

## Manuscript Details

<b>Manuscript number</b>	NEP_2020_68
<b>Title</b>	Exploring Factors Impacting Attitudes Towards Volunteering in the Undergraduate Nursing Student Population in the UK and Ghana.
<b>Article type</b>	Research Paper

### Abstract

This paper builds on an earlier study, which sought to understand the extent, variability, and attitudes towards volunteering among undergraduate nursing students at one United Kingdom (UK) university. Students displayed positive attitudes towards volunteering. However, overall levels of volunteering while at university were low, with demands of the nursing programme, and working to pay down student debt cited as barriers. We recommended the inclusion of supported volunteering experiences embedded within the nursing programme as one way of harnessing positive attitudes towards volunteering. This paper reports on a comparative study undertaken with undergraduate nursing students in Ghana for reasons that Ghana traditionally follows a western model of nurse education whereby students undertake similar educational and clinical components. We were interested to explore (1) similarities/differences between student volunteering in the UK and Ghana, (2) explanations for any differences found, and (3) what we might learn regarding approaches to student volunteering in the undergraduate nursing curriculum. The current study shows a significantly higher number of Ghanaian students were volunteering while studying, compared with the UK cohort. However, there were no significant differences in numbers of students who had volunteered prior to studying at university.

<b>Keywords</b>	Student volunteering, student nurses, nurse education, undergraduate nursing curriculum
<b>Taxonomy</b>	Nursing Education, Nursing Research Methods
<b>Manuscript category</b>	Regular paper
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## Submission Files Included in this PDF

### File Name [File Type]

Cover Letter.docx [Cover Letter]

Highlights.docx [Highlights]

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Volunteering in the Nursing Student Population in Ghana.docx [Manuscript (without Author Details)]

Conflict of interest statement.docx [Conflict of Interest]

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## Research Data Related to this Submission

**Data set** <https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/v26z3xng73/draft? a=c00e4986-38ee-4609-8414-eb09c55571e4>

Data for: Exploring Factors Impacting Attitudes Towards Volunteering in the Undergraduate Nursing Student Population in the UK and Ghana.

Survey data

Dear Editor, please find enclosed our manuscript entitled:

**`Volunteering in the Nursing Student Population in Ghana`, for consideration for publication in nurse Education in Practice.**

This paper details the second in a nested series of studies considering volunteering in the undergraduate nursing population. The first of these studies was published in Nurse Education in Practice in 2017.

Thank you for your consideration of the current study

Best regards

Sue Dyson  
Professor of Nursing  
University of Derby

## Highlights

Volunteering in the undergraduate nursing student population is impacted by the curriculum

Structured volunteering can positively impact uptake of student volunteering

Nursing students in Ghana and the UK report barriers to volunteering

Economic conditions in a country impact uptake of volunteering

**Title Page:**

**Volunteering in the Nursing Student Population in Ghana**

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# Volunteering in the Nursing Student Population in Ghana

## Abstract

This paper builds on an earlier study, which sought to understand the extent, variability, and attitudes towards volunteering among undergraduate nursing students at one United Kingdom (UK) university. Students displayed positive attitudes towards volunteering. However, overall levels of volunteering while at university were low, with demands of the nursing programme, and working to pay down student debt cited as barriers. We recommended the inclusion of supported volunteering experiences embedded within the nursing programme as one way of harnessing positive attitudes towards volunteering. This paper reports on a comparative study undertaken with undergraduate nursing students in Ghana for reasons that Ghana traditionally follows a western model of nurse education whereby students undertake similar educational and clinical components. We were interested to explore (1) similarities/differences between student volunteering in the UK and Ghana, (2) explanations for any differences found, and (3) what we might learn regarding approaches to student volunteering in the undergraduate nursing curriculum. The current study shows a significantly higher number of Ghanaian students were volunteering while studying, compared with the UK cohort. However, there were no significant differences in numbers of students who had volunteered prior to studying at university.

