

## THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS REGARDING VOLUNTEERS' MOTIVATION

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### ABSTRACT

*This article provides information regarding volunteers' motivation within a foundation from Bucharest, Romania. The article starts with a literature review on volunteers' motivation followed by the methodology research section covering the methods used and finally by the section dedicated to results and discussions. The research is based on a survey of a representative sample of 30 respondents involved in volunteering activities. Results revealed that involvement in volunteering activities has beneficial effects on the volunteer and on his/her future, both from a professional and personal perspective.*

**KEYWORDS:** *motivation of volunteers, volunteers' appreciation, skills' development.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The term "nongovernmental organization" was first used in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter adopted in 1945 (Lewis, 2009). They are private legal entities independent of public authorities and do not seek access to the political apparatus or to profit (Păceșilă, 2014).

According to Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier (1996), nongovernmental organizations meet the following criteria:

- They are institutionalized entities: they are registered, have a well-defined legal status and an organizational structure.
- They comply with the nonprofit distribution criteria: they can generate revenue from their activities but the income cannot be distributed to members and it is used to meet the organization's goals.
- From a legal perspective they are private organizations: they are different from public institutions as well as from private companies.
- They are self-governed: they are independent as regards the decisions about their activities or relations with other institutions, and the management is not dominated by the public authorities.
- They are based on voluntary activities in the management process or in their actions (which does not exclude the possibility of hiring personnel); they are set up voluntarily and are not imposed by anybody.
- They do not pursue religious objectives or promote particular religious views as the church does, but they may be aimed at religious education.
- They do not engage in political competition, in exercising political power.

According to the authors mentioned above, the first five criteria are mandatory regardless of country while the last two are formulated as recommendations.

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## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sillamy (2009) states that motivation represents a set of factors determining the individuals' behavior. These factors are physiological, unconscious, conscious, social as well as affective and they are in a continuous interaction. In fact, motivation is the first chronological element of behavior and actions. It is the impetus which sets the body in motion.

Personal motivational energy is entirely subjective and may differ from individual to individual. Therefore, the reason for joining a nongovernmental organization cannot be generalized. Although motivation is a difficult topic to synthesize and quantify, there are a lot of studies attempting to outline a generally valid answer.

Given the nature of the unpaid work provided by volunteers (Păceșilă, 2017; Profiroiu and Păceșilă, 2017), it is necessary that nongovernmental organizations continually focus on their motivation and loyalty (MacLean and Hamm, 2007) in order to minimize volunteers' fluctuation. Moreover, the recruitment and loyalty of volunteers could be more difficult because it cannot be rewarded by remuneration which is the main motivating factor when people work (Păceșilă et al., 2017). The management of the organization should know better their volunteers, find out their reasons for choosing to work as a volunteer in order to harness their potential and keep them interested and active for as long as possible (Akintola, 2011).

Furthermore, in Wilson's opinion (2007) the reasons why people decide to get involved in volunteering are highly diversified:

- Offering help to others;
- Achieving personal goals;
- Receiving encouragement and support from other people;
- Meeting needs;
- Integrating into social groups that correspond to personal values.

Moreover, the organization should understand that the volunteers are not only interested in lending a helping hand (Păceșilă, 2015; Păceșilă, 2016). Therefore, this should involve the volunteers in activities that are in line with their expectations and motivations (Bang and Ross, n.d.; Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley, 2001; Pauline, 2011). That is why, it is more in the interest of the organization to create positions that will arouse the desire to get involved (Kiangura and Nyambegera, 2012), than of the volunteers to carry out a non-motivating activity.

Organizations providing attractive and interesting tasks will have the least difficulty in bringing and maintaining volunteers (Hashim, 2003). According to different authors in the field (Pro Vobis, 2003; Bennett and Barkensjo, 2005; Garner and Garner, 2010), the creation of motivating activities for volunteers should meet the following criteria:

- The need to consult the employed personnel. The employees will support the volunteers only if they understand their activity is advantageous for the organization.
- The results orientation. It is a strategy to motivate the volunteers, offering them the possibility of assuming concrete results, of participating in the tasks' elaboration, of assuming the responsibility for the results.
- According to Abraham (2013), in order to keep volunteers within NGOs, a loyalty program should include:
  - Periodic meetings about the volunteers' involvement in the organization's activities. This could also be an opportunity to take the initiative and come up with new ideas;
  - Possibility to choose the activities in which volunteers want to be involved, taking into account their skills, experience and free time;
  - Volunteers' involvement not only in performing the activities, but also in the phase of planning and organizing events;
  - Assignment of specific tasks within the projects, in order to motivate volunteers and to show that the organization trusts them;

- Organizing special events dedicated to volunteers;
- Creating the sense of belonging to a group and a pleasant, friendly, atmosphere based on team spirit, trust and mutual respect;
- Creating an atmosphere of open communication with the Volunteers' Coordinator (if applicable);
- Providing feedback to volunteers.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Taking into account the studies carried out over time in the field of social sciences, a variety of research methods and techniques have been identified. In social sciences, the method represents a system of principles and rules in order to transform and knowledge an objective reality (Chelcea, 2001).

