

MOTIVATION OF VOLUNTEERS IN NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: PERCEPTIONS AND TRENDS

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Abstract

This paper analyzes motivation of volunteers within a nongovernmental organization. The first part of the paper summarizes the studies related to motivation in general and motivation of volunteers in particular. The second part of the paper consists in a study on the importance of motivating volunteers by nongovernmental organizations. In this regard, the article uses the method of the survey questionnaire administered among volunteers of a nongovernmental organization. Finally, the author concludes that volunteer motivation is often a difficult but necessary process, and NGOs should constantly motivate volunteers

Keywords: motivation, professional development, personal development

1. INTRODUCTION

The nonprofit sector includes many different forms of work, namely voluntary and paid work, as well as typical or atypical work. These forms depend to a large extent on certain factors such as type of economy (developed, in transition or under development), type of industry or field (health or social services, culture, education, international humanitarian assistance etc.), and geographical location (urban, suburban, and rural). Moreover, these forms depend greatly on the size of the organization or its age. More specifically, at the beginning of its establishment a nongovernmental organization could rely solely on voluntary work, and after its expansion also on paid positions (Anheier, 2014, p. 390).

According to Păceșilă (2016, p. 57), the human factor helps nongovernmental organizations to achieve their objectives, mission and goals, by using its abilities and energy. In addition, compared to human resources working in companies or in public sector's organizations, people involving in achieving the goals of nongovernmental entities are more enthusiastic and innovative.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of motivation appeared in literature in the 1930s, having a real success so far. The term is used in several areas relating more or less to human behaviour, such as politics, economics, art, religion, pedagogy, or morals (Druta, 1999, p. 7).

Motivation describes those instinctual or rational phenomena through which people could fulfil certain desires, basic needs specific to human behaviour. Effective management of human resources requires a very good knowledge of their motivation mechanism. Only by knowing what determines a person to perform certain tasks and to contribute to achieving the organization's objectives it is possible to identify a set of effective human resource management methods and techniques (Horga and Nancu, 2017).

Moreover, Păceșilă (2014) considers that motivation is an umbrella concept involving psychological forces that provides power for action. These psychological forces come both from inside the human being as well as outside, generating behaviours of certain duration but also with certain intensity.

The concept of motivation could have several meanings. The employees' motivation can be often associated with the financial incentives; while for other professional categories motivation can mainly refer to social factors. Some organizations are more focused on providing financial incentives, thus attracting a certain type of people whose primary motivational factors are money, while others seek to motivate people through social aspects (Reinklou and Rosen, 2013).

Motivating volunteers is aimed at engaging them in achieving the greatest possible performance (Milette and Gagne, 2008). Their motivation reaches a high level when they know very well the organization's mission, vision, and objectives as well as its guiding principles (Străinescu and Ardelean, 2007).

Without volunteers, most nonprofit organizations would cease to exist or would have difficulties in fulfilling their mission and serving society. According to Heyman (2011), there are 6 key elements that make people volunteer:

- To help other people: most volunteers really want to be helpful. They want to make a contribution to a field that they really care about;
- To get involved in their community: providing help gives volunteers the opportunity to be more connected with the community they live in;
- To contribute to a particular cause: often volunteering supports a cause of personal importance to the volunteer, such as raising money for cancer treatment;
- To develop new skills and achieve new experiences: volunteering can be considered a break from crowded days and an opportunity to take part in change, especially for the very busy people;
- To use their skills in productive ways.

According to Pro Vobis (2003), the motivation of individuals to engage in volunteering activities is based on various reasons: socialization, problem solving, efficient use of time, desire to help, to acquire knowledge, to support a social cause, to belong to a group, to use and improve the skills etc. While volunteers have different needs and interests, the benefits from volunteering (Bromnick et al., 2012) vary depending on the organization and activities they are involved in. Moreover, young people are volunteers for reasons and benefits different from the elderly ones (Willigen, 2000; Cnaan et al, 2010). The former want to learn new things and acquire new skills or increase their chances of entering the labour market. The latter are interested in improving their life quality as well as in using the skills and knowledge acquired during their careers in social activities (Pavelek, 2012; Pavelek, 2013).