## Introduction

Student volunteering is conceptualised in different ways by UK universities, for example volunteering organised as part of student union activities, as part of university-wide modules, or embedded within discreet programmes (Bell et al 2014, Hafford-Letchfield and Lavender, 2015). In an earlier study, students reported lack of time, lack of information, and demands of the nursing programme as impacting uptake of volunteering opportunities. Whereas in the current study Ghanaian nursing students reported lack of volunteering opportunities, limited resources for traveling to and from volunteering venues, and lack of financial incentives as reasons for not volunteering. The current study suggests financial reasons impact Ghanaian and UK nursing students' motivation to volunteer alike. However, Ghanaian students prioritise expenditure on getting to student placements, whereas UK students prioritise working to pay down student debt. A further point of difference is seen in that Ghanaian students believe the

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62 University has a responsibility to incentivise volunteering through reimbursement of travel  
63 expenses, whereas UK students had no such expectation. In addition, volunteering as means of  
64 building a curriculum vitae (CV) were reported as important for UK students who were more  
65 likely to volunteer through particular organisations as opposed to Ghanaian students who were  
66 less motivated by CV building and more likely to volunteer to help people in their local  
67 community. We sought explanation for different motivations and attitudes towards  
68 volunteering through recourse to literature concerned with cross-cultural perspectives on  
69 volunteering.  
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78 Nurse educators were recommended to consider building structured opportunities for  
79 volunteering into nursing programmes, as means to encourage reflective practice, critical  
80 thinking, and in order to impact compassionate behaviours in practice. However, it was noted  
81 that volunteering as an intra-curricular activity is challenging for students who prioritise time  
82 to paying down student debt over and above volunteering, and for nurse educators who are  
83 constrained by a content-heavy curriculum and thus struggle to conceptualise volunteering as  
84 transformative pedagogy. The current study sought to understand how cross-cultural  
85 perspectives on volunteering might be usefully inform pedagogy in culturally diverse  
86 undergraduate nursing programmes.  
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## 95 **1. Background and Literature**

### 96 *2.1 Support for Student Volunteering*

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99 Volunteering has been defined in a number of ways around the world, including for example,  
100 work that is carried out for the benefit of others, for society as a whole or for a specific  
101 organisation, work that is unpaid, or more specifically work that results in the production of a  
102 `public good` (Dekker and Halman, 2003). The lack of a precise definition of volunteering has  
103 made it difficult for academics and researchers to generalise from studies on volunteers, to  
104 measure with accuracy the incidence of volunteering, or to make policy recommendations  
105 (Handy et al, 2000). In terms of support for volunteering many governments have considered  
106 policy initiatives as a means to encourage civic behaviour among young people, with student  
107 volunteering thought to be one way of doing this (Cnaan et al, 2010).  
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121 The National Union of Students (NUS) and the Association of Colleges (AoC) carried out  
122 research aimed at establishing the extent of volunteering in further education (FE) in England,  
123 in order to inform strategies for expanding the number of students volunteering and  
124 volunteering opportunities. The report suggested that (1) volunteering plays a significant role  
125 in students' lives, (2) students recognise that helping people and the community is a key aspect  
126 of volunteering, alongside gaining skills and future employability, and (3) a growing trend for  
127 linking volunteering to students' courses or academic qualifications (NUS, 2015). In English  
128 higher education (HE), while there has been a long tradition of student volunteering, the  
129 situation is reported to be at a critical point, in that without evidence of impact, continued  
130 funding, and an integrated approach to its development, student volunteering will not meet its  
131 full potential (Darwen and Rannard, 2011). While there has been cross-party support to  
132 promote schemes to encourage undergraduate volunteering in the English higher education  
133 system, for example to strengthen the role of volunteering and to promote synergies between  
134 higher education and the voluntary sector (Holdsworth and Quinn, 2010), nevertheless it  
135 remains challenging to provide robust evidence on which nurse educators can incorporate  
136 volunteering opportunities into to an already pressurised undergraduate nursing curriculum.  
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## 148 *2.2 International Student Volunteering*

150 Student volunteering in the UK is currently recognised as students who volunteer in their local  
151 communities through programmes organised either by students' union or by institution  
152 (Student Volunteering England, 2004). In terms of international student volunteering there are  
153 a limited number of studies reporting on the extent or variability of international student  
154 volunteering in HE, although there are international studies, which report on volunteering in  
155 the population as a whole, or in the younger population (Fényes and Pusztai, 2012). Few  
156 international studies specifically examine student volunteering at subject or discipline level,  
157 for example within nursing programmes, thus making cross-cultural comparisons within this  
158 subject area difficult. In addition, different activities and situations when aggregated into a  
159 concept of volunteering render a precise global definition problematic. Nevertheless, attempts  
160 at defining volunteering around the world have recognised a number of common themes  
161 including; it is optional, vital, and worthwhile in and of itself, and of benefit to self and others  
162 (Segal and Robinson, 2019).  
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172 The criterion of being unpaid for volunteering activities is not straightforward. Meijis et al (p.3,  
173 2003) accept the 'availability of tangible rewards' within the remit of volunteering, while at  
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180 the same time recognising the constituents of rewards for volunteering range from  
181 reimbursement of expenses to material tributes of appreciation. Quantification of acceptable  
182 remuneration for volunteering is hence difficult to determine.  
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### 186 187 *2.3 Cross-cultural Attitudes Towards Volunteering*

