

**VOLUNTEERISM IN THE PHILIPPINES: A SYSTEMATIC
LITERATURE REVIEW****Braulio Jr. R. Adonis**bjradonis02202400419@usep.edu.ph

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a PRISMA-guided systematic review of literature on volunteerism in the Philippines published between 2015 and 2025. Anchored on Lidivina V. Cariño's conceptualization of voluntarism as a civic institution, the review synthesizes peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional studies, and policy documents. Searches of Google Scholar, EJournals Philippines, institutional repositories, and government publications yielded 56 records, of which 13 met the inclusion criteria. Thematic analysis identified four dominant themes: motivations for volunteering, skill and civic development outcomes, volunteerism in crisis contexts, and institutional and policy influences. Findings indicate that Filipino volunteerism remains values-driven and culturally grounded in *bayanihan*, while also increasingly incorporating professional and instrumental motivations, particularly among young people. Volunteering contributes to leadership development, employability, and civic consciousness but is constrained by uneven policy implementation, coordination challenges, and limited psychosocial support during crises. The study affirms the continuing relevance of Cariño's framework while highlighting the need for longitudinal, community-based, and nationally representative research to inform evidence-based volunteer policies.

Keywords:

Volunteerism, Philippines, Systematic Review, PRISMA, Civic Engagement, Youth Participation, Disaster Response

INTRODUCTION

Volunteerism has long been embedded in Philippine society through the cultural tradition of *bayanihan*, but it has also been theorized as a structural component of civic life and education. As early as the mid-1990s, Cariño argued that universities have a critical role in embedding "voluntarism in the 21st century," especially in a rapidly globalizing and technologizing age, where social inequalities persist, and institutional involvement in volunteering becomes essential (Cariño, 1996). Her work envisioned a future where volunteer service, institutionalized through universities and civil society, would help bridge social divides and foster civic responsibility. Over the past decade (2015–2025), academic and institutional interest in volunteerism has expanded, focusing on youth, disaster response, community development, and volunteer management (e.g., Llenares, 2015; Bautista, 2025; PNVSCA, 2019/2020). This review synthesizes empirical and conceptual studies from 2015 to 2025 within the context of earlier theoretical foundations to identify trends, gaps, and thematic directions surrounding Philippine volunteerism.

METHODS**Study Design and Protocol**

This study employed a systematic review design, following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, to ensure a transparent and replicable synthesis of the literature. The review was anchored on Lidivina V. Cariño's conceptualization of voluntarism as a civic institution, providing a theoretical lens through which contemporary data was evaluated.

Search Strategy and Data Sources

Comprehensive searches were conducted across multiple digital platforms to capture both peer-reviewed and "gray" literature (research and information produced outside traditional commercial publishing) published between 2015 and 2025. The primary databases and repositories included Google Scholar, E-Journals

Philippines, Institutional repositories (e.g., University of Southeastern Philippines, University of Makati), and Government and Organizational Publications (e.g., PNVSCA, iVolunteer Philippines).

The search strings employed keywords such as "volunteerism Philippines," "youth volunteering," "volunteer motivations," and "Philippine civic engagement."

Eligibility Criteria

Studies were assessed for inclusion based on the following predefined criteria: First, Geographic Focus, the research must be conducted within the Philippine context, as the focus of the study is on volunteerism in the Philippine setting. Second, the temporal range limitation requires that the publications must fall between the years 2015 and 2025, serving as the range of the studies. Third, the Nature of the study, including empirical research, conceptual frameworks, and policy-based documents, must be geared towards the said topic. Lastly, Language: The documents must be available in English for clarity and accessibility, not just for Filipino readers, but also for other foreign readers.

Study Selection and Data Extraction

As illustrated in the PRISMA flow (see Figure 1), a total of **56 records** were initially identified. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts, **42 records** remained for further review. Following a full-text assessment of **17 articles**, a final set of **13 studies** met all eligibility requirements for qualitative synthesis.