Taking into account the nature of volunteering activities (Păceșilă, 2017; Profiroiu and Păceșilă, 2017), the organizations should constantly focus on volunteers' motivation and loyalty (Wisner et al., 2005) in order to minimize their fluctuation. Therefore, the leadership of the nongovernmental organizations should understand and help them develop personally as well as professionally. Moreover, the volunteers' coordinators should know in detail the reasons volunteers engage in unpaid activities within the organizations (Păceșilă, 2015).

In a study conducted by Pro Vobis in 2003 some possible motivations of involving in volunteering activities have been summarized:

- The sense of belonging to the group
- Socializing and binding new friends
- Learning new things
- Helping the needy
- Feeling useful
- Learning to take responsibility
- Working in teams
- Getting working experience which facilitate the entry in the labour market
- Understanding the mechanism of the community, its needs and its problems
- Preventing or even solving a community problem
- Supporting a cause

- Identifying and developing skills and knowledge
- Contributing to the community development.

According to Little (1999) (cited in Beudean and Irimieș, 2013) volunteers' motivation and loyalty requires fulfilling a series of interrelated conditions:

- Setting realistic and well-defined deadlines for completing tasks
- Assigning work tasks in correlation with the volunteer's interests
- Setting written instructions and rules
- Providing the opportunity of a flexible program for carrying out the tasks
- Ensuring all the materials necessary to perform the tasks
- Creating a friendly and enjoyable work environment
- Supervising the fulfilment of the tasks
- Providing feedback on the work and results at the end of each activity and task
- Expressing the appreciation and recognition of the volunteer's efforts correlated with the results obtained

According to some authors in the field (Voicu and Voicu, 2003; Mihai, 2014), social assistance experts have developed two main approaches regarding volunteering. The first is based on investigating the resources of volunteers. The second focuses on their beliefs and values underlying the desire to volunteer.

Mihai's article (2014) focuses on the second approach about volunteering highlighting that researches in the area have revealed a wide range of personal and social motivations to volunteer. Furthermore, according to an UK study conducted in 2008, satisfying individual subjective needs represents one of those motivations. Moreover, the young persons obtain qualifications and knowledge through volunteering activities because it helps them develop communication and teamwork skills. The same study also refers to employers' vision regarding the involvement in volunteering. Thus, 87% of the respondents consider that volunteering could have a positive impact on career development for people aged between 16 and 25 (Ryall, 2008).

Analyzing volunteers' motivation, Clary (1998) identified six motivational functions:

1. Expressing humanist and altruistic concerns for the others
2. Acquiring new experiences allowing the accumulation of new information and the chance to put the skills into practice
3. Involving in activities viewed positively by important individuals of the community
4. Getting potential benefits for the career
5. Reducing the feeling of blame because the individual's life is blessed than of others
6. Developing oneself is beneficial

The research conducted by Mihai (2014) aimed at identifying the personal and interpersonal values prevailing among the Romanian volunteers. The observations over a 7-year period in a child care complex in Ploiești have shown that the main volunteers' motivation is related to career opportunities. Volunteers hope they will acquire and develop new skills for a future job or even a job in the field or institution they volunteer. The participants in this study have mentioned the following reasons for becoming volunteers:

- Personal and professional development
- Desire to help others

- Desire to do something new
- Need for information
- Hope to develop skills for a future job

As regards the intrinsically motivated behavior, it refers to effective engagement and pleasure to perform certain activities (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Finkelstein, 2009). On the other hand, the extrinsic motivation involves performing some activities in order to obtain an immediate result (Deci et al., 1999). Both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic one play an essential role in volunteering. Knowing motivational guidelines of volunteers is beneficial in identifying the potential rewards (Widjaja, 2010).

