

THE ESSENCE, BENEFITS, AND MOTIVES OF VOLUNTEERING: A THEORETICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

For several decades, international and national documents and researchers' reports have highlighted the importance of volunteering. Researchers positively assess the government's focus on promoting and facilitating volunteering but also notice the difficulties in transforming documents into practice. Therefore, the article aims to theoretically analyze the essence, benefits, and motives of volunteering. The analysis of documents and scientific literature was used to achieve the goals. The analysis indicates that in describing volunteering, the authors most often use the *terms activity, society, time, volunteer, social, free, person, society, benefits, volunteer, friend, work, age*, etc. The analysis of the literature revealed the following characteristics of volunteering: it is unpaid and non-obligatory; it can be organized and informal; it is a resource-needed activity; it is beneficial, and it is dependent on the effectiveness of motivators. Volunteering combines personal benefits and societal impact, fostering collaboration, social inclusion, and resilience while enhancing individual well-being. For young people, it provides opportunities for skill development, career exploration, and empowerment through active contributions to meaningful causes. For older adults, it offers purpose, connection, and a chance to share their experience, promoting physical and mental health while combating loneliness.

Keywords: volunteering essence, volunteering benefits, volunteering motivators.

Introduction

Relevance of the topic. For several decades, international and national documents and researchers' reports have highlighted the importance of volunteering. Acknowledging volunteering's critical role in addressing global challenges, international institutions through their papers (for example UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/38, 2002; UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/63/153, 2008; Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015; Volunteering opportunities with the European Solidarity Corps in Europe and abroad - Your Europe) provided a detailed framework for encouraging, supporting, and regulating volunteering. Lithuanian national-level institutions and documents (for example, Lietuvos Respublikos savanoriškos veiklos įstatymas, 2011; Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro įsakymas *Dėl Jaunimo savanoriškos Tarnybos organizavimo tvarkos patvirtinimo*, 2018) also regulates the specifics of volunteering, the principles of volunteering, the rights, and obligations of the volunteer and the organizer of volunteering, the procedure for organizing volunteering, the insurance of volunteers, and the reimbursement of volunteering expenses.

Researchers positively assess the government's focus on promoting and facilitating volunteering but also notice the difficulties in transforming documents into practice (Papa, Vutuli, Principi, Scherer, 2018). Also researchers' work provides heterogeneous information on the extent of volunteering. Paplauskienė (2021) discusses different Lithuania statistical data and indicates uneven levels of Lithuania people's involvement in volunteering activities: 2011 – 20 percent, 2018 – 11 percent, 2019 – 15 percent. Paplauskienė (2021) stresses that there are uneven volunteering opportunities in large and small cities, and even highlights the lack of such statistical information. Papa, Vutuli, Principi, and Scherer (2018) mention that volunteering organizations often struggle to recruit socially excluded people and individuals with disabilities. As the number of nonprofit organizations is permanently growing, volunteers represent a scarce resource for which nonprofit organizations compete (Jedicke, Olk, Zogaj, Tschulin, Lindenmeier, 2024). Ackermann, and Manatschal (2018) indicate decreasing levels of engagement in traditional offline volunteering, especially among young people, and as scientists state that “unequal civic participation constitutes an increasing societal concern”.

Therefore, there must be a better understanding of the essence and types, factors, motives, costs, and other characteristics that impact the decision to volunteer. As it was mentioned before, the volunteering concept and motives were analyzed in international and national documents and in scientific papers. However, as the interests, needs, and motivations of society, and young people in

particular, change, it is appropriate to identify new potential factors and styles for engaging in volunteering; to identify the elements that make up the volunteering complex. Such a theoretical model will then be used to investigate the elements of volunteering that are relevant for different groups of people and the motivators for engaging in volunteering activities. This will lead to the development of recommendations to increase society engagement.

Research problem. The analysis gives answers to the problem question: what elements compose the volunteering definition and what motivates people in different age groups to volunteer? These answers will provide the framework for further empirical research on volunteering understanding and drivers among the different groups of society.

The subject matter of the research – volunteering essence and motivators.

The research aim is to analyze the essence, benefits, and motives of volunteering.

Research objectives:

1. To identify the elements composing volunteering.
2. To reveal motives and benefits for volunteering.

Research methods: the analysis of documents and scientific literature was accomplished. For the analysis, the scientific literature was collected using the Ebsco, Springer and Sage databases. The search was carried out between July and June 2024. The following keywords were used to search for legal documents and articles: volunteering, the essence of volunteering, the benefits of volunteering, and motivators of volunteering.

