

PARTICULARITIES OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:

The behavior of young people involved in volunteer activities is also the result of society's challenges. Therefore, the management of volunteering activities must focus on the motivation of young volunteers. Identifying the main factors that influence the motivation and frequency of young people's involvement in volunteer activities is one of the solutions that contribute to empowering many volunteers and increasing the involvement of young people in more volunteer projects. Using PLS-SEM, we evaluated how personal attributes (age and education) guide the behavior of young people involved in volunteer activities. The research results indicate that their seriousness and rigor in volunteering activities (regardless of gender) allow young people to experience activities in various fields, contributing to developing personal skills.

Keywords: young people, volunteering activities, youth motivations, gender, age.

1. Introduction

The voluntary activities that young people carry out can positively affect the conservation of society's resources so that even in the long term, humanity can carry out its activities. Voluntary activities contribute to establishing a balance between the environment and human nature. That is why the motivation underlying the involvement of young people in volunteering activities must be analyzed in connection with age, gender, education, and specific behaviors.

The research aims to identify to what extent the characteristics of young people influence their motivation to participate in volunteering activities. The motivation of young people is also dictated by the need to establish both an internal balance (one's thinking, inner peace, and tranquility) and an external one (activities carried out with other people, relationships, environmental reactions, management of voluntary activities within the organization and interaction with the community), which leads to their decision to get involved in volunteer activities and to constitute a volunteer behavior, according to the context in which they find themselves (Stoner et al., 2011).

Ajzen (1991), in the analysis of the theory of planned behavior, studied attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control, which are found at the basis of

human behavior, and observed the fact that subjective norms and beliefs are the only factors that cause a person to adopt a specific behavior in society.

This research aims to evaluate how some characteristics of young people (gender, age, studies, and volunteer behavior) motivate them to get involved in volunteer activities.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

Involvement in volunteering activities involves carrying out a set of social, physical, and cognitive activities, and Anderson et al. (2014) observed the beneficial effects resulting from the involvement of people in volunteer activities, such as decreased symptoms of depression, slowing of functional decline or dementia, and even reduced mortality. Awan and Sitwat (2014) analyzed the importance of spiritual involvement and observed implications for the mental well-being of individuals involved in the activities due to increased self-esteem, contributing to personal development and self-realization.

Furthermore, spiritual involvement in volunteering activities is essential at multiple levels (i.e., personal, professional, and organizational). People's daily activities include paid work and social participation (SP) activities, and activities aimed at social participation include volunteer group work, sports activities, hobby activities, cultural activities, senior clubs, neighborhood community associations, and paid activities (Tomioka et al., 2017).

The age of volunteers is significant because people are motivated by different things to get involved in volunteer activities. If aged people are motivated to get involved, especially by social motivation, in the case of young people, social pressure has the opposite effect, a fact that managers of volunteering activities must consider (Aranda et al., 2019).

Afzal and Hussain (2020) analyzed to what extent the voluntary involvement of young people in the community learning process, as an integrated part of the admission process within the educational institution, contributes to the development of their social skills, it being essential that young people voluntarily take part in the learning process within the services carried out in the community, and the young people's decision to continue to get involved even after being admitted to the educational institution demonstrates that young people have a high level of responsibility (Burlea-Schiopoiu, 2007b), the appreciation and care for of community and the desire to develop social skills.

The opinion of Grinshteyn and Sugar (2021) is that volunteering activities depend on human, social, and cultural capital and affect both the individuals involved and local communities, thus concluding that the safety perceived by volunteers differs according to gender and race.

Zelko and Maslo (2021) analyzed volunteer activities in the online environment and highlighted the importance of social partnership and access to educational opportunities and how the online environment contributes to volunteers' personal and professional development. The critical results of the efforts of the educational process in the online environment are due to the attributes of the people involved, such as responsibility, thirst for knowledge and personal development, and the quality of educational services.

The monitoring of the volunteers' activity led to the highlighting of the main factors that influence their motivation to be volunteers, but also to the evaluation of

young people's satisfaction, to the definition of the significance of the work done, and to the knowledge of the role of volunteer activities in creating an inner harmony of volunteers (Caraveo, 2022).