According to Deci (1972), the external rewards such as prizes and money tend to decrease intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, thanksgiving, encouragement and verbal support increase this motivation. At the opposite pole, the extrinsic oriented individuals are not affected by the intrinsic rewards, such as verbal encouragement. Their extrinsic motivating factor consists in achieving the targets such as career advancement or closer social relationships. As for volunteers, they prefer to be praised when they deserve it, instead of being financially rewarded when a task is completed (Widjaja, 2010).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was intended to analyze the volunteers' motivation within an association operating in Bucharest, Romania. In this regard a survey was conducted in May and June 2017 by using a questionnaire as research instrument. The questionnaire was applied via email to the volunteers of the association. The sample consisted of a group of 107 volunteers of this association representing 35.66% of the cohort of 300 volunteers. The volunteers participating in the study were assured of confidentiality.

The questionnaire contains 12 closed questions, having only one required answer. The reason for submitting it by email was the desire of not influencing the respondents when completing it (situation especially encountered in the face-to-face application).

4. ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEERS' MOTIVATION

The association where the respondents volunteered is a nongovernmental organization carrying out projects in the field of sustainable development. The organization was set up in 2006 in Romania as an independent, nongovernmental entity, created to boost sustainable development both at individual as well as organizational and societal level. The Association Viitor Plus operates in accordance with the Ordinance no. 26 of 2000 on Associations and Foundations.

The mission of the association is to develop and implement integrated environmental projects with a long-term positive impact on market and expertise development for sustainable production and consumption as well as to develop educational experiences encouraging responsible environmental behaviors.

The values of the Association are the following (ViitorPlus, 2014):

- *Honesty, morality*: The Association is responsible for the tasks assumed, communicating frequently their achievement.
- *Transparency*: The Association encourages the transparency of the internal operations, of the proposed goals as well as their fulfillment.
- *Example to others*: each occupation, each project of the organization should be an example of practical support of the sustainable development concept
- *Consultation with the stakeholders*: the solutions for the problems identified are developed by interacting with the stakeholders.

- *Personalized, pragmatic and long-term treatment:* every person, target group is served by taking into account its unique character, its peculiarities and needs as well as its long-term incidence and prestige. The ideas should be practical.
- *Applicability:* the activities and projects are widely deployed (either geographically or in terms of volume or capacity); programs could be held in several places simultaneously;
- *Promotion of a a weighted and enjoyable life:* the Association promotes a healthy and weighted lifestyle based on responsibility towards our own person, people around us and all the things that surround us.

The first four figures below present the percent distribution of respondents by background characteristics, including gender, age, occupation and educational level. They also provide a socio-economic profile of the survey sample.

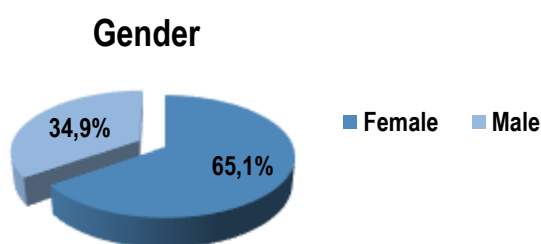


FIGURE 1. RESPONDENTS' GENDER

As noted in figure 1, 34.9% of the respondents are male, while 65.1% are female. The gender of the respondents could have a great influence on the overall outcomes because the females perceptions is different from the males one.