1. The concept and elements of volunteering

Traditionally volunteering is described as an activity when a person voluntarily, and without financial gain provides assistance or contributes to public welfare, the activities of organizations or communities. This may include work in social, environmental, educational, cultural, sports or other fields. Volunteers often work out of personal conviction to help others, gain new skills or experiences, strengthen a sense of community, or make a positive impact on society.

The analysis of volunteering definitions provided in legal regulation acts and scientific literature (Penner, 2002; Hadzi-Miceva, 2007; Grincevičius, 2011; LR Savanoriškos veiklos įstatymas, 2011; Volunteering charter, 2012; Pruskus, 2014; Gil-Lacruz et al., 2016; Lengfeld and Ordemann, 2016; Papa, Cutuli, Principi, and Scherer, 2019; Hamalainen et al., 2023; Visuotinė Lietuvių enciklopedija, 2024; Nappo, Fiorillo and Lavadera, 2024) was accomplished to reveal the essence of volunteering and the main elements composing it. The components of essence of volunteering are indicated in the wordcloud (see Fig. 1), which indicates that in describing volunteering, the authors most often use the terms activity, society, time, volunteer, social, free, person, society, benefits, volunteer, friend, work, age and etc..

The literature analysis allows to indicate such main characteristics of volunteering: (1) it is conducted within a formal framework or informal activities; (2) it is unpaid; (3) it is a resource-needed activity; (4) it is performed for the benefit of society, specific organizations or groups of people, or individuals.

Scientists identify that volunteering is conducted within an organized framework / formal (Wilson, 2000; Dekker and Morrow-Halman, 2003) or informal activities (Wilson, 2000). As Ackermann and Manatschal (2018) note, existing research mainly distinguishes between two manifestations of traditional volunteering: formal volunteering, which occurs within an organization or association, and informal volunteering outside of organizations, such as helping neighbours. Dekker and Morrow-Halman (2003) highlight that volunteering is not merely a spontaneous expression of individual engagement or a natural result of community life; it is often deliberately organized and managed, and can even be shaped by policies. This blend of voluntariness and structured organization makes volunteering a unique and intriguing phenomenon. However, authors (Ackerman, and Manatschal, 2018) identify the changing landscape of volunteering as digitalization increases. According to Ackermann and Manatschal (2018), online volunteering includes various activities such as managing a club website, moderating a Facebook group, contributing to a Wikipedia entry, recording a non-commercial educational YouTube video or couchsurfing. The activity does not necessarily have to be interactive, and it may involve providing

infrastructure, but the online volunteer must invest time and others must benefit.



Figure 1. Essence of volunteering

Created by authors based on: Penner (2002); Hadzi-Miceva (2007); Grincevičius (2011); LR Savanoriškos veiklos įstatymas (2011); Volunteering charter (2012); Pruskus (2014); Gil-Lacruz et al (2016); Lengfeld and Ordemann (2016); Papa, Cutuli, Principi, Scherer (2019); Hamalainen et al. (2023); Visuotinė Lietuvių enciklopedija (2024); Nappo, Fiorillo and Lavadera (2024).

The scientists note that volunteering is unpaid (Dekker and Morrow-Halman, 2003) and non-obligatory (Wilson, 2000; Dekker and Morrow-Halman, 2003; Nappo, Fiorillo and Lavadera, 2024). Nappo, Fiorillo and Lavadera (2024), basing on the accomplished review of socio-economic literature, present volunteering as one of the most considerable pro-social activities and people’s decisions about labor-leisure.