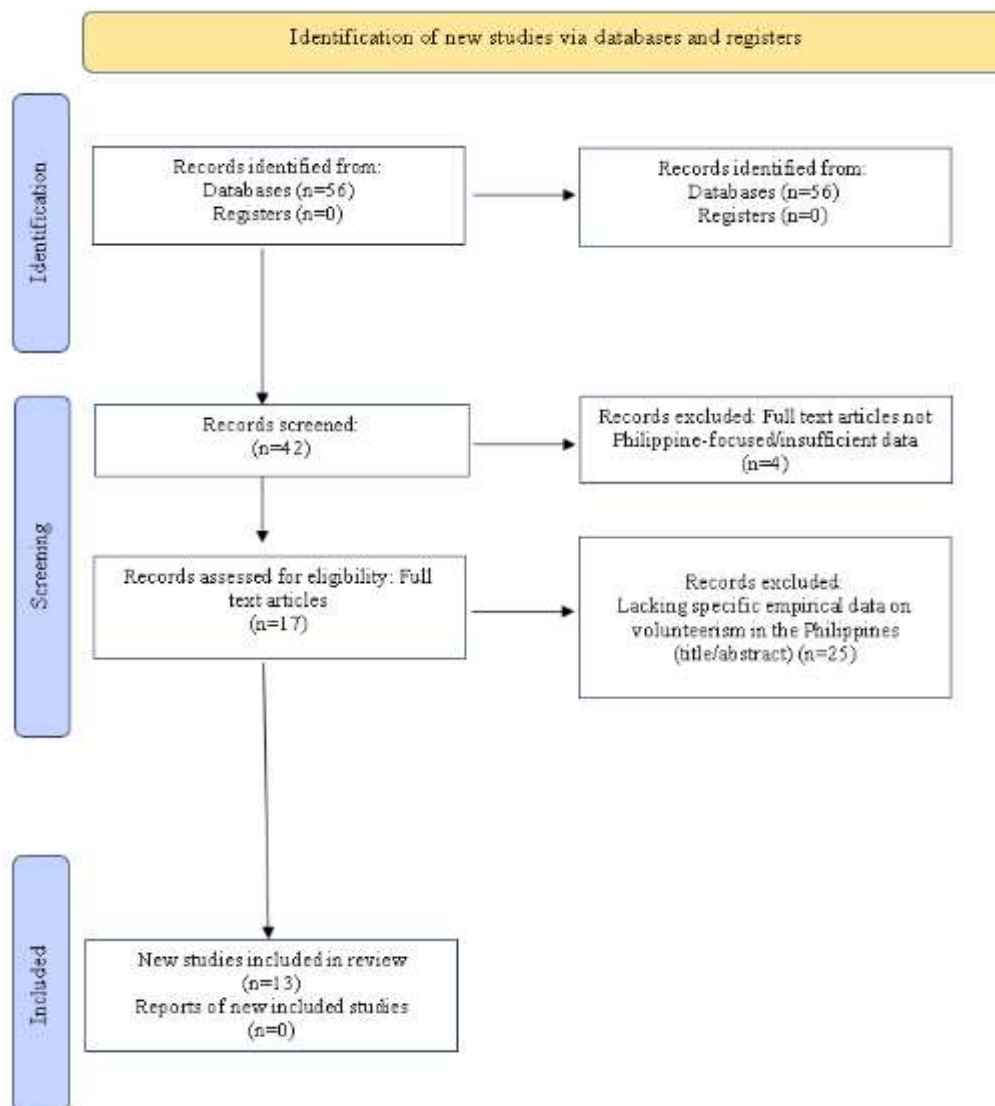


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The 13 included studies comprised: 5 quantitative studies, four qualitative studies, two mixed-methods studies, and two policy/organizational documents (PNVSCA, iVolunteer). Most participants were: college students, youth volunteers, university employees, and community or emergency response volunteers (e.g., Red Cross nursing students). Four themes have emerged from the reviewed literature.

