

Hope deferred makes the heart sick but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life: Deferment in blood donation

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Abstract

The main thrusts of this study are to identify the motivators, emotions and willingness of deferred blood donors. The researchers utilized exploratory qualitative research design. The participants for the study were students, teachers and employees of a private Catholic university. The setting was in the conference room (amphitheater-type). The researchers themselves were the instruments for the collection and analysis of data in the qualitative research. The identified motivators were act of altruism, awareness of the need, health benefits, curiosity and previous positive experience. The emotions elicited were disappointment and regret. All of the participants expressed willingness to donate blood again after the deferral. It was recommended that blood donors who were deferred should be given a clear explanation of the reasons of their deferral status. It was also suggested that information dissemination about the criteria or requirements for blood donors is important to lessen the feelings of disappointment and regret if the donor will be deferred.

Key terms: blood, blood donation, deferment

INTRODUCTION

Blood is considered indispensable to human life (Agrawal et al., 2013). It has numerous functions vital to human survival. Blood is primarily a part of the hematologic system that delivers oxygen to tissues and maintains homeostasis (Linton, 2016). It also provides nourishment and carries-away waste materials from the cells (Nordqvist, 2014). This composition of formed elements and plasma, a major constituent of extracellular fluid in the body, is deemed essential to perform body functions essential to life (Ignatavicius & Workman, 2006).

Since blood is considered a major precursor to life's sustenance, its donation also plays a pivotal role in the field of medicine. Blood donation or blood banking is the voluntary act of giving blood for the purpose of helping others with no remuneration (Snelling, 2014). Even elderly people can stand blood-letting, the act of having their blood extracted for donation (Gandini et al., 1999; Janetzko et al., 1998, 2001 cited in Zhang et al., 2012). However, no matter how noble is the intention, blood donors are subject to rigorous health history-taking and stringent laboratory examinations. Those who are at the peak of their health are fit enough to be selected as blood donors. On the other hand, those who wished to have their blood drawn-out but not qualify based on the needed requirements, would be deferred on blood donation.

Deferment is defined to be an act of waiting, delaying or postponing (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2016). It can also be applied in the process of blood donation and is termed as donor deferment (Philippine Red Cross, 2015). Supposed-to-be donors who will fail the pre-requisite requirements of health history-taking and laboratory examinations are subject to deferment in blood donation. Common diseases or disorders included in the exclusion criteria of blood donation are anemia, hepatitis and HIV infection. These can be detected through laboratory tests and screenings.

With the purest of intent to help save others' lives in critical situations, would deferment somehow hit a big blow to a blood donor's self-esteem? Would deferment serve as a hindrance in one's objective to further his act of sharing what he could offer, blood which sustains life? Would a deferred blood donor's motivation be deterred in participating to the purposeful activity of blood donation? Would the meaning of the quotation: "Only the best is good enough." be a stark contrast to the qualities possessed by deferred blood donors? Lastly, would deferment affect the already dwindling number of people willing to donate blood?

Based on statistics, the number of people who engage in blood banking is remarkably low. Close to three percent (3%) of USA's total population donate blood (Holly, Torbit & Ditto, 2012). This data is almost equal to Australia's statistics of three percent (Hillgrove, Doherty & Moore, 2012). However, all (100%) of blood donations in UK are voluntary and non-remunerated (Snelling, 2014). This means that their drive to donate is through altruism and with no expectation of monetary reward or benefit in return for their selfless act.

Currently, there are limited foreign empirical undertakings in blood donation such as the studies of Snelling, 2014; Agrawal et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2012. There is also dearth of information regarding deferment in blood donation like in the study of Hillgrove et al., 2012 and Sundar et al., 2010. Locally, only the Occupational Health and Safety Center (1999) conducted a survey on blood donation. With these gaps in related in related studies and low blood donor turn-out, the researchers respond to the challenge of having an in-depth research specifically in the deferment of blood donors. Therefore, the researchers find it relevant to conduct this study, which may be advantageous in the promotion and advancement of blood donation.

