

Altruism as a psychological basis volunteering of student youth

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Abstract. The article considers the manifestations of altruism in the students' volunteer activities. It has been stated that the source of altruism is empathy, and the main motives are moral duty and moral compassion. The usage of S. Bubnova's method "Diagnosis of the real structure of personality value orientations" made it possible to identify the connection between altruism and the system of personality values. It has been established that altruistic behavior is characteristic of students in general, and it becomes a priority for student volunteers. The results of the study give grounds to assert that altruism is the psychological basis of volunteer activity of student youth.

Keywords: *altruism, volunteer activity, student youth, values, value orientations.*

Introduction. Altruism as a psychological and moral-ethical phenomenon has attracted the attention of many philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, educators, and representatives of other humanities. At one time, the question of altruism interested many ancient philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, etc.), who saw it as a reasonable limitation of selfish needs. Medieval European philosophy and ethics proclaimed the fundamental principles of life love and mercy [16]. Later, the concept of "altruism" developed as a moral principle of English ethics of the XVIII century (A. Shaftesbury, F. Hutcheson, A. Smith, D. Hume) in line with the ideas of the French Enlightenment (J.-J. Rousseau) and German ethics (G. Leibniz, I. Kant, L. Feuerbach) [20, p. 171].

In the ethical Christian doctrine, altruism has been reflected in such categories as a love of neighbor, goodwill, a duty to man, generosity, charity, compassion, selfless material assistance, care for the sick, protection, care, service, etc. [20, p. 171]. Although the attitude of Christian theologians to altruism was ambiguous: it was accused of "philanthropy" [21, p. 45] and "pleasing man", in which God and the duty to keep his commandments are forgotten [8].

The French philosopher O. Comte, who believed that altruistic behavior is due to selfless human motives [24, p. 43], introduced the concept of «altruism» into scientific circulation. However, there was also no consensus among scholars on the interpretation of this phenomenon. Thus, in Freud's psychoanalytic conception altruism was shown as a neurotic need of weakening guilt of the subject or as compensation of the repressed primordial selfishness [5, p. 181]. G. Spencer saw in altruism an adaptive property that arose in the process of evolution. A. Schopenhauer pointed to a common source of altruism and selfishness: selfishness, which comes from suffering, altruism, which comes from compassion as a kind of suffering. According to E. Durkheim, altruism is a psychological state of society, when the individual is completely absorbed by the group, sharing its goals and norms [16].

Modernist ethical concepts state that altruism includes: love of neighbor, charity, desire to help, compassion, self-restraint, tolerance, helpfulness, mercy, consolation, protection, attention, generosity, duty, support [20, p. 172]. However, the initial basis for the formation of man as an altruist is a selfless desire to help others [5, p. 181].

Likely, altruism is closely linked to the volunteer movement as a form of civic activity aimed at providing unselfish social assistance. Higher education seekers are the most

numerous and active participants in the volunteer movement in Ukraine. Forms of their participation in volunteering are quite diverse: assistance to orphans, children from low-income families and people with disabilities, assistance to the military and the elderly, participation in environmental projects, free assistance in sports and other events, etc.

The psychological aspect of volunteering related to the factor of altruism has not been sufficiently studied. Although the organization of recruitment, training, support of volunteering students, the effectiveness of their volunteer activities, and the impact on social development in general depends on the understanding of this psychological aspect. Given these circumstances, the study of altruism as a psychological basis for student volunteering today seems to be an urgent task.

A brief overview of publications on the topic. The basis for clarifying the essence of volunteering as a kind of charity are several theories, which, in our opinion, should be considered in three main sections: social, psychological, and evolutionary.

Within the social approach, there are at least two views on the mechanisms that regulate the balance of altruistic processes in society. The first view is based on the rules of mutual exchange, and the second justifies the assimilation of altruism as a social norm [7].