Scientific research is a controlled, empirical and systematic investigation regarding the assumptions made about certain aspects. This is also an effort of researchers to find answers to some specific questions and to gain new knowledge (Bîrsan, n.d.)

According to the specialists, there are two representative styles of research, namely the quantitative and qualitative one. Quantitative research is based on statistical analysis and numerical measurement. This type of research determines the intensity, probability and frequency as regards the manifestation of the event under study (Şandor, 2011).

On the other hand, qualitative research allows the in-depth understanding of the causes of an event. The information collected cannot be analyzed statistically, but some concepts are later interpreted by the researcher using several variables (Bîrsan, n.d.).

The most common research methods used in the social sciences are the survey or questionnaire (quantitative method) and the interview (qualitative method). The surveys are considered very suitable methods for measuring orientations, opinions and attitudes of a large population. The questionnaires have three distinct methods of application: the questionnaires applied by the operators, the telephone questionnaires and the self-administered questionnaires (Babbie, 2010).

This research aims to identify the volunteers' motivations within Calea Victoriei Foundation. The results obtained could be used by the foundation to develop new strategies to motivate volunteers.

In order to define the population of this research, nonprobability sampling based on a predefined purpose was used. The predefined purpose consists in finding out the volunteers' motivations. Therefore, the research sample is represented by the occasional and constant volunteers of the foundation mentioned above.

The way of collecting information is the self-administered questionnaire, accessed online by respondents through the platform [isondaje.ro](http://isondaje.ro). The use of the online platform for conducting the research was aimed at reducing the time required to the respondents for completing the questionnaire as well as at increasing the possibility of accumulating many answers. The use of the self-administered questionnaire aimed to eliminate the influence of the operator on the answers, the respondents being more relaxed when providing the answers.

The questionnaire contains 18 questions, mainly closed. The respondents also had the opportunity to provide open answers if they did not agree with the default variants.

The hypotheses of this research are the following:

- The more volunteers become involved in the foundation's activities, the more they become attached to its cause.
- If young people are influenced by the circumstances, then they decide to volunteer.
- If young people volunteer, then they develop personally.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research was carried out in May and June 2018 on a sample of 30 respondents, volunteers within the Calea Victoriei Foundation. The identity of the respondents was kept confidential, because there were no questions about their name or location, but only about their age, gender and occupation, used exclusively for statistical purposes.

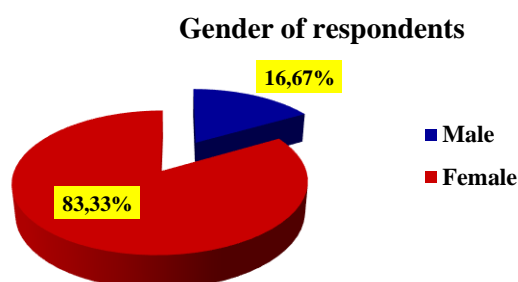
The foundation where the respondents volunteered is an independent cultural non-governmental institution. It organizes interactive events and courses in humanistic and cultural fields. The Foundation operates in accordance with the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 on associations and foundations and it is registered in the Register of Associations and Foundations.

The mission assumed by the founders and members consists in inspiring children, young people and adults through the arts and humanities. This mission is supported by the courses, workshops and events organized within the foundation. The values of the foundation consist in supporting and promoting the culture, especially in Bucharest, as well as in training and educating the youth (Fundatia Calea Victoriei, n.d.).

The Foundation has approximately 40 volunteers per year. Some of them are involved occasionally in the activities at the request of the foundation, while others may be involved for longer periods. That is why their number fluctuates constantly.

The first questions provide information about the profile of the 30 respondents. Their average age is 21.7 years, the youngest respondent being 18 years old, while the oldest is 27 years old.