The other important thing is that volunteering is a resource-needed activity (Papa, Cutuli, Principi, and Scherer, 2019; Qvist, 2021). Therefore it is also important to understand the costs and disadvantages of volunteering. Resource theory describes volunteering as being positively related to the availability of three types of resources: human capital (e.g., resources related to individual capabilities, such as education, income, and health status), social capital (e.g., resources related to social and relational capabilities, such as social networks), and cultural capital (e.g., resources related to ethical resources or values, such as religiosity) (Wilson, and Musick, 1997, as cited in Papa, Cutuli, Principi, Scherer, 2019). Volunteering is related to human resources and individual socio-demographic factors related to time, money and skills. Jedicke et. al. (2024) identifies time costs and professional-volunteer conflicts and even volunteer stigma. Qvist’s (2021) results suggest that hours of paid work have a significant negative effect on the total number of hours that people spend volunteering, not mainly because paid work hours affect people’s propensity to volunteer but because they affect the number of hours that volunteers contribute. The other surveys identify the importance of volunteering experience: Individuals who have volunteering experience in the past are more likely to volunteer in the presence and future, regardless of other factors such as current workload, either because people develop a habit of volunteering or because unobserved individual characteristics are associated with both past and current volunteering (Dawson et al., 2019; Janoski et al., 1998; Smith & Wang, 2016; Wilson, 2000, cited from Qvist, 2021). Qvist's (2021) findings also shed light on how having flexible working arrangements affects volunteering. This appears to be more complicated than previously thought. Compared to those who work regular hours, employees who have the highest degree of flexible working arrangements, including the ability to work from home and autonomy, increase the total number of hours they volunteer. As Ackermann and Manatschal (2018) points out that people need certain skills and motivations for traditional and online volunteering activities. The type of skills and motivations may depend more on the degree of formalisation than on the sphere in which the activity takes place (offline or online). When a person engages in formal volunteering, organisational skills, such as coordinating with others and getting things done on time, may be needed. For informal volunteering, skills and motivations such as caring for others are more important. Giving private mathematics tutoring to pupils in the neighbourhood and explaining mathematical basics to a wider public on YouTube might require quite similar skills and motivations.

Thus, the degree of formalisation is expected to determine the skills and motivations required. The findings of Ackermann and Manatschal (2018) suggest that technical skills and a certain affinity for digital technology are more important for online volunteering, which explains why young people as 'digital natives' are more willing to volunteer online. It is also important for young people that this form of volunteering offers a higher degree of flexibility and anonymity, with a lower degree of commitment and obligation. This makes online volunteering a low-threshold activity. It does not require extensive resources, social networks or a particularly strong psychological commitment.

The scientists highlight that volunteering is performed for the benefit of society, specific organizations or groups of people, or individuals (McCable, White, Obst, 2007; Dekker and Morrow-Halman, 2003) and the volunteers themselves (Surujlal and Dhurup, 2008). Volunteering plays a crucial role in supporting social services at both community and national levels (McCable, White, Obst, 2007). These insights reveal the complexity and multiplicity of volunteering benefits. Therefore, this element of volunteering is analyzed in the next section of the article.

Summarizing the findings on the essence of volunteering it might be assumed that elements and their peculiarities can be useful for policy makers and voluntary sector organizations.

2. Benefit and motivation of volunteering

Benefits and motivation are very important elements in volunteering activities. It should also be noted that benefits and motives are very often tangled and that both can motivate the same person to engage in single-time or ongoing volunteering. It is important to understand that the benefits and motivation itself can differ depending on various factors such as: volunteer's age, occupation, interests, and type of volunteering activities. With the right factors and the right motivation in place, society as a whole may be more willing to engage in volunteer work..

Scientific literature identifies the benefits of volunteering for society, organizations and individuals. Volunteering is a powerful tool that fosters public well-being in numerous ways. Its significance extends beyond the immediate benefits to individuals and communities, influencing societal health, cohesion, and resilience on a broader scale. By engaging in volunteer work, individuals contribute to the immediate improvement of their communities and the long-term health and harmony of society. Through volunteering, people take on active roles in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, which helps to build stronger, more connected communities. Volunteering promotes collaboration, shared responsibility, and collective action. It encourages people to engage with diverse groups, fostering tolerance, empathy, and social inclusion. This collective effort supports societal cohesion bridging gaps between different demographics, and creating a sense of unity. Volunteers often play critical roles in emergency responses, healthcare, education, and community development, making them instrumental in bolstering the resilience of societies in times of crisis or need.

The majority of the literature analyzes the motives and benefits of volunteers themselves. According to Aydinli et al. (2016) there are three main types of motivation affecting sustained volunteering: explicit prosocial, implicit prosocial and interaction (figure 2).

Authors (Aydinli, Bender et al., 2016) describe explicit prosocial motivation for sustained volunteering as the conscious desire to help others, which is often driven by self-awareness of one's intention to act for the benefit of others. This type of motivation is typically measured through self-reports where individuals consciously acknowledge their reasons for engaging in prosocial behavior, such as volunteering. Implicit prosocial motivation for sustained volunteering is described as an internal, often unconscious drive that leads individuals to help others, not for external rewards or recognition, but due to a deeply ingrained sense of social responsibility or care for others. Interaction motivation for sustained volunteering is identified through the desire to form and maintain social relationships through volunteering activities.