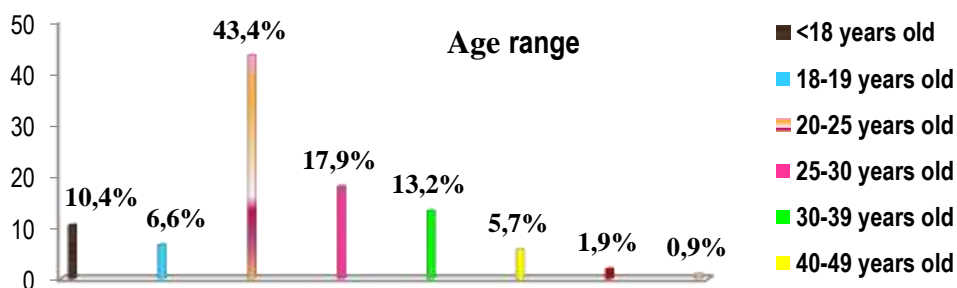


FIGURE 2. RESPONDENTS' AGE RANGE

Most of those who volunteer (43.4%) within the association are aged 20-25, 17.9% between 25-30, 13.2% between 30-39, 10.4% under 18 years old, 6.6% between 18-19, 5.7% between 40-49, 1.9% between between 50-60, 0.9% over 60 years old.

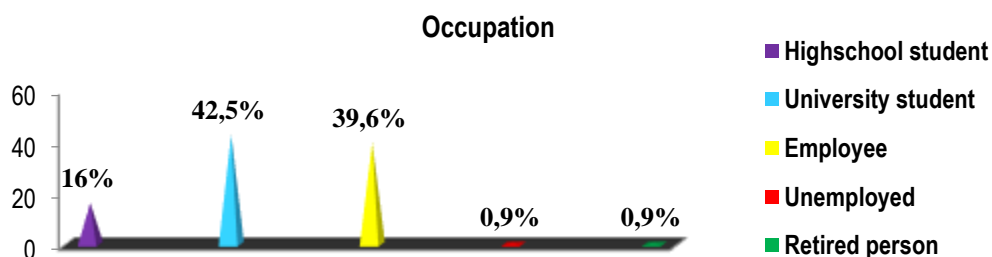


FIGURE 3. RESPONDENTS' OCCUPATION

Taking into account that most volunteers are young, aged 20-25, it was expected that a significant proportion of them (42.5%) should be students and only 39.6% should be employed.

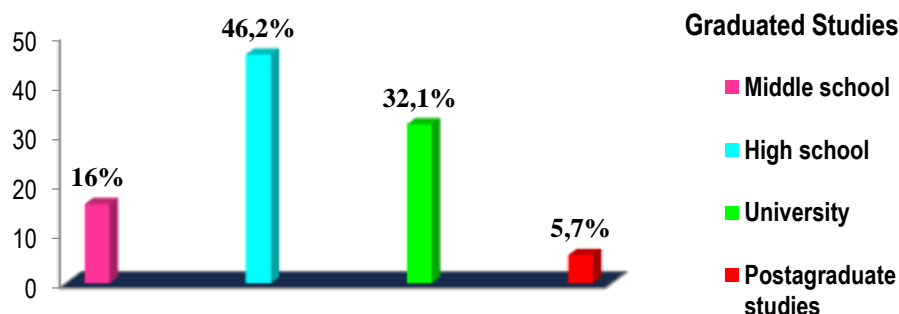


FIGURE 4. RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The education level of volunteers (figure 4) is high. Overall, 37% of the respondents have a bachelor diploma or a postgraduate diploma. Studies (Wilson & Musick, 1997; Voicu & Voicu, 2009) show that people with more years of schooling and employment are generally more open to volunteering. The trend in researches is confirmed by the analyzed sample, with a large majority of active volunteers being either students or graduates. Some authors (Sana, 2016) explain this phenomenon by promoting the values associated with volunteering in universities. Moreover, encouraging students to get involved in internships as well as recognizing volunteering as a professional experience bring a real contribution to both volunteers and nonprofit organizations, stimulating participation.

The fifth question (figure 5) examines the sources from which volunteers learned about the association where they volunteered. The results show that social networks represent the most important way to promote the association because 29% of respondents selected this option. The Internet and friends of current volunteers also play an important role in promoting the association's activities, as over 45% of respondents have chosen the two options.

