

Motivation for Formal Volunteering: Traditional and Reflexive Volunteering Style

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Abstract | Background: The nature of volunteering is undergoing a transformation that has been described as a shift from a “traditional” collectivist to a “reflexive” individualistic style, which affects the motivational structure of volunteers. Objective: This research aims to analyse the motivation for formal volunteering in relation to the selected variables: frequency, length, and intensity of volunteering, membership in an organisation, within the framework of traditional and reflexive volunteering styles (Frič & Pospíšilová, 2010; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Methods: Quantitative research on motivation for formal volunteering is based on the multifactorial VFI/Volunteer Functions Inventory model, which measures six motivational factors: values, protection, social, career, understanding, and enhancement (Clary et al., 1998). Data collection was carried out in 2023 using a quota sampling method on a representative Slovak sample of 1,020 respondents, of whom 349 were involved in formal volunteering, and 671 were not. This research worked with a sample of 349 Slovak volunteers aged 18 to 82 ($M = 47.23$, $SD = 15.37$, women = 187, men = 162). Results: Descriptive results indicated the dominance of value motivation, followed by enhancement and understanding motivations. Correlational and comparative analyses of motivation to volunteer indicate several significant relationships. Volunteers who engage in the activity regularly (at least once a month) show significantly higher motivation in almost all areas: values, career, social, understanding, and enhancement. The intensity of involvement over the past four weeks was related to career, social, understanding, and enhancement motivation. In contrast, the length of volunteering (short-term vs. long-term involvement) did not show significant differences in motivational profile. Membership in an organisation was associated with a higher level of motivation in values, social, and understanding. Discussion and conclusion: The research results show that patterns of traditional and reflective volunteering styles in the context of the selected variables often overlap, creating hybrid motivational profiles that combine altruism with self-development, social connections, or career benefits. The results may be helpful for organisations in managing volunteers.

Keywords | formal volunteering, motivation, temporal dimensions, membership in an organisation, traditional and reflexive styles

Introduction

For a long time, there has been a prevailing perception that the very nature of volunteering is undergoing significant transformation due to broader social changes. This shift has been described as a transition from a “collectivist” to an “individualistic” or from a “traditional” to a “modern” or “reflexive” style of volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Brozmanová Gregorová, 2012). Traditional volunteering is based on collective identities and established social roles, which makes it a relatively stable and coherent type (Brozmanová Gregorová, 2012; Frič & Pospíšilová, 2010). It is characterised by reliability, predictability, and long-term, regular commitment (Koolen-Maas et al., 2022). In contrast, reflexive volunteering is more oriented towards the personal preferences of the individual and is therefore more unstable, fragmented, and less predictable (Brozmanová Gregorová, 2012; Frič & Pospíšilová, 2010). It is perceived as a means of self-realisation and a source of personal satisfaction and fulfilment (Cnaan et al., 2022). Reflexive volunteers tend to focus on the opportunities offered, while their ties to the organisation are usually weak, which is reflected in a lower level of overall commitment to the organisation (Brudney & Meijs, 2013; Meijeren et al., 2025).

The differences between traditional and reflective styles of volunteering manifest themselves in various dimensions related to the individual and social (collective) levels (Brozmanová Gregorová, 2012; Frič & Pospíšilová, 2010). One such dimension is the motivational structure (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). In this paper, attention is focused specifically on motivation as a key dimension. Motivation to volunteer can be understood as a set of incentives that encourage individuals to devote their time and energy to beneficial activities without expecting financial reward. These motives can vary in nature, ranging from altruistic efforts to help others and contribute to the public good to individually focused goals (Hizazi et al., 2023; Stukas et al., 2014). In the context of the traditional (collective) model, altruistic motivation is emphasised, often rooted in religious traditions of charity or the concept of civic virtues. Volunteering is seen as a duty or responsibility towards the local community or the wider collective. It is an integral part of socially established rules of behaviour in a community where personal ambitions give way to collective goals. Although traditional volunteering also involves self-centred motivations, these impulses are firmly linked to precisely defined positions and roles in a relatively closed community. Volunteering thus helps to confirm the stability of an individual’s life story and strengthen collective identity (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). In the context of the new reflexive model of volunteering, altruism and solidarity remain relevant, but greater attention is paid to egoistic motivations and the view that pure altruism rarely exists. The motivation of reflective volunteers often stems from the experience of biographical discontinuity, whether as a result of unexpected life events or deliberate personal reorientation. They use volunteering as a means of self-realisation, achieving personal goals, or overcoming life’s uncertainties and challenges. However, sources emphasise that selfish and altruistic motives coexist and can complement each other – this pattern is referred to as “altruistic” individualism (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

