Unofficial Offering and Socialization Consequences: Surveying Modelling and Reinforcement by Parentages and Lover

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ABSTRACT

Informal volunteering is seen as an important indicator of social relations and community life. We therefore investigate the impact of various socialization practices on informal volunteering, being small helping behaviours outside of organizations for people outside the household. From theoretical notions on socialization, we hypothesize that experiencing extensive prosocial socialization practices promotes informal volunteering. We examine socialization processes of both modelling and encouragement and consider two socializing agents: parents and partners. We test our expectations employing the sixth wave of the Family Survey Nigeria Population (N = 2464) that included unique measures on socialization as well as informal volunteering and holds important control variables. Our results indicated that parental modelling, partner modelling and partner encouragement were all positively related to informal volunteering, but that parental encouragement was not significantly related to informal volunteering. Our paper, thus, underscores that socialization practices are relevant in nurturing social relations and community life.

KEYWORDS: Human Development, Educational Psychology, Qualitative Research, Recruitment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the role of socialization in explaining informal volunteering. Informal volunteering is here defined as helping behaviors for people outside the household, such as friends, neighbors and acquaintances, that do not involve any organizations or institutions [1-13]. Examples of such types of helping are looking after children, doing garden work, lending materials, or driving someone to an appointment. Informal volunteering is a form of prosocial behavior, since it involves costs for the self and results in benefits for another person's well-being [14-21]. Moreover, abundant informal volunteering by a society's members is seen as the social glue of a society and a key aspect of community life [19-27]. A profound study on the impact of socialization on informal volunteering may contribute to the lively debate on the supposed decline of community life. Some scholars have expressed serious concerns, arguing that communities have become less tightly knit in terms of social relations and support, which in its turn reduces community life [23-34]. Contrarily, scholars also argued that such concerns are theoretically unfounded and empirically unverified. Social networks would be changing and shifting in focus, but this not necessarily entails a reduction in social support and corrosion of community life [35-41]. Our study on the impact of socialization practices on informal volunteering highlights another relevant aspect in this discussion, namely the motivational side. It is assumed that socialization in informal volunteering foremost nurtures a person's motivation to volunteer informally. If socialization practices play a meaningful role in the manifestation of informal volunteering, it is likely that society's community life would remain relatively stable since changes in (the effects of) socialization practices only come about slowly. Prior research on informal volunteering has revealed several explanatory factors: (a) psychological traits of sociability and emotional stability [42-51], and (b) sociological features such as being religious, higher educated, older and female [52-58]. However, the impact of socialization practices on informal volunteering has been neglected, despite theories suggesting the relevance of socialization in prosocial behavior, such as informal volunteering [59-66]. Moreover, socialization practices have been found to play a prominent role in various other prosocial behaviors, including formal volunteering which is closely related to informal volunteering. Although formal volunteering is organized by formal institutions and informal volunteering is not, they share similarity in content and motivation and are both considered forms of prosocial behavior [1-16]. Hence, it is likely that socialization practices play a role in informal volunteering, but this has not been tested yet. Underscoring this study's focus on the impact of

socialization on informal volunteering, we will use an extensive approach towards socialization. First, we will distinguish between two forms of socialization: modelling and encouragement. Modelling has been examined in studies towards formal volunteering relatively often and refers to the idea that people learn by observing behavior from relevant others. If these relevant others are more prosocial in their behaviors, this is believed to induce prosocial behavior in the observant. Yet, most prior studies do not take into account that socialization by direct encouragement may also be relevant [17-26]. People who engage in prosocial behaviors likely discuss their activities and thereby encourage others to do alike. To provide a stricter test of modelling and encouragement as socialization practices, we distinguish the two and examine them simultaneously. Second, we consider two highly relevant socializing agents that are important in various stages of a person's life course: parents and partners. Parents are likely the most important socializing agents during a person's youth, and partners are most relevant in adulthood. Both parents and partners as socializing agents share a strong (emotional) bond with a person and have a high frequency of (daily) contact, both contributing to the presumed impact of socialization by modelling and encouragement [27-36]. We focus on socializing agents originating from the family. Therefore, we chose to exclude family members as targets of informal volunteering. Reciprocity processes may predict both informal volunteering among relatives and socialization practices, which makes them difficult to separate in the family context. We will answer the following research question: To what extent do modelling and encouragement by parents and the partner promote informal volunteering? To answer this question, we use recently collected data from the sixth wave of the Family Survey Nigeria Population 2017–2018 (FSDP). This dataset uniquely includes measures of informal volunteering and additionally pro- vides extensive information on socializing activities of respondents' parents and—if applicable—a partner [37-46]. To provide a strong test of our expectations, we also include a wide set of control variables in our models. Information on personality traits (Big 5), religiosity, family configuration and a person's resources is available. In sum, we contribute to the literature by assessing the impact of socialization processes on an important aspect of society's community life, namely informal volunteering. The paper is structured as follows: first, we elaborate on the theoretical background of socialization and its impact on informal volunteering. From this theoretical framework, we derive our hypotheses. Next, we describe data and measurements and present estimations from statistical models to test our hypotheses. Finally, we relate our findings to the existing literature, discuss limitations and describe the study's impact [57-66].