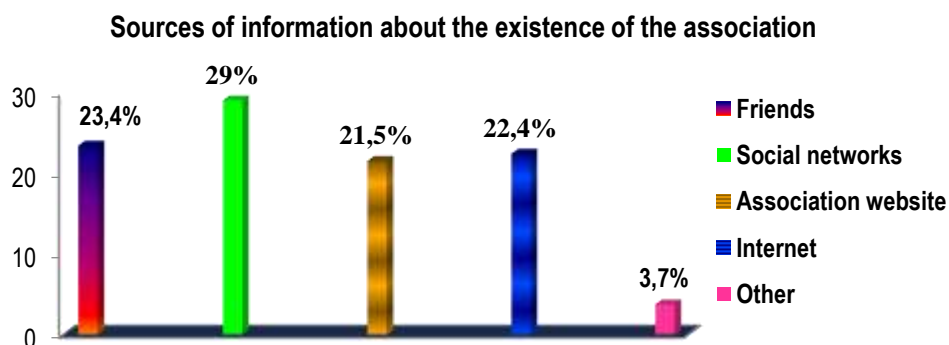


FIGURE 5. RESPONDENTS' SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION

Figure 6 shows that most of the volunteers (36.4%) spend time in the association because they want to develop both professionally and personally. Through the projects carried out, the association meets their development needs, contributing to the improvement of their knowledge and skills. As regards the other respondents, the desire to meet new people (32.7%) and to have a contribution to the causes that the association supports (30.8%) is considered important.

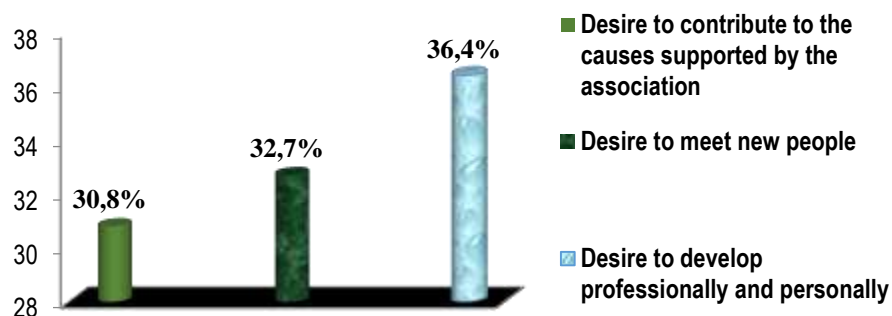


FIGURE 6. REASONS FOR VOLUNTEERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE ASSOCIATION

From the respondents' answers, figure 6 shows that 54.2% are involved only in some projects within the association while 24.3% have been volunteering for several months. Only 21.5% of respondents have been frequently and for a long time involved in the organization's activities. In general, the higher the volunteer's seniority in the organization is, the greater his experience is and implicitly knows better the organization and its projects. Generally, the older the volunteer is, the greater the experience and the better knowing the organization and the projects.

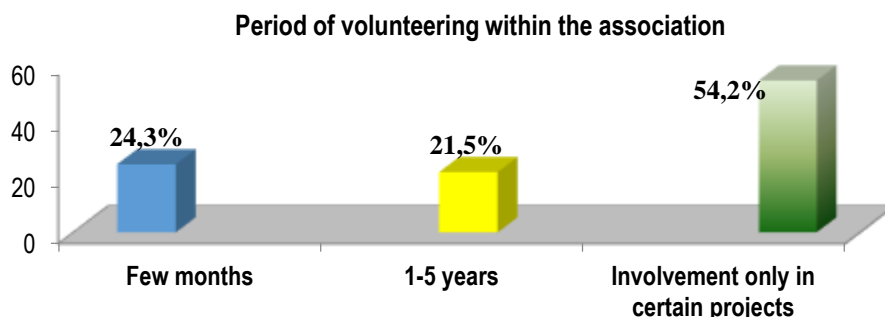


FIGURE 7. PERIOD OF VOLUNTEERING WITHIN THE ASSOCIATION

Figure 8 shows that over 99% of respondents consider they are accepted into the team of the organization. The relationship with the association members is one of the most important motivating factors, because together they form a team and a family and they offer mutual help to fulfill common goals and objectives. Moreover, without members' and employees' help, the activity of volunteers in the association would not be possible.