Currently, numerous models examine different kinds or types of motivation for volunteering, which can be placed in the context of traditional and reflective styles of volunteering. This paper approaches the examination of motivation from the perspective of the functionalist approach proposed by Clary et al. (1998), the authors of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) questionnaire. According to this approach, all people have the exact basic psychological needs, while the same behaviour can fulfill different functions for different individuals. Individuals engage in volunteer work because they see it as an opportunity to fulfil their inner needs. The VFI questionnaire, which is based on a functionalist approach, measures six factors or functions that

correspond to particular motivations: values – the expression of altruistic and humanistic values (selfless help to others, the less fortunate); understanding – the desire to learn something new, develop one’s skills, and gain new experiences; social – the desire to establish and strengthen social ties; career – developing academic or professional knowledge and skills, improving career prospects; enhancement – psychological growth and development (self-development, self-knowledge), desire to experience positive emotions; protective – defence against the ego, elimination or reduction of negative emotions (frustration, guilt), escape from personal problems (Clary et al., 1998; Martins et al., 2024). In the context of traditional and reflective styles of volunteering, it can be said that the value factor refers to the traditional style. In contrast, the factors of career, understanding, enhancement, and protection refer to the reflective style. The social factor can be perceived as lying between the traditional and reflective styles, because an individual may engage in volunteering either because their friends, family, or community do so and they want to feel part of something, or because they want to make new contacts.

According to previous research, values are generally the most significant motivator for volunteering, achieving the highest average score (Allison et al., 2002; Chow et al., 2021; Kmecová et al., 2014; Martins et al., 2024; Matulayová, 2012; Phillips et al., 2022; Planalp & Trost, 2009; Principi et al., 2015; Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009; and others). After values, the most significant motivations are understanding and enhancement (Allison et al., 2002; Chapman & Morley, 1999; Chow et al., 2021; Planalp & Trost, 2009; Principi et al., 2015; and others).

In relation to motivation to volunteer, empirical research shows that variables such as the frequency, intensity, and duration of volunteer activity, as well as membership in an organisation, have been less studied. Furthermore, the selection of these variables for this research reflects the characteristics of the traditional and reflective styles of volunteering in which this research is set (see above).

According to some authors, frequency of volunteering is a significant factor in motivation to volunteer (Allison et al., 2002; Okun, 1994). In the study by Allison et al. (2002), where the average age of the research sample was 35.37 years, the frequency of volunteer activity was positively associated with the motive of understanding and values. However, after performing a regression analysis, the frequency of volunteer activity was positively predicted only by the value motive and negatively predicted by the social motive. According to Allison et al. (2002), several authors have reported an additive effect of the value motive on the frequency of volunteer activity (Clary & Orenstein, 1991; Okun, 1994; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). The above means that as the level of value motivation increases, volunteers engage in volunteer activities more frequently and demonstrate greater determination to continue doing so. However, Matulayová (2012) reports the opposite result in relation to the social factor. According to the author, the social factor was positively related to the frequency of volunteer activities, and it was the only significant factor. On the other hand, Okuna’s (1994) study of a sample of older adults revealed several significant relationships between the frequency of volunteering and the motives for volunteering, with the strongest correlates of frequency being a sense of usefulness or productivity and a desire to help others. However, in the final logistic regression analysis, only two motives proved to be statistically significant predictors: a sense of usefulness or productivity and the fulfilment of a moral obligation, in a positive sense.

The intensity of volunteering in relation to motivation was examined mainly in a sample of older people. Le and Aartsen (2022) used multivariate linear regression analysis to find that older people who find volunteer work fun/interesting and that allows them to use their skills spend more hours doing it. In the study by Principi et al. (2022), an increase in the time spent on volunteering among

older people during the COVID-19 pandemic was related to all six VFI motivation factors. On the other hand, a decrease in time was negatively related to social, protective, and career motives. A logistic regression analysis was also performed, which included control variables (e.g., age, gender, frequency of volunteering, etc.). None of the motivational factors remained significant for an increase in time spent volunteering. In the case of a decrease in time spent volunteering, only the social factor remained significant. The findings suggest that the greater the social motivation, the smaller the decrease in time. Authors Shantz et al. (2013) found that prosocial values are positively related to time spent volunteering. In addition, engagement in volunteering mediated this relationship. In Slovak research, Matulayová (2012) found no significant relationship between the intensity of volunteer activity and motivation to volunteer.

