Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH) (e-ISSN : 2504-8562)
2023, Volume 8, Issue 11, e002603
DOI: https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v8i11.2603

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Socio-Cultural Perceptions toward Blood Donation Practice Among Young Blood Donors

Szariannie Sulaiman[1*], Sohela Mustari[2], Iyad M. Y. Eid[3]

[1]Department of Sociology and Anthropology, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 53100, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia.
Email: sza@iium.edu.my
[2]Department of Sociology and Anthropology, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 53100, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia.
Email: mustari@iium.edu.my
[3]Department of Sociology and Anthropology, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 53100, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia.
Email: iyad@iium.edu.my

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR (*):
Szariannie Sulaiman
(sza@iium.edu.my)

KEYWORDS:
Blood donation
Socio-cultural perceptions
Young blood donor

CITATION:
Szariannie Sulaiman, Sohela Mustari, & Iyad M. Y. Eid. (2023). Socio-Cultural Perceptions toward Blood Donation Practice Among Young Blood Donors. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH), 8*(11), e002603. https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v8i11.2603

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study examining the socio-cultural perception toward blood donation practice among young blood donors. Understanding blood donation practice and its underlying socio-cultural perceptions among the younger population is crucial to the functioning of the health system. This is to ensure blood supply is adequate to address the health needs of the population. To address the issue, nine (9) young blood donor aged between 21 and 24 years old were approached during a blood donation drive held at the International Islamic University Malaysia. These young blood donors were selected through a convenient sampling technique. Guided by a semi-structured interview schedule, face-to-face interviews were conducted on campus to capture informants' perceptions toward blood donation practice. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyse data obtained from the study. It was found that young blood donors in this study perceive blood donation practice as a good thing to do to help others. This includes perceiving blood donation practice as moral and social responsibilities.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by empirically demonstrating the positive attitudes of young blood donors on blood donation practice, highlighting the roles of university students in spreading good message about blood donation.

1. Introduction

Unlike other forms of donation, blood donation is a unique and noble form of helping that could be perceived as doing a small favour for strangers. Interestingly, in certain

© 2023 by the authors. Published by Secholian Publication. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

cases, donating blood is valued as an anonymous gift of life as donors have no idea whom they are helping and blood recipients do not know whom to thank for the gift (Beyerlein, 2016). Often, it is acclaimed as an altruistic action (Alessandrini, 2007; Sudgen and King, 2021; France et al., 2022). At an individual level, blood donation provides donors with meaningful personal experiences for being socially useful. Hence, the experiences offer individuals a social identity as a blood donor that could enhance their self-esteem for performing the social role (Belda Suarez et al., 2004; da Conceicao et al., 2016). Whereas at a societal level, blood donation denotes a collective form of helping which it is perceived and practiced as a religious duty as well as moral and social responsibilities (Abdel Gader et al., 2011; da Conceicao et al., 2016; Nyambiya et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Hossain et al., 2022; Ayob et al., 2022).

2. Literature Review

Irrespective of religious backgrounds, individuals' religious values and their altruistic attitude could motivate them to express their concern for others via various means including blood donation. Among the Muslims, blood donation is regarded as a religious duty. In Saudi Arabia for instance, the *fatwa* (religious ruling) proclaimed that Muslims can donate blood with the intention to save the life of needy patients. Thus, they believed it is a religious duty that must be carried out for the preservation of life (Abdel Gader et al., 2011). In a study conducted by Ayob et al. (2022) in Malaysia, it was observed that young donors regarded an act of donating blood as a sacred duty that is performed with a good intention to save others' lives. In addition, one's intention to donate blood could be associated with the elements of religious teachings. In a study by Chen et al. (2021) in China, it was observed that the instrumental elements of Buddhist teachings such as the pursuit of moral perfection, the cultivation of the virtues of unselfishness, benevolence and understanding, and the laws of karma could influence the intention to donate blood among Buddhists blood donors. They indicated that Buddhist religious elements were positively associated with moral attentiveness which later could promote higher intention to donate blood among them.

Among blood donors in Australia, blood donation is carried out as a voluntary work. They felt obliged to contribute to the community where they can and gain personal satisfaction from volunteering. This highlights that blood donation practice and volunteering are mutually reinforced (Alessandrini, 2007). Furthermore, blood donation is a right thing to do to save a life, thus could reinforce a sense of social responsibility among donors (Shaz et al., 2006). For instance, Jaafar et al. (2023) in their study observed that young donors reflect their concern towards the virtues and needs of other individuals through donating blood. Similarly, Yao and Wu (2023) in their study in China among university students found that these young donors believe that donating blood could not only help others but could also save lives. They regarded it as a good deed and a noble charity that should be done voluntarily without any compensation.