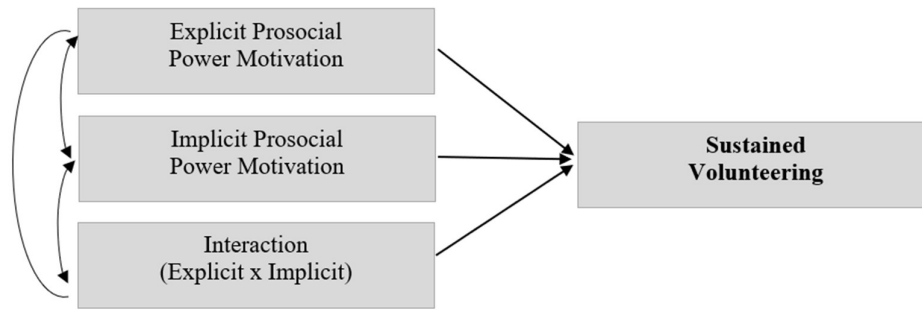


Figure 2. Types of motivation affecting sustained volunteering
 Created by authors based on Aydinli, Bender et al. (2016)

Through the study conducted in four different countries (Germany, China, Turkey and United States of America), by investigating 1082 participants of the study, Explicit prosocial motivation has been found to play an important role in long-term volunteering across cultures by Aydinli, Bender et al. (2016). Individuals with high levels of explicit prosocial motivation are more likely to engage in sustained volunteering. This is because they are consciously motivated by the desire to make a positive contribution to society.

Jedicke et. al. (2024) identify such triggers or motives of volunteering: protecting against bad emotions (quilt, self-pride, vicarious pride) and feelings of gaining social status; the possibility of putting one’s values into practice through volunteering; improving understanding of the world; allowing for the practice of certain skills; strengthening one’s personality and self-confidence; providing an advantage in the labor market; making new acquaintances and establishing friendships. The literature (Nappo, Fiorillo, Lavadera, 2024) identifies different reasons or motivators of volunteering depending on peoples’ social preferences, and care about recipients’ usefulness. For example, Andreoni (1990, cited from Nappo, Fiorillo, Lavadera 2024) indicates that people receive a “warm-glow” from giving time to others. The literature describes volunteering also as the possibility to invest in people’s human capital and improve their expectations and income. The research of Nappo, Fiorillo and Lavadera (2024) revealed volunteering as an activity that helps people to feel more confident about their perceptions of “labor market insecurity” (applied probit models showed a negative and significant correlation that indicates how employees who do voluntary activities have a greater likelihood of declaring perceived labor market insecurity, which is nearly 3% points lower, than employees who do not volunteer). Jedicke et. al. (2024) also note that identifying career enhancement opportunities is common in volunteering appeals. Accordingly, volunteering is a means of strengthening social relationships. As the findings of Jedicke et. al. (2024) indicated status-seeking and affiliation-seeking behavioral drives triggered by pride appeals are more favored by potential volunteers. The benefits of volunteering listed in the literature are summarized in Table 1.

Literature reveals that motivation for volunteering can vary significantly between young people and older adults due to differences in life stages, goals, and experiences. While both groups may share certain motivations, such as the desire to give back to their communities, there are distinct factors that drive each group to volunteer.

Young people’s motivation for volunteering. Young people are driven to volunteer for different reasons and benefits compared to older individuals. One of the main motivations for youth volunteers is the opportunity to gain work-related experience, skills and qualifications that can support their education and future career (Cnaan et al., 2010). Bocsi et al. (2017) noted that modern motivations for volunteering include career development, personal growth, work experience, professional improvement, gaining information, developing and practicing skills, getting a job more easily, increasing human capital, making friends, meeting people with similar interests, and participating in useful leisure activities (learning and practicing sports and cultural activities). Bocsi et al. (2017) note that through voluntary activities, the young generation transforms the cultural and social capital they acquire into material capital in the form of higher wages and better jobs at a later stage. In those countries (e.g. Canada and

the United States) where volunteering sends a strong positive signal to employers when young people are looking for a job, they are more likely to volunteer.