Literature review

Blood donation and donors

Blood donation is the term used for the voluntary and non-remunerated act of blood offering (Snelling, 2014). It provides an excellent opportunity to give blood, the gift of life (Philippine Red Cross, 2016). People who are willing to have their blood extracted are coined as prospective blood donors. These possible blood donors will first be evaluated through arduous history-taking and series of blood tests in order to qualify in the blood donors' list (American Red Cross, 2016).

There were previous studies related to the concept of blood donation. According to the study of Snelling (2014), blood donation as a form of supererogation was contested regarding its moral status. A suggested alternative moral account is beneficence, which is explained by greater benefit to the recipient and low cost from the donor. Another alternative account is the wrongness of free-riding, which involves people contributing to collective systems for their benefits.

The knowledge, attitudes and practices of blood donors were studied by Agrawal et al., (2013). It was learned from this research that promotion of blood donation has a direct relationship with the literacy level of the people. It was also noted that lack of awareness is the prime reason for not donating blood. Hence, the role of media is important in the promotion of blood donation.

Zhang et al., (2012) studied the effects of blood donation to the electro-encephalogram and hematology of the donors. Based on their study, the related effects of blood donation are of minimal significance due to only minor changes. It was suggested that blood donation is a safe procedure and must be promoted to volunteers.

Locally, a study was conducted by OSHC (1999), to determine the level of awareness of people regarding voluntary blood donation. This result of this cross-sectional and descriptive survey showed that 83% of the total population are aware of voluntary blood donation compared to 69.6% of the student population. It was also stated in the local study that half of the respondents were informed through the aid of mass media, specifically through radios and televisions.

Deferment in blood donation and deferred donor

Deferment is the postponement of an activity (Dictionary.com, 2015). In blood donation, it is sometimes called deferral (Philippine Red Cross, 2015). During screening procedures, comprehensive history-taking and strict laboratory examinations are performed to select the prospective donors. People who are disqualified or who have not met the necessary requirements from blood donation are the deferred blood donors.

A deferred donor can be classified into two: temporary or permanent (Philippine Red Cross, 2015). Temporary deferment may be caused by a disease or a disorder which can be reversed. A concrete example is anemia, a blood disorder characterized by a reduced number of circulating red blood cells (Smith, Duell & Martin, 2008). Persons who recently had tattoos or tooth extraction can be permitted to donate blood after one year (Philippine Red Cross, 2015). Temporary deferred donors are still eligible for future blood donations. However, permanent deferment is for prospective donors who tested positive for hepatitis and HIV infection. These persons would not be eligible to donate blood and its components even if they are on medication or treatment.

Hillgrove et al., (2012) studied why deferral in blood donation reduces the chances of the donor's return. Results showed that deferral disrupts the voluntary donation because of practical and emotional hassles. Return after deferral was linked to a person's other obligations such as parenting, whether the donation program was facilitated by support system, identity of blood donor and whether deferral made the donor feel appreciated and valued.

According to the study of Sundar et al., (2010), deferral of blood donors is five times more common in women compared to men and its rate is higher among those in the age bracket of 18-25 years old. The prevalent reasons for blood deferral in females are hypotension, low body weight and low hemoglobin levels while hypertension, low body weight and low hemoglobin levels are common in males.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to elicit meaningful responses of blood donors regarding deferment. Specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following questions: 1. What motivated the participants to donate blood? 2. What have they felt after being deferred as blood donors? 3.) Would they still be willing to donate blood again after their experience of deferment?

METHOD

The researchers utilized exploratory qualitative research design. It was used to elicit meaningful information regarding deferment in blood donation. The participants for the study were students, teachers and employees of a private Catholic university. The setting was in the conference room (amphitheater-type).