In a pluralistic society like Canada, family solidarity is generally salient among the Black communities in Montreal. They felt obliged to one another due to family ties. Despite acknowledging blood donation is crucial to save a life and they do it for a common good and a civic duty, Black communities would be inclined to donate blood to their family members or community rather than total strangers (Tran et al., 2013). In another instance, among Brazilians, blood donation is practiced to mainly keep life and ward off death. It is believed that by giving blood, it could save lives, help live and strengthen the lives of others (da Conceicao et al., 2016). In Zimbabwe, donating blood is both a

© 2023 by the authors. Published by Secholian Publication. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

religious and social responsibility for it could save others' lives. By donating blood, it enhances blood's availability in the blood bank as well as enhances accessibility to those who are in need. By donating, donors do not only save others' lives but also could enhance their health too (Nyambiya et al., 2020).

Understanding blood donation practice and its underlying socio-cultural perceptions among the younger population is crucial to the functioning of the health system. This is to ensure blood supply is adequate to address the health needs of the population. Thus, this study aims at exploring the socio-cultural perceptions towards blood donation practices among young blood donors in Selangor.

3. Research Methods

A qualitative study was carried out at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) to examine young donors' perceptions towards blood donation practices. A convenient sampling technique was employed to select the informants for the study. They were approached during the two-day blood donation drive held at the university to obtain their consent to participate in the study. They were also briefed about the objectives of the study prior to obtaining their consent. After obtaining their consent, informants were interviewed face-to-face for data collection. The interview sessions were held informally in a semi-structured way, but guided by the interview schedule. The interviews were conducted on campus at the convenient time and place of the informants and lasted for approximately 20 minutes on average. Questions on informants' socio-demographic data and perceptions towards blood donation practices were applied, audio- recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Thematic content analysis technique was used to analyse the data obtained from the study. The interview transcripts were read and read to gain an understanding of the issue and classified into dominant themes representing the socio-cultural perceptions towards blood donation practices among the informants.

4. Results and Discussions

Informants Demographics Profiles

Nine (9) young donors aged between 21 and 24 years old involving both local and international students were selected as informants for the study. Out of nine informants, seven were male and two were female students in their undergraduate programme from various disciplines. The informants' demographic profile is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Informants' demographic profile

Informants (Pseudonym)	Age	Sex	Nationality	Blood donors' status	Blood Type
Alya	21	Female	Local	Returning donor	B+
Mira	21	Female	Local	First time donor	A
Wan	24	Male	Local	First time donor	O
Mirul	22	Male	Local	First time donor	B
Azman	21	Male	Local	First time donor	A
Shah	21	Male	Local	Returning donor	A
Baim	21	Male	International	First time donor	A
Abdul	23	Male	International	Returning donor	A+
Faz	24	Male	Local	Returning donor	AB+

© 2023 by the authors. Published by Secholian Publication. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

Table 1 represents informants' demographic profiles. It was observed that most of the informants interviewed were first time donors. They reported having to find out their blood type during the blood donation drive. As young donors, informants in this study held a positive view towards blood practice. The discussion that follows below will describe several themes generated from the data obtained in this study in relation to socio-cultural perceptions on blood donation practice. It was observed that young blood donors in this study perceived blood donation practice as a good thing to do to help others. This includes perceiving blood donation practices as moral and social responsibilities.

Theme 1: Moral Responsibility

One of the informants, Malik, a 21 years old blood donor perceived blood donation as a form of *sadaqah* (charity) that can be performed to help others. In one of the interviews he said:

> *…it is like giving 'sadaqah' (charity) to others, you are doing something good to the person. You help others who are in need. Indeed, the word 'donation' itself implies doing a good thing, not limited to donating money only.*

In another instance, Hakimi aged 21 described the following in one of the interviews:

> *I do not have money to help poor people but fortunately, 'alhamdulilah' I am a healthy person, so I can donate blood to those who need it.*

Often donating money is central in the concept of donation. However, this is not the case among young blood donors in this study. For them, the concept of donation is not limited to donating money for a good cause, but also includes non-money gifts. They perceived that their good health permeates good to others. By donating their healthy blood to others without expecting anything in return promotes the feeling of happiness for the blood donors. Thus, it is evident that young blood donors in this study exhibited altruistic behaviour.

Theme 2: Social Responsibility

The act of donating blood among young donors in this study could be perceived as one of the ways to contribute to the community. This includes helping others to overcome fear and save lives. In one of the interviews, Faz aged 24 mentioned that his intention to participate in a blood donation drive is to help save others' lives. He described his intention as follow:

> *Young people like me have the best quality of blood. The best thing that I can do now (in a healthy state and have the best quality of blood) is by helping a person who is in a critical condition in a hospital and in need of blood.*

Similarly, Alya aged 21 also perceived blood donation as a social responsibility and a way to contribute to her country. She mentioned that:

© 2023 by the authors. Published by Secholian Publication. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

> *Donating blood is one of my contributions to the country. When I was in my secondary school, I came across a poster published by the National Blood Bank stating that the country is in shortage of blood supply. I wanted to donate, believing it is a good deed to be performed as a citizen. Unfortunately I was underage, thus I was not eligible to donate. Now I am 21 and this is my 3rd time donating.*

As for Wan, aged 21 narrated that his experience of overcoming his fear of needles could be a motivational factor to help others in overcoming their fear too. He described that:

> *One of my friends wanted to donate blood but she fears needles. I did feel the same way previously, but managed to overcome the fear in my first blood donation attempt. It was like enhancing my self-confidence too. For this reason, I felt responsible to help her to overcome her fear too by persuading her to participate in a blood donation drive as a blood donor.*

The above discussions highlighted that donating blood is not only to help patients who are in need of blood for their health problems, but also could help others to overcome their psychological conditions like fear through blood donation procedure. It was observed that the blood donation procedure itself could hinder the process of recruiting potential blood donors.