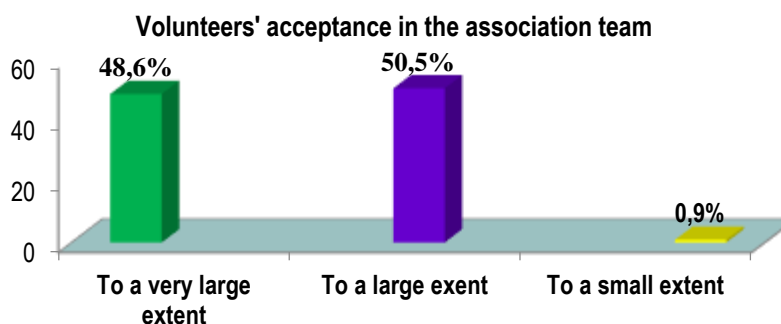


FIGURE 8. VOLUNTEERS' ACCEPTANCE IN THE ASSOCIATION TEAM

Figure 9 highlights the most important motivational factors that respondents were asked to assess with the following items: 1-"Unmotivating"; 2-"Low motivation"; 3-"Satisfactory motivation"; 4-"Moderate motivation"; 5-"Strong motivation".

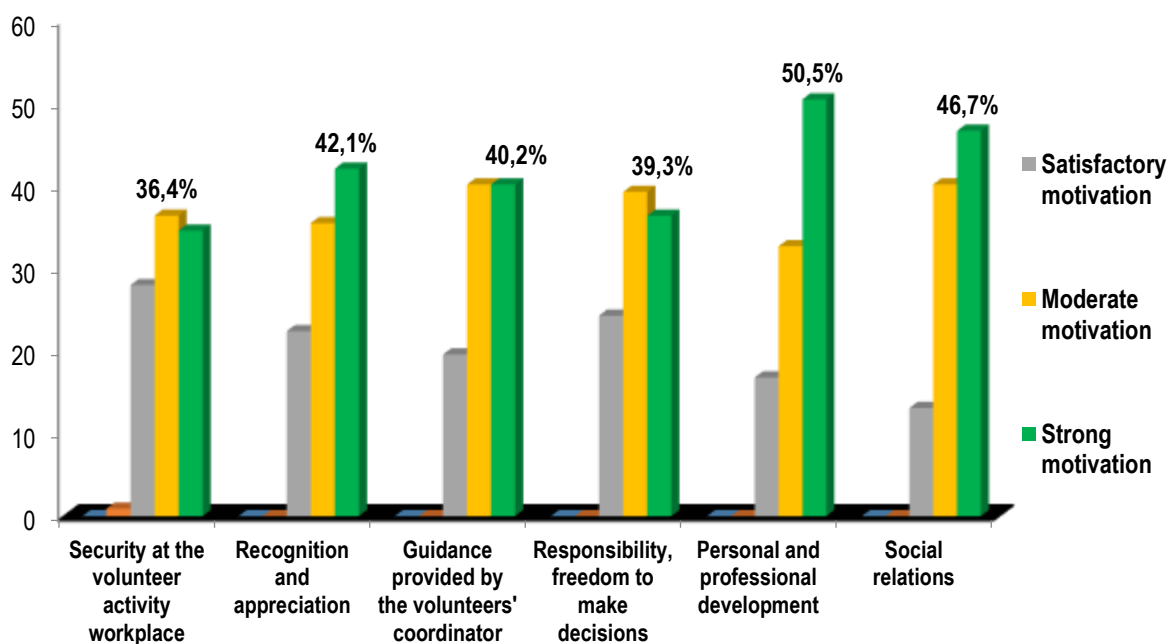


FIGURE 9. MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF VOLUNTEERS

Systematization of the data in Figure 9 indicates that the strong motivation of volunteers consists in personal and professional development (50.5%) closely followed by social relations (46.7%). However, the other statements were also successful among respondents because the response rate was high.