188 Globalisation and democratization in many countries has led to a realisation that governments  
189 alone cannot provide all services and that citizen participation is important to the provision of  
190 services, in maintaining community, and building trust and social solidarity (Hodgkinson,  
191 2003). This citizen participation, in other words the contribution to society made by volunteers  
192 is connected to cultural, as well as political, religious and social contexts (Grönlund et al 2011).  
193 Globally, the European Values Surveys (EVS) coordinated from the Netherlands, and the  
194 World Values Surveys (WVS), coordinated from the US draws together survey data on  
195 membership and volunteering among nations. Hodgkinson (2003) examined EVS and WVS  
196 survey data from 47 nations completed between 1999 and 2002, comparing definitions of  
197 volunteering, volunteer rates, and fields in which volunteers are active, concluding variation  
198 between volunteer rates within countries is unrelated to levels of economic development or  
199 level of freedom. An alternative explanation is provided by the social resources theory, which  
200 sought to understand whether individual characteristics and behaviours (of volunteers) could  
201 explain various rates of volunteering among nations. While theories at the country level do not  
202 fully explain differences in aggregate levels of volunteering there are more consistent findings  
203 when individual characteristics of volunteers are compared across nations, with volunteers  
204 generally more likely to attend religious services more frequently, be members of associations,  
205 have more dense social networks, and discuss politics more frequently than non-volunteers  
206 (Hodgkinson, 2003). In as much as universities can provide students with opportunities to  
207 engage with a broad range of social networks it is reasonable to suggest that university students  
208 are better placed to engage with debate around politics and religion, and thus more likely to  
209 volunteer than individuals who do not access university education. Widening participation to  
210 university education for young people from diverse backgrounds is thus key to promoting  
211 volunteering among students.  
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239 *3 Methods*  
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242 The original study was concerned with the extent, variability and attitudes towards volunteering  
243 among undergraduate nursing students at one university in the UK. In the study reported here  
244 we were interested to know of similarities/differences in attitudes towards volunteering among  
245 the student population in the UK and Ghana; explanations for any differences found, and what  
246 we might learn regarding approaches to student volunteering in Ghana, which might be  
247 transferable to a UK setting. We used a mixed methods approach to study design to ensure  
248 consistency of approach with our UK study. Mixed methods research has been considered a  
249 response to the debate surrounding the relative merits of quantitative versus qualitative  
250 research, whereby the traditional paradigms are diametrically opposed (Creswell and Plano  
251 Clark, 2007). As such, mixed methods research strives to integrate quantitative and qualitative  
252 approaches by constructing an alternative framework to accommodate the diverse nature of  
253 much research (Feilzer, 2010). Typologies and designs in mixed methods research have been  
254 criticised with reference to (1) the need for the researcher(s) to be proficient and competent in  
255 both qualitative and quantitative methods (2) the need for adequate resources to undertake a  
256 mixed methods study, and (3) for the tendency of researchers to only superficially mix methods  
257 (Cameron, 2009). The research team had expertise in qualitative and quantitative approaches,  
258 access to resources through competitive internal university mechanisms for small research  
259 grants and adopted a sequential mixed method approach consistent with the UK study.  
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273 *Sequential mixed methods*  
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275 A sequential mixed model design with two phases was undertaken. First, quantitative data were  
276 collected by our Ghanaian researcher using the original survey instrument comprising of a 24-  
277 item questionnaire. Second, emergent questions from the analysis of survey data were used to  
278 construct the semi-structured interview guide, consistent with the approach used in the UK  
279 study.  
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286 *3.2 Ethical Permission*  
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288 The study was approved in 2016 by the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research,  
289 which is a constituent of the College of Health Sciences at the University of Ghana, with the  
290 original study receiving ethical approval from the UK University. Permission to distribute the  
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questionnaire to nursing students was granted from programme leaders. Participant consent was assumed upon completion and return of the questionnaire. All participants were recruited during lectures delivered between May and June 2016. Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated using SPSS for Windows (IBM SPSS 22). Qualitative data were collected via semi structured face to face interviews with students between March and April 2018.