1. Motivations for Volunteerism

Multiple studies highlight that Filipino volunteers are motivated by altruism, empathy, community involvement, and a desire for personal growth (Llenares, 2015; iVolunteer Philippines, 2015; Napil, 2025). Student volunteers also seek skill enhancement, social connections, and career preparation (Faustino, 2022). Event volunteer research suggests that motivation interacts with self-efficacy and perceived outcomes (Senevirathna, 2023), a concept also reflected in Philippine youth contexts.

2. Benefits and Developmental Outcomes

Volunteering consistently produces positive developmental outcomes: (a) **Soft-skill gains**: communication, leadership, teamwork, civic values (Llenares, 2019), (b) **Professional preparedness**: particularly among students in service-oriented disciplines (Bautista, 2025), and (c) **Personal growth**: enhanced empathy, social awareness, and sense of purpose (Estrera, 2024).

Also, Estrera's (2024) "3Cs Model" (Civic duty, Career development, and Competence) suggests that volunteering is increasingly viewed as a pathway to employability and professional skill development, moving beyond pure altruism. The rise of **Skill-Based Volunteerism (SBV)**, where volunteers contribute specific professional expertise (e.g., IT, medical) rather than general labor. Thus, Student-leader studies also confirm that volunteer activities build confidence and initiative (Bantugan et al., 2024).

3. Volunteerism in Crisis Contexts

Crisis-related volunteering surged during COVID-19. Nursing student volunteers faced emotional strain but demonstrated resilience and civic commitment (Castro, 2022). Youth volunteerism during crises was shaped by risk perception, community duty, and structured engagement mechanisms (Dagohoy, 2024). These studies emphasize the need for proper training, psychosocial support, safety protocols, and clearer roles.

4. Policy and Organizational Systems

Government frameworks, primarily the National Volunteer Deployment Framework (NVDF), provide strategic direction for national volunteer initiatives (PNVSCA, 2019/2020). The framework identifies volunteer types, deployment mechanisms, and partnership structures.

Organizational studies emphasize the importance of structured volunteer management systems, recognition and retention programs, and leadership roles in sustaining engagement. Consequently, recognition and leadership roles are primary predictors of volunteer retention, suggesting that organizations should prioritize better volunteer management systems (Napil, 2025).

Across 2015–2025, the following gaps have consistently appeared: a lack of large-sample national surveys, the absence of long-term longitudinal studies, underrepresentation of older adult volunteers, limited research on rural or community-based volunteers, and a need for a deeper examination of volunteer retention.

Additionally, there is recent Philippine journal literature that reinforces earlier findings while adding nuance across sectors: (1) **Education and Service-Learning**, the studies published in Philippine education journals emphasize service-learning as a structured pathway to volunteerism. Dela Cruz and Torres (2018) found that institutionalized service-learning programs significantly enhance students' civic responsibility and social awareness. Similarly, De Vera (2021) reported that sustained volunteer exposure correlates with higher levels of prosocial behavior among university students. (2) **Youth and Civic Engagement**, Research in youth studies highlights increasing youth participation in volunteering as a response to socio-political challenges. Alampay and Garcia (2019) observed that Filipino youth volunteers view participation as both a civic duty and a means of identity formation. Bautista (2023) further noted that peer influence and digital mobilization platforms are playing an increasingly important role in youth volunteer recruitment. (3) **Community and Faith-Based Volunteerism**, Philippine sociology and social work journals document the importance of faith-based organizations in sustaining volunteer engagement. Reyes and David (2020) demonstrated that church-affiliated volunteer programs exhibit higher volunteer retention due to strong value alignment and social support mechanisms. (4) **Disaster Risk Reduction and Health Volunteering**, Disaster studies published locally emphasize the indispensability of community volunteers. Luna and Javier (2017) found that barangay-based volunteer groups significantly improved disaster preparedness outcomes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Soriano et al. (2021) documented both the heroism and burnout experienced by health volunteers, underscoring

the need for psychosocial support. (5) **Governance and Policy-Oriented Research**, Public administration journals highlight the evolving role of government in volunteer coordination. Brillantes and Fernandez (2018) argued that volunteerism complements decentralization by strengthening local governance. However, Cruz (2022) identified persistent policy gaps in monitoring the effectiveness of volunteer deployment at the local level.

