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PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING VOLUNTEER MOTIVATIONS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract: This article examines the psychological factors influencing volunteer motivation among young people. Volunteering is an important form of social participation in contemporary society and plays a significant role in the personal and social development of youth. Based on scientific literature, the study analyzes the impact of altruism, empathy, intrinsic motivation, social identity, self-expression, and personal growth on volunteer engagement. Furthermore, the article highlights the contribution of volunteering to psychological well-being, social competence, and civic responsibility among young individuals.

Keywords: volunteering, motivation, youth, altruism, empathy, social identity, intrinsic motivation, social participation.

In the development of modern society, fostering young people's social activity and civic responsibility is considered one of the most important tasks. In this process, volunteerism occupies a special place. Volunteerism is defined as a voluntary activity carried out by individuals without expecting material rewards, aimed at serving the interests of society and its individual members. Today, volunteerism is regarded not only as a means of providing social assistance but also as an important factor in the personal growth, professional development, and enhancement of social competencies among young people. In recent years, the growing popularity of volunteer activities has created a need for a deeper understanding of the factors that motivate youth to engage in such activities. Psychological research indicates that the motives underlying volunteerism have a complex structure. While some young people participate in volunteer work out of a genuine desire to help others, others are motivated by the opportunity to gain new experiences, expand their social networks, or demonstrate their abilities and potential. Therefore, analyzing the psychological factors that influence volunteer activity has become one of the most relevant areas of social psychology.

Research Methodology

The article is based on a theoretical analysis of national and international scientific studies conducted on volunteer motivation. Comparative analysis, scientific generalization, and a systematic approach were employed as the primary research methods during the study.

Results and Discussion

Altruism plays a crucial role in explaining the psychological foundations of volunteer activity. Altruism refers to an individual's willingness to prioritize the interests and well-being of others over personal interests. Many researchers emphasize that altruistic values constitute one of the primary sources of volunteerism. The desire to help others, contribute to the reduction of social problems, and support social justice motivates young people to participate in volunteer activities. Altruistic motives generate a sense of moral satisfaction and strengthen an individual's feeling of social usefulness.

Another important psychological factor underlying volunteer activity is empathy. Empathy refers to the ability to understand and share the emotional experiences of other people. Young individuals with a high level of empathy are generally more sensitive to the difficulties faced by others and are more inclined to provide assistance. Empathy serves as a particularly significant motivational factor among volunteers working with persons with disabilities, disadvantaged families, or individuals affected by natural disasters. Research findings indicate a positive relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior.

Intrinsic motivation also occupies an important place in explaining volunteer motivation. According to Self-Determination Theory, the stability and effectiveness of human activity are closely associated with internal interests and personal satisfaction. Through volunteer activities, young people gain opportunities to acquire new experiences, participate in meaningful projects, and demonstrate their abilities and potential. When the activity itself becomes a source of satisfaction, volunteer engagement tends to be sustained over a longer period and aligns more closely with the individual's internal needs and aspirations.

The need for self-development is also an important factor contributing to the widespread participation of young people in volunteer activities. Youth is a developmental stage characterized by personal identity formation, the establishment of life goals, and preparation for future professional careers. Through volunteer work, young people develop communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills. Therefore, volunteerism is often perceived as a means of both personal and professional development. In particular, increasing competition in the labor market has heightened young people's interest in gaining practical experience through volunteer activities.

The factor of social identity also plays a significant role in volunteer engagement. When individuals perceive themselves as members of a particular group or community, they are more likely to actively contribute to the achievement of that group's goals. Volunteer organizations foster a sense of belonging among young people, providing opportunities to establish new social connections and collaborate toward common objectives. This sense of belonging is considered one of the key psychological factors that sustain long-term volunteer participation. Analysis indicates that volunteer motivation is not limited solely to altruistic factors. Young people often participate in volunteer activities with the dual aim of benefiting society while simultaneously satisfying their own personal needs. In this regard, volunteerism can be viewed as a combination of prosocial and individual motives. This characteristic allows volunteerism to be regarded as an effective social institution that harmonizes the interests of both individuals and society.

Contemporary research on volunteer motivation demonstrates that volunteerism is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by numerous factors. Early studies primarily interpreted volunteerism as a manifestation of altruistic behavior; however, subsequent research has revealed that the motivations driving volunteer participation are considerably more complex. In particular, the functional approach developed by Clary and Snyder emphasizes that volunteer activities serve to satisfy various psychological needs. According to this approach, volunteerism functions as a means of expressing personal values, acquiring knowledge and experience, advancing professional development, expanding social networks, and coping with personal challenges.