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Most often socialization is described as a two-layered process in which people learn to behave appropriately in certain groups or situations. First, people learn what is considered appropriate or desirable behavior in a society, certain group or situation. This learning process may take various expressions. People may be directly encouraged to engage in certain behavior (encouragement), but may also learn by being confronted with rewards or punishments following their displayed behaviors (reinforcement). Another type of learning concerns observational learning; people observe behaviors and the (possible) reactions and repercussions of others and learn through this information whether behavior is appropriate [1-13]. After people have learned appropriate behaviors, they may display these behaviors to gain approval and confirmation of others, but will not do so if no one is present to give their approval. In other words, they do not yet value these behaviors to a high extent themselves. The second layer of socialization concerns the internalization of behavior. Experiencing encouragement and reinforcement and observing others' behavior gradually results in an internal motivation to perform similar appropriate behavior. In this process, people learn to value a behavior themselves and incorporate this in their inner value system. As a result, it also becomes more likely that they will engage in this type of behavior [14-21]. After internalization of behaviors, external control is no longer considered necessary, meaning that people will engage in socialized appropriate behavior even if no one is present to give (dis)approval. Socialization involves at least two persons or entities: the target (the person, who is socialized) and the agent (the entity that socializes) of socialization. By definition, a target can be of any age and can be in any stage of life when experiencing socialization practices. Understandably, most prior studies have focused on children as targets of socialization, as (young) children are in the initial process of learning to become functional individuals in society. Various socializing agents may contribute to children's socialization, but nuclear family members, and particularly parents, are regarded as the primary agents of socialization [22-29]. Generally, parents are the first adults that children have a strong bond with, they are formally assigned the role of primary caretakers, and they mostly are in close proximity to their children, which gives them a prominent position to socialize them. Other significant socializing agents that may play a role during a person's youth include schools, teachers, peers and the media [30-38]. Customarily, these are regarded as

secondary socializing agents. Youth experiences of primary and secondary socialization are expected to have a relevant impact that lasts into adulthood. Actors that play a relevant socializing role in adulthood are regarded as tertiary agents. Although most adults do no longer need to learn how to function in society, their ideas about what is appropriate behavior in a certain situation can still be moderated. Instead of being socialized by parents and original nuclear family members, most adults encounter socialization practices in a romantic relationship with a partner [39-46]. As is the case with parents and children, most partners have a close emotional bond, they are often formally connected, and they live in close proximity, which gives them the opportunity to communicate and encourage ideas about desirable behavior. For example, prior studies have shown that romantic partners influence each other's health behaviors, financial behaviors, and prosocial and antisocial behaviors. Therefore, we consider romantic partners as important tertiary agents. It is, however, important to note that tertiary socializing agents are fundamentally different from primary agents of socialization, because they are to some extent self-selected [47-56]. Although socialization processes play a role in the transmission of various types of behaviors, we here focus on the development of prosocial behaviors. Prior research has not only theorized that socialization practices play a significant role in the manifestation of prosocial behavior, empirical studies have also shown the impact of socialization for several forms of prosocial behavior, such as formal volunteering, charitable giving and blood donation. Various ways in which individuals learn prosocial behavior may be distinguished, including reinforcement, observational learning (modelling), and talking about and encouraging helping others. In this study, our focus is on modelling and encouraging as socialization processes, as we suspect that people will be susceptible to such forces and influences in both their youth and adulthood. Direct reinforcement may be perceived as a threat to a person's autonomy, especially by adults, which may make this type of socialization less effective in adult life. Below, we outline how parents and partners may be involved in modelling and encouragement and how these socialization processes relate to informal volunteering [57-66].