Tsai et al. (2023) analyzed the influence of leadership within voluntary organizations on the motivation of volunteers and observed links between discrete leadership behaviors and the desire for long-term involvement of people in volunteer activities. As a result of the study of the specialized literature, we developed the following research hypotheses and built the theoretical research model (figure 1):

H1: Age directly and positively influences the involvement of young people in volunteering activities.

H2: Gender directly and positively influences the motivation of young people to get involved in volunteering activities.

H3: Studies directly and positively influence young people's motivation to get involved in volunteering activities.

H4: The behavior of volunteers directly and positively influences the motivation of young people to get involved in volunteering activities.

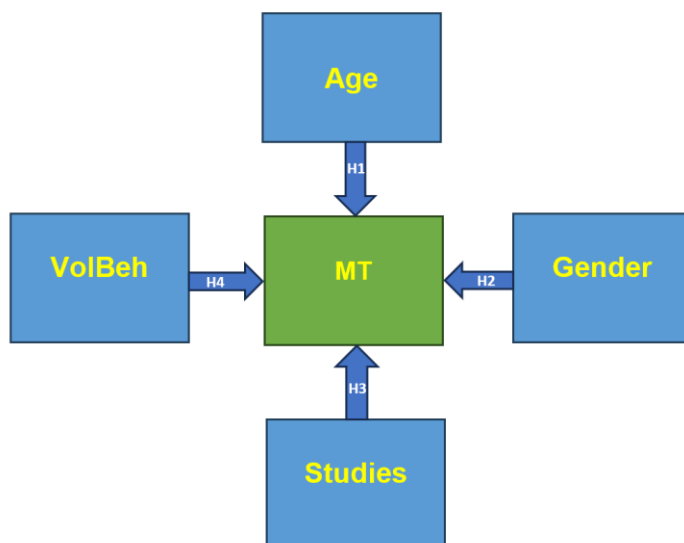


Figure 1. The conceptual model for evaluating young people's motivation according to individual characteristics

3. Methodology

In order to evaluate the motivation of young people's involvement in volunteering activities, we carried out quantitative research based on a questionnaire.

The demographic variables of young people involved in volunteer activities, such as age category, gender, and level of education, were coded as follows: gender of respondents: 1 = male, 2 = female, and 3 = prefer not to answer, the age categories of the respondents have the following: 18 - 24 years, 25 - 29 years and

30 - 35 years, and the level of education was classified into 1 = high school or vocational school, 2 = higher bachelor's studies, 3 = higher master's studies, 4 = doctorate and 5 = post-doctorate.

The tool built as a result of the critical analysis of the specialized literature is a questionnaire, which allowed the collection of answers online through the Google Forms platform between September 2022 and May 2023. The respondents are young people between the ages of 18 and 35, students, and other young people from Romania, and the sample structure can be found in the table below.

Table 1. Sample structure

Items	Answer	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
1	2	3	4	5
The gender of the respondent	woman	142	44,4	44,4
	man	144	45,0	89,4
	I prefer not to answer	34	10,6	100,0
Age of respondents	18 - 24 years	185	57,8	57,8
	25 -29 years	104	32,5	90,3
	30 - 35 years	31	9,7	100,0
The level of education of the respondent	high school or vocational school	76	23,8	23,8
	higher undergraduate studies	140	43,8	67,5
	higher master's studies	75	23,4	90,9
	PHD	19	5,9	96,9
	post - doctorate	10	3,1	100,0
Involvement of the respondent in voluntary activities	once time	27	8,4	8,5
	2 times	32	10,0	18,5
	repeatedly	62	19,4	37,9
	many times	198	61,9	100,0

We observe an approximately equal distribution regarding the gender of people involved in volunteer activities. Regarding the structure by age categories, more than 50% of the young people involved in volunteer activities are aged between 18 and 24, demonstrating the willingness of young people to carry out volunteer activities since high school and during their university studies. Young

people between the ages of 30 and 35 represent only 9.7% of the respondents, and this low share may be the consequence of being employed in the labor market or starting a family, which leaves its mark on the time allocated to volunteering.