The theory of social exchange is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms of organizational behavior, which involves several interactions [4, p. 874]. The main assumption of this theory is that people help only when the benefits outweigh the costs [14], and the exchange itself is carried out according to one or more "rules of exchange": rationality, reciprocity, altruism, consistency of status or competition [15, p. 485]. The main ideas that make up the theory of social exchange have not been properly formulated yet [4, p. 874], but this theory essentially denies altruistic behavior as a hypothetical possibility [12, p. 59].

The theory of social norms explains altruistic behavior by a set of ordered norms [12, p. 59; 23], which determine the rules of conduct and determine what people are obliged to do [14]. Researchers have identified two social norms that motivate altruistic behavior: the norm of reciprocity and the norm of social responsibility [12; 14; 23].

The norm of reciprocity encourages people to respond with good, not evil, to those who have come to the rescue. This is the only universal code of honor: those who help us, we must help, not harm [14]. The norm of reciprocity

determines the exchange of material goods, actions, charity, and even harm ("an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"). However, if the assistance is based on reciprocity, it loses its altruistic nature [5, p. 220].

The norm of social responsibility encourages people to take care of those who need it for as long as necessary, even when they are unable to thank [14]. It requires assistance to an old, sick, or poor person [5, p. 219]. This norm underlies altruistic behavior towards socially immature or helpless people: children, the infirm, the disabled, the elderly, and all those who cannot reciprocate [7]. We can agree that the implementation of volunteering involves compliance with the norm of social responsibility [23].

Among the psychological theories that describe altruistic behavior, we can highlight the theory of mutual altruism, the theory of altruism as a disguised egoism, and theories based on empathy. The theory of mutual altruism states that people will support another person if they hope for prosaic behavior in return, expecting to receive affection in the future [1, p. 185].

One of the psychological theories of altruism considers the provision of any help as a manifestation of disguised selfishness. Its main premise is the attitude that altruistic behavior cannot be used in principle; it is always aimed at obtaining certain benefits. Among the possible benefits of altruism are usually called self-reward (increased self-esteem and self-confidence) and complacency (relief from guilt or remorse) [7].

According to many psychologists, altruism is the result of empathy, due to which we sympathize with a person, feel similar feelings with him, and respond to his emotions [7]. Feeling compassionate, we do not think so much about ourselves as about the one who suffers [14]. Besides, empathy may be the basis of human manipulation [7], thus we must agree with Myers that empathy is the source of true altruism [14].

The third approach of the interpretation of altruism is based on the evolutionary theory. Darwin also drew attention to the biological basis of altruistic behavior, trying to reconcile altruistic processes with the basic provisions of the theory of natural selection [8]. According to evolutionary psychologists, the quintessence of life is the preservation of the gene pool [14]. According to Hamilton, altruism arose as a mechanism for preserving our genes in the bodies of people close to us [7], so people are more likely to help those with whom they are genetically related [21, p. 46]. Thus, the main idea of this theory is in thought that for any individual it is the appropriate only activity that ensures the survival of his own family [12, p. 59]. One of the forms of self-sacrifice is attachment to one's children [14].

In social psychology, the idea that altruism is selfless care, help, self-sacrifice and has gained recognition [20, p. 174], willingness to provide selfless help without regard to their selfish interests [14]. Altruism is a rule according to which we strive to benefit another person even at an absolute price for ourselves [4, p. 879].

From a psychological standpoint, altruism is often understood as a devotion, conscious and voluntary service to people, the desire to help others [20, p. 175]. In Western psychology, altruism is a motive for help, manifested in compassion, in meeting the needs of the helpless, in the desire to care for, comfort, protect, and care [5, p. 181-182].

In this case, altruism involves the promotion of not the general interest, but the interest of another person [20, p. 175]. The altruist is ready to help completely unselfishly, even when he is not offered anything in return.