### 3.3 *The Survey*

A total of 500 students, studying within the School of Nursing, University of Ghana were asked to participate voluntarily in our survey. The survey questionnaire comprised two sections. The first section collected biographical data about respondents, comprising of four questions (1) type of programme, (2) programme start date, (3) mode of study (full or part-time), and (4) year of study. The subsequent section comprised of twenty-eight multiple-choice and open-ended questions concerned with volunteering experiences. 276 students completed the survey, and of these 20 were excluded for reasons of incomplete data leaving 256 responses, a 51.2% response rate.

### Data analysis

Differences between the two cohorts were tested using chi-square or Fisher's exact test (for tests involving two categorical variables) and the Mann Whitney test (for tests involving one categorical independent variable and an ordinal / scale dependent variable. Nonparametric tests were used because criteria for parametric tests (such as anormal distribution) were not met. Statistical significance was defined as  $p < .05$ . Descriptive statistics were used to analyse multiple choice questions.

### 3.4 *Survey Results*

In terms of respondents' characteristics, the median age of respondents was 22 years, with a range from 17 to 38 years. 25% of respondents (n=64) were in the first year of their programme, 21.5% (n=55) were in the second year, 18.4% (n=47) were in the third year of study and 35.2% (n=90) were in the fourth year of study. Most of the respondents were female (70.9%, n=180) and 29.1%, n =74 were male). Ghanaian students were younger than those in the UK sample

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357 and much more likely to be single. Respondent characteristics are detailed in Table 1, along  
358 with comparison to the UK students in our original study.  
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363 **Insert table 1 here Title: Respondent characteristics.**  
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367 *Previous experience of volunteering*  
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369 42.3% of UK participants (n=58) said that they had volunteered at some point in the past,  
370 compared to just under half of Ghanaian students (49.2%, n=126). The difference was not  
371 statistically significant ( $p=.114$ , Fisher's exact test, n=393).  
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377 *Number of organisations volunteered for and current volunteering rates*  
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379 The average number of organisations which Ghanaian respondents volunteered for (2.37) was  
380 similar to our previous UK study cohort (2.86 UK) the difference was not statistically  
381 significant ( $p=.776$ , Mann-Whitney test). 78.2% of Ghanaian students (n=142) had volunteered  
382 for one or two organisations previously, compared to 73.7% (n=100) in the UK cohort.  
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388 The percentage of Ghanaian respondents who had volunteered since joining the university  
389 (39.8% n=102) was significantly higher than that in the UK (8.8%, n=12).  $p<0.001$ , Fisher's  
390 exact test, n=393). Similarly, the percentage of respondents who were volunteering at the time  
391 of completing the questionnaire was significantly higher in Ghana when compared with UK  
392 cohort reported previously (19.5% n=50 in Ghana vs 5.1% n=7 UK,  $p<0.001$ , Fisher's exact  
393 test), base= all those who said they had volunteered at some time). One explanation for this  
394 may be in countries where volunteering has the effect of 'positive signalling' to a potential  
395 employer, volunteering rates are thought to be higher. On the other hand, volunteering with the  
396 express purpose of building a CV is thought to lower intensity to volunteer (Rothwell and  
397 Charleston, 2013). As such the triggers for volunteering are thought to be complex, in addition  
398 to being culturally determined (Handy et al, 2010).  
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407 *How students heard about current volunteering opportunity*  
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416 Ghanaian respondents were much more likely to have heard about their current volunteering  
417 opportunity through word of mouth (58.8%, n=30) than UK respondents (25% n=2) and were  
418 also much more likely than UK respondents to have heard about their current opportunity  
419 through involvement with the organisation (37.3%, n=19 in Ghana compared to 2.5%, n=1  
420 UK).  
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425 **Insert Table 2. here: Title: How students heard about current volunteering opportunity**

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427 *Focus of current organisation*

