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Humanitarian volunteer training as a strategy for promoting students' social awareness: collaboration with the KNRP in Social Welfare Study Program, Halu Oleo University

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ABSTRACT

This community service program aims to enhance students' capacity, social awareness, and humanitarian competencies through structured humanitarian volunteer training. Implemented in collaboration with the *Komite Nasional untuk Rakyat Palestina* (KNRP), the program targets students of the Social Welfare Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Halu Oleo University. It emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of volunteerism values, fundamental principles of humanitarian action, and the strategic role of volunteers in addressing social issues. The training equips students with essential skills in coordination, communication, and rapid response, while also introducing them to humanitarian networks. Furthermore, the program fosters the development of practical competencies in managing social situations in an organized and effective manner. By promoting a shift in mindset, from passive understanding of solidarity to active engagement, this initiative prepares students to become responsive and committed actors in humanitarian efforts.

INTRODUCTION

Developing social awareness and humanitarian sensitivity is a fundamental competency that must be fostered among university students, particularly those enrolled in Social Welfare programs. As part of the younger generation, students hold a strategic position as potential agents of social change who can promote solidarity and respond to humanitarian issues within society. However, despite this strategic role, many students still demonstrate limited readiness to engage effectively in humanitarian activities (Carlson-Oehlers et al., 2017), particularly in terms of knowledge (Smith & Bonnan-White, 2025a), practical skills (Nassar et al., 2016), and field experience (Townsend & Brennan, 2025).

In practice, student involvement in humanitarian activities is often characterized by sporadic participation rather than structured

capacity development. Existing initiatives tend to emphasize participation in social actions without adequately equipping students with a comprehensive understanding of humanitarian principles, ethical standards, and operational competencies required in real-world contexts. As a result, students' engagement is frequently not supported by sufficient skills in areas such as coordination, communication, and emergency response. This condition reflects a broader issue in higher education, where the integration between theoretical learning and practical humanitarian engagement remains limited (Kondratkova & Golikova, 2023; Lukitasari et al., 2025; Romano & Albrecht, 2023; Smith & Bonnan-White, 2025b).

Previous observations and preliminary assessments among students of the Social Welfare Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Halu Oleo University, reveal several key

constraints. These include limited understanding of humanitarian values and volunteer roles, lack of practical experience in field-based activities, restricted access to structured training and mentoring, and insufficient development of coordination and communication competencies. Furthermore, there is a lack of systematic collaboration between academic institutions and humanitarian organizations, which restricts opportunities for experiential learning and professional skill development.

Ethics constitutes a central foundation in humanitarian work, guiding volunteers to uphold human dignity, ensure fairness, and maintain accountability in the delivery of assistance. However, ethical considerations are often not systematically integrated into student training programs (Silvestre & Maestre, 2023). Consequently, students may participate in humanitarian actions without fully understanding the ethical implications and responsibilities associated with such roles. This highlights the need for a more comprehensive training approach that integrates ethical awareness with practical competencies and reflective learning (Johnson et al., 2024; Maglio & Pherali, 2020).

Although various forms of volunteer training have been implemented in higher education settings, these programs generally lack a structured, competency-based framework that combines ethical principles, practical skills, and social awareness development (Ahmed & Qadhi, 2025; Barton et al., 2019; Fényes et al., 2022; McFadden & Smeaton, 2017). Moreover, limited collaboration with professional humanitarian organizations reduces the authenticity and effectiveness of student learning experiences (Burkle et al., 2013; Sorensen et al., 2025). Therefore, there is a critical need to develop an integrated training model that bridges theoretical knowledge and field-based practice while fostering students' readiness as ethical and competent humanitarian actors (Borysova & Zhykharieva, 2026; Brubaker et al., 2024; Cranmer et al., 2014; Zimmerman et al., 2026).

In response to these challenges, this program introduces a humanitarian volunteer training initiative in collaboration with the *Komite Nasional untuk Rakyat Palestina* (KNRP). This initiative is designed to provide a structured and experiential learning platform that enhances students'

understanding of humanitarian principles, strengthens practical skills such as team coordination, empathetic communication, and emergency response, and cultivates ethical awareness and social responsibility.