In psychology, altruism is often seen as the opposite of selfishness and (or) competition [4, p. 879]. However, if the altruist helps others, even when potentially he is harming himself, then in the case of competition, the individual harms others, even at the risk of their benefit [15]. Altruistic behavior that stems from a sense of moral obligation to act according to personal norms [22, p. 273], identified with prosocial behavior [20, p. 174], aimed at the benefit of others, rather than some external reward [5, p. 218].

Adolescence is characterized by a high level of formation of prosocial behavior, which is due to psychological mechanisms of identification, empathy, and reflection [6, p. 112]. Its special case is altruistic behavior [12, p. 58], and in terms of social significance, the highest level of prosocial self-realization is altruism [13, p. 4].

According to G. Bierhoff, it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of "help", "prosocial behavior" and "altruism". The aid concerns actions aimed at improving the situation of the beneficiary. Prosocial behavior refers to assistance that is not motivated by professional obligations. Altruism refers to prosocial behavior, which has the ultimate goal - to benefit another person [1, p. 179].

It is believed that the manifestation of altruism is associated with two motives: moral duty, in which help is usually sacrificial ("detached"), and moral compassion, in which a person shows altruism in connection with the identification-empathic merger, identification, empathy, but sometimes does not come to action [5, p. 221]. Altruistic personality is characterized primarily by a focus on others, concern for the welfare of loved ones, empathy, kindness [11, p. 62]. It would be impossible without altruism, friendship, love, salvation, volunteering, charity, etc. [16].

Thus, despite the often quite significant differences in the views of different scientists on altruism, the scientific community has formed a fairly clear idea of its nature and manifestations in different life situations. Some attention was also paid to the place and role of altruism in volunteering, which has long traditions and different forms of practical implementation in terms of different regions, ages, and social groups.

A peculiar trend of recent times, at least in Ukraine, is the active participation in student volunteering, which is motivated by various factors. At the same time, the place and role of altruism as a psychological factor of student volunteering remains insufficiently studied.

The purpose of the article is to clarify the nature and manifestations of altruism as a psychological basis for volunteering students.

Materials and methods. We used the method of S. Bubnova's "Diagnosis of the real structure of value orientations of the individual" to study the system of value orientations (including those related to altruism) of students who participate in the volunteer movement [3]. It makes it possible to determine the value orientations of respondents, including those seeking higher education, which further influences the choice of life path and the implementation of certain life strategies. The technique allows you to explore the value human's sphere in terms of 11 groups of values. 1 - a pleasant pastime and rest; 2 - high material well-being;

3 - search and enjoyment of the beautiful; 4 - help and mercy towards other people; 5 - love; 6 - knowledge of the new in the world, nature, man; 7 - high social status and people management; 8 - recognition and respect of people, influencing others; 9 - a social activity to achieve positive changes in society; 10 - communication; 11 - health.

Among these groups of values should be distinguished those that directly (help and mercy concerning other people) or indirectly (recognition and respect for people and influence on others; love) relate to altruistic behavior.

During the study process, there were also used methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, descriptive statistics, ranking, and parametric methods of statistical comparison of two independent samples.

Results and their discussion. In a general sense, volunteering can be considered as one of the phenomena of altruism. The results of psychological research show that the personality of the volunteer is characterized by an altruistic orientation [17, p. 390], and for a significant part of student youth volunteering is an important area of personal self-realization [18, p. 171].

Psychological research states that the prerequisites for altruism are the following personality traits: empathy, the ability to consider the consequences of their actions for other people, and personal norms that set the patterns of evaluation of the subject of the altruistic act [12, p. 61]. Altruist statements often contain the words: happiness, goodness, peace, justice, and so on. [11, p. 62].

It is important that altruism is based on the value system of the individuality [22, p. 275]. According to the study [10, p. 84], almost half of the volunteers are dominated by pronounced altruistic attitudes, which are characterized by a desire to provide selfless help to people who need it. Leading positions in the value hierarchy of volunteers are also self-confidence, spiritual freedom, development and self-improvement, cheerfulness, breadth of knowledge, and views [17, p. 390].

