

Assessment of Factors that Motivate Young People to Volunteer

Mădălina-Maria Dodoc (Ghițun)¹, Denisa-Maria Cojoacă (Alniți)²
and Marius Sandy Stănescu³

^{1) 2) 3)} University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania

E-mail: madalinadodoc@gmail.com; E-mail: denisa.cojoaca@gmail.com

E-mail: andy.stanescu@rogers.com

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Abstract

The volunteering activities in which young people participate play a significant role in individual development, but it also affects society. The diverse challenges in the field of volunteering highlight the factors that motivate young people to carry out volunteering activities. The decision of young people stems from the desire to make contributions to an important cause. The paper aims to identify the practices underlying young people's decisions, identify the peculiarities of volunteering, the types of volunteering, and the typology of volunteers, and evaluate how young people rank the factors that determine them to carry out volunteering activities. Setting up new voluntary initiatives is essential, but particular importance should be attached to methods of integration and retention of young people. Therefore, between January and March 2023, a quantitative study on young people involved in volunteering activities was carried out. Our research objective consists of evaluating the factors that motivate young people to carry out volunteering activities and analyzing the behavior of young people in carrying out volunteering activities. The results prove that young people actively participate in volunteering activities, and gender, age, and level of education are factors influencing the involvement of young people. Furthermore, the young people's lifestyle and the family environment influence their motivation to volunteer and contribute to the community's sustainable development.

Keywords

Volunteering activities, young people motivation, typology of volunteers, behavioral commitment, influencing factors.

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Introduction

Currently, young people in Romania want to get more and more involved in volunteering activities, which substantially impact them and the community. A challenge for voluntary organizations is identifying the mechanism behind motivating young people to volunteer and associating them with their lifestyle. As a result, the responsibilities of young people converge, sometimes with organizational responsibilities (Burlea-Schiopoiu et al., 2017).

Active young people show creativity, which leads to the development of skills and the reduction of specific weaknesses of volunteers since, in some cases, even various disabilities (such as deafness, blindness, paralysis) can be overcome together with other volunteers through joint efforts (Farmer and Van Dyne, 2005).

Salamon (2010, p.202) defined *volunteering work* as "the great renewable resource for social and environmental problem-solving".

Studies in the field of volunteering should focus on young people involved in volunteering activities, volunteer managers, representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and ways to promote volunteering (Wilson, 2012).

Navracsics (2016), as the European Commissioner responsible for Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport, following dialogues with young Europeans, initiated efforts to attract them to engage in activities within local communities, especially volunteering activities. Moreover, it is considered that a volunteering scenario is composed of three elements: the availability of volunteers, the strengths or skills that the volunteers have, and the tasks that the volunteer will carry out (Meijs and Brudney, 2007).

Our research objective consists of evaluating the factors that motivate young people to carry out volunteering activities and analyzing the behavior of young people in carrying out volunteering activities. That is why facilitating young people's access to existing volunteering opportunities is essential.

The research results will contribute to the drawing of defining elements of young people's behavior in terms of volunteering activities and a better understanding of the factors that influence their motivation to become volunteers. The paper presents an analysis of volunteering activities, followed by a case study, and is completed with conclusions and future research.

1. Literature review

• *Motivation of young people to get involved in volunteering activities*

Meijs et al. (2006, p. 40) sought answers to the question: *What drives a person to volunteer?* Based on the answer to this question, they identified the following three scenarios:

- The micro (individual) level of volunteering involves everyone with their skills, abilities, and experience.
- The meso (organizational) level of volunteering refers to volunteers who prefer to participate in volunteering activities within the organization and choose to be an integral part of it.
- The macro level (community or societal) of volunteering is characterized by society's civic spirit, including people willing to participate in volunteering activities to support the community.

The dynamism of each volunteer, from recruitment to management practices, is influenced by motivation (Meijs et al., 2006). The main elements that influence the motivation of young people to take part in volunteering activities are the person's desire to take part in volunteering activities, personal capabilities, and availability in terms of time spent.

Managers have a vital role in the ethics of volunteering activities, which helps define the behaviors and skills of the young people involved in Eisenbeis's activities (2012).

The European Youth Portal has identified factors that discourage young people from engaging in volunteering in their communities: the costs of participation, summary information on the opportunities available, lack of motivation, lack of recognition, lack of interest of employers in the skills acquired by young people involved in volunteering and lack of inspirational models.