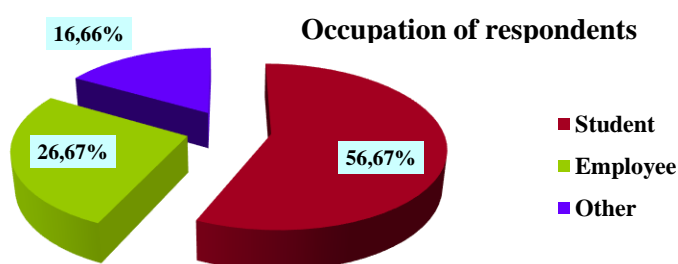
As figure 1 shows, 16.67% of the respondents are men while the rest of 83.33% are women.



**Figure 1. Gender of respondents**

*Source: Author 2020*

As figure 2 shows, education level of the respondents is high because at least 56.67% of them attend university courses. Moreover, many of those who checked the box "Other" mentioned as additional information both student and employee.

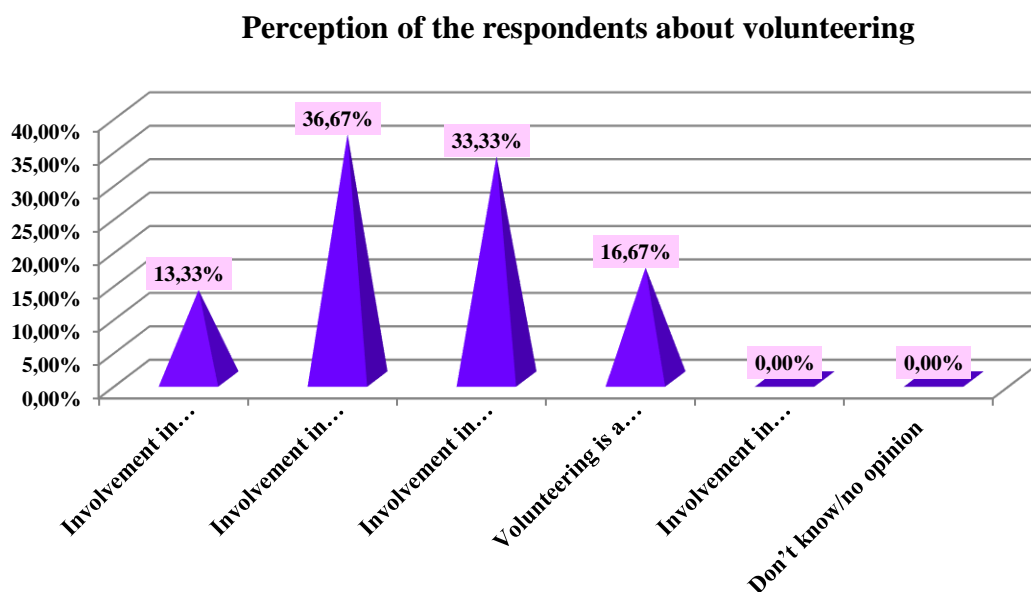


**Figure 2. Occupation of respondents**

*Source: Author 2020*

As noted in figure 3, half of the respondents admit that volunteering is important and necessary for personal and professional development. Furthermore, according to a third of them, this unpaid activity

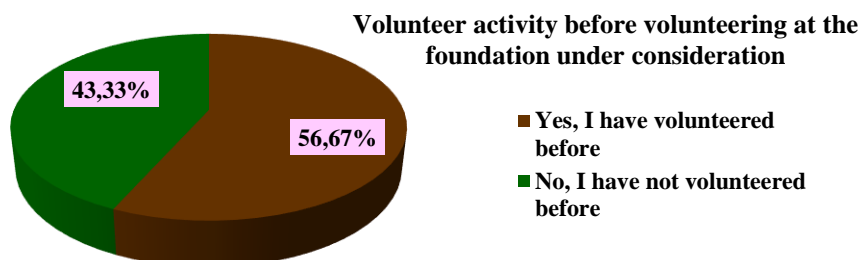
is useful to society, while 16.67% consider it a social responsibility of each individual. Moreover, none of the respondent checked the box “Don’t know/no opinion”.



**Figure 3. Perception of the respondents about volunteering**

*Source: Author 2020*

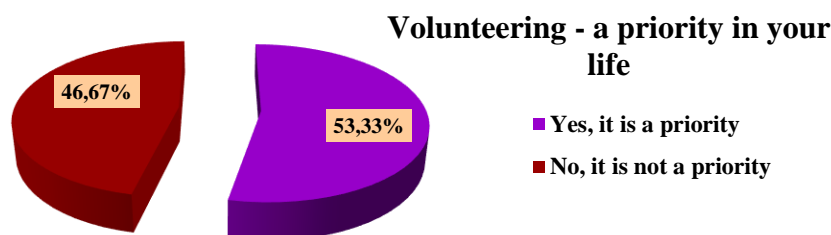
In conclusion, NGOs should involve more and more young people, providing them the opportunity to interact in order to create comfortable relationships. Their personal and professional development should become a necessity while letting them speak their minds and come up with new ideas.



