

Charitable people tend to be happier: study

By Janice Tai in Singapore/The Straits Times/01 October 2013

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Singapore (The Straits Times/ANN) - People who volunteer or donate money to help others are more likely to be satisfied or happy with their lives, a study in Singapore has found.

Those who give more, whether of time or money, and more frequently, also tend to rate higher on satisfaction and happiness.

This is because people who give derive a sense of personal meaning from helping others and become more grateful for what they have, said Professor David Chan, director of the Behavioural Sciences Institute and professor of psychology at the **Singapore Management University**.

Chan was the consultant for the survey commissioned by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC).

Another motivating factor is the sense of community created through interaction with the people they help, he added.

This is the first time a national study has established the link between giving and happiness.

It was done as part of NVPC's Individual Giving Survey last year, which interviewed 1,512 Singapore residents.

The bi-yearly survey tracks volunteerism and philanthropy trends in Singapore. It found that two-thirds of those who volunteered or donated in the past year were satisfied and happy with their lives. In contrast, 45 per cent of those who did not volunteer or donate were satisfied.

And more than 70 per cent of those who served 12 or more volunteer hours, or gave S\$100 (US\$79.69) or more in the last 12 months registered high levels of well-being compared to 63 per cent of those who gave less time and 59 per cent who gave less money.

Well-being was measured using a 10-item index, which asked individuals the extent to which they feel satisfied or happy.

Prof Chan said the results of this survey were consistent with other research. "Happy people are more likely to give, but people who give also tend to become happier. This leads to a positive spiral in which both givers and recipients benefit," he said.

NVPC chief executive Laurence Lien said he hopes the survey results will encourage people to give back to society more regularly.

Madam Tay Hui Chan, 70, embodies the sentiment. She cooks every week for 20 to 30 elderly folks in her neighbourhood.

"When they are happy, I am also happy," she said. "We are a family."