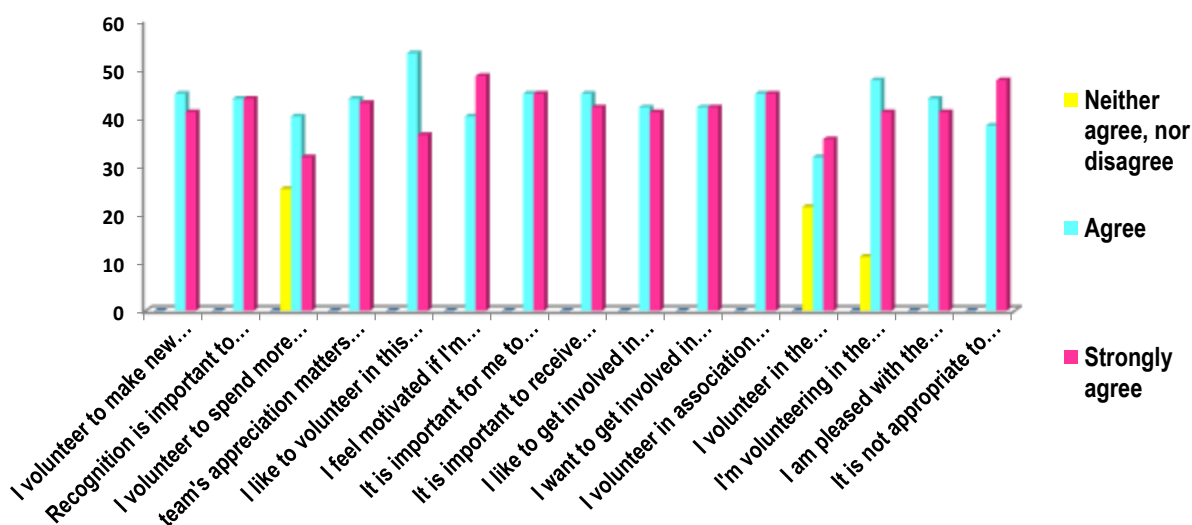


FIGURE 10. STATEMENTS REGARDING VOLUNTEERS' MOTIVATION

As figure 10 shows, the respondents were asked to assess 15 statements regarding their choices to volunteer within this association. For each statement, they selected one of the following options: 1-"Strongly disagree"; 2-"Disagree"; 3-"Neither agree, nor disagree"; 4-"Agree" și 5-"Strongly agree". With few exceptions, the options "agree" and "strongly disagree" were preferred by the respondents for all statements.

Thus, most of the respondents (41.1% - strongly agree and 44.9% - agree) said they volunteered to make new friends sharing the same passions and areas of interest. The same situation is valid for the statement regarding the recognition of volunteers work within the association (43.9% - strongly agree and the same percentage 43.9% - agree). As regards the statement “I volunteer to spend more time with my friends who are also volunteers in this association”, 72% selected agree and strongly agree, while 25.2% adopted a neutral position.

Moreover, a large number of volunteers (90%) consider that the organization does not make a difference between them and employees. Therefore they feel they are treated the same way when they are involved in the elaboration and implementation of different projects. Furthermore, 88.6% of the respondents agree and strongly agree they that feel motivated when they are involved in planning some of the association's activities. For 89.8% of respondents it is important to know well the mission and vision of the association as well as its fields of activity while 87% specify that it is important to receive feedback from the volunteers' coordinator about the tasks they have fulfilled. Similar percentages have been also recorded for the statement “I volunteer in association because I feel like I'm part of a team” (88.8%) as well as for “I am pleased with the organization of the association's activities and do not feel the need for change” (85%).