According to Fuertes and Jiménez (2000), some authors suggest that the motivations influencing the decision to become a volunteer differ from those influencing the decision to continue volunteering (Oda, 1991; Winniford et al., 1995). An interesting question, therefore, is whether long-term volunteers have different motivations than short-term volunteers. Omoto and Snyder (1995) found significant positive relationships between the length of volunteer service and three motives: understanding, personal development, and esteem enhancement, which can be described as self-centred. In contrast, Penner and Finkelstein (1998) report that the value motive (altruistic motivation) was the only motivation positively related to the length of volunteer service. More recent research by Finkelstein (2008) pointed out that only the social motive was positively related to the length of volunteer activity. According to Fuertes and Jiménez (2000), a high level of motivation, focused on both oneself and others, can encourage the continuation of volunteer service. In Slovak research, the length of volunteer activity is not significantly related to motivation to volunteer (Matulayová, 2012).

On the other hand, membership in an organisation was one of the most significant factors in relation to motivation for volunteering in representative Slovak research (Matulayová, 2012). Motives such as values, social interaction, self-esteem, and reciprocity were significantly higher among volunteers who were members of an organisation, association, or club than among non-members. According to Matulayová (2012), membership is closely linked to volunteering and points to a traditional style of volunteer engagement. In another study, Lu and Schuett (2014) found that members of volunteer associations involved in outdoor recreation are motivated by social networks, civic engagement, and self-improvement, with ongoing involvement mediating the relationship between motivation and volunteer experiences. However, the relationship between motivation to volunteer and membership in organisations has not yet been sufficiently explored.

Research objective

Examining volunteer motivation is a key area of research, as it provides a deeper understanding of why individuals engage in unpaid voluntary work. At the same time, it has an important practical dimension – it can serve as an effective tool for recruiting, placing, and retaining volunteers. Although the issue of motivation for volunteering has been the subject of several foreign studies, only a few studies have addressed it in the Slovak context (e.g., Brozmanová Gregorová et al., 2018; Kmecová et al., 2014; Matulayová, 2012). The relationships between individual motivational factors and variables such as the frequency, intensity, and duration of volunteering or membership in an organisation remain less explored, even at the international level. The above opens up opportunities for further empirical research, which can contribute to a deeper understanding of the motivation for volunteering in Slovakia. An important dimension of the study of motivation is also the distinction between traditional and reflexive styles of volunteering. While the traditional style refers to altruistic and normative motivation, regular, long-term, and intensive involvement in

volunteering, as well as a close connection with membership in an organisation, the reflexive style emphasises self-oriented motives, irregular, short-term, and less intensive involvement in volunteering with a weak connection to the organisation (Frič & Pospíšilová, 2010; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

This research aims to analyse the motivation for formal volunteering in relation to the selected variables – frequency, intensity, and length of volunteering, and membership in an organisation – and then to discuss these results in the context of new trends that distinguish between traditional and reflexive styles of volunteering (Brozmanová Gregorová et al., 2012; Frič & Pospíšilová, 2010; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

RQ1: Which VFI motivational factors motivate Slovak volunteers to volunteer?

RQ2: Are there differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the frequency of volunteering (regular vs. irregular)?

RQ3: Is there a correlation between the intensity of volunteering and VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers?

RQ4: Are there differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the length of volunteering (short-term vs. long-term)?

RQ5: Are there differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of membership in an organisation (members vs. non-members)?

Methods

Participants

The research sample obtained by quota selection consisted of 349 volunteers involved in formal volunteering ($N_{\text{women}} = 187$, $N_{\text{men}} = 162$, $M_{\text{age}} = 47.23$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 15.37$, $Min. \text{ age} = 18$, $Max. \text{ age} = 82$). The quotas were set based on the sociodemographic characteristics of the adult population of Slovakia according to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (age, gender, nationality, education, size of settlement, region). It was representative research conducted as part of the VEGA 1/0603/23 project, entitled “Dobrovoľníctvo na Slovensku v čase krízy” (Volunteering in Slovakia in Times of Crisis), with a total of 1,020 respondents participating. Data collection was carried out by an external company using a personal interview method, in which the interviewer recorded the answers on an electronic device (CAPI). Respondents recorded their answers to the VFI motivation questionnaire items independently and individually. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous.

Instruments

Motivation to volunteer was measured using the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998) questionnaire. The Slovak translation was provided by Estera Frgelcová and Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová, who is an expert in the field of volunteering in Slovakia. The VFI questionnaire contains 30 items and measures six factors or functions of motivation: values, career, social, understanding, enhancement, and protection. Each factor consists of 5 items. Respondents rated the extent to which each of the 30 reasons for volunteering was important or accurate to them on a 7-point scale from 1 (not at all important/accurate) to 7 (extremely important/accurate). The score for each factor was obtained by averaging the relevant items. The reliability of the research tool, assessed based on the internal consistency of the items, showed acceptable Cronbach's alpha values for each factor, ranging from 0.82 to 0.87.