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429 Health and disability were the most commonly cited focus of the current volunteering  
430 opportunity in both countries (76%, n=38 in Ghana and 62.5%, n=5 in the UK). Education was  
431 also a common focus in Ghana (46%, n=23) but much less so in the UK (12.5%, n=1). A  
432 religious focus was quite common in both countries (26%, n=13 in Ghana, 25%, n=2 in the  
433 UK) as was a focus on children and young people (32%, n=16 in Ghana and 25%, n=2 in the  
434 UK).. The first aid focus was quite important in Ghana (30%, n=15) but was not a focus for  
435 any of the UK students. A focus on "local community/neighbourhood/citizen groups" was a  
436 relatively common focus in both Ghana and the UK (22%, n=11 and 25%, n=2. respectively).  
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443 **Insert Fig 1 here Title: focus of current organisation.**

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445 *Description of volunteering role*

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447 For Ghanaian students, 'handling money (other than fundraising)' (56%, n=29) and visiting  
448 people;(50%, n=25) were the two most frequently cited roles in the current volunteering  
449 position. For UK students, giving advice information or counselling and education (each  
450 mentioned by 42.9%, n=3) were the most frequently cited roles. One explanation for this  
451 difference might be that general educational attainment in Ghana varies according to  
452 accessibility and locality with people living in rural areas having the lowest educational  
453 attainment and boys generally faring better than girls. Much needed educational reform has  
454 been beset with challenges of capacity and resources, resulting in varied access to and levels  
455 of educational attainment (Akyeampong et al, 2007). Skills associated with handling money,  
456 for example ledger balancing, knowledge of proper cash handling procedures, and general  
457 money management, all of which are dependent on strong mathematical skills are likely to be  
458 proportionately higher among the student population, such that student volunteers with money  
459 handling skills will be viewed as an asset.  
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468 **Insert Table 3 here Title: description of current volunteering role**