**Figure 4. Volunteer activity before volunteering within Calea Victoriei Foundation**

*Source: Author 2020*

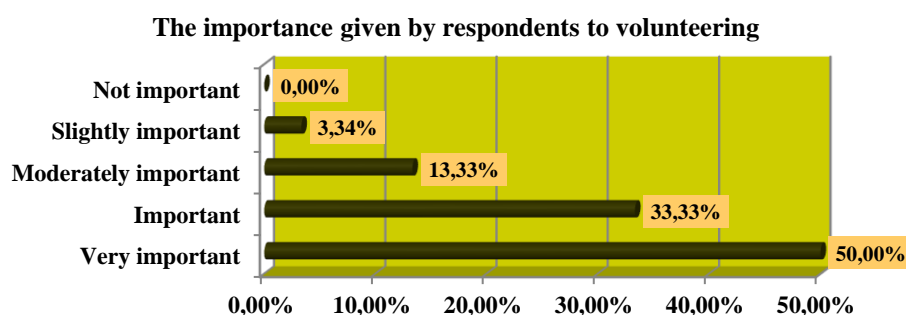
Figure 4 presents the percent distribution of interviewed people as regards their volunteer activity before volunteering within Calea Victoriei Foundation. 56.67% of them had been involved in volunteering before joining Calea Victoriei Foundation. This shows an upward trend among young people to spend their free time for the benefit of society and personal development. As for the respondents who have not volunteered, this can be an opportunity to discover this sector, to experience new things and to benefit of good mentoring, opportunities, positive thinking.



**Figure 5. Volunteering - a priority in your life**

*Source: Author 2020*

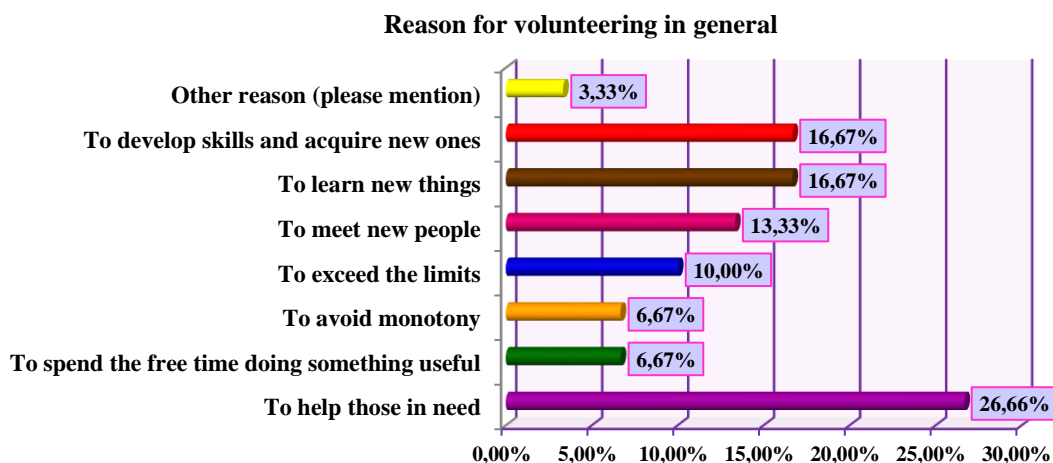
46.67% of the respondents find volunteering a low priority. For them it probably represents an alternative to leisure, but also an alternative to informal education. It is possible that many of them were employees, their time being very limited, and their involvement within the foundation being occasional.



