

Motivation and application of general psychology in volunteering



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens others,” wrote Charles Dickens as he touched on the value of volunteerism in his short story *Dr. Marigold* . According to Dr. Mark Snyder, Ph. D., who documents his research on the psychology of volunteering, there are five key motives to volunteer: to satisfy personal values, to help a community concern, to enhance self-esteem, to gain better understanding of others, and to further personal development (Winerman, 2006). In recent weeks in my personal volunteer work, I experienced these forms of motivation first-hand and will describe three in particular: helping a community concern, gaining a better understanding of others, and furthering personal development.

At Citrus Missionary Baptist Church in Inverness, Florida, the congregation practices integrated services, that is, worshippers of all ages attend together. Because of this, there is a community need where caregivers of small children require help during the services so that their worship experience can be more enjoyable. This gives me the opportunity to work with the small children that attend and support young mothers and single caregivers. Specifically, I assist a young mother, who travels an hour to church with two young children, a 6-month old boy and 2-year old girl, as well as, a single grandmother, who is rearing her two grandchildren, a 4-year old boy and a 6-year old girl. Normal attention spans for these ages tend to be shorter than the length of the worship service, so it can be a challenge for both the caregivers and the children to have a positive experience. Because of this, during church meeting times, I sit with these families and aid the caregivers in attending to the needs of multiple children. After and between church services, I supervise outdoor play with this small group of children.

Through this work, I am meeting the community need of childcare in order for the child's caregiver to enjoy a less stressful worship experience and creating a positive association for the child with church attendance.

In my volunteer childcare work I had the opportunity to observe different aspects of psychology, particularly early stages of human growth and development, and as such experienced a second motivator of volunteer work, gaining a better understanding of others, children in this case.

According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, humans go through four stages of cognitive development. The first stage, the sensorimotor stage, includes the ages between newborn and two years old, the second phase, the preoperational stage, includes children from two to seven years old, the third stage, concrete operational stage, covers children between the ages of seven and eleven, and finally the fourth stage, the formal operational stage, describes the developments in people from twelve years old until death (Feldman, 2017). Some of the defining characteristics of this first stage are, an infant defining their world through their movements and sensations, children are learning about the surrounding world through actions known as reflexes, infants learn the basics of " object permanence, and these young ones begin to realize that their actions affect the world around them (Cherry, 2019). Observing the six-month old boy, many of the traits from the sensorimotor stage are apparent. Most noticeable, is the quality of understanding " object permanence." When his " binky" fell out of his mouth, he immediately lifted his head and began searching for it. This baby also exhibited the realization that his actions affect the world around him. As he played with a teething ball, he would toss it on the ground.

Instinctively, I would retrieve it and hand it to him. In response to this action, he would giggle and toss it back on the ground. He realized that if he tossed his ball on the ground, I would fetch it and he could extend the game indefinitely by tossing it again. When observing the two-year old, four-year old, and seven-year old, many of the characteristics of Piaget's second stage, the preoperational stage, are displayed. This stage is categorized by children beginning to learn to use words and pictures to describe the world around them, developing egocentric thought, struggling to see the world from the perspective of others, and though getting better with forming thoughts and language, still think about things in very concrete terms (Cherry, 2019). For instance, the two-year old clearly exhibits her ability to use words to describe the world around her. Walking around the church building during lovebug season, she pointed at each bug and said, " Bug, yuck." She also struggles to see the world from the perspective of those older than her. Whenever I explain to her the dangers of walking toward the street, she listens to me in the moment, but soon after she walks toward the road again, not understanding the true risks. In the case of the four-year old, he noticeably displays some characteristics of egocentric thought. When he first started attending, he would sit and talk in a conversational voice. He did not understand why people would sit quietly for an hour listening to a man gab. When it was suggested that he should sit quietly, he continued to talk in a loud whisper. He could not appreciate his surroundings from an adult's perspective but has gradually learned to mimic the behavior of those around him. Further exemplifying the preoperational stage, the seven-year old still thinks in very concrete terms. One day, after church, when we went over to our fellowship hall for lunch, she needed a drink. She wanted the taller,

<https://assignbuster.com/motivation-and-application-of-general-psychology-in-volunteering/>

thinner 12 oz. plastic cup instead of the shorter 12 oz. cup because she thought it was bigger. In this stage, children are also beginning to develop their fine motor skills (Oswalt, n. d.). To pass time more quickly for these preschoolers, I often provide stickers, crayons, and paper for them. The four-year old boy distinctively is refining his motor skills and is continuing to build upon earlier developed skills. When I draw basic shapes such as, circles and squares, he can copy them, and his figures have striking comparison to mine. His seven-year old sister, on the other hand, has much more defined motor skills. She has the ability to copy fully formed letters and words from my notes and Bible and can also spell her name by herself. This opportunity to observe various stages of development in these children as they were grouped together was a helpful experience and I believe will contribute greatly to my personal development.

As stated earlier, personal development is another motivator for volunteer service that Dr. Snyder describes. Knowing that I can contribute to reducing the stress of overworked caregivers and to the enjoyment of small children in church attendance is fulfilling. In the case of my own motivation, this experience is a step toward personal development that will contribute to my intended life work of a nursing career, as well as, mothering and teaching my own children. It was an added benefit for me to observe growth and development to further understand young children in light of what I have learned in this general psychology class.

Although various motivations for volunteering may exist for different individuals, Dr. Snyder's outline of them is beneficial in exploring personal avenues of volunteer work. Understanding these motivations may help <https://assignbuster.com/motivation-and-application-of-general-psychology-in-volunteering/>

persons to best use their talents and inclinations for others. After reading his thoughts on this subject, I was able to successfully analyze my motivations and consider future possibilities for volunteering. My volunteer efforts proved valuable as I helped a community concern, gained a better understanding of others, and furthered personal development.

References

- Cherry, K. (2019, May 20). *The Four Stages of Cognitive Development*. Retrieved from <http://www.verywellmind.com>.
- Feldman, R. (2017). *The Essentials of Understanding Psychology*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Oswalt, A. (n. d.). *Early Childhood Physical Development: Gross and Fine Motor Skills*. Retrieved from <https://www.gracepointwellness.org>
- Winerman, L. (2006, December). *Helping Others, Helping Ourselves*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org>