

Characteristics of the essence of volunteering in psychology

Angelina Alexandrovna Shagurova^a, Efremova Galina Ivanovna^a,
Bochkovskaya Irina Aleksandrovna^a Sergey Ivanovich Denisenko^b,
Tarasov Mihail Valerievich^b, Nekrasova Marina Viktorovna^b
Svetlana Anatolievna Potutkova^c

^a The North Caucasus Federal University, RUSSIA

^b Russian State Social University, RUSSIA

^c Institute for Additional Professional Education of Workers for Social Services, RUSSIA

ABSTRACT

The article discusses the basic ideas of volunteering; it analyzes the data of psychological studies on social activity and it highlights the importance of studying the motivational part of volunteering. The conclusion on structure and content of volunteering is made. Key focus is on the fact that volunteering is of particular importance in the social sphere and is considered as an activity aimed at positive social change through charity, peacekeeping and humanitarian support to members of society. Lots of definitions are characterized as volunteering activities. However, not only the characteristics of this activity, its content, forms and methods are important, but also the goals and results.

KEYWORDS

volunteering, altruism, social activity, motivation.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 17 May 2016

Revised 29 June 2016

Accepted 16 August 2016

Introduction

In the recent decades, volunteering has become one of the main forms of expression of social activity of citizens. To denote this phenomenon we use such synonyms as "voluntary" and "volunteering".

CORRESPONDENCE Angelina Alexandrovna Shagurova ✉ linochka.88@mail.ru

© 2016 The Author(s). Open Access terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) apply. The license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, on the condition that users give exact credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if they made any changes.

The works of Russian and foreign sociologists and psychologists reveal different aspects of volunteerism: charity volunteering (I. N. Aynutdinova, L.K. Ivanova, V. Mitrofanenko, A. Mitrohina, G. Olenina, O. V. Reshetnikov, A. S. Sorvina, E. V. Subbotinsky, M.V. Firsov, E.I. Holostova, A.V. Huhlin); motivation of the altruistic behavior (L.I. Bozovic, E.P. Ilyin, B.I. Dodonov, A.V. Zaporozhets, Y.Z. Neverovic, N.Y. Slabzhanin, E.V. Subbotsky et al.); forms of social practice of volunteering (G.V. Bodrenkova, N.Y. Slabzhanin, E.L. Shelkova); volunteerism among the young people (S.V. Aleschenok, L.I. Bagryantseva, S. Bondarenko, R. Vaynola, P. Jordan, I.Zvereva, A.Kapskaya, G.Laktionova, T.Lyah, T.N.Martynova, E. A.Panova, O.F.Petrova, Y.Polischuk, S.Savchenko, N.V.Cherepanova, S.G.Chukhin).

Methods

When considering the volunteer work from the standpoint of the model of society, it appears as the work applicable in the nonprofit sector in economy, and it is the basis of the development of civil society. This approach of economic orientation to the study of the volunteer labor was developed by V.N.Tambovtsev and M. Lester. It is defined by the fact that volunteering is becoming a significant phenomenon in certain countries and at the international level. According to the studies, 12% of adults in 37 countries are employed full-time as volunteers. This means that 20.8 million people in the world work as volunteers and bring an annual contribution to the economy equal to 400 billion US dollars (Hopkins, 2008). In Russia, according to sociologists, every third Russian worked voluntarily in 2005 - 2009. In 2011, the number of such people has increased to 53%. According to other data, 33% of Russians worked voluntarily at least once (Mersiyanova I.V., 2011).

Social psychologists I.N. Aynutdinova, O.V. Reshetnikov, E.V. Subbotinsky, A.I. Holostova have the following definition of volunteering: it is a selfless assistance to people in need, a special form of human activity, based on altruistic motives (Shapiro B. Y, Tsarapkina E.B., 2005).

In Russia, the word "volunteer" has been known since the beginning of the XVIII century. However, such people were called in a different way: "volontir" or "volonter". The official date of foundation of the international volunteer movement is considered to be 1920. Today there are hundreds of thousands of volunteer movements around the world, small and large, that have a professional international status, working under the auspices of the UN and UNESCO. There is one basic principle of every volunteer movement in most countries of the world. It is the voluntary and unconditional assistance to those in need.

According to the sociological dictionary, a volunteer is a person that is voluntarily participating in any activity without any material compensation.

The essence of volunteering as a psychological phenomenon is defined as a form of social service, carried out with the free will of citizens, aimed at providing selfless socially important services at the local, national and international levels. It is conducive to personal growth and development of volunteers (Reshetnikov O.V., 27).