The level of education is a significant factor regarding the involvement of young people in voluntary activities because, with the acquisition of new knowledge, the need for personal well-being is realized. To measure the behavior of young people involved in volunteer activities, we used the Likert scale: 1 = never, 2 = once, 3 = 2 times, 4 = several times, and 5 = very many times.

The variable factors influencing young people's motivation to participate in volunteering activities are made up of 8 items (Table 2), evaluated using a five-point Likert scale (1 = total disagree and 5 = total agree) the influence of internal factors and external influences on the motivation to take part in volunteering activities.

Table 2. Variable structure of the factors that influence young people's motivation to take part in volunteering activities

Items	Adapted from
1	2
<i>MT1 - The desire to help motivate me to get involved in volunteering activities</i>	Suhud (2013, p. 350), Al Mutawa (2015, p. 260) and Mason (2016, p. 83).
<i>MT2 - The need to develop myself</i>	Suhud (2013, pp. 350-351), Al Mutawa (2015, p. 260) and Mason, (2016, p. 83)
<i>MT3 - Possibility to work in a team</i>	Suhud (2013, p. 349-350), Al Mutawa (2015, p. 256) and Mason (2016, p. 83-84)
<i>MT4 - The opportunity to solve my problems</i>	Suhud (2013, pp. 349-351) and Al Mutawa, 2015, p. 260
<i>MT5 - Means to test different career options</i>	Al Mutawa (2015, p. 260)
<i>MT6 – The path to success in life and self-improvement</i>	Suhud (2013, pp. 349-350, Al Mutawa (2015, p. 260 and Mason (2016, p. 83)
<i>MT7 – I like to be surrounded by friends and their involvement in volunteer activities motivates me to get involved</i>	Al Mutawa (2015, p. 260) and Mason (2016, p. 83)
<i>MT8 – Volunteer status and the benefits of community recognition of this status</i>	Mason (2016, p. 83)

4. Results and discussion

The desire to help others, the need for development, the opportunity to work in a team, the opportunity to solve problems, the means to test different career options, the chance to aim for success and self-improvement, the importance of young people being with of friends in volunteering and the benefits of volunteering in the community were analyzed in our youth motivation research.

The structure of young people motivated by the desire to help those around them is shown in the figure below.

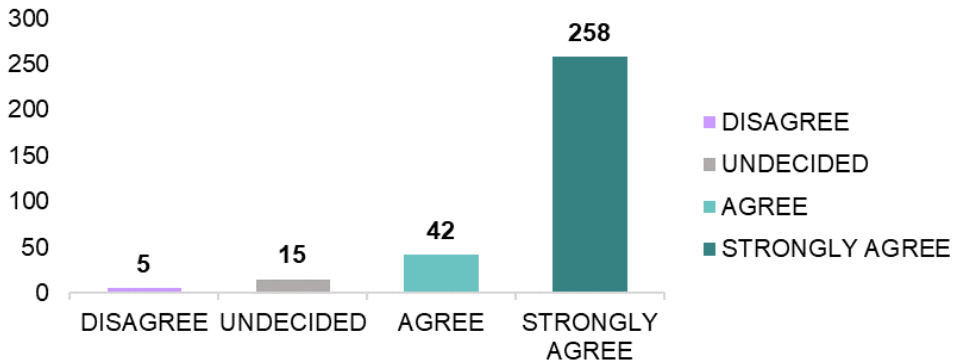


Figure 2. The structure of young people motivated by the desire to help those around them

Most young people pay special attention to the desire to help, which triggers the initiative to get involved in volunteering projects.

The structure of young people motivated by the need for personal development due to involvement in voluntary activities is presented in the figure below.

