

Increasing Non-Donors' Willingness to Donate Blood: Barriers and Facilitators

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Highlights: This paper is part of an ongoing study that aims to increase non-donors' willingness to donate blood by addressing barriers and facilitators influencing blood donation. This study will involve two (2) phases of data collection. The first data collection will involve the conduct of focus groups with the aim of exploring barriers and facilitators in blood donation among non-donors to develop items for the survey questionnaire development. Then, 300 young adults among non-donors will be invited to participate in the study survey. By analysing behaviour of non-donors in terms of their barriers and facilitators in blood donation, specific campaign program can be recommended to increase participation among non-donors in blood donation.

Keywords: Blood donation, donation barriers, donation facilitators, Malaysia, non-donor, willingness

Introduction

Blood donation is a vital component of healthcare. National Blood Centre (NBC) of Malaysia is a Malaysia's premier blood centre for transfusion medicine and transplant (Pusat Darah Negara, 2024). Malaysia practices voluntary blood donation without giving any reward to blood donors. The NBC frequently appeals to the public for donations due to a persistent surge in demand leading to a depleted inventory (Arumugam, 2022; Ahmad, 2023). To support a growing population in Malaysia, it is essential to recruit new donors to replace donors who reach their golden years and stop donating. Therefore, to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of blood when needed, it is important to develop effective strategies to encourage people to donate to address the imbalance between the supply and demand for blood.

To encourage more people to donate blood, it is crucial to understand the obstacles or barriers they encounter that prevent them from donating blood. A study on German blood donation behaviour found that lack of information and knowledge about blood donation have deterred non-blood donors to participate in blood donation (Greffin et al., 2021). Similar findings were found in Qatar whereby lack understanding of the requirements for blood donation and never being asked to donate as the most common barriers among non-donors (Ibrahim et al., 2021). These results supported previous study by Lownik et al. (2012), which found that people were discouraged from donating blood by misinformation about blood donation.

Other than that, fear, risk to health and physical harm from blood donation are highlighted in the literature as barriers to donation (Alanazi et al., 2023; Sham et al., 2019; Harrington et al., 2007; Finck et al., 2016). Alanazi et al. (2023) in their systematic review study identified fear of needles as significant barrier of blood donation. Fear of blood and needles may have prevented adults from becoming blood donors (Sham et al., 2019). Consequently, people were discouraged from donating blood because they perceived it was painful (Bednall & Bove 2011; Finck et al., 2016). This is more so among non-donors who claimed that they are fear of transfusion need and did not want to experience any pain (Wilkinson & Gupta, 2016).

Barriers to donate blood among blood donors have also been explored in the previous studies. For instance, unpleasant symptoms after donating blood, such as dizziness and light-headedness have discouraged them from donating blood (Sham et al., 2019). In other study, Mohammed and Essel (2018) reported that poor attitude of staff as a deterrent to blood donation while positive experiences with blood donation staff facilitate the whole blood donation (Rael et al., 2021). Furthermore, donors who did not experience any unfavourable reactions were more likely to return for a subsequent donation within a year compared to those who did (Finck et al., 2016).

While recognising barriers to donate among non-donors is essential, it is equally important to explore factors or conditions that encourage and enable individuals to donate or known as facilitators. Klinkenberg et al. (2018) argued that the potential facilitators could refer to factors either negatively or positively associated with blood donation behaviour, blood donor status, or intention to donate or become a blood donor. Previous studies have indicated convenience of the donation centres and availability of mobile blood drives as facilitators of blood donation (Shaz et al., 2009; Nhung et al., 2020; Masser et al., 2017). Also, comfortable donation environment was important in motivating people to donate blood (Dubey et al., 2014) and providing information about the donation process and the impact of blood donation could also facilitate donation (Ferguson, 1996).

In Malaysia, in addition to blood donation at the blood banks, efforts to facilitate mobile blood donation are also carried out to encourage the public to donate. These mobile blood donations are held in several places including the government buildings, higher education institutions, and shopping malls with the help and support of the non-government organizations (NGOs), student bodies as well the government and private associations (MyHealth Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2024). Nevertheless, currently only 2.2 per cent of Malaysian donate blood in a year as compared to 3.5 to 5 percent in developed countries (Ova, 2024). Therefore, this study aims to increase non-donors' willingness to donate blood by addressing barriers and facilitators that impact blood donation.

Method

There will be two (2) stages of data collection for this study. In the first stage, focus groups will be conducted with the aim of exploring factors that encourage and hinder non-donors from donating blood to develop items for survey questionnaire. Then, in the second stage, 300 young adults among non-donors will be invited to participate in this study survey. By analysing behaviour of non-donors in terms of their barriers and facilitators in blood donation, targeted campaign program can be developed to increase participation among this group in blood donation efforts.

Conclusion

This study investigates barriers and facilitators among non-donors in blood donation by employing focus groups and survey questionnaire. The research aims to promote a culture of regularly donating blood by identifying effective strategies such as tailored marketing and improved donor experiences. Such initiatives are essential for addressing the country's blood donation needs as well as developing sustainable blood donation framework that supports Malaysia's healthcare needs.

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