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Observational learning, or modelling, is a socialization process that is grounded in social learning theory. It stresses that people learn a behavior by observing others performing it and observing the according consequences. This means that socializing agents will teach prosocial behaviors by engaging in prosocial activities themselves, especially when it is possible for targets of socialization to observe them. We argue that formal volunteering is a well-demarcated behavior that is easily recognizable for others. This likely makes it suitable behavior for parental modelling. For example, adolescents whose parents formally volunteer are more likely to volunteer formally themselves [1-15]. This parental impact has been found to last into adulthood, as adults whose parents volunteered formally in their school-age years seem more likely to volunteer formally as an adult. In addition to direct modelling, formal volunteering can inspire other forms of prosocial behavior, such as charitable giving. Hence, we expect that the prosocial norm that is learned by observing parental formal volunteering enhances all kinds of prosocial behavior, including informal volunteering [16-24]. We therefore hypothesize that: If parents volunteered formally during individuals' youth, those individuals will engage more in informal volunteering in adulthood (H1). While socialization processes have been studied mostly for children, modelling has also been proposed as an effective strategy among adults. As stated before, romantic partners may be seen as important tertiary socializing agents, meaning that they could be effective role models in adulthood. Previous research on volunteering among spouses has found that people are more likely to volunteer formally and provide informal support when their spouse volunteers formally [49-58]. According to studies, these findings suggest that partnered people engage more in prosocial behavior when their partner sets the example. Hence, we expect that: Individuals whose partner is a formal volunteer will engage more in informal volunteering than individuals whose partner is not a formal volunteer (H2). Instead of indirectly observing prosocial behavior and copying appropriate behaviors, people are also socialized through direct encouragement [38-48]. This may include both direct instruction, i.e. being instructed to act pro-socially, and also preaching, i.e. being explained that helping is valuable and therefore something the target is expected to do. Since parents are primary socializing agents in a person's youth, we assume that they are also effective in encouraging children to express prosocial behaviors. Indeed, prior research has found that adolescents whose parents encouraged and discussed charitable giving with them donate more money to charity and volunteer more [59-66]. We assume that these socialization influences hold into adulthood and work similarly for informal volunteering. We therefore expect that the more parents encouraged prosocial behavior, the more individuals will engage in informal volunteering in adulthood (H3). Among adults, it is less likely that direct encouragement is an effective socialization strategy [25-37]. Because adults do not

necessarily perceive socializing agents as more powerful, they may not respond as strongly to direct instruction, and since most adults already have established ideas on appropriate and desirable behaviors, also preaching seems less effective. We, however, do consider encouragement by a romantic partner in the form of conversations as an effective socialization strategy for adults. In a conversation among partners, there is room for discussion about what behaviors are important and what would speak against it [38-46]. Thus, encouragement takes a less commanding form in adulthood, but could still be a relevant socialization practice. Hence, we expect that: the more the partner encourages prosocial behavior, the more individuals will engage in informal volunteering (H4). A summary of the hypotheses is presented in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 Conceptual model
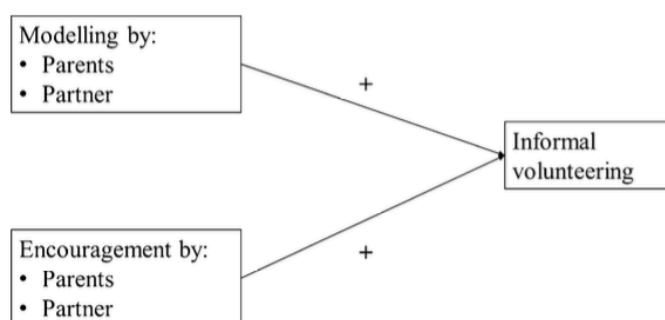
4.0 RESULT