The researchers themselves were the instruments for the collection and analysis of data in the qualitative research. As human instruments, the researchers must be able to respond and adapt in the progression of collecting and analyzing information. They should be able to therapeutically utilize their skills in verbal and non-verbal communication, instantaneously process the gathered information, precisely interpret the data and readily anticipate unexpected or unusual responses. Hence, the researchers must eliminate any form of bias such as subjectivity in the collection and interpretation of data (Merriam, 2002 cited in Usman, 2010). The tool which was utilized is an interview guide. It consists of three questions and were face and content validated by three professors who specialize in the medical health field.

The voluntary nature of participation in the study was observed through informed consents. Participants' freedom to refuse or withdraw anytime was included in the consents. The anonymity of the respondents for this study was strictly followed. Analysis of data was through content analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Motivations for donating blood

Act of altruism. Some of the participants mentioned donating blood in order to help other persons. They voluntarily donate blood rooted from the desire to help other people through simple ways. This is a reflection of an act of altruism. Altruism refers to seeking for the improved welfare of others and not thinking of one's own (Steinberg, 2010). It is also a means to act for others' interests not expecting monetary return as a form of compensation (Monroe, 2002).

"First time ko mag-donate sa PGH. May mga leukemia ang first priority kong tutulungan regarding sa dugo na mayroon naman ako." [It was my first time to donate in PGH. Patients with leukemia are my priority since I have blood anyway to help them.]

P2

"Siyempre, masarap ang feeling na nakatulong ka." [Of course, the feeling is good when you are able to help others.]

P3

Awareness of the need. Experiences of other people, especially of own family members who also need blood, motivate some participants to donate blood voluntarily. There is an awareness of need which is integrated in the sensation of environment as a means of achieving personal goals for the recipient of blood and the donor himself (Merker, 2007).

"Makatulong sa mga nangangailangan kasi na-experience ko yung neighbor naming nangailangan ng dugo, kaso wala silang pera." [I want to help those who are in need. Before, I experienced one of my neighbors needed blood. However, they do not have money to buy one.]

P7

Peer influence. Participants have intrinsic motives of donating blood which is triggered by the encouragement given by friends and family members. These then play an important factor to motivate other participants to donate blood. Peer influence and examples set by family members greatly affect the willingness of the participants to donate blood. According to Ma (2003), peer interactions promote optimal means of providing opportunity to give something to others.

"Sinamahan at in-encourage ako ng kaibigan ko at yung kapatid ko na nagdo-donate lagi." [I was with my friend and sibling. They encouraged me to donate blood.]

P13

"Kasi sa mga classmates ko, laging nagdo-donate at sinasabi nila, makakatulong po yung dugo ko." [My classmates are always donating blood and they told me that my blood is of great help to other people.]

P14

Health benefits. Health benefits associated with blood donation motivate others to donate blood. Aside from the emotional benefits of fulfillment, health benefits of blood donation include primarily the following: reduces the incidence of cancer, cardiovascular disorders and replenishes blood. There could also be a feeling of alertness and generally feeling better or wellness (Alfouzan, 2013).

"Gusto kong mapalitan ang aking dugo." [I wanted to replenish my blood.]

P1

"Last year nag-donate ako. Maganda po dahil nakakalinis ng dugo at para sa circulation. Nabawasan po yung pimples ko." [Last year, I was able to donate. My blood was cleaned and it improved my circulation. My pimples were reduced.]

P18

"Kasi last year, nag-donate po ako. Maganda po dahil nakakalinis daw po ng dugo. Dati po, marami akong pimples. Nabawasan naman yung pimples ko." [Last year, I donated blood. According to others, it is good because it can clean your blood. Before, I have many pimples. Now, they are fewer than before.]

P18

Curiosity. Some blood donors undergo blood-letting for the purpose of curiosity. Litman and Spielberg (2003) defined curiosity as a means to acquire new and valuable data and experience that promotes exploratory behavior. It is an urge to know or feel something. First time blood donors wanted to try and experience donating blood out of curiosity of what it would feel like to donate blood.

"Na-curious po ako. Gusto ko lang i-try." [I am curious. I wanted to try doing it.]