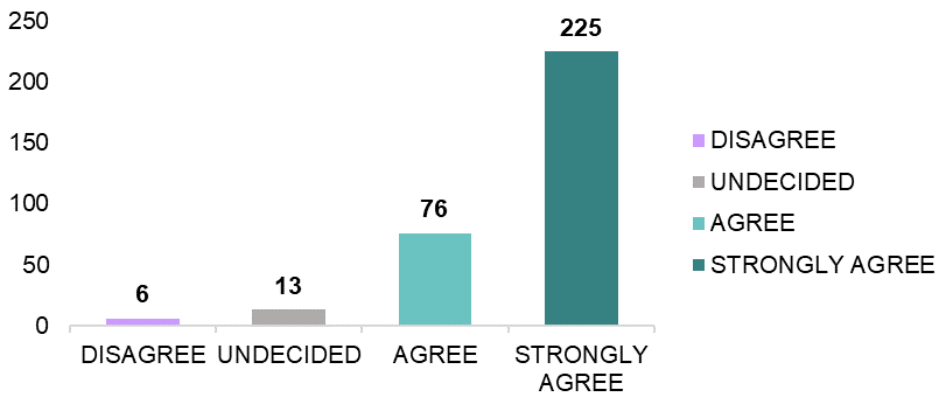


Figure 3. The structure of young people motivated by the need for personal development

Young people are interested in opportunities for personal development, which motivates them to get involved in volunteering projects.

The fact that young people want to spend as much time as possible in the presence of other people of their age is natural, and volunteering projects are an excellent opportunity to achieve this.

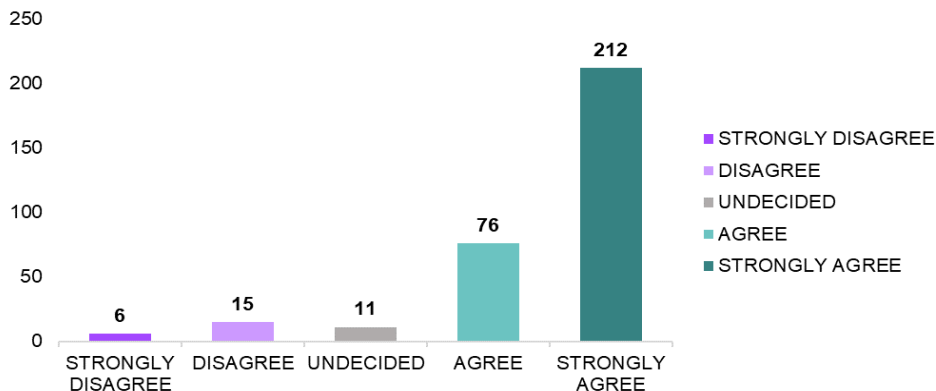


Figure 4. The structure of young people motivated by the opportunity to work in a team

The young people are motivated to participate in volunteering activities because they can collaborate, socialize, and work in a team with other young people. However, six respondents believe it is optional to be like this, with interaction with people of all ages being beneficial.

One of the concerns of young people is overcoming personal problems, and involvement in volunteering activities represents a moment of meditation to find solutions to problems.

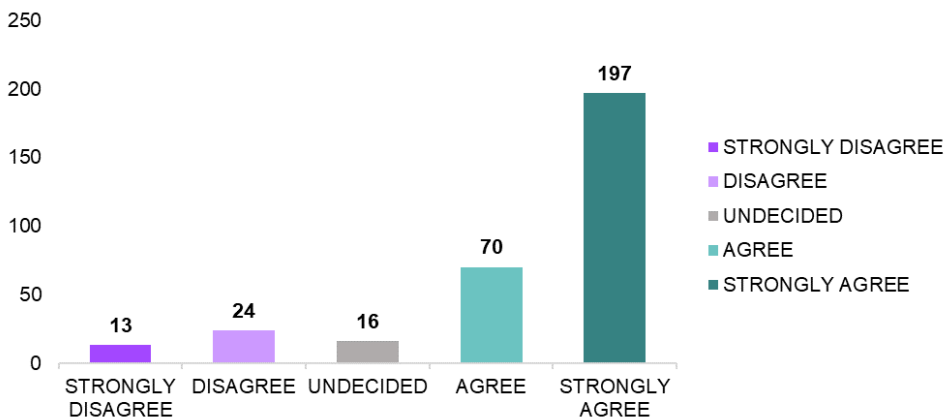


Figure 5. The structure of young people motivated by the opportunity to solve problems as a result of involvement in volunteer activities

The structure of young people motivated by the means to test different career options is shown in figure 5.