5. Conclusion

The foregoing discussions had demonstrated that donating blood has become a common practice among younger population particularly the university students. These young blood donors looked forward to donating blood for it provides a means for them to contribute to society. They felt socially and morally responsible to help others who are in need. This positive attitude is crucial in ensuring the blood supply in the country is sufficient for its shortage would bring disruption in providing the necessary health care to the population.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Research Ethics Committee approval was neither mandated nor emphasised prior to the commencement of data collection. However, all informants were furnished with sufficient information regarding the study before obtaining their consent to voluntarily participate in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect informants' privacy.

Acknowledgement

None

Funding

This study received no funding.

© 2023 by the authors. Published by Secholian Publication. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in relation to the research, authorship, or publication of this paper.

References

Abdel Gader, A. G., Osman, A. M., Al Gahtani, F. H., Farghali, M. N., Ramadan, A.H., & Al-Momen, A. K. (2011). Attitude to blood donation in Saudi Arabia. *Asian Journal of Transfusion Science*, *5*(2), 121-126.

Alessandrini, M. (2007). Community volunteerism and blood donation: Altruism as a lifestyle choice. *Transfusion Medicine Reviews, 21*(4), 307-316.

Ayob, N. F., Nilusha, A. G. K., Siddiqui, B. A. M. A., Baskaran, H., Abavanan, M., Santhosh, V., Makhish, M., Uzair, M. A., & Gnanamuttu, S. (2022). Knowledge, attitude and practice towards voluntary blood donation among students from Quest International University, Malaysia. *Quest International Journal of Medical and Health Sciences, 5* (1), 6-12.

Belda Suárez, I. M., Fernández-Montoya, A., Fernández, A. R., López-Berrio, A., & Cillero-Peñuela, M. (2004). How regular blood donors explain their behavior. *Transfusion, 44,* 1441-1446.

Beyerlein, K. (2016). The effect of religion on blood donation in the United States. *Sociology of Religion: Quarterly Review, 77*(4), 408-435.

Chen, L., Zhang, S., Zhou, Y., & Xiao, M. (2021). *How Buddhist beliefs relate to blood donation intention: The role of moral attentiveness and self-monitoring. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 51*(6), 610–621.doi:10.1111/jasp.12763

da Conceição, V. M., Araújoa, J. S., de Oliveiraa, R. A. A., de Santanab, M. A., & Zago, M. M. F. (2016). Perceptions of donors and recipients regarding blood donation. *Brazilian Journal of Hematology and Hemotherapy, 38*(3), 220-224.

Jaafar, J. R., Kamarudin, N. H., Zakaria, N. H. & Kam, W. S. (2023). Empowering humanity behaviour among university students through blood donation activity. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 8*(1), e002097.

France, C. R., France, J.L., Ysidron, D. W., Martin, C. D., Duffy, L., Kessler, D. A., Rebosa, M., Rehmani, S., Frye, V., & Shaz, B. H. (2022). Blood donation motivators and barriers reported by young, first-time whole blood donors: Examining the association of reported motivators and barriers with subsequent donation behavior and potential sex, race, and ethnic group differences. *Transfusion, 62*(12), 2539-2554.

Hossain, M. S., Siam, M. H. B., Hasan, M. N., Jahan, R., & Siddiqee, M. H. (2022). Knowledge, attitude, and practice towards blood donation among residential students and teachers of religious institutions in Bangladesh – A cross-sectional study. *Heliyon, 8,* e10792.

Nyambiya, T. E., Muromo, T., & Muchena, K. (2020). My blood is now old and exhausted: A qualitative study of adults' behavioural beliefs about donating blood in Harare, Zimbabwe. *Africa Sanguine, 22*(1), 14-22.

Shaz, B. H., Demmons, D. G., Hillyer, K. L., Jones, R. E., & Hillyer, C. D. (2009). Racial difference in motivators and barriers to blood donation among blood donors. *Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, 133*(9), 1444-1447.

Sugden N., & King, N. (2021). A descriptive phenomenological analysis of the experience of blood donation as a regular donor. *Journal of Health Psychology, 26*(11),1821-1832.

© 2023 by the authors. Published by Secholian Publication. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

Tran, N. Y. L., Charbonnear, J., & Valderrama-Benitez, V. (2013). Blood donation practices, motivations and beliefs in Montreal's Black communities: The modern gift under a new light. *Ethnicity & Health, 18*(6), 508-529.

Yao, X & Wu, Y. (2023). Experiences and perceptions of Chinese university students toward blood donation: A qualitative analysis, *SAGE Open*, *13*(1), 1-10.

© 2023 by the authors. Published by Secholian Publication. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).