**Figure 6. The importance given by respondents to volunteering**

*Source: Author 2020*

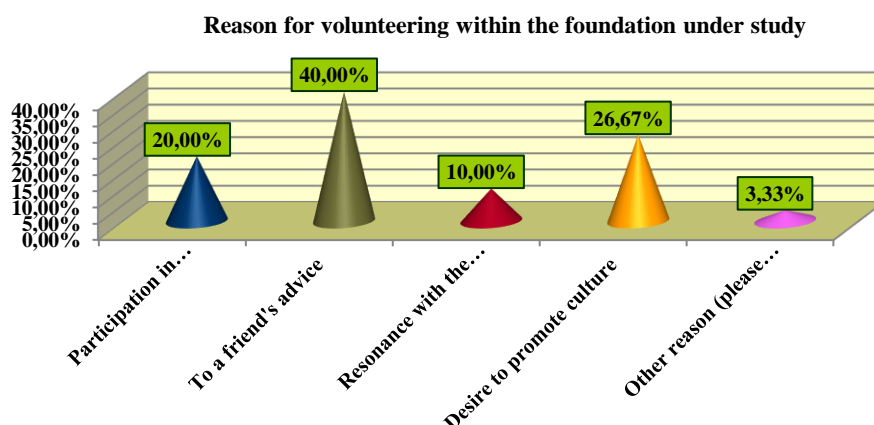
Most of the volunteers (83.33%) within the foundation attach great importance to volunteering. This result was to be expected, considering that volunteering not only plays an important role in the community, but it helps the individual to develop, making him feel useful in society. For the other respondents, volunteering is of moderate or small importance. Therefore, in order to improve the perception about volunteering and attract as many volunteers as possible, organizations should be more malleable in the way of using volunteer work, including work that could be done at home or at the end of the week.



**Figure 7. Reason for volunteering in general**

*Source: Author 2020*

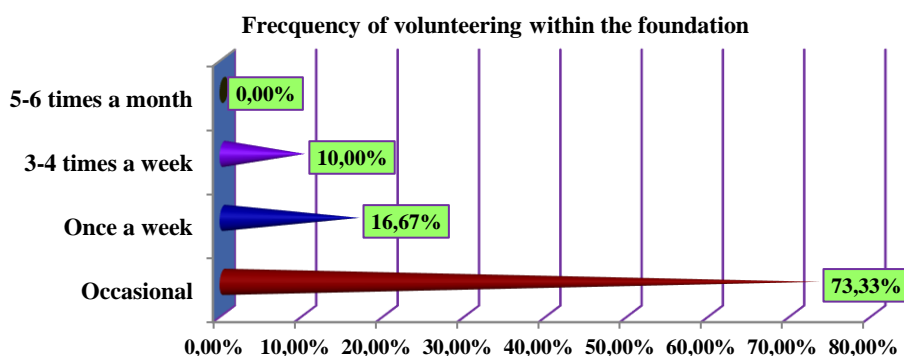
Figure 7 shows the respondents' reasons for volunteering in general. The decision for volunteering depends on the personal motivation of each individual. Most of the volunteers (26.66%) want to help those in need. They are probably aware that the world needs them a lot and want to provide a valuable service to the community. For others, volunteering means learning new things and getting to know people who contribute to their personal and professional evolution. For others it means increasing their self-confidence, improving their mood or discovering talents that help them overcome their limits. As regards the option "Other reason", the respondents mentioned that it was useful for carrying out projects within the faculty where they study.



**Figure 8. Reason for volunteering within the foundation under study**

*Source: Author 2020*

As noted in figure 8, most volunteers have chosen this foundation because its field of activity matches their skills and experience: participation in courses/workshops organized by the foundation (20%), resonance with the objectives and the mission of the foundation (10%), desire to promote culture (26,67%). The social aspect and relationships also play an important role when it comes to volunteering because an important percentage of the respondents (40%) stated they were involved in volunteering activities due to a friend/some friends' advice.

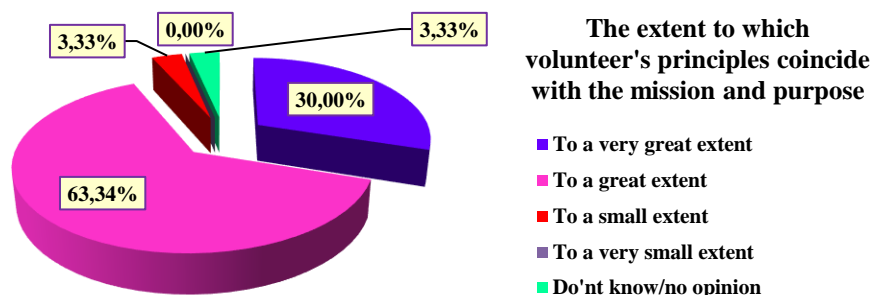


**Figure 9. Frequency of volunteering within the foundation**

*Source: Author 2020*

In accordance with figure 9, 73.33% of the volunteers within the foundation are occasionally involved in its activities, 16.67% once a week, and the remaining 10% 3-4 times a week. A possible explanation is that the respondents are too busy at work or at the university or the foundation does not need all the volunteers weekly.