Awareness of these factors makes the difference between the success and failure of an activity.

One of the European Union's (EU) priorities is young Europeans and their volunteering activities. Thus, the European Youth Portal (https://europa.eu/youth/home_en), dedicated to informing young people about learning opportunities, career development, and volunteering for young people, aims to contribute to shaping European citizens at the level of social standards.

The EU Youth Strategy resulting from Member States' cooperation contributes to improving volunteering policies (e.g., through projects and sharing good practices).

The international voluntary initiatives of the European Voluntary Service (EVS), part of the Erasmus+ program, and the EU Aid Volunteers are carried out by the European Commission and contribute to promoting youth volunteering by funding the Erasmus+ program.

• *The role of motivation in the typology of volunteers*

The typology of volunteering has changed because of lifestyles and young people involved in various volunteering activities (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). The classification of volunteering activities can be

done based on several volunteering scenarios due to the energy and motivation of volunteers to benefit from volunteering opportunities.

Goudge (2003) stressed the importance of training young people in volunteering, his research on young people in Central America, and locals' acceptance of Western volunteers. Numerous visitors to developing countries in the south and from developed countries in the west induce the locals to a state of inferiority, creating some inconsistencies. Thus, if westerners were called brigadistas in the past, this appellation has disappeared, replaced by notions such as tourist volunteers and students adapting to cultural trends and social norms.

As a result of the motivation of young people to get involved in volunteering activities, two types of volunteering have been identified: *classical collective organizational volunteering and episodic volunteering focused on personal development* in terms of the volunteer's biographical reference framework, motivational structure, level of involvement and intensity of the personal commitment, organizational environment, the field in which volunteering activities take place, as well as rewarding the effort made.

Classical collective organizational volunteering is carried out in a well-organized setting, the motivation of the volunteers is considered a duty to the organization to which the volunteers belong, and volunteering activities lead to the promotion of the common good.

Episodic volunteering is focused on personal development, volunteering is a consequence of individual planning, and the volunteers' priorities dictate participation in volunteering activities. (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

Studies on voluntary typologies have highlighted those contemporary styles of volunteering refer to specific characteristics of volunteers, such as (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 6):

- High interest in episodic volunteering does not imply a long-term commitment.
- Individual decisions on carrying out certain types of voluntary activities.
- The use of personal skills and the discovery of autonomy.
- Determining the factors that generate benefits as a result of the participation of volunteers in volunteering activities and the factors that influence altruistic motivation.
- Focusing on the cause that generated the volunteering project or other significant activities for the volunteers and less on loyalty to a particular organization.

Formal volunteering corresponds to an organization that carries out practical volunteering activities carried out by people with specially designed training for volunteering activities, where volunteers' motivation is guided by society's current needs (Perpék, 2012).

The idea of *occasional volunteering* may seem to indicate instability, but due to volunteers' motivation and spontaneous nature, it is associated with a high quality of volunteering activities (Wang and Yu, 2015).

Meijs et al. (2021, p. 22) highlighted the importance of episodic, virtual, and team volunteering. *Episodic volunteering* does not involve costs from the organization; most of the time, spontaneous volunteers are people who do not identify with a particular volunteer organization but are people who are voluntarily involved in helping their fellow human beings as a result of force majeure situations such as in the context of the recent pandemic generated by the COVID-19 virus and during periods of natural disasters (i.e., Earthquakes, fires). In the framework of organizations, *episodic volunteering* takes place on a project basis (involving activities different from those usually carried out within the organization) to generate volunteer energy within specific groups.

Virtual volunteering is a different approach to episodic volunteering, and it is carried out by social media volunteers, who use the Internet to take part in volunteering activities, a complement to existing volunteering within organizations, a change in the scenario that involves low costs and new benefits because the activities become more flexible being independent of place, time, or both.

Team volunteering refers to groups of people (for example, company employees, students of a class, or volunteers within an organization) who participate in team activities aimed at common well-being because of decisions within the company, organization, or curriculum. This type of volunteering involves additional costs depending on the activities carried out.

Young people have the right to choose which organization to be part of, according to their skills and personal motivation, and the managers of volunteering activities must ensure that the volunteer is placed first in the organization (Balan and Burlea-Schiopoiu, 2017).