In addition to motivation for volunteering, this research also focused on variables such as frequency, intensity, and length of volunteering, membership in an organisation.

The frequency of volunteering reflected how often volunteers performed unpaid volunteer activities for or through an organisation. Responses were categorised as regular (at least once a month) or irregular (less than once a month).

The length of volunteer activity expressed how long volunteers performed volunteer activities for or through an organisation. Respondents could choose from five options (1 = shorter than 1 year, 2 = longer than 1 year and shorter than 2 years, 3 = 2 to 3 years, 4 = 3 to 5 years, 5 = longer than 5 years). The minimum length of volunteer activity was shorter than 1 year, and the maximum was longer than 5 years. Responses were categorised as short-term (shorter than 1 year) or long-term (longer than 1 year).

The intensity of volunteer activity expressed the number of hours that volunteers had spent on all unpaid volunteer activities for or through an organisation in the last four weeks. Respondents reported the number of hours in the range of 0 to 260.

Membership in an organisation expressed whether the volunteer was part of an organisation, club, association, or society. Responses were categorised as yes - I am a member, no - I am not a member.

The categorisation of responses for the variables "frequency and length of volunteer activity" and "membership in an organisation" was based on previous representative research on volunteering in Slovakia by Brozmanová Gregorová et al. (2012).

Procedure

The research has a quantitative correlation-comparison design. The data obtained from the VEGA 1/0603/23 project were processed using Microsoft Excel, where data cleaning and variable quantification took place. The data were then analysed in the statistical program JASP 0.18.3.0. First, the descriptive characteristics of the VFI variables were quantified, where the first research question was answered based on the arithmetic mean. Subsequently, comparative and correlation analyses were performed according to the research questions, preceded by an assessment of data normality based on skewness and kurtosis values (-1 to 1) and, in the case of comparative analyses, verification of the assumption of equality of variances between groups (Levene's test, $p > 0.05$). When the assumptions of normality and equality of variances were met, the parametric Student's t-test for two independent samples was used. If the assumption of equality of variances was violated, Welch's t-test was used. In the case of correlation analysis, the non-parametric Spearman's test was used due to the failure to meet the assumption of data normality.

Results

The results are presented in the order of the research questions RQ1 - RQ5. Table 1 shows descriptive indicators of VFI motivational factors.

RQ1: Which VFI motivational factors motivate Slovak volunteers to volunteer?

Table 1

Descriptive characteristics of motivational factors in a sample of Slovak volunteers (N=349)

	Motivational factors of VFI					
	Values	Career	Social	Understanding	Enhancement	Protection
Mean	26.04	17.50	21.94	23.86	23.90	19.26
Median	27.00	17.00	22.00	24.00	24.00	20.00
Std. deviation	5.69	7.66	6.09	6.28	6.14	6.95
Skewness	-0.52	0.08	-0.28	-0.36	-0.39	-0.18
Kurtosis	0.06	-0.77	0.04	-0.24	-0.21	-0.40
Range	29.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00
Minimum	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Maximum	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00

Note. N – number of respondents

According to the arithmetic mean, Slovak volunteers are most motivated by the factor values, which achieved the highest average score (AM = 26.04), followed by the factors enhancement (AM = 23.90) and understanding (AM = 23.86). The lowest average score was achieved by the career factor (AM = 17.50; Table 1).

Table 2 shows the results of a comparative analysis of VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the frequency of volunteering (regular – at least once a month, irregular – less than once a month). Based on the skewness and kurtosis values of the VFI motivational factors (-1 to 1) shown in Table 1 and Table 2 for individual groups, which indicate a normal distribution of data, and based on the assumption of equal variances between groups (Levene's test, $p > 0.05$), we used the parametric Student's t-test for two independent samples for most VFI factors. For the protection factor, the condition of equality of variances was violated, so Welch's t-test was used (Table 2).

RQ2: Are there differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the frequency of volunteering (regular vs. irregular)?

Table 2

Results of the comparative analysis of motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of frequency of volunteer activity (N=345)

Motivational factors of VFI	Frequency of volunteer activity								Student's t-test		
	Regular (n = 155)				Irregular (n = 190)				t	p	dCohen
	AM	SD	Sk.	Ku.	AM	SD	Sk.	Ku.			
Values	27.23	5.40	-0.65	0.16	25.19	5.75	-0.45	0.15	3.362	< .001	0.364
Career	19.07	8.10	-0.02	-0.91	16.25	7.12	-0.03	-0.78	3.445	< .001	0.373
Social	23.44	5.93	-0.22	-0.21	20.84	5.96	-0.37	0.21	4.045	< .001	0.438
Understanding	25.42	6.36	-0.58	0.00	22.70	5.96	-0.33	-0.17	4.098	< .001	0.444
Enhancement	25.21	6.25	-0.55	-0.06	22.96	5.87	-0.39	-0.12	3.431	< .001	0.371
Protection	19.92	7.57	-0.10	-0.71	18.71	6.42	-0.40	-0.22	1.589	0.113	0.173