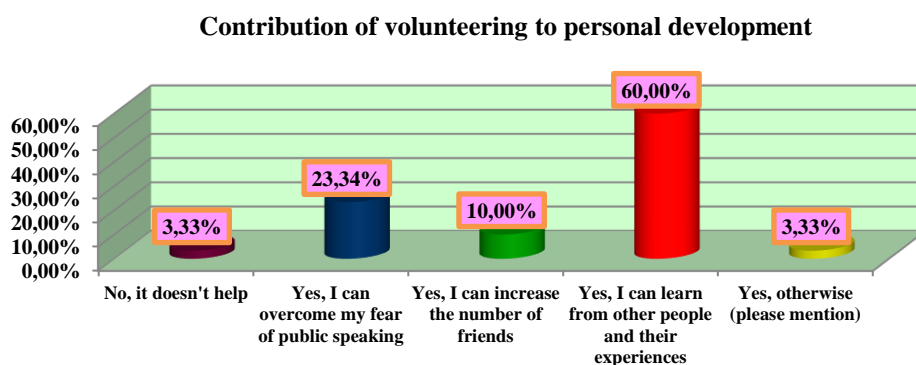




**Figure 10. The extent to which volunteer's principles coincide with the mission and purpose of the foundation**

Source: Author 2020

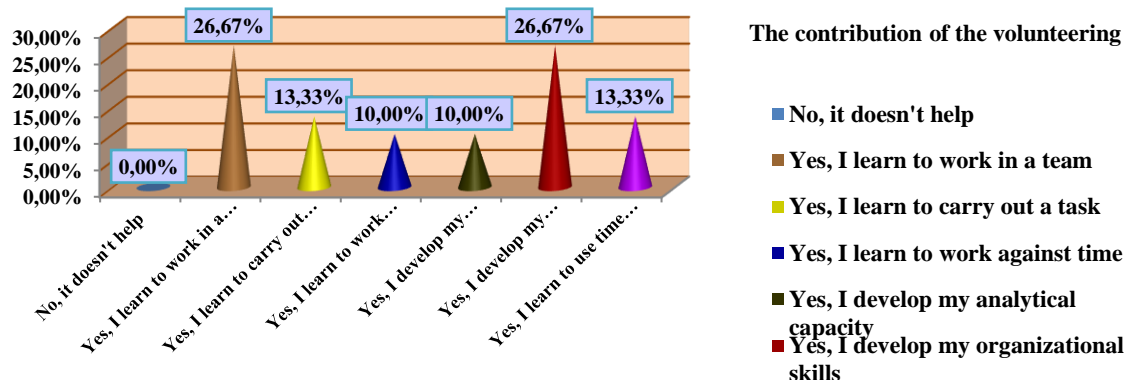
93.34% of the respondents answered positively to the question regarding the extent to which their principles coincide with the mission and purpose of the foundation. The answers provided are in accordance with question 8 regarding the reasons for volunteering within the foundation. Therefore, the volunteers believe in the mission of the foundation they are supporting.



**Figure 11. Contribution of volunteering to personal development**

Source: Author 2020

As figure 11 shows, the answers provided show that no matter why individuals volunteer, benefits are often important not only for the organization or community, but also for the volunteer's own personal development. Thus, most of the respondents (60%) are interested in learning from the experiences of those they interact with, while 23.34% want to overcome their fear of public speaking. One respondent checked the option "Other" mentioning the interaction with different types of people and learning new ways of communication, while another respondent gave a negative answer.