Socialization processes also play an essential role in shaping volunteer motivation among young people. Family, educational institutions, peer groups, and mass media are among the primary

social institutions that influence the development of prosocial values. Parental encouragement of helping behavior, cooperation, and concern for others contributes to the formation of positive attitudes toward volunteerism. Likewise, social projects, charitable events, and volunteer programs organized within educational institutions increase young people's interest and involvement in volunteer activities. An individual's value system is another significant determinant of volunteer motivation. According to Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values, individuals who highly prioritize values such as universalism, benevolence, and social justice are more likely to engage in prosocial activities. For these individuals, the welfare of others and the interests of society are of great importance. Consequently, they tend to perceive volunteer work as a practical expression of their personal beliefs and life principles.

Volunteer activity also has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of young people. Scientific studies indicate that young individuals who regularly participate in volunteer work report higher levels of life satisfaction, optimism, and subjective well-being. One of the primary reasons for this is that helping others enables individuals to perceive themselves as socially valuable, strengthens their confidence in their abilities, and generates positive emotional experiences. In psychology, this phenomenon is often referred to as the “helper’s high,” a term describing the feelings of emotional uplift, fulfillment, and satisfaction that arise from helping others. Volunteer activities also contribute significantly to the development of young people's communicative competence. By interacting with individuals of different ages, professions, and cultural backgrounds, volunteers acquire skills in effective communication, active listening, constructive problem-solving, and teamwork. These competencies are valuable not only in social activities but also in future professional careers. Consequently, many employers view volunteer experience as a positive indicator of a candidate’s skills and personal qualities.

Another important psychological aspect of volunteerism is the development of leadership potential. Many volunteer projects require initiative, responsibility, and organizational abilities. Through planning projects, organizing events, and collaborating with team members, young people develop leadership skills. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between volunteer experience and the acquisition of leadership competencies.

The advancement of digital technologies has also given rise to new forms of volunteer motivation. Today, young people actively participate not only in traditional volunteer activities but also in online volunteering projects. Virtual platforms provide increasing opportunities to engage in environmental initiatives, educational projects, psychological support programs, and charitable campaigns. As a result, the scope of volunteerism has expanded, further enhancing youth social engagement and participation. Cultural factors also play an important role in the motivational structure of volunteerism. In societies characterized by collectivist cultures, volunteer activities are more closely associated with values such as social duty, solidarity, and mutual assistance. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, motivations related to personal development, self-expression, and the acquisition of new experiences tend to be more prominent. Therefore, while volunteer motivation possesses universal characteristics, it is also shaped by specific socio-cultural conditions.

Furthermore, participation in volunteer activities contributes to the development of civic identity and social responsibility among young people. By directly observing social problems and taking part in efforts to address them, young individuals strengthen their civic awareness and commitment. They begin to perceive themselves as active members of society. This process

positively influences the promotion of democratic values, social cohesion, and the development of civil society institutions. Thus, volunteer motivation is formed not merely through biological or individual factors but through a complex interaction of psychological, social, and cultural influences. It is this multifaceted motivational system that ensures the sustainability of volunteer engagement and contributes to both the personal and social development of young people.

Until relatively recently, many people had limited knowledge about volunteerism. A considerable number of citizens perceived volunteering as a paid profession rather than a voluntary social activity. Although volunteer service has existed in various forms and manifestations in Uzbekistan for many years, recent years have witnessed the establishment of its legal foundations, the strengthening of its role in society, and its significant development. In particular, the adoption of the Law “On Volunteer Activities,” the establishment of the Uzbekistan Volunteers Association, and the creation of 99 permanently operating volunteer groups involving approximately 61,000 individuals have contributed substantially to the development of this field. These groups currently organize and implement volunteer initiatives across a wide range of areas. Nevertheless, there remains a need to further support volunteer activities in the country and to designate an authorized state body responsible for providing methodological assistance and guidance to volunteer organizations and coordinators.

In accordance with the approved Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Volunteering Activities”, a draft law has been developed. In connection with the designation of a state body authorized to manage the introduction of volunteering into the Law “On Volunteering Activities”, a number of amendments and additions are being made to this document. Also, a number of amendments and additions are being made to the Law "On Volunteering" in connection with the designation of an authorized state body in the field of volunteering. For example, the draft law is supplemented with Article 92, which establishes the powers of state bodies in the field of volunteering in order to establish additional mechanisms for supporting volunteering, and Article 10 introduces additional powers of local government bodies in this regard.

From this perspective, the fact that this draft law provides for specific powers of state administration bodies in this area will undoubtedly serve to systematize powers aimed at regulating and developing the sector, encourage the activities of volunteers, and expand the scope of socially significant projects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, volunteer motivation among young people is shaped by various psychological factors, including altruism, empathy, intrinsic motivation, social identity, and the desire for personal growth. Volunteering not only benefits society but also contributes to the development of communication skills, leadership abilities, civic responsibility, and psychological well-being. Therefore, supporting and promoting volunteer activities among youth is essential for fostering both individual development and social progress.

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