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475 *Reasons for starting volunteering*  
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479 'Wanting to help people' was the most common reason cited by Ghanaian students for starting  
480 volunteering (74.5%, n=41) and this was much less frequently cited by UK respondents  
481 (42.9%, n=3). UK students were much more likely to say that personal development (71.4%,  
482 n=5) was the reason they started volunteering compared to 54.9% (n=28) of Ghanaian students  
483 and UK students were somewhat more likely to cite 'Improved employment prospect/gain  
484 qualification' (28.6%, n=2 compared to 19.6 (n=12) amongst Ghanaian students. UK students  
485 were more likely to say cause was important to me' as a reason why they started volunteering  
486 (42.9%, n=3 compared to 17.6%,n=12 of Ghanaian students). This suggests that UK students  
487 may be more focussed on particular causes (and organisations) as opposed to just helping  
488 people more generally or informally in their local community.  
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495 **Insert Table 4 here Title: Reasons for starting volunteering**  
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499 *Gains or achievements from volunteering*  
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501 Learning new skills, improved general health and well-being and improved personal  
502 development were the top three gains or achievements for UK students and for Ghanaian  
503 students although the proportion of responses in each category varied considerably between  
504 the two sites. Ghanaian students were more likely to say that they had gained improved earning  
505 potential/career opportunities, although as noted in the previous section, they were less likely  
506 to cite this as a reason for starting volunteering. There was an interesting contrast with regard  
507 to improved sense of ethnic identity (28.6% for UK and 0% for Ghana) and improved sense of  
508 faith or religious identity (32% Ghana, 0% UK). Clearly as the UK students were ethnically  
509 diverse and the Ghanaian students were ethnically homogenous it might be expected that they  
510 would differ regarding the relationship of volunteering and ethnic identity but the contrast is  
511 stark. The survey did not collect data on religious identity but it is likely that both UK  
512 participants and Ghanaian students were religiously diverse, in that more than half the  
513 population of Ghana are Christian, with one-fifth Muslim, and a smaller proportion adhering  
514 to indigenous religions (Akotia et al, 2013). In the UK, the official religious affiliation is  
515 Christianity of all denominations, the main other religions including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism,  
516 Judaism, and Buddhism. Overall Ghanaian students were more likely than their UK  
517 counterparts students to identify gains or achievements from volunteering (i.e. Ghanaian  
518 students were more likely to identify most of the possible benefits as applying to them than  
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534 were UK students, with exceptions of ‘learnt new skills’; ‘improved general health and well-  
535 being’ and ‘improved sense’ of ethnic identity. This suggests that Ghanaian students perceive  
536 their volunteering as more rewarding for them, on a number of dimensions, than do UK  
537 students.  
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544 **Insert Fig 2 here Title: Perceived gains or achievements from volunteering**  
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547 *Reasons for not volunteering*  
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549 The most commonly cited reason for not volunteering amongst both UK and Ghanaian students  
550 was ‘too little time’ (86.4%, n=178) in Ghana compared to (70.6% n=84) of UK students. The  
551 second most common reason indicated by the both groups of respondents was ‘Demands of my  
552 course are too great (80.1%, n=165 in Ghana and 31.9%, n=38 in the UK) and the third most  
553 common was ‘lack of confidence in volunteering (79.6%, n=164 in Ghana and 21%, n=25 in  
554 the UK). Thus we can see that although the top three reasons for not volunteering are the same  
555 in our Ghana and UK samples, the Ghanaian students are much more likely to say that each of  
556 these factors are a reason for them not volunteering (i.e. they seem to be effected by these  
557 barriers to a much greater extent than the UK students) and yet Ghanaian students appear to be  
558 nearly four times more likely than UK students to be current volunteers (as described above).  
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565 The least common reason for not volunteering was reported as ‘poor experience of volunteering  
566 in the past’ (63.1%, n=130% for Ghana and just 2.5% n=3 in the UK sample) highlighting that  
567 even those barriers which were (in relative terms) less of a problem for Ghanaian students still  
568 effected the majority of respondents (see Table 2).  
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572 **Insert FIG 3 here Title: Reasons for not volunteering.**  
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575 *Intention to volunteer in the future*  
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577 Ghanaian respondents (85.5%, n=219) were statistically significantly more likely to say that  
578 they would consider volunteering in the future, compared to UK respondents (63.5%, n=87).  
579 Fisher’s exact test p=.001, n=393.  
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593 *3.5 The Interview*  
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595 Following the quantitative part of the study, the Ghanaian research team member contacted ten  
596 students who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed by including their email addresses  
597 on returned questionnaires. Ten students were subsequently approached and agreed to be  
598 interviewed on campus and duly consented into the study. Interviews took place between  
599 January and April 2018 and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were semi-  
600 structured with questions focused on ascertaining students' attitudes towards volunteering.  
601 Data were analysed using a general inductive approach, consistent with methods used in our  
602 UK study. Inductive analysis refers to approaches which primarily use detailed readings of raw  
603 data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by  
604 an evaluator or researcher (Thomas, 2006). Participants were assigned a number to protect  
605 anonymity.  
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614 *3.6 Interview Findings*  
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616 Interviews began by thanking students for agreeing to participate, followed by collection of  
617 biographical data relating to year of study and field of practice studied, and experiences of  
618 volunteering, prior to and during their time as an undergraduate nursing student. Table 5 shows  
619 the demographic nature of the Ghanaian nursing students:  
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623 **Insert Table 5 here Title: Summary of interviewee characteristics**  
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627 In total 10 Ghanaian students agreed to be interviewed for this study, of whom five had  
628 volunteered before studying at university, five had volunteered since studying at university,  
629 but only two students were studying at the time of our study. These data, although not the  
630 primary focus of the interviews was interesting in that half the Ghanaian students had  
631 volunteered before studying at university compared to one fifth of students in the UK study.  
632 However, the same number of students (two out of ten) in both the UK and Ghanaian studies  
633 were volunteering at the time of interview. Students were asked the same questions as in our  
634 UK study, i.e. to talk about their volunteering experiences if any, and their thoughts on  
635 volunteering in general. The following four themes were generated from interview data: (1)  
636 motivation to volunteer, (2) time to volunteer, (3) resources necessary for volunteering, and (4)  
637 academic support for volunteering. A comparative discussion, which considers similarities and  
638 differences between the Ghanaian study and the UK study is presented below.  
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654 *3.7 Theme 1: Motivation to Volunteer*

655 Students talked about motivation to volunteer, which included the idea of selflessness, benefit  
656 to others, and undertaking sacrificial work:

659 “volunteering is about selfless activity, which an individual offers services for no  
660 financial or social gains but benefits others and if you are not prepared you do not have  
661 to take part” (3<sup>rd</sup> year general nursing student)