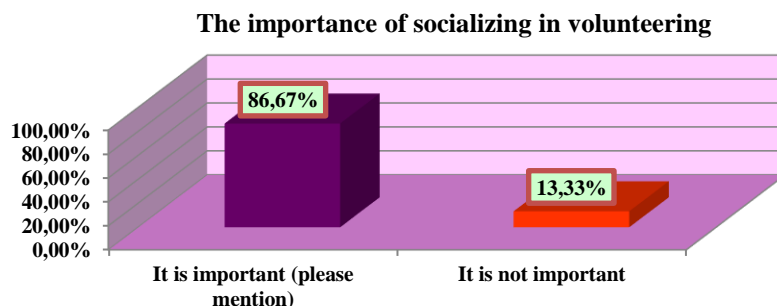


**Figure 12. The contribution of the volunteering activity to professional development**

Source: Author 2020



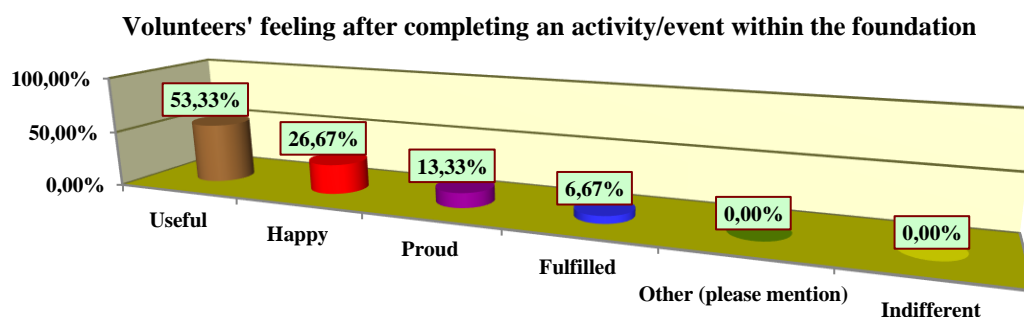
Figure 12 demonstrates that all respondents agreed with the statement that volunteerism could provide people with the career development skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that volunteering within the Foundation Calea Victoriei is an opportunity for professional development that does not reduce the value it brings to the organization. According to the respondents, volunteers are given the opportunity to work in team (26.67%), carry out a task (13.33%) and improve the analytical skills (10%). Moreover, volunteerism allow individuals to work against time (10%). Volunteerism also creates the opportunity to develop existing skills and learn to use time efficiently (13.33%).



**Figure 13. The importance of socializing in volunteering**

*Source: Author 2020*

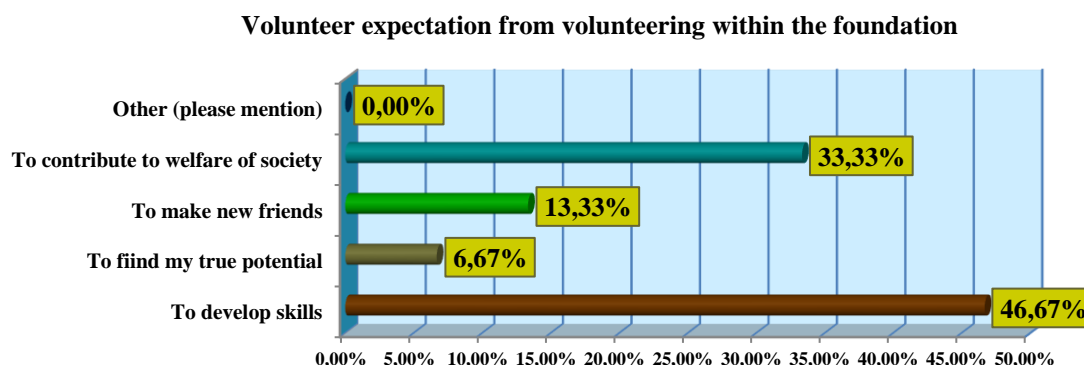
As figure 13 shows, 86.67% of volunteers gave positive answers regarding the role of socialization when involving in such activities. According to the respondents, the barriers raised by timidity, the fear of public speaking, the difficulties encountered in Building deeper friendships are broken. Volunteering also means belonging to a group that soon becomes a family, and although the relationships are professional, they sometimes become personal. Volunteering creates bridges between people and communities that need to socialize in order to collaborate. Volunteering allows learning techniques and socializing methods so that shyness and fear disappear. Put more positively, all these aspects mentioned above contributes to the professional growth of the individual.



**Figure 14. Volunteers' feeling after completing an activity/event within the foundation**

*Source: Author 2020*

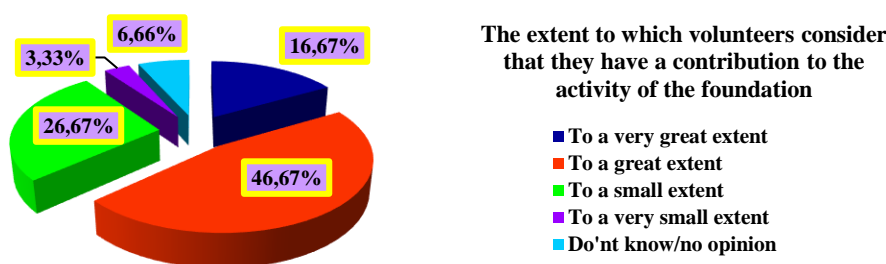
Volunteer behavior is also influenced by the feelings felt by those involved in such activities. According to figure 14, the main feelings felt by the volunteers of the foundation are usefulness and happiness. These elements represent also a predictor of volunteers' organizational commitment. Moreover, "increased job satisfaction" can be a factor leading to increased organizational commitment and moreover, to the intention of remaining a longer period within the organization.