Furthermore, the reviewed literature strongly supports Cariño's conceptualization of volunteerism as a civic institution embedded in Philippine social and political life. Universities continue to function as primary incubators of volunteer engagement, affirming Cariño's emphasis on higher education. However, contemporary journal research reveals a diversification of volunteer spaces, including NGOs, faith-based organizations, local governments, and digital platforms.

A significant development in post-2018 literature is the professionalization of volunteerism. While altruism remains central, many volunteers increasingly expect skills training and employability outcomes. This shift aligns with global trends but raises questions about long-term commitment and intrinsic motivation, echoing concerns in the field of public administration scholarship. Crisis-related volunteerism illustrates both the resilience of Filipino civic culture and systemic gaps in coordination and volunteer protection. Journal evidence suggests that institutionalizing volunteer training and mental health support enhances sustainability and effectiveness. Policy-focused studies further emphasize the need to strike a balance between centralized coordination and community-driven flexibility.

CONCLUSION

Volunteerism in the Philippines between 2015 and 2025 remains a dynamic and adaptive form of civic participation. Integrating Cariño's foundational framework with contemporary journal research reveals both continuity in values-driven service and transformation toward institutionalized and professionalized volunteer engagement. To strengthen volunteerism as a civic institution, future research should prioritize longitudinal designs, community-based perspectives, and national-level data to inform inclusive and sustainable volunteer policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the systematic review of Philippine volunteerism and recent 2025 developments, here are recommendations to strengthen volunteer engagement and policy:

1. Institutional & Policy Recommendations

- **Strengthen National-Local Alignment:** Improve the link between national volunteer policies (such as RA 9418) and local implementation by empowering Local Government Units (LGUs) to serve as primary hubs for community-driven innovation.
- **Mandate Evidence-Based Planning:** Use the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) to collect systematic data and build volunteerism statistics, ensuring that actual volunteer contributions and trends inform national development goals.
- **Formalize the "Bayanihang Bayan" Program:** Embed corporate and citizen volunteering more deeply into the national development strategy to target high-need sectors like education, environment, and health in specific priority cities.
- **Review Regulatory Requirements:** Simplify the registration process for volunteer organizations with the PNVSCA while maintaining strict oversight of foreign volunteer workers to ensure their activities align with national priorities.

2. Academic & Youth Engagement Strategies

- **Adopt the 3Cs Model:** Encourage universities to transition from "one-off" service-learning projects to long-term commitments, viewing volunteerism as a "service continuum" that fosters sustained social justice and civic consciousness.
- **Integrate Skills-Based Volunteering:** Align volunteer opportunities with career development and employability goals, as modern Filipino youth are increasingly motivated by professional growth alongside traditional *bayanihan* values.
- **Mainstream Volunteerism in Curricula:** Formally integrate volunteer service into academic programs and outreach activities to make it a central part of holistic student development.

3. Volunteer Management & Retention

- **Implement Structured Onboarding:** Reduce volunteer turnover by providing clear role descriptions, mission-aligned training, and structured orientations that make volunteers feel prepared from their first day.
- **Prioritize Psychosocial Support:** For volunteers in crisis contexts (e.g., Red Cross, disaster response), provide mandatory psychological first aid (PFA) training and regular peer-support sessions to prevent burnout and emotional exhaustion.
- **Enhance Digital Mobilization:** Utilize platforms like the "Bayanihang QC" portal to match volunteers with specific opportunities in health, education, and disaster response based on their location and skill sets.
- **Recognize and Celebrate Impact:** Maintain long-term loyalty by publicly acknowledging volunteer contributions through awards (e.g., Search for Outstanding Volunteers) and demonstrating the tangible impact of their work on the community.

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