Table 1. Benefits of volunteering

The significance of volunteering for society	The meaning of volunteering for the volunteer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • volunteering is one of the means by which individuals or groups can draw attention to human, social or environmental problems; • strengthens the social, cultural, environmental and educational fields; • fosters social values; • develops citizenship; • promotes humanity and tolerance; • provides economic and political benefits; • provides irreplaceable assistance in case of force majeure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps volunteers feel needed; • helps to acquire valuable skills and qualities useful in realizing one's expectations or pursuing a personal career; • provides an opportunity to find new friends; • allows volunteers to test themselves in new situations; • promotes communication, as volunteers learn to communicate and work in a team; • provides non-formal and informal learning opportunities; • learns to manage crises; • requires organizational skills and promotes their acquirement; • provides an opportunity to look at the world from a different perspective.

Source: created by authors based on literature analysis.

Holdsworth, Brewis's (2014) analysis reveals that students are resistant to the expectation of volunteering if it is perceived as undermining the value of their engagement. Both students and stakeholders agree that efforts to promote volunteering should focus on aligning institutional practices with young people's expectations and aspirations to effectively support and encourage their participation. Jardim, and Marques da Silva (2018) point out that young people tend to view volunteering in an instrumental way, primarily focusing on the personal and professional benefits they expect to gain. According to the authors, volunteering is seen as a means of escaping and overcoming the ongoing challenges and constraints of society, particularly rising unemployment and job insecurity, which increasingly affect younger generations worldwide. Gil-Lacruz et al. (2016) highlight several underlying reasons for the significant differences in youth volunteering across European Union member states. They identified both individual and contextual factors, comparing various volunteer activities. The key finding reveals that social capital variables play the most crucial role in influencing young people's decision to engage in voluntary activities. While an individual's socioeconomic characteristics are important in the decision to participate in voluntary activities, factors such as involvement in non-governmental organizations and attitudes toward various aspects of life exert even greater influence.

Older adult motivation for volunteering. Some authors analyzed volunteering through older adult's perspective. For example, Howell et. al. (2003) analyzed how volunteering affects the well-being of older adults. The authors' findings suggest that volunteering has a positive effect on well-being in later life. The research suggests that more volunteering hours are associated with higher levels of well-being. Gil-Lacruz et al. (2019) analysed the benefits of volunteering in later life on well-being. The authors found that participation in volunteering offers a wide range of benefits for all involved, but awareness of volunteering opportunities remains limited. Many older adults may not volunteer simply because they are not aware that such opportunities exist. Pozzi et al. (2014) investigated the impact of volunteering and community involvement on the well-being of older volunteers. Martinez et al. (2011) also examined the civic engagement of older adults. According to Pozzi et al. (2014), Martinez et al. (2011), given the positive effects of social cooperation and well-being, volunteering deserves more attention and recognition as a key factor in promoting social cohesion. It should be made more visible in society. In order to promote the involvement of older generations in both formal and informal volunteering projects, barriers such as limited financial resources and mobility issues need to be addressed.

According to Salvador-Carulla et al. (2014), Gil-Lacruz et al. (2019) quality of life is influenced by various factors, including access to and utilization of education and healthcare services, biological processes, environmental conditions, as well as individual behaviors and socioeconomic characteristics. To ensure optimal well-being in old age, it is essential to promote health across the entire lifespan.

Lengfeld and Ordemann (2016) in their research chose to investigate the group of retired volunteers and understand the factors influencing this group. It was stated that individuals with higher occupational status are more likely to volunteer during retirement, and this influence is notably stronger compared to the impact of occupational status on volunteering among those still employed. The study additionally revealed that higher levels of education significantly increase the likelihood of volunteering in later stages of life and contrary the older a person becomes, the lesser chance that they will become volunteers. In Hämäläinen’s et al. (2024) study it was shown that positive association between retirement and volunteering is stronger among individuals with better resources (financial situation, self-rated health, level of education, country group) compared to those with less resources. The research showed that the frequency of volunteering increased more after retirement in countries with higher GDP per capita compared to lower GDP per capita, which highlights the importance of country-level resources moderating retirement effect on volunteering. In sum, these studies suggest that socioeconomic factors, individual resources, and the broader national context significantly influence both the quality of life and the likelihood of volunteering in retirement, underscoring the importance of resources and support for fostering engagement and well-being in later life.

Summarizing the theoretical analysis, we present the essential motivations for volunteering among young people and older adults (Table 2).

Table 2. Motives for young people and older adults to volunteer.