Note. N – number of respondents, AM – mean, SD – Standard deviation, Sk. – Skewness, Ku. –

Kurtosis

The results of the comparative analysis in Table 2 showed that there are differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the frequency of volunteer activity (regular vs. irregular). Volunteers who engage in volunteer activities regularly achieve significantly higher scores in the motivational factors of values ($p < 0.001$, AM = 27.23), career ($p < 0.001$, AM = 19.07), social ($p < 0.001$, AM = 23.44), understanding ($p < 0.001$, AM = 25.42), and enhancement ($p < 0.001$, AM = 25.21) than volunteers who engage in volunteer activities irregularly. No significant difference was found in the protection factor ($p > 0.05$). The effect sizes found were small (Cohen's $d = 0.36 - 0.44$).

Table 3 shows the results of the correlation analysis of the relationships between VFI motivational factors and the intensity of volunteer activity among Slovak volunteers. Based on the skewness and kurtosis values (-1 to 1) of the VFI motivational factors (Table 1) and intensity (Table 3), which do not indicate a normal distribution of data within the intensity variable (skewness = 7.75 and kurtosis = 85.07), the non-parametric Spearman correlation coefficient was used.

RQ3: Is there a correlation between the intensity of volunteering and VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers?

Table 3

Results of the correlation analysis of the relationships between the intensity of volunteer activity and motivational factors among Slovak volunteers (N=348)

Intensity of volunteer activity	Motivational factors of VFI					
	Values	Career	Social	Understanding	Enhancement	Protection
AM = 8.89; SD = 19.48	ρ 0.073	0.183	0.165	0.149	0.119	0.082
Skewness = 7.75 Kurtosis = 85.07	p 0.177	<0.001	0.002	0.005	0.027	0.128

Note. N - number of respondents, AM - mean, SD - Standard deviation, ρ - Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

The results of the correlation analysis in Table 3 showed weak positive statistically significant relationships between intensity of volunteer activity and the motivational factors of career ($p < 0.001$, $\rho = 0.183$), social ($p = 0.002$, $\rho = 0.165$), understanding ($p = 0.005$, $\rho = 0.149$), and enhancement ($p = 0.027$, $\rho = 0.119$) among Slovak volunteers. In the case of the factor values and protection, no statistically significant relationships were found ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4 shows the results of a comparative analysis of VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the length of volunteer activity (short-term - less than 1 year, long-term - more than 1 year). Based on the skewness and kurtosis values of the VFI motivational factors (-1 to 1) shown in Table 1 and Table 4 for individual groups, which indicate a normal distribution of data, and based on the assumption of equal variances between groups (Levene's test, $p > 0.05$), we used the parametric Student's t-test for two independent samples for all VFI factors.

RQ4: Are there differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the length of volunteering (short-term vs. long-term)?

Table 4

Results of the comparative analysis of motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the length of volunteer activity (N=264)

Motivational factors of VFI	Length of volunteer activity								Student's t-test		
	Short-term (n = 40)				Long-term (n = 224)				t	p	dCohen
	AM	SD	Sk.	Ku.	AM	SD	Sk.	Ku.			
Values	25.10	6.14	-0.40	-0.42	26.68	5.56	-0.65	0.51	-1.631	0.104	-0.280
Career	18.58	7.39	-0.21	-0.54	17.74	7.84	0.06	-0.78	0.628	0.530	0.108
Social	21.00	6.00	-0.73	0.88	22.59	5.91	-0.33	0.20	-1.567	0.118	-0.269
Understanding	23.33	6.18	-0.72	0.44	24.45	6.44	-0.47	-0.17	-1.025	0.306	-0.176
Enhancement	23.10	6.57	-0.58	0.30	24.33	6.21	-0.45	-0.12	-1.168	0.244	-0.200
Protection	19.88	6.16	-0.32	0.28	19.27	7.35	-0.21	-0.61	0.492	0.623	0.085

Note. N – number of respondents, AM – mean, SD – Standard deviation, Sk. – Skewness, Ku. – Kurtosis

The results of the comparative analysis in Table 4 did not show statistically significant differences in any of the VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the length of volunteer activity ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5 shows the results of the comparative analysis of VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of membership in an organisation (yes – I am a member of an organisation, no – I am not a member of any organisation). Based on the skewness and kurtosis values of VFI motivational factors (-1 to 1) shown in Table 1 and Table 5 for individual groups, which indicate a normal distribution of data, and based on the assumption of equality of variances between groups (Levene's test, $p > 0.05$), we used the parametric Student's t-test for two independent samples for most VFI factors. For the protection factor, the condition of equality of variances was violated, so Welch's t-test was used.