This study contributes by proposing an integrated humanitarian training model that combines ethical formation, competency-based learning, and institutional collaboration. Unlike conventional volunteer activities, this approach emphasizes the transformation of students from passive participants into active agents of change who are capable of engaging in humanitarian actions in a structured, ethical, and impactful manner. Ultimately, this program aims to strengthen students' capacity to respond to humanitarian challenges and to contribute meaningfully to society.

METHODS

The implementation of this community service program began with a preliminary survey conducted among students to assess their initial understanding of humanitarian values and volunteerism. This was followed by a coordination meeting with the Head of the Social Welfare Study Program, as well as representatives from Political Science and Sociology at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Halu Oleo University, on September 28, 2025.

Subsequently, invitations were extended to students of the Social Welfare Study Program, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, along with lecturers and instructors with expertise in research methodology and instrument development. The activity was conducted on October 27, 2025, at the Bahtiar Hall, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, under the theme Humanitarian Volunteer Training as a Strategy for Promoting Students' Social Awareness: Collaboration with the KNRP.

The problem-solving approach was implemented through a series of structured socialization sessions and humanitarian volunteer training activities designed collaboratively with KNRP. The stages of implementation included:

1. Preparation Stage: Identification of training needs through an initial survey focusing on students' understanding of humanitarian values, the role of volunteers, and practical field skills;

development of training materials covering humanitarian ethics, team coordination, empathetic communication, and procedures for humanitarian action; and coordination with the faculty, department, and KNRP to support the program implementation.

2. Implementation Stage: Socialization sessions introducing the concept, benefits, and ethical principles of humanitarian volunteerism; hands-on training conducted in small groups to ensure effective transfer of skills in coordination, communication, and emergency response; and interactive discussions and question-and-answer sessions to address challenges encountered by participants.
3. Evaluation and Follow-up Stage: Collection of participant feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of the training in improving practical skills and understanding of humanitarian values; and provision of supplementary materials and post-training technical support through online platforms to facilitate the application of acquired skills in real-world contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The independent Community Service Program conducted in the Social Welfare Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Halu Oleo University, entitled Humanitarian Volunteer Training as a Strategy for Promoting Students' Social Awareness: Collaboration with the KNRP commenced with an opening session led by the program coordinator and hosted by the master of ceremonies. During this session, the course lecturer emphasized the importance of student involvement in humanitarian activities, the development of social awareness, and the strategic role of volunteers in assisting affected communities. The remarks also provided guidance on the structure of the training and volunteer simulation activities.

This was followed by a material presentation delivered by representatives from KNRP, who explained the fundamentals of humanitarian volunteerism and the role of volunteers in responding to crises at both local and global levels. The session introduced key concepts such as volunteer ethics, humanitarian values, and the operational framework of humanitarian action. Additionally, participants were introduced to

KNRP's institutional profile and its humanitarian programs, enabling them to gain practical insight into field-based humanitarian work.

At the outset of the activity, the community service team introduced the objectives of the program, namely, to enhance students' awareness of humanitarian issues and prepare them to become professional and empathetic volunteers. A pre-test was administered to assess students' initial understanding of volunteerism concepts and basic humanitarian skills. The team then explained essential competencies, including needs assessment, empathetic communication, and coordination in humanitarian response. KNRP was also introduced as a partner organization providing field experience, guidance, and best practices in volunteer work.

Introduction to Humanitarian Volunteerism

This session aimed to provide foundational knowledge regarding the principles, values, and roles of humanitarian volunteers. Many students initially demonstrated concern for social issues but lacked an understanding of structured and responsible volunteer engagement. The KNRP representative from Southeast Sulawesi delivered theoretical insights into humanitarian values, ethical principles, and the strategic role of students in crisis response. The session also covered various humanitarian activities, such as fundraising, public education, psychosocial assistance, and aid distribution in conflict-affected areas.

In addition, students were introduced to essential competencies required of volunteers, including communication skills, emotional management, teamwork, and physical and mental readiness. A practical demonstration was conducted to simulate real-world scenarios, including rapid response, use of volunteer equipment, and humanitarian communication techniques.

Basic Practice of Humanitarian Volunteerism

This session was designed to provide hands-on experience and deepen students' understanding of practical volunteer skills. Students practiced applying theoretical knowledge in simulated humanitarian contexts, focusing on rapid response, empathetic communication, teamwork, and situational awareness.