Informal volunteering was measured with the following question: 'please indicate how often you have done the following things for a) friends and acquaintances and b) neighbors without receiving money in return in the past 12 months'.1 A list was presented to the respondent with types of behavior indicating emotional support (giving advice; listening to someone's problems) and indicating practical help (doing small chores in or around the house; lending tools, appliances or clothes; helping with an activity or event; looking after (grand)children; taking care of pets or plants when someone is away; providing trans- port). Since informal volunteering refers to voluntary work, we decided to only include the items referring to practical help in our analyses. Response options for each of the six items were as follows: never (0); once in a while (1); regularly; (2); often (3). To create one composite measure of informal volunteering, we first weighed the items according to the proportion of respondents that had responded 'never' to that particular item to take into account that some behaviors (e.g. looking after (grand)children of friends or neighbors) were more exclusive and may take more effort and prosocial motivation than others (e.g. doing small chores in or around the house).3 For example, 42% of the respondents indicated that they had never done small chores in or around the house in the last 12 months for friends. Therefore, we multiplied respondents' original scores by 0.42. A respondent who originally scored 3 on the item scored 0.42 * 3 = 1.26 after this multiplication. As a result, doing small chores was less relevant to the composite measure than other behaviors, such as looking after (grand) children of neighbors (which was never done by 86.1% of respondents). To create a scale, we averaged the weighed scores. The minimum score was 0, meaning that a respondent had not engaged in any informal volunteering. The maximum observed score was 2.04. Parental modelling referred to whether or not parents (formally) volunteered during a respondent's youth. Respondents were asked about parental volunteering when they were approximately 15 years old. Although we would have preferred to use parental informal volunteering as a measure of parental modelling, this information was not available. Moreover, it is likely that questions about parental informal volunteering would suffer more from a memory bias than questions about formal volunteering, since it is less formalized and therefore less memorable. Hence, we use parental formal volunteering as an indicator of parents' modelling prosocial behavior. A similar strategy was applied for partner modelling, which referred to whether or not a partner was currently active in formal volunteering. For parental and partner encouragement, we used two items, namely 'I learned from my parents/partner to take others into consideration' and 'my parents/partner emphasizes how important it is to help others', with response categories ranging from 'totally disagree' (0) to 'totally agree' (4). If respondents answered 'not applicable' (2.2%), they were assigned the lowest score (0). A dummy variable controlling for selectivity in this respect (missing information) was included in the analyses.4 For both parents and partners, the scores on both items were averaged to create a scale. Higher scores refer to stronger parental and partner encouragement. We considered several control variables in our models.

First, we controlled for gender and for age in years. Second, we take relevant psychological traits and religious motivations into account by inclusion of agreeableness, extraversion and being religious. Agreeableness and extraversion are two of the 'Big Five' personality traits, and prior research indicates that these traits are relevant for people's prosocial behavior. Within LISS, these traits were measured by the IPIP's Big Five scale which has 50 items in total, 10 for each personality trait. Factor analysis indicated that agreeableness and extraversion were separate dimensions, and a reliability analysis showed high alphas (0.846/0.880) for agreeableness and extraversion. A third group of control variables referred to an individual's resources. For employment status, individuals were divided into three categories: non-employed (no job or works less than 12 h a week), part-time employed (works 12–36 h a week) and full-time employed (works 36 or more hours a week). Education was measured in years of education based on the highest degree a respondent obtained. The so- called name generator assessed respondents' core discussion network size; the number of people a respondent named to discuss personal matters with. Health referred to a person's subjective health. The original five categories were reduced to two categories, namely 'bad' ('bad' and 'mediocre') and 'good' ('good', 'very good' and 'great'). Household income was measured as the sum of the net monthly income of all household members. To facilitate interpretation of the coefficients, income scores were divided by 100. People who did not answer the question (8.1%) were assigned the average household income, and we included a dummy variable (missing information) to control selectivity therein. Finally, we controlled for several family characteristics. Parental education was measured in years similar to respondents' own education. In the sample with partnered respondents, we additionally con- trolled for partner's education, partner's employment status, relationship duration and number of children. Partner's education and partner's employment status were measured similar to respondent's own education and employment status. Relationship duration was measured in years, and number of children refers to the number of children that lived in the same household as the respondent.