Motives	Young People	Older Adults
Career Development	Gain experience, build skills for future jobs	Apply existing skills, pass on knowledge and mentor
Personal Growth	Discover oneself, exploration, build identity	Maintain purpose, stay engaged in life post-retirement
Skill Acquisition	Learn new skills and explore interests	Use and share expertise developed over a lifetime
Social Engagement	Meet peers, network, make friends	Combat loneliness, stay socially connected
Short-Term vs. Long-Term	Prefer short-term, flexible roles	Prefer long-term, consistent involvement
Focus on Future vs. Legacy	Advocate for future change, activism	Leave a legacy, preserve values, contribute to heritage

Source: created by authors based on theoretical analysis.

These differences illustrate how volunteering meets different needs and motivations at various life stages. Understanding these motivators can help organizations create volunteer opportunities that appeal to both groups, maximizing the benefits of volunteerism for all ages.

Summarizing the analysis, it can be stated that volunteering is driven by a mix of motivations and benefits that vary across age, occupation, and personal interests. Scientific research identifies three main types of motivation for sustained volunteering: explicit prosocial (conscious desire to help others), implicit prosocial (unconscious social responsibility), and interactional (forming social connections). Volunteers also benefit from emotional satisfaction, skill development, career advantages, and enhanced social inclusion, which together foster personal growth and societal cohesion. The motivations for volunteering differ significantly between young people and older adults due to life stage differences. Young volunteers often prioritize career development, personal growth, and social connections, while older adults value enhanced well-being, community involvement, and social cooperation. Awareness and accessibility of opportunities are critical for increasing participation in all age groups, with barriers such as mobility and resources needing to be addressed for older volunteers. Overall, volunteering strengthens societal resilience and cohesion by fostering tolerance, collaboration, and collective action. It provides individual volunteers with emotional rewards and societal acknowledgment while addressing critical social, economic, and environmental challenges. National contexts, such as GDP and institutional support, significantly influence volunteering rates and impact, highlighting the need for tailored strategies to maximize participation and benefits across diverse communities.

Conclusions

1. Volunteering is described as an activity when a person voluntarily, and without financial gain, provides assistance or contributes to public welfare, the activities of organizations or communities in social, environmental, educational, cultural, sports, or other fields. The analysis of volunteering definitions provided in legal regulation acts and scientific literature revealed that in describing volunteering, the authors most often use the terms activity, society, time, volunteer, social, free, person, society, benefits, volunteer, friend, work, age, and etc.. The analysis of the literature revealed the main characteristics of volunteering: it is unpaid and non-obligatory; it is organized and informal; it is resource-needed activity (volunteering is linked to human resources and individual sociodemographic factors that relate to time, money, and skills); it is benefiting and it is dependent on the effectiveness of motivators.

2. Benefits and motives are very often tangled and both can motivate the same person to engage in single-time or ongoing volunteering. Volunteering promotes collaboration, shared responsibility, and collective action. It encourages people to engage with diverse groups, fostering tolerance, empathy, and social inclusion. Volunteers often play critical roles in emergency responses, healthcare, education, and community development, making them instrumental in bolstering the resilience of societies in times of crisis or need. Moreover, the act of volunteering enhances individual well-being by offering numerous personal benefits. It provides a sense of purpose, emotional satisfaction, and mental stimulation, all of which contribute to better overall health and happiness. Volunteering can also improve one's physical health through active participation in community activities and reduces the risk of social isolation by fostering connections with others. For many individuals, the ability to make a positive impact on their surroundings leads to greater life satisfaction and personal fulfillment. Volunteering can be highly fulfilling for individuals across different life stages, but the motivations to volunteer often vary between younger and older adults. For many young individuals, it serves as a platform to explore different career paths, build essential skills, and boost their resumes. Volunteering enables them to work in diverse environments, engage with real-world issues, and take on responsibilities that they may not otherwise encounter in traditional education or early-stage jobs. It helps them develop critical soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership. Beyond professional development, volunteering fosters a sense of empowerment as young people realize that they can actively contribute to positive change, whether it is through social justice causes, environmental conservation, or community development. These experiences are formative, helping them build confidence, broaden their perspectives, and shape their values and identities in a rapidly changing world. For older adults, volunteering offers unique opportunities that go beyond just giving back to the community – it becomes a deeply fulfilling and purposeful part of their lives. Through volunteering, older adults can continue to contribute their wealth of knowledge and experience in meaningful ways, often mentoring younger generations or using their skills to support causes close to their hearts. Volunteering also enhances well-being by promoting physical and mental activity, reducing stress, and creating a sense of accomplishment. Furthermore, it opens doors to meaningful social interactions, allowing older adults to build new friendships, reconnect with their communities, and combat feelings of loneliness. In both cases, volunteering contributes to personal satisfaction and social responsibility. For young people, it provides a path to personal and professional growth, and for older people, it provides ongoing engagement, purpose and connection.