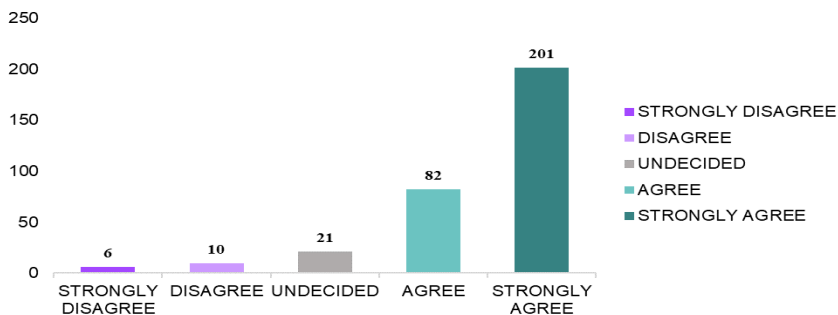


Figure 6. The structure of young people motivated by the means to test different career options

Involvement in voluntary activities represents an opportunity for most young people to fulfill their personal development goals. The seriousness and rigor that young people show allow them to explore and identify the activities they would like to do, so they come to love a field and excel because they put much passion into what they do.

Young people who are determined to walk the path to success will pay due attention to involvement in volunteering activities because activities of this kind charge them with positive energy, which allows them to respond firmly to many challenges and helps them focus on developing their skills and personal.

The involvement of young people in volunteering activities affects the implementation of volunteering objectives, and the experience gained through involvement in volunteering activities represents elements that contribute to increasing the degree of self-knowledge and self-improvement.

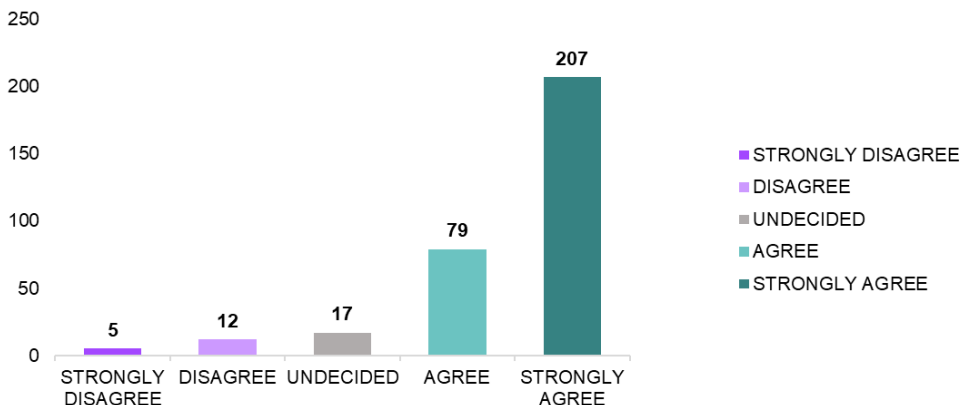


Figure 7. The structure of young people motivated by the chance to aim for success and self-improvement

Young people involved in volunteering believe that this activity contributes to their professional success and that acquiring new skills leads to a perpetual desire for self-improvement (Burlea-Schiopoiu and Burdescu, 2017).

The structure of young people motivated by being with friends in carrying out volunteering activities can be found in Figure 8.

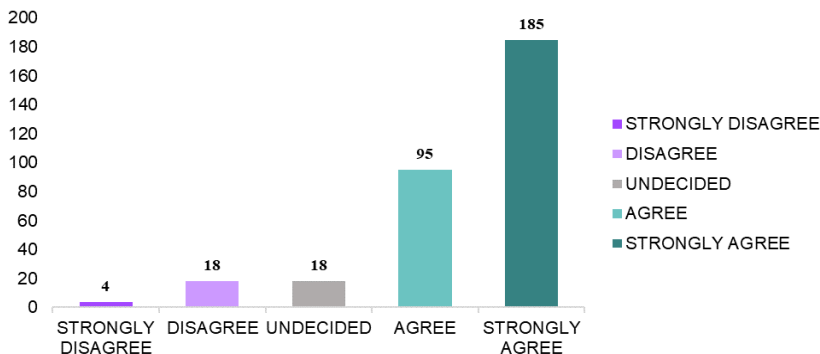


Figure 8. The structure of young people motivated to be with their friends in carrying out volunteer activities

A group of friends is significant for young people because spending free time, sharing and confessing problems without fear of being judged, forming your own collective, and taking initiatives that confer a particular type of comfort directly impact young people's involvement in voluntary activities.