In Russia, the first studies on occurrence and development of volunteer organizations were conducted in the second half of the 1990s. The works by V.



Scherbina (1995), K. Flyamer, V.Yakimts (1996), K.Belyaeva (1996), A.Sangurov (1997) are among them. This period also includes the appearance of translated works by Z.Rouz (1995), E.Gellner (1997), K.Ebner, K.Foks, O.Holmz (1998), which examine various aspects of the volunteer movement in the US and Western Europe, that are significantly different from the Russia, because of the historical, cultural and legal differences between the countries.

V.G. Bocharova and V.N. Iarskaia define volunteering as "a social practice", which can be mastered by future specialists of the social sphere outside of the higher education system. According to A.S.Sorvina and M.V.Firsov, volunteering is the basis of the functioning of public organizations; it is a form of a civic activity of the population. According to L.V.Radchenko and B. Sirri, volunteering is "a weakly specialized labor in the various fields of activity".

The works of the Russian psychologists reveal different aspects of volunteering: T. Lyah studies the features of the socio-pedagogical activity of student volunteer groups; S.Bondarenko pays attention to the organization of volunteer work for the future social teachers; R.Vaynola, N.Zaveriko, A.Kapskaya believe that technologies of attraction and preparation of students for volunteering are important; I.Zvereva, G.Laktionova, Y.Polischuk, S.Savchenko consider the role of volunteering as a component of social and educational work with the young people.

Studies on motivation of volunteering, carried out by A.M. Omoto and M.Snayder have identified two groups of motives: the first is associated with a sense of moral or religious duty to help others. This is altruists, they care about the problems of others. The second group are egomaniacs. They are involved in volunteering in order to get some benefit for themselves. These basic motives are not mutually exclusive, but one of them is always the leading one (Kudrinskaya L.A., 2012).

While stressing the importance of studying the motivational component of volunteering, S.V. Aleschenok considers solidarity and responsibility for problems in society to be the leading motivation of volunteering (Bobneva M.I., 1978).

L.A. Kudrinskaya indicates that the motives are directly linked with the direction of volunteering. If it is the sphere of political parties and political movements, then we can say about the socio-political motivation as a volunteer feels himself/herself to be an active subject of a historical action. Volunteers, guided by religious or secular humanist values (helping neighbors, doing good, etc.), have a traditional values motivation. Finally, the volunteers who are looking for new connections, information, experience, knowledge through volunteerism, according to the L.A.Kudrinskaya, have a motivation of a socio-economic adaptation (Nasinovskaya E.E., 1988).

The data obtained by Y.V. Kovaleva show that the decision on participating in volunteering is mostly made under the influence of emotional factors (50.9%). This is evidenced by such respondents' answers as compassion to those in need (26.3% of total) and a sense of duty to help (24.6%) (Ilyin E.P., 2013).

The Federal Law "On Philanthropy, Sponsorship and Volunteerism" defines volunteering as a voluntary activity, based on the ideas of selfless service to humane ideals of humanity for not-profit purposes; obtaining of full satisfaction

of personal and social needs by helping others "[Federal Law" On Philanthropy, Sponsorship and Volunteerism "]. It also offers the following interpretation of the basic categories of volunteering:

A volunteer is a do-gooder; a citizen involved in solving social problems via unpaid labor.

A do-gooder is a volunteer, a person, carrying out charitable activities in the form of unpaid labor to provide services, to conduct work, to collect charitable donations, etc. (Federal Law "On Philanthropy, Sponsorship and Volunteerism").

Thus, volunteering has a particular relevance in the social environment and is seen as an activity aimed at positive social change through organization of charitable, peacekeeping and humanitarian support for members of society.

When studying the characteristics and the structure of the volunteer movement, one needs to include such concepts as "social activity", "voluntariness", "altruism" and "empathy."

According to the analysis of the data of sociological and psychological studies (D.B. Bogoyablenskaya, L.I. Bozovic, A.F. Lazurskii, V.G. Lapina, N.S. Leites, A.M. Matyushkin, S.L. Rubinstein, etc.), there is every reason to believe that the activity is a complex characteristic of an individual. Activity of a person appears as a set of proactive actions of a subject, which are determined by its internal contradictions, mediated by environmental influences.

There are many definitions of the term "social activity", but the authors emphasize a conscious, purposeful interaction of the individual and society, i.e., the fact that social activity is motivated by a specific way.

Russian scientific literature studied the social activity of the youth primarily as a political activity (participation in elections, membership in public associations, and so on), or as a cultural activity (belonging to the informal youth movements, subcultural communities, and so on).