2. Research methodology

The research was conducted based on a questionnaire distributed online on the Google Forms platform between January and March 2023. The questionnaire is structured in two sections: in the first section, we included the demographic data of the respondents (gender, age, and categories of studies), and in the second section, we included the elements for identifying the factors that motivate young people to carry out volunteering activities that we evaluated using a Likert measurement scale (of 1 to 5, where 1 = Total disagreement and 5 = Total agreement).

We received a reply to 127 questionnaires, and after the removal of incomplete questionnaires, 103 valid questionnaires resulted. The results of the collected questionnaires were processed by SPSS 23.0.

The respondents are young people between the ages of 18 and 35 from Romania. The structure of respondents by gender is as follows: 47 women (45,6%), 48 men (46,6%), and eight respondents preferred not to respond (7,8%). Regarding the age structure: 51 respondents (49.5%) are under 25 years old, 36 respondents (35%) are between 25 and 29 years old, and 16 respondents (15.5%) are between 30 and 35 years old.

The level of education is a significant factor, and it seems that with the acquisition of new knowledge, the desire for representation also increases, which determines a greater involvement on the part of young people in Romania. For example, if at high school, 24.3% of young people volunteered during the bachelor's degree cycle, the number of young people who carry out such activities almost doubled (37.9%).

After completing the master's cycle, the youth rate registers a decrease (27.2%) because of entering the labor market and setting up their own family. However, young people who choose to enroll in doctoral study programs (8.7%) and post-doctoral studies (1.9%) intend to continue to participate in volunteering activities because they already know the benefits of getting involved in such activities and can put into practice their own identified solutions for some existing problems in the community.

3. Results and discussions

The analysis of the results shows that young people were involved in volunteering very often (75.7%), which demonstrates the civic spirit, interest, and intention of respondents to act, either on their own as independent, spontaneous volunteers (63.1%) or within student associations (76.7%) youth associations (57.3%) or non-governmental organizations (54.4%).

Only (4.9%) of the respondents were involved in volunteering activities only once, which demonstrates the receptivity of young people to this type of activities and the desire to try to take part, either out of curiosity or because of the volunteering opportunities they identified with the help of information sources.

In the top of the primary sources of information of the respondents on volunteering opportunities were found the group of friends and family (72,8%), social networks (73,8%), and educational institutions (51,5%), which suggests the impact of education on the motivation and the need for young people to belong to the community, which determines them to offer their support. 33% of the respondents chose the church as a source of information, which proves the inner character of the factors underlying young people's intention to get involved in volunteering activities without expecting material rewards but to achieve inner peace.

In the first stage, the mean and the standard deviation for the variable related to measuring the impact of factors on the Level of involvement of young people in volunteering activities and for control variables were calculated.

The most significant standard deviation observed in Table No. 1 is that of the variable: *Respondent's sources of information*. Another control variable that records a notable standard deviation is *the Level of education*. The lowest Dispersion (.099) is the *Voluntary status*. We can deduce that almost all respondents hold the status of volunteers. The other control variables (*respondent's gender, age, respondent's involvement in volunteering activities, and the place where the respondent worked as a volunteer*) register a lower standard deviation, reflecting the homogeneity of the sample concerning these four criteria.

Table no. 1. Descriptive statistics of the variable on the level of involvement of young people in volunteering activities and of the control variables

Stage	Mean	Standard deviation
Voluntary status	1.01	.099
Respondent's gender	1.62	.628
Age	1.66	.735
Level of education	2.22	1.019
Respondent's involvement in volunteering activities	3.58	.835
The place where the respondent worked as a volunteer	1.68	.831
Respondent's sources of information	1.93	1.096

Source: Author's own research.

The analysis of descriptive statistics for *measuring the impact of factors on the level of involvement of young people in volunteering activities* reveals that behavioral commitment, passion, effort, perseverance, and determination in volunteering activities have the most significant influence on the involvement of young people (4.50). Furthermore, the highest standard deviation (1.160) is recorded by the Time allotted to the volunteering factor. Therefore, the Time allotted was not a priority for respondents.

Table no. 2 analysis shows that the evaluated items obtain averages above 4, the lowest recorded average (4.20), and a reduced relative standard deviation (.943) for Constant focus on volunteering tasks and objectives. Therefore, we infer those respondents attach little importance to this factor regarding engagement. For them, aspects such as *Enthusiasm, attitude, and interest in the volunteering mission, Positive body language (smile, laughter, openness, and eye contact) during volunteering activities, Mutual trust of volunteers and interpersonal networking, Behavioral commitment, passion, effort, perseverance, and determination within volunteering activities, Verbal communication with staff and/or other volunteers*, where the standard deviation is relatively low, are the factors that determine them to be actively involved in the development of volunteering activities.