P11

Feelings after being deferred from blood donation

Disappointment. Many of the participants felt disappointment after being rejected. That is normal for anyone who is very determined to donate but because of unavoidable circumstances, they will feel rejected. According to Brandstatter (2001), feeling of disappointment emerges when a perceived expectation such as blood donation has not been met.

"Sayang kasi yung pursgido kang mag-donate. Tapos, di naman makakapag-donate." [I am very willing to donate. Unfortunately, I was not able to donate.]

P2

"Medyo malungkot, ine-expect ko na makaka-donate ako kasi last year ko na sa College. Kaso, na-reject kasi umalis ako." [I felt sad because I am expecting that I will be able to donate since this is my last year in college. Unfortunately, I was deferred because I left the country.]

P10

Regret. Missed opportunities and failure to accomplish a goal lead to feeling of regret. Blood donors who are conditioned and prepared to donate blood feel regret once deferred. According to Bailey (2005), regret is the emotion of having lost or missing-out joy when someone is supposed to make a righteous decision such as blood-letting.

"Sayang kasi yung pursigido kang mag-donate." [I regret that I was not able to donate because I am really willing to do so.]

P2

"Ewan ko, nanghihinayang ako kasi gusto ko talaga at nag-ready ako." [I don't know, I felt upset, because I really wanted to donate blood and I am ready.]

P7

Optimism. While most donors have negative feelings of them being deferred, some may feel that there are justifiable and positive reasons for them being deferred. Some even have positive outlook of trying again next time. Blood donors have optimism as a mood or attitude which is often related to an expectation in the near future (Luthans, Lebsack & Lebsack, 2008).

"Kagandahan nya, kahit di ako nakapag-donate, safe pa rin ako." [On the positive note, even I was not able to donate, I still feel safe.]

P2

"Okay lang, at least nalaman ko na ganitong kalagayan ay hindi pala okay (asthma). Last year lang nag-attack dahil sa sobrang pagod." [It is fine. At least, I know with this condition of asthma, I will not be able to donate. It was only last year when I had my asthma attack because of fatigue.]

P6

"Okay lang may next time pa." [It is fine. Next time, I will donate blood.]

P17

Willingness to donate blood again

Most of the participants are willing to try to donate again inspite of the deferment that they have experienced. This primarily rooted from their altruistic motives of helping others and secondarily from the feeling that they wanted to experience donating blood. They are willing to wait for the next blood-letting procedure even if it would take a little more time.

"Yes one way to help another people."

P2

"Yes, I want yearly or 2x a year at least makapag-donate ako." [Yes, I will donate again yearly or at least 2x a year if will be able to donate.]

P12

"Opo kung available po sana ako, at if pwede na ako."[Yes if I am available, I hope to donate.]

P13

Conclusions

The act of altruism, awareness of the need, peer influence, health benefits and curiosity were the motivators for potential blood donors. People who participate in blood-letting activities are encouraged to donate blood due to holistic rewards which include physical, mental, emotional and spiritual benefits.

Disappointment, regret and optimism were the expressed feelings of deferred blood donors. Negative emotions such as disappointment and regret set-in the moment they receive the bad news of being deferred. However, upon realizing that they could still donate in the future, approximately after three to six months, optimism becomes a common emotion for the deferred blood donors.

Most of the deferred blood donors are willing to undergo blood-letting procedures in the future. They are ready to wait for a few months just to be of huge help to those people who need blood transfusions. They are also willing to undergo the same procedures prior to blood donation for the very same purpose.

Recommendations

It is recommended that blood donors who were deferred should be given a clear explanation of their deferral status whether it is just temporary or permanent deferral from donating blood. It must also include the reasons for being deferred.

It is suggested that deferred blood donors must be encouraged to keep themselves healthy for them to be possible blood donors in the future. There should be proper information dissemination about the criteria or requirements for blood donors to return during blood-letting activities.

It is imperative to provide professional counselling to deferred blood donors. This will be instrumental in easing the feelings of disappointment and regret on blood donation.

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