662  
663 This student expressed the view that volunteering, while of benefit to others nevertheless  
664 required a sacrifice on the part of the volunteer, which should not be undertaken lightly. While  
665 the notion of ‘sacrifice’ was not evident in our UK study, or at least not expressed in those  
666 terms nonetheless this student alluded to the time, commitment and indeed personal cost of  
667 engaging in an activity, which involved considerable personal outlay. Volunteering was  
668 thought to come at a cost to this individual. However, other students perceived volunteering as  
669 a means to give back to less fortunate individuals in society:  
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676 *“if you want to help others, stretching out your hands to the needy, giving them aid,  
677 donating in whichever way to help people who are in need of volunteering”* (4<sup>th</sup> year  
678 general nursing student)

679  
680 *“I think willingly taking action in which you do not demand financial gain. Volunteering  
681 is about whole heartedly doing something. Intrinsically you generate interest to do  
682 something. No external factors are involved. Interest and curiosity is part of  
683 volunteering because you like to do something on your own to see how best people will  
684 benefit from your efforts and curiosity”* (4<sup>th</sup> year community nursing student)  
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686  
687 In the UK study the most important motivations to volunteer cited by students were personal  
688 development, wanting to help people, and volunteering for an important cause. While there are  
689 clear parallels with their UK counterparts, the Ghanaian students expressed interest or curiosity  
690 with the *subject* or area of the volunteering, in addition to the *object* or recipient of the  
691 volunteering activity. In other words, Ghanaian students were individually motivated to  
692 volunteer in areas of personal interest as opposed to personal development per se.  
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698 *3.8 Theme 2: Time to Volunteer*

699 With respect to time to volunteer Ghanaian students experienced similar challenges to their UK  
700 counterparts such that even positively minded students were challenged to commit the  
701 necessary time to volunteering;  
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711 *“I will look at the seriousness of the logistics, distance to the place of volunteering, to*  
712 *travel so long from my house because it makes studying difficult”* (4<sup>th</sup> year adult nursing  
713 student)  
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715  
716 Ghanaian students, similar to our UK nursing students referred to their respective nursing  
717 programmes as difficult with respect to assignments, and other programme obligations;  
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721 *“You know the nursing programme is not easy, we are always not easy, we are always*  
722 *occupied, even during our short breaks, there are assignments and I am engaged all the*  
723 *time, there will be not time to do voluntary work”* (2<sup>nd</sup> year general nursing student)  
724

725 Time to volunteer was implicated in Ghanaian students’ ability to act on intrinsic motivations  
726 to volunteer. In similar fashion to nursing programme in the UK, which have been shown in  
727 our earlier study to impact uptake of volunteering nursing programmes across fields and years  
728 of study demand a similar level of commitment from students, which negates participation in  
729 volunteering, despite the espoused understanding of the benefit of so doing.  
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### 733 734 735 3.9 Theme 3: Resources for Volunteering

736 A key difference between UK and Ghanaian students related to accessing the resources needed  
737 to volunteer. Ghanaian students consistently talked of having to sustain themselves financially  
738 during a period of volunteering, which resulted in serious challenges;  
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743 *“So it entails a lot, feeing yourself, transport cost and others, so it is not that simple* (1<sup>st</sup>  
744 year general nursing student).  
745

746  
747 Ghanaian students did point out however, that volunteering programmes embedded within the  
748 nursing programme provide some relief from the personal cost of volunteering:  
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751 *“The volunteering programme takes care of these, then I think it will be better*  
752 *opportunity for students like me to get experiences from it, if it is related to our*  
753 *programme of study* (4<sup>th</sup> community nursing student)  
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### 756 757 3.10 Theme 4: Academic Support for Volunteering

758 In terms of academic support for volunteering Ghanaian students intimated where nursing  
759 programmes accommodated volunteering or planned volunteering into programme activities  
760 the likelihood of participation increased;  
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771 *“If it is part of the programme then volunteering becomes a regular part of our work*  
772 *(3<sup>rd</sup> year general nursing student)*  
773

774 However, unlike UK students Ghanaian nursing students indicated the University would need  
775 to request support from parents for students to undertake extracurricular activities, which calls  
776 into question the purpose of higher education, which, certainly in the UK is to challenge, to  
777 develop independence of thought and to build confident students (Hargreaves, 2008).  
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782 *“If the school or University wants to include volunteering in it academic programmes,*  
783 *they have to give letters to our parents so that it is recognized as part of academic work.*  
784 *My parents are not in agreement last time I got the chance to volunteer (1<sup>st</sup> year general*  
785 *nursing student)*  
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## 787 Discussion