Table no. 2. Descriptive statistics for measuring the impact of factors on the level of involvement of young people in volunteering activities

Stage	Mean	Standard deviation
Time allotted to volunteering	4.29	1.160
Positive body language (smile, laughter, openness and eye contact) during volunteering activities	4.44	.788
Constant focus on volunteering tasks and objectives	4.20	.943
Verbal communication with staff and/or other volunteers	4.24	.955
Mutual trust of volunteers and interpersonal networking	4.43	.836
Enthusiasm, attitude, and interest in the volunteering mission	4.42	.835
Behavioral commitment, passion, effort, perseverance, and determination within volunteering activities	4.50	.839

Source: Author's own research.

The next step was to identify the factors that influence the level of involvement of young people in volunteering activities according to the importance they give to them. One of the study's results materialized in the realization of a ranking based on the answers received from the respondents. In Table no. 3, we can see the main factors that influence young people in Romania.

Table no. 3. The factors that influence the level of involvement of young people in volunteering activities

Number	
1.	Time allocated to volunteering activities (65%)
2.	Behavioral commitment, passion, effort, perseverance, and determination within volunteering activities (64%)
3.	Mutual trust of volunteers and interpersonal networking (60%)
4.	Positive body language (smile, laughter, openness, eye contact, etc.) during volunteering activities (57%)
5.	Enthusiasm, attitude and interest in volunteering (56%)
6.	Verbal communication with staff and/or other volunteers (50%)
7.	Constant focus on volunteering tasks and objectives (48%)

Source: Author's own research.

Many respondents (65%) considered time one of the most important factors that conditioned their involvement in volunteer activities. This is because young people provide the most important resource, the young people plan so that they feel fulfilled and can carry out the activities that attract them. However, several 5% of respondents indicated a disagreement about the positioning of time among the factors of influence, and these young people consider other factors such as passion, trust and networking, positive body language, enthusiasm, or communication more relevant to the motivation to take part in volunteering activities (Figure no. 1).

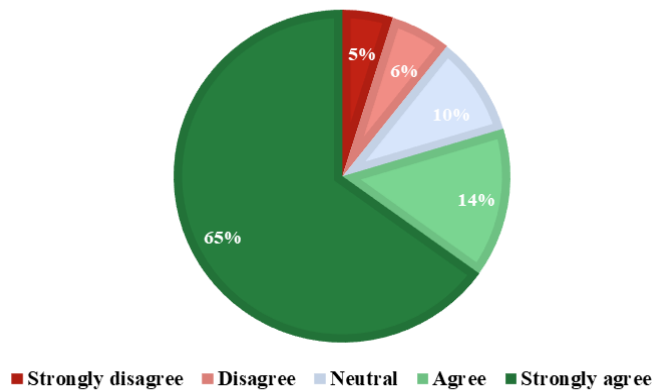


Figure no. 1. Time allocated to volunteering activities.

Source: Authors own research.

Positive body language, a sincere smile always on the lips because of the joy felt, openness to other people, and keeping eye contact during volunteering activities was indicated as a relevant factor for respondents. This highlights young people's desire to be greeted with a sincere smile and to be able, by their mere presence, to do so much good in their turn by engaging in volunteering activities.

The mutual trust of volunteers and interpersonal relationships have also been analyzed, and many respondents (60%) fully agree, and 26% agree that mutual trust is the basis for establishing a lasting relationship between volunteers and contributes to the involvement in long-term volunteering activities, thus creating an environment where personal and professional development pleasantly takes place. The results are shown in Figure no. 2. Other respondents (11%) chose to be impartial, while 2% disagreed or disagreed (1%) with the idea that other volunteers influence personal participation. The concern of young people to continue to participate in volunteering activities should be done for reasons related to each individual volunteer; it is not the kind of activity to participate in because others do it too. To be lasting, the desire for involvement to contribute to a particular cause, in volunteering activities, as in the case of the independent, spontaneous volunteer, and as it should be in the case of those in voluntary organizations, must come from within.

