Examining the motivations and emotions linked to the formation of a Voluntary sewing group formed in response to Covid-19


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• Relatively little attention has been paid to informal community groups and activities (Toepler, 2003; McCabe and Phillimore, 2018)

• During the immediacy of lockdown under Covid-19 requirements, these ‘under the radar’ groups came to the fore when responding to risk and need and are important when considered to be part of ‘civil society.’

• These small, community led groups have formed seemingly overnight to address immediate need in a swift, responsive way that many statutory or more formal organisations are often unable to do (Streets, 2020)
Research Undertaken

• Mixed methods research took place with 99 participants during the period of UK Covid-19 community lockdown and social distancing in April/May 2020.

• Online JISQ survey, 99 participants; quantitative and qualitative questions.

• The study considers the responses of individual research participants within a Tamworth community group forming as a direct result of Covid-19.

• It examines the emotions and motivations of community voluntary involvement during the lockdown period of Covid-19 (April – June 2020).
• This research is interesting as it examines the motivations and emotions behind collective action during the Covid-19 health crisis we are currently experiencing.

• It considers the volunteering activities of individuals in and around a small market town during a period of national & international crisis.

• An online questionnaire asked participants about how they heard about the group, what their emotions and feelings were about joining and the motivations of why they chose to join.
80% of respondents felt that the fact that this was a Tamworth group had been important to their reasons for joining.

Only 20% of respondents indicated that the location of the group made no difference to their decision to join.
Emotions & Feelings connected with the collective of Volunteering

• The research questionnaire aimed to capture some of the emotions and feelings of volunteers during the pandemic connected to volunteering for this group, a time in history when we will look back upon and consider for some generations.

• Respondents offered qualitative comments to this question linked again to feeling part of a community effort to help, for some there was anger at the political aspects of Covid-19, some felt a sense of pride and a sense of community cohesion.

• Some replies indicated a sense of doing something to assist their own mental wellbeing, of being purposeful and playing their part.
Feeling APPRECIATION: A sense of Community

“We’re in an extraordinary phase of history and I felt the need to contribute. I’m disabled and work from home, but I am a crafts person and have the skills to contribute a little by sewing and crocheting items. If we all offer a little bit to community, wouldn’t the world be a nicer and safer place? I wanted to feel that I’d done something to support others during this awful time.”
ANGER- at lack of PPE equipment and for political reasons

“I see NHS workers on the tv working long, uncomfortable and dangerous hours. I am only asked to sit at home. It is the least I can do. It has been lovely to see the rapid join up of the group, all Tamworth folk coming together making a difference. Lovely.”

“I think it disappointing to think the government were so ill prepared for what unfolded compared to other countries. I feel happy to have been involved, that I could support by producing garments... a drop in the ocean but working together is achieving at least something towards the cause!”

“Love the group and thankful to be a small part but angry we’ve had to do it.”
PRIDE and feeling a patriotic connection to the purpose of the group

“I feel a little bit proud to be doing something for my country (albeit minuscule) compared with the doctors and nurses. You feel so helpless at home and this enables me to be a part of something lovely and useful. “

“I am proud to be part of this group, and so pleased I found it. I think the ladies who set it up have been inspirational. I like to think that groups like ours are playing an important part in helping the NHS, care workers, key workers etc, by providing scrubs, masks, headbands, laundry bags etc.”

Pride or vicarious pride is important in volunteering (Septianto et al., 2018:501)
“It feels reminiscent of the war era where everyone joined regardless of class/money/status to become one and fight for a common goal. It has restored my faith in humankind and made me proud to be British.”

“These are such devastating times for many people and such suffering is taking place. It helps tremendously to know that we are, as a group and as individuals, helping to ease that suffering for so many people. Whilst I couldn’t be a part of helping the nation through CV-19 as a nurse, I have been able to help those nurses to work a little more safely and a little more comfortably through it. (A bit like the land girls taking on the farming during the war 😊)”
Relief of personal Anxiety: helping the mental wellbeing & health of individual group members

“The group posts make me smile and that helps my mental wellbeing too, being part of something.”

“I had depression and volunteering helped me to cope. And glad that volunteering in this group help the community.”

“I am proud to be part of a wonderful group and cannot believe how Tamworth residents came together offering numerous skills or general support. I think if I was not part of this group I would be lonely and would find it difficult to keep occupied. Whilst me mental health is fine I know from experience it doesn’t take much to become sad or depressed. When the group winds down I will continue to help others however I can. On a selfish note this really helps me.”
Research Summary

• Emotional connection to purpose is vital when choosing to volunteer time, skills or resources to a community cause.

• Emotions connected with volunteering in this context were: a sense of appreciation/the need to contribute, anger, pride (individual & collective), self worth.

• A geographical connection to volunteering is important.

• The sense of community and mutual purpose might be of particular interest given the social and financial impact of the pandemic on all communities across the globe.