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791 While there are large and pervasive differences between the worldviews of people in rich and  
792 poor societies, economic differences are not the only story. Inglehart (2003) points out the  
793 importance of specific religious traditions, which impact contemporary values systems of  
794 societies, including attitudes towards civic engagement including volunteering, suggesting  
795 countries, where English is the predominant language share similar values systems. Ghana is a  
796 multilingual country in which around eighty languages are spoken. Of these, English, inherited  
797 from the colonial era is the lingua franca, which may explain the similarities in basic values in  
798 the UK and Ghanaian cohorts, despite the differences in levels of economic development  
799 between the two countries. In Ghana, as in other African countries with similar histories, the  
800 colonial influence on nursing programmes shaped the development of nurse education  
801 generally, followed over time by a period of Africanisation and a focus on the needs of  
802 indigenous populations (Klopper and Uys, 2013). While the structure of nursing programmes  
803 in Ghana historically adopts a westernised model of nurse education, with similar demands  
804 placed on Ghanaian nursing students as on UK students, nevertheless individual attitudes  
805 towards volunteering are shaped by economic development within and across countries.  
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808 Intergenerational cultural changes are also important considerations in any strategy around  
809 volunteering in Higher Education, in as much as these have capacity to transform basic values  
810 and motivations, including attitudes towards, and individual capacity to volunteer (Inglehart,  
811 2003). The marked difference between the UK and Ghanaian student attitudes towards  
812 volunteering relates to reimbursement, with Ghanaian students expecting the University to  
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829 shoulder the cost. Nevertheless, Ghanaian students expressed positive attitudes towards  
830 volunteering, with benefits noted for personal development, for gaining work related  
831 experience, and skills development. Our study identified much higher volunteering rates in  
832 Ghanaian students at the time of the survey and more frequent volunteering by current  
833 volunteers. Despite this however, Ghanaian students are much more likely to report  
834 experiencing a range of barriers to volunteering.  
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## 839 840 841 Conclusion

842 There is evidence that economic development tends to produce rising levels of volunteering.  
843 In a country such as Ghana where it is likely the economy will grow at a slower rate than  
844 predicted, volunteering rates may decline among the general population. A country's wider  
845 economy also impacts the lives of students. Therefore, in times of economic growth and in the  
846 presence of positive attitudes student volunteering it is likely volunteering will flourish.  
847 Conversely, volunteering is likely to be negatively impacted at times of low economic growth,  
848 as individuals' prioritise available resources, irrespective of positive attitudes towards  
849 volunteering in general. While structured volunteering provides some antidote to the lack of  
850 available time for extra-curricular activities, it fails to address the implicit financial burden of  
851 volunteering. Furthermore, this is likely to impact Ghanaian nursing students who reported  
852 having to travel some considerable distance to volunteer at their own expense, more so than  
853 their UK counterparts. In Ghana at least, it seems unlikely reimbursement for volunteering will  
854 be prioritised in the current economic climate. For these reasons' structural challenges within  
855 countries provide a more likely explanation of variation in uptake of student volunteering, as  
856 opposed to cross-cultural variation in attitudes towards volunteering within countries.  
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## 868 Limitations

869 This research was conducted in two universities – one in the UK and one in Ghana. While we  
870 can be reasonably confident that the samples obtained are representative of students on nursing  
871 programmes at those universities, to establish how representative the universities are of their  
872 respective countries would require a much larger research project with random samples from  
873 several universities in each country. In the UK sample, the number of current volunteers was  
874 very small (n=7) and this means that it was difficult to meaningfully break these responses  
875 down across multiple choice questions. The quantitative part of the research relies on self-  
876 reported behaviour in a survey. Obviously, such surveys can be subject to bias in terms of social  
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desirability for example – that is respondents wishing consciously or unconsciously, to give responses which they think are likely to be viewed favourably by the researcher or perhaps by other people who will read the research findings. Further to that, when doing surveys in more than one country or culture while using standardised wording it is of course possible that questions can be understood differently in one or other of the countries. While time and resources precluded piloting of the questionnaire with Ghanaian students the research team tried to minimise this possible source of bias by taking great care with question wording and checking that wording, with nursing teachers in both countries.

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## **Volunteering in the Nursing Student Population in Ghana**

There are no conflicts of interest concerning this paper

Middlesex University provided 5K from small grants funding

Ethical Approval was received from the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, which is a constituent of the College of Health Sciences at the University of Ghana, with the original study receiving ethical approval from the UK University