The exchange of experience and mutual encouragement creates a strong and stable connection of the volunteer with the group of friends, which contributes familiarly to the successful fulfillment of the volunteering goals. The involvement of friends in volunteer activities motivates young people to agree with the positioning of friends among the reasons that led them to say yes to volunteering.

Young people are interested in knowing about the volunteer status and the benefits of recognizing this status at the community level. Figure 9 shows the structure of young people motivated by the benefits offered by the volunteer status within the community.

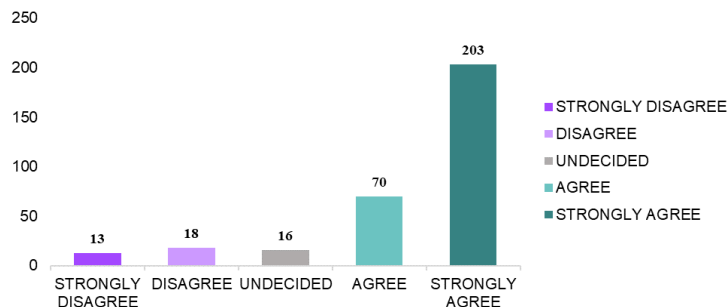


Figure 9. The structure of young people motivated by the benefits offered by the volunteer status within the community

The involvement of young people in voluntary activities comes from the desire for validation and recognition of their volunteer status by the circle of friends, the

organization, and the community. Very few young people admit that an inner force guides them and do not seek any extrinsic recognition.

Using the program SMART-PLS4 (Ringle et al., 2023), we evaluated the theoretical model and tested the four hypotheses.

In the case of the variable related to the motivations that guide the behavior of young people involved in volunteer activities, the highest mean (4.73) was recorded for item MT1 - The desire to help those around me motivated me to get involved in volunteer activities - which indicates that young people are motivated by the desire to help, which influences the frequency of volunteering activities.

In terms of standard deviation, the highest (1.118) was recorded for item MT4 - Opportunity to solve my problems, which indicates that young people do not engage in volunteering activities to solve their problems, but it is a secondary benefit, which results as a result of involvement in volunteering activities.

The external concentrations of the research items were calculated to establish each item's reliability and validate the consistency of the model. We will consider relevant values greater than 0.7, according to Hair et al. (2017, p. 2860). Thus, the minimum value was recorded for the **MT1** item (0.712) and the maximum value for the **MT5** item (0.859).

Table 3 includes the representative values, which determine the validation/invalidation of the hypotheses of the conceptual model regarding the motivations that guide the behavior of young people involved in volunteer activities.

Table 3. Validation of the scientific research hypotheses of the conceptual model regarding the motivations that guide the behavior of young people involved in volunteering activities

Hypotheses	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values
1	2	3	4	5	6
H1: Age -> MT	-0.281	-0.290	0.080	3.521	0.000
H2: Gender -> MT	-0.010	-0.011	0.056	0.177	0.859
H3: Studies -> MT	0.198	0.203	0.080	2.476	0.013
H4: VolBeh -> MT	-0.101	-0.103	0.059	1.707	0.088

Hypothesis 1 was validated, and Aranda et al. (2019) concluded that volunteers have different motivations depending on their age. This aspect is essential for the management of volunteering activities because the analysis of this influence of age on motivation results in the fact that activities can be carried out that allow access to as many young people as possible, depending on the specific interests of young people. Each age represents a stage of development, increasing the thirst for knowledge and acquiring new skills, which determines the orientation

of young people towards volunteering projects whose causes respond to their needs and desires.