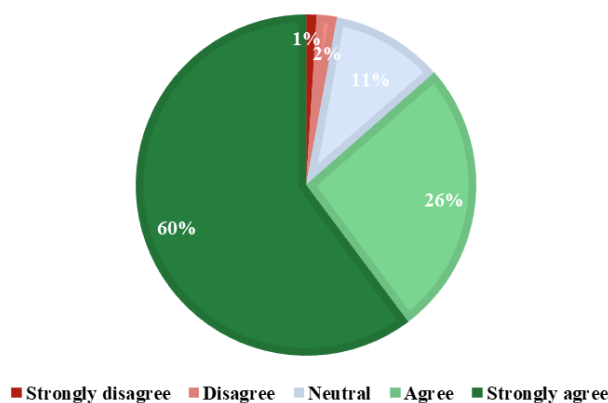


Figure no. 2. Mutual trust of volunteers and interpersonal relationship

Source: Authors own research.

An essential factor that leads to the continuation of volunteering activities by young people is the enthusiasm generated by the chance to make their contribution, the optimistic attitude, and the interest in the volunteering mission. The distribution of answers, according to Figure no. 3 shows that 56% of respondents support that enthusiasm, mood, and interest are the basis of the decision to participate in volunteering activities. The uniqueness of each activity, spontaneity, and reasoning is a mix that makes young people choose to continue to experience volunteering activities.

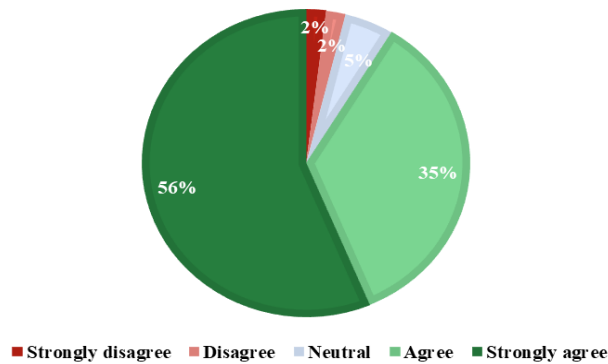


Figure no. 3. Enthusiasm, attitude, and interest in volunteering missions

Source: Authors own research.

Behavioral commitment, passion dedicated to volunteering activities, the effort that young people make, perseverance, and determination are among the factors that guide the decision to continue to get involved body and soul in volunteering activities. Most of the respondents (64%) are in complete agreement, and 27% agree with the positioning of these factors in the first place; when it comes to volunteering, although many moments involve considerable effort, young people know their goals and put passion into completing the volunteering mission (Figure no. 4). The power of young people to follow their calling is the basis of all the activities they undertake; success, in this case, lies in the permanent desire to act for the causes that matter to them: reducing pollution, supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, promoting the rights of people with disabilities, or promoting equal opportunities between women and men on the labor market.

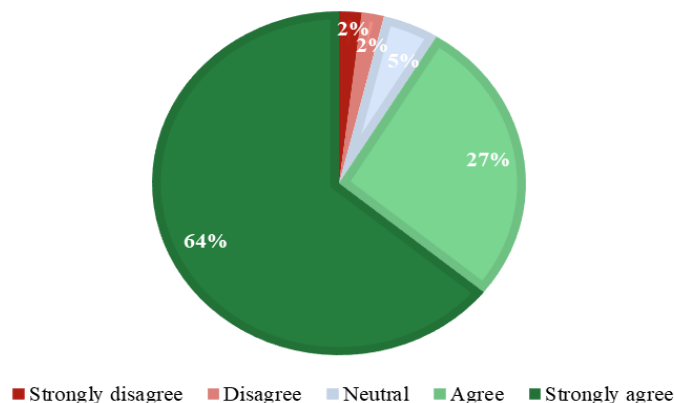


Figure no. 4. Behavioral commitment, passion, effort, perseverance, and determination within volunteering activities

Source: Authors own research.

Conclusions

In conclusion, young people's volunteering activities contribute to the community's sustainable development. Therefore, promoting and supporting volunteering activities should be an objective of government policy. Young people in Romania appreciate volunteering opportunities and provide active support, which is in the same line with Burlea-Schiopoiu et al. (2016), which analyzed accounting students'

behavior as leaders and volunteers. The level of knowledge is also a factor that influences young people's commitment to volunteer activities (Burlea, 2007).

In the following research, we aim to analyze the causes that prevent young people from getting involved in volunteering activities and the influence of management practices within voluntary organizations on the motivation of young people.

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