RQ5: Are there differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of membership in an organisation (members vs. non-members)?

Table 5

Results of the comparative analysis of motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of membership in an organisation (N=344)

Motivational factors of VFI	Membership in an organisation								Student's t-test		
	Yes (n = 212)				No (n = 132)				t	p	dCohen
	AM	SD	Sk.	Ku.	AM	SD	Sk.	Ku.			
Values	26.66	5.42	-0.58	0.59	25.09	6.05	-0.38	-0.55	2.495	0.013	0.277
Career	17.76	7.94	0.08	-0.85	16.92	7.25	0.07	-0.65	0.984	0.326	0.109
Social	22.66	5.92	-0.40	0.12	20.79	6.25	-0.18	0.01	2.786	0.006	0.309
Understanding	24.23	6.36	-0.49	-0.02	22.77	6.13	-0.19	-0.50	2.534	0.012	0.281
Enhancement	24.32	6.31	-0.35	-0.34	23.21	5.90	-0.50	-0.02	1.628	0.104	0.181
Protection	19.22	7.43	-0.20	-0.69	19.12	6.21	-0.07	0.24	Welch's t-test		
									0.129	0.898	0.014

Note. N – number of respondents, AM – mean, SD – Standard deviation, Sk. – Skewness, Ku. –

Kurtosis

The results of the comparative analysis in Table 5 showed that there are differences in VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of membership in an organisation (members vs. non-members). Volunteers who are members of an organisation achieve significantly higher scores in the motivational factors of values ($p = 0.013$, $AM = 26.66$), social ($p = 0.006$, $AM = 22.66$), and understanding ($p = 0.012$, $AM = 24.23$) than volunteers who are not members of any organisation. No significant differences were found in the factors protection, enhancement, and career ($p > 0.05$). The effect sizes found were small (Cohen's $d = 0.28 - 0.31$).

Note: The different sample sizes for individual variables reflect the fact that not all volunteers involved in formal volunteering in 2023 answered all questions or were unable to provide an answer.

Discussion

This research aimed to analyse the motivation for formal volunteering in relation to frequency, intensity, and length of volunteer activity, as well as membership in an organisation, among Slovak volunteers. The results are interpreted and discussed in the context of traditional and reflective styles of volunteering, thus complementing previous research findings in the field of motivation for volunteering.

Motivation of Slovak volunteers (RQ1): The research results show that Slovak volunteers are primarily motivated by the factor of values, which achieved the highest average score ($AM = 26.04$). The above was followed by the factors of enhancement ($AM = 23.90$) and understanding ($AM = 23.86$). This finding is consistent with previous research, which generally cites values as the most important motivation for volunteering (Allison et al., 2002; Chow et al., 2021; Martins et al., 2024; Matulayová, 2012; Phillips et al., 2022; Planalp & Trost, 2009; Principi et al., 2015; Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009; and others). At the same time, the importance of motives of understanding and enhancement is confirmed, which is also consistent with previous studies (Allison et al., 2002; Chapman & Morley, 1999; Chow et al., 2021; Planalp & Trost, 2009; Principi et al., 2015; and others). On the other hand, the career motive received the lowest average score ($AM = 17.50$), which may be related to the higher average age of the research sample ($AM = 47.23$), as this motive is more typical of younger volunteers (Musick & Wilson, 2007). In the context of traditional and reflective volunteering styles, the values factor can be clearly assigned to the traditional style, as it reflects altruistic and humanistic values, selfless help, and a sense of duty to the community. Conversely, the factors of enhancement and understanding are characteristic of the reflective style, as they emphasise psychological growth, skill development, and the acquisition of new knowledge and experience. The finding that both of these factors motivating volunteering are significant/important for Slovak volunteers suggests that motivation is multi-layered and includes both altruistic and self-oriented motives. The above corresponds to the concept of “altruistic individualism”, according to which self-oriented and other-oriented motives do not contradict each other but, on the contrary, reinforce and enrich each other (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

