- Belong to the community	305	4.570	0.581
- To be a good role model for future generations	305	4.640	0.558
- Enhance the feeling of responsibility for the community and the values of civil society	305	4.580	0.580
Social inclusion index (accumulated with six measured items)	305	4.281	0.517
- Decrease inequality and differences	305	4.180	0.676
- Create acceptance of the community	305	4.490	0.608
- Promote equality in the community	305	4.280	0.702
- Bring excluded or marginalized groups back to the community	305	4.080	0.748
- Reduce the discrimination regards to sexual orientation, race, religion	305	4.250	0.778
- Promote social inclusion in the community	305	4.410	0.653

The Independent Variable

The independent variable was the three social network sizes. This independent variable was recoded from a dichotomous scale, which was an original scale. In order to recode a new scale, the ten measured items related to both formal and informal agencies which volunteers participated in, were counted as 1 = participate, and 0 = not participate. All responses were

counted as the number of social networks participated in, which was divided into three groups: if individuals volunteered in 1 to 3 agencies, the social network was counted as a small; 4 to 6 agencies as a medium; and 7 to 10 agencies as a large. The descriptive statistics show that the highest proportion of social network size was the medium (N = 137, 44.9%), then small (N = 132, 43.3%), followed by large (N = 36, 11.8) (See Table 3).

Table 3: The social network by size

Social network size	N	Percentage (%)
Small size	132	43.3
Medium size	137	44.9
Large size	36	11.8
Total	305	100.0

** *Social network size here is measured by participating in both informal and formal agencies for community services and activities.*

Data Analysis

This analysis used the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test the effect of social network size on the perspectives of volunteering. Also, descriptive statistics were analysed for all variables. A total of 305 participants ensured that there were no missing data in any of the four dependent variables, and the group design factor was conducted in this analysis. Data are expressed in Table 4 as the mean and standard deviations. The groups of social network size: small, medium, and large had a higher score in their community attachment perspective (M = 4.509, SD = 0.438; M = 4.640, SD = 0.414; M = 4.782, SD = 0.038, respectively). The mean score for three groups of social network size for community attachment perspective was greater than other perspectives, M = 4.600, SD = 0.423 (See Table 4).

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of the perspectives of volunteering for the social network size used in the MANOVA

Perspectives	Small (N=132)		Medium (N=137)		Large (N = 36)		Total (305)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Individual values index	4.437	0.442	4.513	0.356	4.685	0.356	4.501	0.402
Community benefit index	4.256	0.516	4.345	0.435	4.428	0.398	4.316	0.470
Community attachment index	4.509	0.438	4.640	0.414	4.782	0.308	4.600	0.423
Social inclusion index	4.184	0.535	4.319	0.511	4.495	0.385	4.281	0.517

Results

The analysis of this study used the MANOVA to examine the effect of social network size on the combined variables of perspectives of volunteering. Preliminary assumptions checking show that there was no multicollinearity issue and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices as assessed by Box's M test ($p > 0.001$). The results from SPSS are presented in Table 5. Wilks'Λ indicates that the combined dependent variables were significantly affected by the groups of social network size, with a multivariate $F(8,598) = 2.355$, $p < 0.05$. Results indicate that a small association with the groups of social network size and the combined dependent variables partial $\eta^2 = 0.031$.

Table 5: The MANOVA results

Effect	Test statistic	Value	F	df	Sig. (p)	Partial η^2
Social network size	Pillai's Trace	0.060	2.335	8, 600	0.018	.030
	Wilks' Lambda	0.940	2.355	8 , 598	0.017*	.031
	Hotelling's Trace	0.064	2.375	8, 596	0.016	.031
	Roy's Largest Root	0.060	4.48	4 , 300	0.002	.056

*Note: * P < 0.05*

Follow-up univariate ANOVA indicates that three perspectives of volunteering including individual values ($F(2, 302) = 5.692$, $p < 0.05$; partial $\eta^2 = 0.036$), community attachment ($F(2, 302) = 7.326$, $p < 0.05$; partial $\eta^2 = 0.046$), and social inclusion ($F(2, 302) = 5.958$, $p < 0.05$; partial $\eta^2 = 0.038$) were statistically significantly different between the volunteers from different social network size (See Table 6).

Table 6: The Univariate ANOVA results

Effect	Dependent variables	F	df	Sig. (p)	Partial η^2
Social network size	Individual values index	5.692	2, 302	0.004*	0.036
	Community benefit index	2.366	2, 302	0.096	0.015
	Community attachment index	7.326	2, 302	0.001*	0.046
	Social inclusion index	5.958	2, 302	0.003*	0.038

*Note: * P < 0.05*

Hotelling's T2 tests were conducted to determine which groups of social network size differed from the perspectives of volunteering. Using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha (0.05/3), the results show that only the pairwise comparison between the small size of social network

and large size of the social network was statistically significant, $(F(4,163) = 3.953, p < 0.016;$ partial $\eta^2 = 0.088$) (See Table 7).