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SAVANORIŠKOS VEIKLOS ESMĖ, NAUDA IR MOTYVAI: TEORINĖ APŽVALGA

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Santrauka

Savanoriška veikla yra galinga priemonė, įvairiais būdais skatinanti visuomenės gerovę. Savanorystę galime apibrėžti kaip veiklą, kai asmuo savo noru, negaudamas finansinės naudos, teikia pagalbą ar prisideda prie visuomenės gerovės, organizacijų ar bendruomenių veiklos. Savanorystė gali būti darbas socialinėse, aplinkosaugos, švietimo, kultūros, sporto ar kitose srityse. Tyrėjai teigiamai vertina vyriausybės dėmesį savanoriškos veiklos skatinimui ir palengvinimui, tačiau taip pat pastebi sunkumus, kylančius perkeliant dokumentus į praktiką. Taip pat tyrėjų darbuose pateikiama nevienoda informacija apie savanorystės mastą. Paplauskienė (2021), aptardama įvairius statistinius Lietuvos duomenis, nurodo nevienodą Lietuvos gyventojų įsitraukimo į savanorišką veiklą lygį: 2011 m. - 20 procentų, 2018 m. - 11 procentų, 2019 m. - 15 procentų. Paplauskienė (2021) pabrėžia, kad nevienodos savanoriškos veiklos galimybės didžiuosiuose ir mažuosiuose miestuose, ir netgi pabrėžia, kad tokios statistinės informacijos trūksta. Papa, Vutuli, Principi, Scherer (2018) mini, kad savanoriškos veiklos organizacijoms dažnai sunku įdarbinti socialinę atskirtį patiriančius asmenis ir asmenis su negalia. Kadangi ne pelno siekiančių organizacijų skaičius nuolat auga, savanoriai yra ribotas išteklius, dėl kurio konkuruoja ne pelno siekiančios organizacijos (Jedicke, Olk, Zogaj, Tschulin, Lindenmeier, 2024). Ackermann, Manatschal (2018) nurodo mažėjantį įsitraukimo į tradicinę savanorišką veiklą ne internetu lygį, ypač tarp jaunų žmonių, ir kaip mokslininkai teigia, kad „nevienodas pilietinis dalyvavimas kelia vis didesnį visuomenės susirūpinimą“.

Pagrindinis šio straipsnio tikslas – išanalizuoti savanorystės esmę, naudą ir motyvatorius.

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjami probleminiai klausimai: kokie elementai sudaro savanorystės apibrėžimą ir kokie motyvatoriai skatina žmones savanoriauti? Šie atsakymai sudarys pagrindą tolesniems empiriniams savanoriškos veiklos tyrimams.

Tyrimo objektas – savanorystės esmė ir motyvatoriai.

Tyrimo uždaviniai:

1. Nustatyti savanorystę sudarančius elementus.
2. Atskleisti savanorystės naudą ir motyvatorių įvairovę.

Tyrimo metodai: dokumentų ir mokslinės literatūros analizė.

Savanorystė apibūdinama kaip veikla, kai asmuo savanoriškai, negaudamas finansinės naudos, teikia pagalbą ar prisideda prie visuomenės gerovės, organizacijų ar bendruomenių veiklos socialinėje, aplinkosaugos, švietimo, kultūros, sporto ar kitose srityse. Išanalizavus teisinio reglamentavimo aktuose ir mokslinėje literatūroje pateiktus savanoriškos veiklos apibrėžimus paaiškėjo, kad apibūdinami savanorišką veiklą autoriai dažniausiai vartoja sąvokas veikla, visuomenė, laikas, savanoris, socialinis, nemokamas, asmuo, visuomenė, nauda, savanoris, draugas, darbas, amžius ir pan. Literatūros analizė atskleidė pagrindinius savanoriškos veiklos bruožus: ji yra nemokama ir neprivaloma; ji yra organizuota ir neformali; ji yra išteklių reikalaujanti veikla (savanoriška veikla yra susijusi su žmogiškaisiais ištekliais ir individualiais sociodemografiniais veiksniais, kurie susiję su laiku, pinigais ir įgūdžiais); ji teikia naudą ir priklauso nuo motyvatorių veiksmingumo.