Frequency of volunteering and motivation (RQ2): The results of the comparative analysis showed that Slovak volunteers who regularly engage in volunteer activities (characteristic of the traditional style) achieve significantly higher scores in the factors of values, career, social, understanding, and enhancement compared to those who do not engage in volunteer activities regularly. No significant difference was found in the protection factor. The effect sizes found were small. These results support the conclusions of other authors that the frequency of volunteering is an important factor in

motivation (Allison et al., 2002; Okun, 1994). In particular, the positive connection with the values motive is consistent with previous studies (Clary & Orenstein, 1991; Okun, 1994; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). In contrast to the findings of Allison et al. (2002), who reported a negative relationship between social motivation and the frequency of volunteering, this research, like Matulayová (2012), suggests that the social factor is higher among regular volunteers. These findings refer more to the traditional style of volunteering. At the same time, higher scores in factors such as career, understanding, and enhancement among regular volunteers suggest that although these motives are associated with a reflexive style of volunteering (unstable, irregular involvement), they can also contribute to maintaining regular volunteer engagement, which again highlights the plurality of motivations and their mutual reinforcement. This result is consistent with Okun's study (1994), where altruistic motivation is combined with self-oriented motivation.

Intensity of volunteering and motivation (RQ3): Correlation analysis revealed a weak positive statistically significant relationship between the intensity of volunteering and the motivational factors of career, social, understanding, and enhancement among Slovak volunteers. The above suggests that the more hours volunteers devote to volunteering, the more motivated they are by these self-oriented motives. In the case of values and protection, no statistically significant relationships were confirmed. These results differ from the findings of Matulayová (2012), who found no significant relationship between the intensity of volunteer activity and motivation. In contrast, Principi et al. (2022) showed that during the Covid-19 crisis, an increase in the number of hours spent volunteering was associated with all six VFI factors – both altruistic and self-oriented. Authors Le and Aartsen (2022) emphasise the importance of self-oriented motives. On the other hand, Shantz et al. (2013) found a positive relationship between prosocial values (altruistic motivation) and time spent volunteering. As we can see, the results of previous studies are not consistent. The results of this research show that the more intensive involvement of Slovak volunteers is associated more with self-oriented motives, which are typical of the reflective style of volunteering. The above is interesting, as a higher intensity of volunteering is usually considered a sign of the traditional style (Frič & Pospíšilová, 2010). This difference may indicate that for Slovak volunteers, motives related to learning, personal and career growth, and social interactions are particularly decisive at higher intensities of volunteering. These results are consistent with the findings of Le and Aartsen (2022), who emphasise the importance of selfish motives. According to the authors, volunteers devote more time to volunteer work if it allows them to use their skills and if the work is interesting to them.

Length of volunteering and motivation (RQ4): The comparative analysis did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the VFI motivational factors among Slovak volunteers in terms of the length of their volunteering activity (short-term vs. long-term). This finding is consistent with previous Slovak research by Matulayová (2012).

At the international level, however, the findings are mixed: some studies suggest that long-term volunteers are motivated by self-centred motives (understanding, personal development, and esteem enhancement; Omoto & Snyder, 1995), while others report that long-term volunteer service is related to value motives (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998) or social motives (Finkelstein, 2008). Fuertes and Jiménez (2000) suggest that a high level of motivation, focused on both others and oneself, can encourage continued volunteering service.

This discrepancy in results may point to the specifics of the Slovak environment or to the complexity of the interaction between initial motivations and factors that contribute to maintaining long-term commitment, which require further investigation. Penner (2002) suggests in his theoretical model of long-term volunteering that although motives are important for the initial

decision to become a volunteer, once a volunteer identity has been formed, motives become less important determinants of long-term volunteering. Another explanation may be the use of the length of volunteering activity as a dichotomous variable instead of an interval or ordinal one, which could reveal even subtle differences in motivation. Similarly, differences between individual studies in setting criteria for the length of short-term and long-term volunteering also play a role.

Organisational membership and motivation (RQ5): The results of the comparative analysis showed that volunteers who are members of an organisation achieve significantly higher scores in the motivational factors of values, social, and understanding compared to volunteers who are not members of any organisation. No significant differences were found in the factors of protection, enhancement, and career. The effect sizes found were small.

These findings are broadly consistent with previous representative Slovak research by Matulayová (2012), which identified values, social interaction, reciprocity, and self-esteem as significant motives for members. Membership is closely linked to volunteering and points to a traditional style of volunteer engagement. Higher scores in the value motive among members clearly refer to a traditional, collectivist model in which volunteering is part of a collectively prescribed code of conduct and, at the same time, confirms collective identity (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Higher scores in the understanding and social factors among members may be associated with a desire to establish and strengthen social ties within an organised structure, as well as to learn new things and develop skills. The organisation's common goals may also support these motives. These findings suggest that volunteers with a closer connection to the organisation have not only traditional but also some reflective motives.