An important aspect of studying social activity of youth is to study the personality of a young activist. S.V. Tetersky includes such qualities as the structural elements of a socially active person: self-aimed (determination, perseverance, activity, curiosity, independence, etc.), aimed at society (leadership, mobility, originality, sociability, teamwork and mutual support, creativity), aimed at state (responsibility, involvement in political practice and public field, and others.).

Voluntariness, as a reflection of the personal position, is the basic principle of volunteering. The distinguishing feature of a volunteer is that while doing the work, he/she deliberately agrees to the complete lack of remuneration, while having the opportunity to receive a higher salary for his/her services (Shindauletova S.S., 2008).

One must have professionally important qualities of a volunteer for effective volunteering. So, it seems appropriate to further explore such properties as altruism and empathy.

The term "altruism" was proposed by the French philosopher, the founder of positivism, Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in order to express the principle of life that is opposite to selfish relationships. Comte has outlined this principle by



words revile pour outre, which means "live for others" as the program to build the perfect human society. He saw the meaning of human life in "serving the humanity, while improving themselves".

The Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian language by S.I. Ozhegov and N.Y. Shvedova describes "altruism" as "a willingness to act selflessly for the benefit of others, without regard to their own interests" (Ozhegov S.I., Shvedova N.Y., 1999).

Sociologist V.G. Lapina says that altruism is closely linked with collectivity (Lapina V.G., 2003). J. McAuley and J. Berkowitz define altruism as "a behavior, done for the benefit of another person without expectations for any external reward".

According to the theory of social exchange, assistance is motivated by a desire to minimize costs and optimize the reward. The theory of social norms is based on the fact that assistance is related to specific rules existing in society. The norm of reciprocity motivates us to respond with good, and not evil to those who came for our help. The norm of social responsibility makes us care for those who need it, for as long as it is necessary, even when they are not able to thank us.

According to the theory of group selection, altruism serves the interests of the group to which the individual belongs, therefore this individual also uses its products. The theory of kin selection draws altruism on relatives with similar genes. The theory of reciprocity says that altruism is based on the compensation that an individual receives for his/her action.

According to V. Efroimson, humaneness emotions, kindness, respect for the children, the elderly and women were inevitably evolved due to natural selection and were included in the fund of hereditary traits.

Russian scientists have uncovered the phenomenon of altruism from the perspective of helping behavior and mercifulness. In particular, Russian psychological science have studied specific altruistic installations (N.I. Sardzhveladze), altruistic emotions (L.P. Vygovskaya, T.P. Gavrilova, L.P. Zhuravleva), altruistic orientation of the personality (B.G. Dodonov), altruistic values (Z.S. Karpenko, S.D. Maksimenko), altruistic motives of activity (V.E. Kim, E.E. Nasinovskaya).

Studies of A.A. Moiseeva consider altruistic orientation as a result of positive family relationships and the influence of the environment. Personality-developing and trust-respecting style of parenting in conjunction with the family atmosphere of trust contribute to development of altruism as a quality of an individual.

The works of V.A. Zhmurov do not apply altruism to helping behavior. He points out that helping behavior is a provision of assistance to anyone, excluding, in contrast to altruism, any sacrifice of their own interests.

Results

Emotional core of altruism is a tendency to empathy and understanding of others. Altruistic personalities have a developed sense of duty, credulity, tolerance, freedom from envy, benevolence. Such persons do not have a tendency to dominance and authoritarian behavior.

Utility, social justice and tolerance are important in the system of altruistic orientations of an altruistic person. The high level of altruism is closely associated with such values of prosocial behavior as honesty and responsibility. People with high level of altruism often trust people and do not resort to deception, in addition, they do not have aggressive reactions if they are busy or if they reject another person.

We can come to a conclusion that to date there is no generally accepted definition of altruism. However, altruism is mostly seen as dedication, a conscious and voluntary service to other people, a desire to help others, to contribute to their happiness out of love, devotion and compassion.

After examining the main synonymous terms of volunteering, it seems quite obvious to pay attention to its features. The main features of volunteering are: lack of a financial gain or a partial financial reward; voluntary character of the activities; the benefits of volunteering do not only spread to a volunteer and his/her inner circle, but also to society as a whole.

Studying the structure and content of the volunteering has a great importance for a more in-depth research on the problem of volunteering (A.A. Shagurova, 2015).

Every volunteer work is based on the principles of altruism, selflessness, generosity, openness, humanism, free will, legitimacy, compassion, sensitivity, dedication and humaneness.