2. Nauda ir motyvai labai dažnai yra susipynę ir abu jie gali motyvuoti tą patį asmenį užsiimti vienkartinę ar nuolatinę savanorišką veiklą. Savanoriška veikla skatina bendradarbiavimą, bendrą atsakomybę ir kolektyvinius veiksmus. Ji skatina žmones bendrauti su įvairiomis grupėmis, ugdo toleranciją, empatiją ir socialinę įtrauktį. Savanoriai dažnai atlieka svarbų vaidmenį reaguojant į ekstremalias situacijas, teikiant sveikatos priežiūrą, švietimą ir bendruomenių vystymąsi, todėl jie yra labai svarbūs stiprinant visuomenės atsparumą krizių ar sunkumų metu. Be to, savanoriška veikla gerina asmeninę gerovę, nes teikia daug asmeninės naudos. Ji suteikia tikslo jausmą, emocijų pasitenkinimą ir protinį stimuliaciją, o visa tai prisideda prie geresnės bendros sveikatos ir laimės. Savanoriška veikla taip pat gali pagerinti fizinę sveikatą aktyviai dalyvaujant bendruomenės veikloje ir sumažinti socialinės izoliacijos riziką, nes skatina ryšius su kitais žmonėmis. Daugeliui žmonių galimybė daryti teigiamą įtaką savo aplinkai suteikia didesnę pasitenkinimą gyvenimu ir asmeninį pasitenkinimą. Savanoriška veikla gali teikti didelį pasitenkinimą įvairiais gyvenimo etapais, tačiau motyvacija savanoriauti dažnai skiriasi tarp jaunesnių ir vyresnių suaugusiųjų. Daugeliui jaunų žmonių savanorystė padeda ieškoti įvairių karjeros galimybių, ugdyti svarbius įgūdžius ir pagerinti savo gyvenimo aprašymą. Savanoriška veikla suteikia jiems galimybę dirbti įvairioje aplinkoje, spręsti realias problemas ir prisiimti atsakomybę, su kuria kitu atveju jie negalėtų susidurti tradicinio mokymosi ar ankstyvojo darbo metu. Ji padeda jiems ugdyti svarbiausius minkštuosius įgūdžius, pavyzdžiui, bendravimo, komandinio darbo, problemų sprendimo ir vadovavimo. Be profesinio tobulėjimo, savanoriška veikla ugdo įgalinimo jausmą, nes jauni žmonės supranta, kad gali aktyviai prisidėti prie teigiamų pokyčių, nesvarbu, ar tai būtų socialinio teisingumo reikalai, ar aplinkos apsauga, ar bendruomenės vystymasis. Tokia patirtis yra formuojanti, padedanti jiems įgyti pasitikėjimo savimi, praplėsti savo perspektyvas ir formuoti vertybes bei tapatybę sparčiai besikeičiančiame pasaulyje. Vyresnio amžiaus žmonėms savanorystė suteikia unikalių galimybių, kurios neapsiriboja vien tik atsidavimu bendruomenei - savanorystė tampa labai prasminga ir prasminga jų gyvenimo dalimi. Savanoriaudami vyresnio amžiaus suaugusieji gali ir toliau prasmingai prisidėti prie savo gausių žinių ir patirties, dažnai konsultuoti jaunesnes kartas arba panaudoti savo įgūdžius remdami jiems artimus tikslus. Savanoriška veikla taip pat gerina savijautą, nes skatina fizinį ir protinį aktyvumą, mažina stresą ir suteikia pasitenkinimo jausmą. Be to, savanorystė atveria duris prasmingiems socialiniams ryšiams, todėl vyresnio amžiaus žmonės gali užmegzti naujas draugystes, atkurti ryšius su savo bendruomenėmis ir kovoti su vienišumo jausmu. Abiem atvejais savanoriška veikla prisideda prie asmeninio pasitenkinimo ir socialinės atsakomybės. Jauniems žmonėms savanorystė yra asmeninio ir profesinio tobulėjimo kelias, o vyresnio amžiaus žmonėms - nuolatinis įsitraukimas, tikslas ir ryšys.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: savanoriškos veiklos esmė, savanoriškos veiklos nauda, savanoriškos veiklos motyvatoriai.