Overall, the results of this research on a Slovak sample of volunteers confirm the complex and multi-layered nature of motivations for volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

The contradiction between the research findings and some previous studies, whether in relation to the frequency, intensity, length of volunteer activity, or membership in an organisation, may reflect several factors. It is also important to note that previous studies are not consistent either. Significant factors may include the age of the research sample, as it is assumed that younger volunteers are motivated by more self-oriented motives, while older volunteers are more motivated by value- and social-oriented motives (Musick & Wilson, 2007). Furthermore, the nature or field of volunteer activity may play a role, for example, humanitarian work or social services compared to education, culture, sports, or the environment, as these fields may reflect different types of motivations. In this study, the research sample had a wide age range (18 to 82 years), and volunteers were involved in different areas of volunteer work. This may be related to the statistical significance of multiple types of motivations, ranging from altruistic to self-oriented. Another important factor may be the operationalisation of variables such as the frequency and duration of volunteer activities, including the criteria used to determine their values (regular vs. irregular volunteer activities, short-term vs. long-term volunteer activities), as well as the use of different research tools.

Although the research was conducted on a representative sample of Slovak volunteers, and its results can therefore be considered reliable in general, it is necessary to point out several limitations. Firstly, the research was based on self-assessment questionnaires, which may lead to socially desirable responses and subjective distortions. Secondly, the research focused exclusively on formal volunteering, leaving out informal and community forms of volunteer engagement, which may have a different motivational structure. Thirdly, although statistical analyses revealed several significant relationships, the effect sizes were small, suggesting that their practical significance is

limited. Another limitation is the chosen research design, which does not allow for tracking changes in motivation over time or causal relationships.

Future research could expand the scope to include informal forms of volunteering and examine a broader range of variables related to motivation to volunteer, including psychological and other sociodemographic factors. At the same time, it would be beneficial to conduct longitudinal studies to better understand the dynamics of changes in motivation during an individual's volunteering path. In addition, qualitative studies could provide deeper insight into the complex interactions between altruistic and self-oriented motives, as well as between traditional and reflective styles of volunteering. Finally, it would be appropriate to replicate the research in view of the results concerning the effect size (practical significance).

Conclusion

The results of this research support the continued importance of traditional altruistic values in Slovak volunteering, while also underscoring the growing significance of reflexive, self-oriented motives. The findings suggest that Slovak volunteers exhibit a hybrid motivational profile, combining elements of traditional and reflexive volunteering styles that reinforce and enrich each other. This phenomenon is also referred to as "altruistic individualism" (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

A deeper understanding of the motivation to volunteer is key to effective recruitment, placement, and retention of volunteers. Organisations working with volunteers should adapt their strategies to address a wide range of motivations, from altruistic to self-oriented. Specific implications may include: 1. Recruitment strategies. Organisations should emphasise both sides, the benefits for themselves and for the community ("help others, develop yourself"). 2. Matching tasks with volunteers' motivational profiles. Placing volunteers in suitable positions and assigning specific tasks should be in line with their motivation. Volunteers motivated primarily by altruism and selfless help for others are suitable for regular, community-based, value- and relationship-oriented activities that reinforce the traditional style of volunteering. Humanitarian aid and social services could be an important area of their involvement. Conversely, volunteers motivated by personal development, career growth, or skill acquisition can be effective not only in regular but especially in time-intensive activities. For self-oriented volunteers, project-based, development, professional, and creative tasks that offer opportunities for learning, growth, experiences, and greater autonomy may be suitable. 3. Retaining volunteers through specific support. For traditionally oriented volunteers, it may be key to appreciate their prosociality, the meaningfulness of their work, and their contribution to the community. For self-oriented volunteers, it is appropriate to offer opportunities for development: for example, workshops, training, supervision, opportunities for professional growth, or the acquisition of certificates that increase their competence and value in their professional lives. Creating space for social connections and a volunteer community can also encourage volunteers to stay with the organisation.

Finally, volunteer organisations should adapt their programs to the diverse motivations of volunteers and offer activities on a regular but flexible basis. This can increase the frequency and intensity of participation and strengthen the motivation of volunteers themselves.

The research findings contribute to understanding the specifics of Slovak volunteering and can provide a starting point for the National Program for the Development of Volunteering in Slovakia 2024 - 2030 in the area of motivation and open up opportunities for further research that can contribute to the more effective development of the volunteer sector in Slovakia.

Acknowledgements

Funded by the EU NextGenerationEU through the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia under the project No. 09I03-03-V05-00009.

The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Matej Bel University.

The research was conducted in compliance with the ethical standards set by the Declaration of Helsinki (1964).

Anonymised data will be accessible as a dataset on the UMB website after the monograph is published, which is expected to be by the end of 2025.

The authors did not preregister their analysis plan.

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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