Appreciating the communication with the volunteers coordinator within the asociation

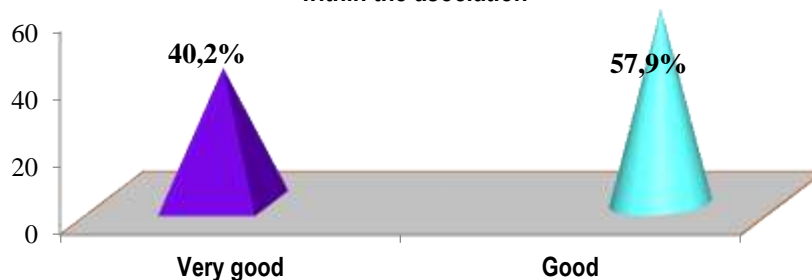


FIGURE 11. COMMUNICATION WITH THE VOLUNTEERS' COMMUNICATION

Regarding the communication with the volunteers' coordinator (figure 11), all volunteers mention they have good and very good communication with that person. Generally, people feel more motivated when they receive clear tasks, indications and responsibilities, because it is much easier to fulfil them.

Skills recognition by the association as well as the opportunity for personal and professional development

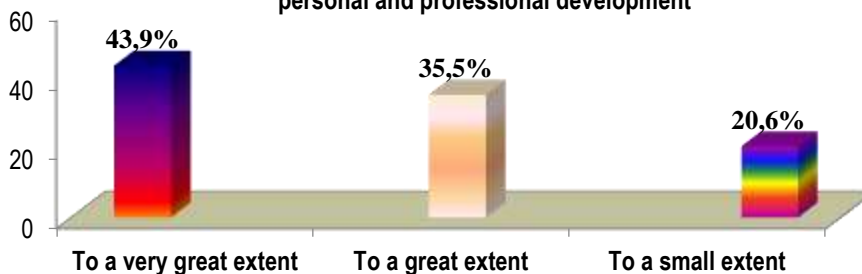


FIGURE 12. SKILLS RECOGNITION AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In figure 12, over 79% of the volunteers argue that volunteering activities help them greatly to improve their knowledge, qualifications and skills as well as to develop both personally and professionally.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Volunteers often play a very important role in the activities and services provided by non-governmental organizations. However, their integration into the organization is a rather difficult stage. Therefore, the NGO management team should identify their motivations and expectations towards the organization.

Organizations should continuously try to motivate volunteers. Their motivation is often a difficult but necessary process that the volunteer coordinator or manager of the organization should do. Keeping volunteers motivated can often be a challenge, but there are simple things that anyone in the organization can do to increase volunteers' motivation.

As is pointed out above, the association where the respondents of this research volunteered pays special attention to volunteers' motivation. Moreover, they feel like they are part of a team because they are treated in the same way as the employees. Volunteers have the opportunity to participate in the planning of important events within the association, communicate very well with their coordinator, know the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the association and have professional and personal development perspectives.

People will always get better results when their motivation increases. To be effective, the motivation process should be continuous and cumulative. Managers should turn motivation into a habit, and apply it differently to each employee. Thus, the motivation should be a well-perceived, well thought-out tool while the motivation process should be creative and balanced.

As regards the limits of the research, it could be mentioned the small number of respondents because only 107 volunteers out of 300 provided answers to the questionnaire. Therefore, the research results may not be relevant if we take into account the total number of the association's volunteers because in general, the small sample size could limit the results interpretation in a larger context. Furthermore, the research is not relevant to all nongovernmental organizations from Bucharest or Romania, but only to the association under study. However, the research may be of interest to those who want to volunteer in nongovernmental organizations.

The questionnaire contains only closed questions which did not allow volunteers to be flexible in providing answers because they had to choose from the proposed answers. Moreover, some of the volunteers could have approached the questions superficially or could have not provided honest answers, which raises question marks on the relevance of the research. Personal motivational energy is entirely subjective and might differ from individual to individual; therefore the reason for joining a nongovernmental organization could not be generalized.

However, although volunteers' motivation is a difficult subject, rather problematic when it comes to synthesize and quantify it, there are studies trying to outline a valid answer. The present paper follows this trend, striving to provide answers to a topic not very often addressed in literature.

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