Table 7: The MANOVA results by the pairwise group comparisons of the social network size

Effect	Test statistic	Value	F	df	Sig. (p)	Partial η^2
Small size and medium size	Pillai's Trace	0.025	1.709	4, 264	0.148	0.025
	Wilks' Lambda	0.975	1.709	4, 264	0.148	0.025
	Hotelling's Trace	0.026	1.709	4, 264	0.148	0.025
	Roy's Largest Root	0.026	1.709	4, 264	0.148	0.025
Medium size and large size	Pillai's Trace	0.043	1.885	4, 168	0.115	0.043
	Wilks' Lambda	0.957	1.885	4, 168	0.115	0.043
	Hotelling's Trace	0.045	1.885	4, 168	0.115	0.043
	Roy's Largest Root	0.045	1.885	4, 168	0.115	0.043
Small size and large size	Pillai's Trace	0.088	3.935	4, 163	0.004	0.088
	Wilks' Lambda	0.912	3.935	4, 163	0.004	0.088
	Hotelling's Trace	0.097	3.935	4, 163	0.004*	0.088
	Roy's Largest Root	0.097	3.935	4, 163	0.004	0.088

Using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha (0.05/3), p < 0.016

Discussion

These analyses confirmed the effect of social network size on the perspectives of volunteering. Following *Hypothesis 1*, the size of the social network affects the perspectives of volunteering in terms of individual values, place attachment, and social inclusion. In practice, the social network size, both in formal and informal agencies, is the number of members who promote the perspectives of volunteering. Notably, in the broad social network, the data suggests that the members have higher values on the four perspectives of volunteering than the two other groups because more individuals within the large social networks tend to perceive the benefits of volunteering (Lee & Brudney, 2009).

Furthermore, consistent with *Hypothesis 3*, the results show that those who are in the large social networks are more likely than those in small social networks, to be connected to people and organisations outside the family, which can influence their views of involvement in group activities and events (Wuthnow, 2002; Onyx & Warburton, 2003; Southby & South, 2016). In contrast, the findings show that small networks do not differ from the medium networks in the perspectives of volunteering. These findings support *Hypothesis 2* of this study, as there are no differences between the small social network and the medium social network on the perspectives of volunteering. Likewise, the results confirm *Hypothesis 4* that

the medium network does not differ from the large network in the perspectives of volunteering.

The consideration of each perspective of volunteering is based on two levels: the individual level and the community level. At the individual level, much can be learned from this study about how individuals think about their volunteer work. Volunteers in this study indicate the following rank of individual values from highest to lowest: feels good and happy, increases a sense of pride and value, promotes benefits in the community, enhances moral and ethical behaviour, sees their parents' role modelling as a volunteer behaviour, and develops skills and capability. When asked about volunteering in community activities, they frequently speak in terms of altruistic values and ethical values; "I feel good when I can help others in the community," or "I am happy to see my community improve." For example, individuals volunteer in cleaning up their community or temple without remuneration makes them contribute to altruistic values or motivation to volunteering (Wilson & Musick, 1997). These individual values can inspire volunteering to help others (Meier & Stutzer, 2008; Wilson, 2000). In this study, the size of social network is related to individual values in terms of happiness, self-esteem, and human development – learning new skills, developing personality, and expressing personal values (Andronic, 2014; Chan & Lee, 2006; Omoto & Snyder, 2002; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Therefore, the social network size enhances positive outcomes of volunteering, such as pleasant feelings and happiness in helping and working with others through volunteer activities in the community.

At the community level, the social network size is associated with place attachment and social inclusion. Informal and formal volunteering is conducted on behalf of collective action, and social networks are crucial for overcoming community problems and free-rider problems (Wilson & Musick, 1997). This study indicates that social networks are embedded through friendship networks, organisational memberships, and community membership networks that provide support and share useful information between their members. Social networks enhance trust in each other and promote cooperation and participation to foster collective action (Andronic, 2014; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Volunteering plays a vital role in solving community problems by utilising social networks through interaction between individuals (Adger, 2010).

In communities, community problems need to be solved by community members. Community members, who volunteer their time to work with others to solve community problems through their formal and informal social networks, by opening up pathways for marginalised groups, can achieve social inclusion in the community (United Nations Volunteers, 2014). These volunteers feel grateful bringing all groups of people to participate in community activities as much as they can. Simultaneously, the marginalised groups that

are socially integrated have more chances to become involved in community activities and have a sense of belonging to the community.

Furthermore, social networking between community members can contribute to the attachment to place. The link with the environment increases the quality of social networks between members of the community and a sense of community (Weijs-Perrée et al., 2017). For this study, community members become involved as volunteers to help support their communities and others. They are involved in community activities such as tree planting, clean-up days, and painting school buildings and walls. These community activities are generally place-based, where people work either on their own or with others (Gooch, 2003).

The data reported here suggest that building social networks in terms of bonding (informal) and bridging (formal) networks can promote volunteering in the communities. Most volunteers participate in activities or events, in both informal and formal agencies. As participation in informal agencies, volunteers usually work with their family members, relatives, and close friends as a bonding network. On the other hand, some volunteers work with public officials are a bridging network, because these volunteers are assigned as the subdistrict headman, village headman, or representative of the village committee. These volunteers have a better chance to connect with people beyond their bonding networks to get more significant access to information and resources to help support their communities. When they can become involved in local organisations, these bridging networks enhance their access to useful information and resources. Also, people who are in the large social networks tend to volunteer because they connect with diverse groups of people and organisations that enhance their volunteering (Cramm & Nieboer, 2015; Southby & South, 2016).

Conclusion

The social network size has a significant effect on the perspectives of volunteering in rural communities. The social network is viewed as an essential resource because the social network can change the course of the lives of the volunteers, and enhance their trust with each other by participating in activities. The broader the social network, the higher social capital to strengthen voluntary actions and activities in the community and outside the community. However, this study limits understanding of how some of the social institutions contribute to making connections between volunteers. Thus, further study will explain how volunteers are connected based on social institutions.

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Volume 11, Issue 5, 2020

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