**Figure 15. Volunteer expectation from volunteering within the foundation**

Source: Author 2020

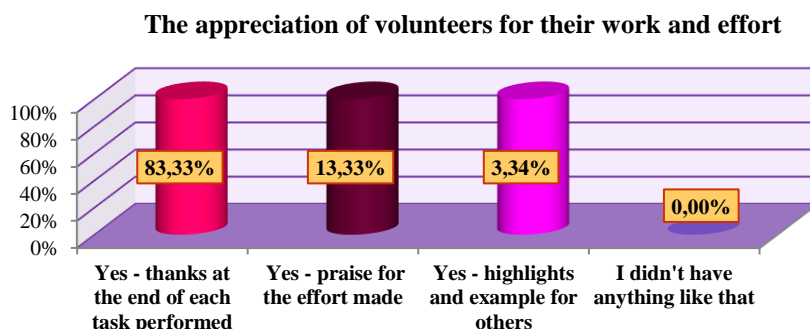
Volunteering can be a motivating and unforgettable experience, but given the large number of possibilities available, it is important to make the right choice. As noted in figure 15, the volunteering activities of the foundation are suitable to the respondents. The activities they are involved help volunteers to develop, but also to offer something to the community.



**Figure 16. The extent to which volunteers consider that they have a contribution to the activity of the foundation**

Source: Author 2020

It is vital and highly motivating for volunteers to have a clear picture of the difference their activity produces on the organization, community and society as a whole. In this case, most of the respondents gave a positive answer (see figure 16). Thus, it can be concluded that the foundation under analysis does not regard volunteering as a source of expenses, but as a contribution to achieving its objectives and purpose. Checking the box "To a very small extent" or "Do't know/no opinion" could signify that some volunteers underestimate the importance of their efforts within the foundation or are not actually aware of their real contribution to the development of the organization.



**Figure 17. The appreciation of volunteers for their work and effort**

Source: Author 2020

In general, unmotivated volunteers are not necessarily attracted to the values of the organization and do not have a high level of satisfaction regarding the organization's activity. As regards the organization under analysis (see figure 17), all the respondents declared they were satisfied with the way their work and effort are appreciated. The most frequently mentioned ways of appreciation were praise and words of thanks when fulfilling a task.

Finally, the respondents were asked to say if they have encountered difficulties during volunteering. The response of 20 of them was negative, mentioning that the foundation's members helped them to integrate and guided them. Others respondents encountered minor difficulties due to their insecurity, emotions and fears of joining a new group. Furthermore, the lack of skills and experiences was an impediment in some situations, but they exceeded them due to the support provided by the foundation's members. Other difficulties referred to the lack of communication as well as time management. The latter was especially mentioned by volunteers with the status of students and full-time employees. In fact, for them it is always very difficult to find a balance between personal and professional life as well as leisure activities.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper aims to identify the reasons for volunteers' involvement in the activities of Calea Victoriei Foundation. In this regard, the answers of 30 respondents who volunteered in this organization were analyzed.

First of all, an aspect that characterizes the current generation of volunteers within the foundation mentioned above is that they dedicate their time, energy and enthusiasm to nongovernmental organizations. Most volunteers are students working either full-time or part-time. However, they manage to dedicate some of their free time to volunteering, which means that they attach great importance to this type of activities.

Secondly, young people choose to engage in volunteering both for altruistic reasons, to help their peers or to contribute to the general evolution and well-being of society, but especially for personal reasons. In this regard, the respondents mentioned that they wanted to develop their communication and social skills and to build new relationships.

The first hypothesis "The more volunteers become involved in the foundation's activities, the more they become attached to its cause", was invalidated, because the fluctuation of volunteers within the foundation is relatively high taking into account their tight schedule. Therefore, their frequency cannot be correlated with their motivation of working for fulfilling the purpose of the foundation, because other factors should be taken into consideration.

The second hypothesis "If young people are influenced by the circumstances, then they decide to volunteer" was validated, as it was found that the recommendations of friends who volunteered within the foundation, as well as the participation in courses and workshops strongly influenced the choices of most respondents.

The third hypothesis "If young people volunteer, then they develop personally" was validated because most of the respondents emphasized the desire to grow and develop personally. Moreover, the actions carried out within the foundation gave them the opportunity to acquire or develop their skills, such as communication and socialization.

In conclusion, the participants within this research state that they get involved in the activities of the foundation and make efforts to dedicate their free time to this organization. However, individuals working without pay need constant affirmation and appreciation of their effort. Therefore, the foundation should pay increased attention to volunteers and encourage them in order to continue supporting its mission.

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