Discussion

Concrete definition of the essence of these principles can be represented the following way:

- the principle of altruism assumes that a volunteer is ready to engage in any activity aimed at the resolution of the difficult situations of customers, the interests of customers come to the fore;

- the principle of gratuitousness is an essential principle of ethics of the social work, when the relationship between the volunteer and the client is based on the absence of the material interest in each other;

- the principle of generosity allows building the relationship between a volunteer and a recipient on the basis of honesty, openness and morality, as a volunteer is not entitled to hide information from a recipient, the attitude towards him/her should be sensitive, tactful, respectful, empathetic;

- the principle of transparency is related to the availability of volunteering for public acquaintance and discussion, because ensuring the completeness of information on the implemented voluntary activity will contribute to the popularization of this kind of activity in the community and it will help the recipient to become a subject of social work;

- the principle of humaneness is expressed in respect for human rights, in showing kindness and tolerance of a volunteer to the client;

- the principle of voluntariness is in participation in volunteering at will, not under compulsion, when the client is entitled to withdraw from social services if they do not meet his/her needs;

- the principle of legality requires the compliance of volunteering with legislation (Declaration of the rights and freedoms of a man and a citizen, the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993), the Civil Code of the Russian



Federation (1995), the Law of the Russian Federation "On charitable activities and charitable organizations" (1995), the Law of the Russian Federation "On public associations" (1995), etc.);

- the principle of mercy permeates the entire contents of volunteering, based on the willingness of a volunteer to help people out of compassion and humaneness;

- the principle of responsiveness implies the readiness of a volunteer to help those in need, in a timely manner;

- the principle of selflessness brings to the fore the priority of interests of the client in volunteering and the presence of the volunteer's optimism in resolving the difficult life situation of a client;

- compliance with the principle of compassion is a reflection of the humane treatment of the clients.

Conclusion

The 2011 report of the United Nations on the state of volunteerism in the world underlines that volunteering is an important instrument for the development of society: it is an instrument of social policy, it is a means of "fighting poverty by increasing social, human, natural, physical and political potential," a means of overcoming social exclusion, and a means of cohesion of local communities through the creation of mutual trust.

Thus, we can conclude that volunteering is of particular importance in the social sphere. Mostly volunteering is characterized as an activity. However, the key emphasis is either on the characteristics of these activities, on its contents, forms and methods, or on the objectives and results. Scientists note that the presence of such qualities as altruism, empathy, diligence, charity, benevolence and humane treatment of people are not only important for volunteering, but they are also formed during its process.

Social and psychological readiness for volunteer activities is a complex, integral new formation providing unity and coherence levels of the personality and forms of subjective experience to successfully complete this activity (G.I. Efremova, A.A. Shagurova, I.A. Bochkovskaya, 2015).

Acknowledgment

This article is prepared within the project No. 15-36-01298 "Socio-psychological readiness of youth to volunteer activities" with the support of the Russian Humanitarian Science Foundation.

References

- Bobneva, M.I. Social norms and behavior regulation. M.: Science, 1978.
- Efremova, G.I., Shagurova, A.A., Bochkovskaya, I.A. Actual problems of social and psychological readiness of young people to volunteering. Bulletin of North Caucasus Federal University. 2015. No. 5 (50). pp. 159-166.
- Ilyin, E.P. Psychology of assistance. Altruism, egoism, empathy. SPb.: Piter, 2013.
- Kudrinskaya, L.A. 2006. Voluntary labor: the experience of a theoretical reconstruction. Synopsis, dissertation doctor of social sciences, pp. 302.
- Mersiyanova, I.V., Jacobson, L.I. Practices of the philanthropy in Russia: the population's involvement and attitude towards it. M.: Pub. house of State University - HSE, 2009.
- Nasinovskaya, E.E. Methods of studying personality motivation. The experience of studying the personality-semantic aspect of motivation. M., 1988.



- Ozhegov, S.I., Shvedova, N.Y. Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language: Russian Academy of Sciences. Institute of Russian Language named after V.V. Vinogradov. 4th ed., Ext. M., 1999.
- Reshetnikov, O.V. Organizing volunteering. Educational handbook. M.: "Foundation on promotion of education of the XXI century", 2005.
- Shagurova, A.A. Psychological crowdsourcing. Bulletin of North Caucasus Federal University. 2015. No. 2 (47). pp. 251-253.
- Shindauletova, S.S. Problems of legal regulation of volunteering: Overview. St. Petersburg: Fortess, 2008.