A key issue identified was that many students possessed strong interest in humanitarian work but lacked clarity regarding appropriate actions in field situations. Common challenges included limited

knowledge of needs assessment, ethical interaction with beneficiaries, and risk identification. These limitations often hindered their readiness to engage effectively in humanitarian activities.

Furthermore, students frequently struggled to align their actions with the actual needs of affected communities. Although motivated, some lacked awareness that humanitarian action must prioritize relevance, safety, and respect for beneficiaries' dignity. Errors such as providing inappropriate assistance or ineffective communication could reduce the impact of interventions. Therefore, this practical component was essential in preparing students for real-world volunteer engagement.

Problem-Solving in Volunteer Practice and Information Access Challenges

This session aimed to provide practical solutions to challenges encountered during volunteer practice, including difficulties in

understanding procedures, accessing humanitarian information, and accurately identifying community needs. Many students, particularly those with no prior experience, reported confusion in interpreting field situations, determining aid priorities, and communicating empathetically.

The activities included interactive discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and direct problem-solving exercises. These approaches enabled students to better understand field dynamics and develop appropriate responses to humanitarian challenges.

Evaluation and Outcomes

The program employed several evaluation methods, including participant engagement in group dynamics, interaction and collaboration among participants, and self-reflection. At the end of the session, a post-test was conducted to measure learning outcomes.

Table Pre-and Post-Training Evaluation of Students' Knowledge, Skills, and Application

No.	Evaluation Aspect	Indicator	Pre-Training (%)	Post-Training (%)	Improvement (%)
1	Knowledge and understanding	Comprehension of basic volunteer principles (humanitarian ethics, empathetic communication, team coordination)	45	80	+35
2	Practical Skills	Ability in needs assessment, action planning, and community interaction	30	80	+50
3	Application in Simulation	Implementation of volunteer principles aligned with community needs	35	85	+50
4	Technical and Coordination Ability	Ability to manage procedures, teamwork, and resource access	50	90	+40

The results indicate a significant improvement in students' knowledge and skills. Before the training, only 45% of the 48 participants demonstrated adequate understanding of basic volunteer principles, including humanitarian ethics, empathetic communication, and team coordination. Following the training, approximately 80% of students reported increased confidence and readiness to participate in humanitarian activities with KNRP.

Similarly, students' practical skills improved substantially. Initially, only 30% demonstrated basic competencies in needs assessment, action planning, and community interaction. After the

training, around 80% showed improved ability in assessing community needs, communicating empathetically, and organizing humanitarian actions effectively.

In terms of application, only 35% of students were initially able to implement volunteer principles effectively in simulations. This increased to 85% after the training, indicating improved alignment between humanitarian actions and community needs. Additionally, technical and coordination challenges experienced by 50% of students before the training decreased significantly, with 90% demonstrating improved ability to manage procedures, teamwork, and resource access.

Overall, the program successfully enhanced students' understanding of humanitarian principles, strengthened their social and practical skills, and improved their readiness to engage in volunteer activities. These findings highlight that structured training programs are effective in increasing student professionalism and preparedness as humanitarian volunteers. Future programs should include advanced training in strategic planning, team coordination, and continuous field mentoring to further develop students' competencies and empathy.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Community Service Program aimed to enhance the social awareness, skills, and preparedness of students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Halu Oleo University, in humanitarian volunteer activities in collaboration with the *Komite Nasional untuk Rakyat Palestina* (KNRP). Based on the results of the program, it can be concluded that the initiative has successfully generated a positive impact on improving students' understanding and competencies in volunteerism principles, team coordination, and the implementation of humanitarian actions.

Before the training, most students demonstrated limited understanding of the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian volunteers and faced difficulties in aligning their actions with the actual needs of communities. Following the socialization and training sessions, there was a significant improvement in their comprehension of volunteerism principles, their ability to communicate empathetically, and their practical skills in carrying out social actions.

Moreover, the training enabled students to overcome various challenges, including issues related to coordination, access to resources, and technical constraints in the field. As a result, students became more confident and better prepared to engage in humanitarian activities in an effective, structured, and professional manner. These findings indicate that the KNRP-led humanitarian volunteer training has effectively strengthened students' readiness, skills, and social awareness.

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