Hypothesis 2 was not validated and is in disagreement with Grinshteyn and Sugar (2021), in a study conducted on citizens of the United States of America, who believe that gender and race influence involvement, in the case of men, greater involvement resulted, than in the case of women, of course under the influence of the safety factor. The validation of hypothesis 2 highlights that in the case of young people involved in volunteer activities, the motivation for involvement is not influenced by this aspect. However, the problem of equal opportunities between the sexes that persists in many fields represents a real case for young people who actively participate in volunteering projects.

Hypothesis 3 was validated. Al Mutawa (2015) highlighted that educational level only contributes a little information about the participants. We observed that volunteering behavior differed at each educational stage (high school, university studies, doctorate, and post-doctorate). The validation of this hypothesis confirms that education has a different impact on young people's motivation to engage in volunteering activities. That is why managers of volunteering activities must take into account the level of education and include in the volunteering projects undertaken activities that respond to the development needs of young people, in the case of volunteers from high school or college, and to maintain a constant interest in the case of volunteers from other educational levels.

Hypothesis 4 was invalid, as Ajzen (1991) indicated that motivations influence behavior. Volunteering behavior is directly proportional to the motivation that determines this behavior, but there is no direct influence between volunteering behavior and motivation. Therefore, young people adopt a specific behavior, being guided by motivation. Further, they are guided by the goals and causes of volunteering and the felt states.

The results of our research are in agreement with those of Bayer et al. (2013), who analyzed the mentor-protégé relationship in mentoring activities within higher education institutions, and the results highlighted the fact that a close relationship between volunteers who provide mentoring activities and students, which has a positive impact on improving the academic results of student volunteers.

The results of the research demonstrate that the involvement of young people in voluntary activities is not at all accidental, and for this to be possible, the family, society, and nature are the ones that guide the behavior of young people through education, self-education, self-improvement, awareness of the need for common well-being and the union efforts to contribute to spiritual balance and harmony.

5. Conclusions

The research results demonstrate the importance of young people's involvement in volunteering activities and the influence of family, society, and the decisions made by the managers of volunteering organizations or projects guide young people's behavior. Moreover, education, self-education, self-improvement, awareness of the need for common well-being, and joining the efforts of all parties involved contribute to achieving the spiritual balance of young people.

The confirmation of the hypotheses regarding age and education demonstrates the specific attraction of young people to volunteering activities, guided by a sense of fairness.

Most of the young people involved in volunteering activities are graduates of higher studies of the bachelor's cycle (43.8%), but we found that since high school, 23.8% of the young people were involved in volunteering activities, which proves the need for an early education of young people in an altruistic spirit.

The desire to help others, the need for development, the opportunity to work in a team, the opportunity to solve problems, the means to test different career options, the chance to be successful and to overcome oneself, the opportunity for young people to being with friends in carrying out volunteering activities. Therefore, the benefits that the volunteer status offers are the main aspects that motivate young people to get involved in volunteering activities.

Young people pay particular attention to the desire to help as a trigger for the engagement initiative, and volunteering opportunities allow them to tap into their creative potential in a spontaneous and controlled way.

Volunteering projects are a good opportunity for young people to spend time with others of the same age. They can collaborate, socialize, and work in a team (Burlea-Schiopoiu, 2007a), which translates into beneficial experiences for personal and professional development.

Overcoming personal problems becomes possible due to volunteering because young people who identify personal problems with those of the volunteering cause are more actively involved in successfully implementing volunteering projects. However, some young people prefer not to associate personal problems with volunteering activities out of fear or insecurity.

The seriousness and rigor they show in volunteering activities allow young people to experience activities in various fields, and their passion contributes to the development of skills and guides them to follow the right path towards success in life, self-knowledge, and self-improvement.

The group of friends is significant for young people; sharing difficulties and confessing problems without fear of being judged, forming their own collective, and taking initiatives together that allow them to enjoy a certain level of comfort substantially impact youth involvement in volunteering activities.

In conclusion, young people's curiosity to know the advantages of carrying out a volunteer activity leads them to adopt a behavior focused on the common welfare.

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