	Full sample ($N = 2464$)		Partnered sample ($N = 1475$)	
	β	β	β	β
Parental modelling	0.092***			
Parental encouragement		0.037 +		
Partner modelling			0.109***	
Partner encouragement				0.148***

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.1$

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we examined the role of socialization practices on informal expressions of volunteering. We expected that modelling and encouragement by both parents and a partner would promote informal volunteering. We tested our expectations with unique recent data from the sixth wave of the FSDP (2017–2018) and extensively controlled for confounding factors to ensure that the reported effects of socialization practices may not be assigned to con- founding factors. In line with research on volunteering in formal organizations, our study found that socialization was indeed consistently related to informal volunteering, even after controlling for confounding factors and examining various aspects of informal volunteering. More specifically, we found that people whose parents or partner volunteered engaged more in informal volunteering. These findings are strongly in support for the theoretical idea that modelling prosocial behavior is a relevant socialization practice. Moreover, as we tested modelling by examining formal volunteering, our findings suggest that observing a parent or partner being active in formal volunteering spills over to prosocial behaviors in other domains. These findings are in line with previous studies that also found a spillover between formal volunteering and charitable giving, and between formal volunteering and informal support (Hook 2004). With respect to encouragement as a socialization practice, this study found that the more the people were encouraged by their partner to help others, the more they were active in informal volunteering. Parental encouragement, however, did not relate to informal volunteering. This finding contrasts prior research that shows that talking with parents about donating to charity promotes charitable giving (Wilhelm et al. 2014, 2017). It may be that the effect of partner encouragement actually reflects partner's stimulation to become active in informal volunteering with each other as a social activity, for instance when caring for (grand) children is concerned. Another explanation for why we did not find an effect of parental encouragement may be that the items measuring parental encouragement were rather general. These items referred to learning to 'take others into consideration' and 'helping others'. Likely, almost all parents encouraged these

types of behaviors in their children (83% 'taking into conside ration' and 73% 'helping others'), and it might be too difficult for respondents to assess the intensity of parental stimulation. This may be less relevant for partner encouragement, as parents are charged with the responsibility to teach what is right and partners are not. When future research would continue to study modelling and encouragement simultaneously, it is preferable to include measures that more strictly differentiate in situations or behaviors in which parental encouragement may play a role. Obviously, our study also holds limitations. First, while our analyses of the partnered sample may indicate that partners influenced each other's prosocial behavior, it is also possible that partners have met each other performing prosocial behaviors, or selected each other because of their prosocial behavior. Our measurement of partner encouragement takes this into account to some extent by asking respondents about their experience of encouragement instead of their partner's values. However, to draw stronger conclusions on the direction of partner effects, it is advisable for future research to study longitudinal data. A second limitation concerns the dyadic aspect of informal volunteering. This study has focused on the motivation of the helper and has made an effort to isolate effects of socialization practices. The decision to informally volunteer, however, may not only depend on personal characteristics of the helper, but also on characteristics of the one that is helped, and the relationship with the helper. Moreover, although informal volunteering indicates that people are willing to help and may point at social cohesion in a neighborhood or friendship network, informal volunteering may also depend on social cohesion and norms to help others within a certain context. When such norms do not exist, individuals may be less inclined to volunteer informally, regardless of their socialization. Hence, the amount of informal volunteering that one does may also depend on contextual characteristics. Future research could examine how these alter, dyad and context characteristics affect informal volunteering and how they relate to socialization practices. Finally, although our study distinguished between two types of socialization processes, modelling and encouragement, it was unable to test the underlying mechanisms, most prominently, intentions. We presumed that socialization practices result in prosocial motivations and intentions, which promote informal volunteering. Yet, we were unable to put that notion to the test. Future research could examine the underlying mechanisms further, for example by including motivations and intentions in their empirical models. Despite its limitations, we are of the opinion that this study makes some meaningful contributions to the literature. First, it tested whether socialization practices are relevant for informal volunteering. Second, our study included socialization practices of parents as primary socializing agents, and partners as tertiary socializing agents, and differentiated between modelling and encouragement processes of socialization, which allowed us to show more accurately that modelling was a more powerful socialization process than encouragement. Finally, our study examined both youth and adult prosocial socialization practices, showing that motivations for prosocial behavior are not set after a person's youth, but are affected by significant others in adult life as well. These findings suggest an optimistic outlook on com- munity life in terms of informal volunteering. Our conclusion that informal volunteering is (partly) shaped by socialization by volunteering parents suggests that com- munity life decline may be a process of slow development. Simultaneously, our conclusions suggest that also in adult life, people still learn informal volunteering from others. One the one hand, this implies that people may be socialized during their adult life in the direction of not engaging in informal volunteering. Yet, on the other hand, it offers opportunities to turn the tide of community life decline, as people are shown to still learn new behaviors, even after they have reached adulthood.

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