In the process of volunteering, students form and significantly change the system of value orientations. The main factors on which depend the formation of value orientations of participants in the volunteer movement are educational, organizational, activity (practical), communication, social, professional, personal [18, p. 171]. It should be noted that the list of basic values of student youth practically does not undergo significant transformations during their studies at a higher education institution. At the same time, their importance depending on various external and internal factors is constantly changing [19, p. 268].

With the help of S. Bubnova's method in 2020, we conducted a study in which 65 students of 2-4 courses of the Faculty of Mathematics, Physics, Computer Science and Technology of Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, who received education in pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialties, with such qualifications as a teacher of mathematics, teacher of computer science, teacher of physics, teacher of labor training and technology, specialist of professional education in the field of service, and mathematics.

After the survey, respondents, depending on the experience of volunteering, were divided into two groups: student volunteers and students who do not volunteer. The number of the first group was 34 people, the second - 31 people. The results were processed after diagnosing the students by

adding positive answers separately for each of the 11 groups of values following the method developed by the author of the key with the subsequent finding of arithmetic mean values for each group of respondents.

As a result of calculations for students-volunteers the following rating list of groups of values were received (in parentheses is the arithmetic mean value): 1) "help and mercy concerning other people" (4.88); 2) "pleasant pastime, rest" (4.44); 3) "recognition and respect of people, influencing others" (4.32); 4) "love" (4.03); 5-6) "high material well-being" (3.12); 5-6) "knowledge of the new in the world, nature, man" (3.12); 7) "search and enjoyment of the beautiful" (3.06); 8) "health" (3.00); 9) "communication" (2.94); 10) "high social status and people management" (2.82); 11) "social activity to achieve positive changes in society" (2.29).

For students who do not take part in volunteering process, the rating list of value groups was as follows: 1) "pleasant pastime, rest" (4.16); 2) "recognition and respect for people and influence on others" (3.84); 3) "help and mercy towards other people" (3.65); 4) "love" (3.61); 5) "knowledge of the new in the world, nature, man" (3.16); 6) "high material well-being" (3.13); 7-8) "high social status and people management" (2.97); 7-8) "health" (2.97); 9) "communication" (2.68); 10) "search and enjoyment of the beautiful" (2.65); 11) "social activity to achieve positive changes in society" (2.13). To increase the level of visualization, the results of the study for both groups of students was shown in Figure 1.

The comparative analysis showed that for volunteering students the main value (1st ranking position) was to "help and mercy towards other people" with a fairly high final score (4.88), which is significantly higher than the same figure for students which were not engaged in any volunteer activities (3.65). The value of "recognition and respect for people and influence on others" among student volunteers (4.32) was also significantly higher than the value of the other groups (3.84), as well as the value of "love" (4.03 as opposed to 3.61). This is the evidence that, on the one hand, altruistic behavior is quite characteristic of students in general, and on the other hand, it becomes a priority for volunteering students.

It is noteworthy that the indicators of other groups of values for volunteering students and students who were not engaged in any volunteer activities are very close in absolute value and rating position. The leading role in the system of value orientations of value "pleasant pastime, rest" can be explained by psychological and social features of youth. Thus the first four (on a rating) values occupy leading positions in both investigated groups. The last rating position of the value "social activity to achieve positive changes in society" is the evidence of the personality-oriented attitude of students to others, which can also be seen as an indirect argument in favor of their altruistic behavior.

To determine statistically significant differences between two independent samples, first we need to check the normality of the distribution of features. In this case, to make it possible to do this, we must find the asymmetry and excess of the distribution and compare them with the critical values [9, p. 137]. Our studies have shown that for all groups of values the values of asymmetries and excesses do not exceed critical values. This means that in all cases we are dealing with a normal distribution, so we can use it

as a basic Student's t-test.

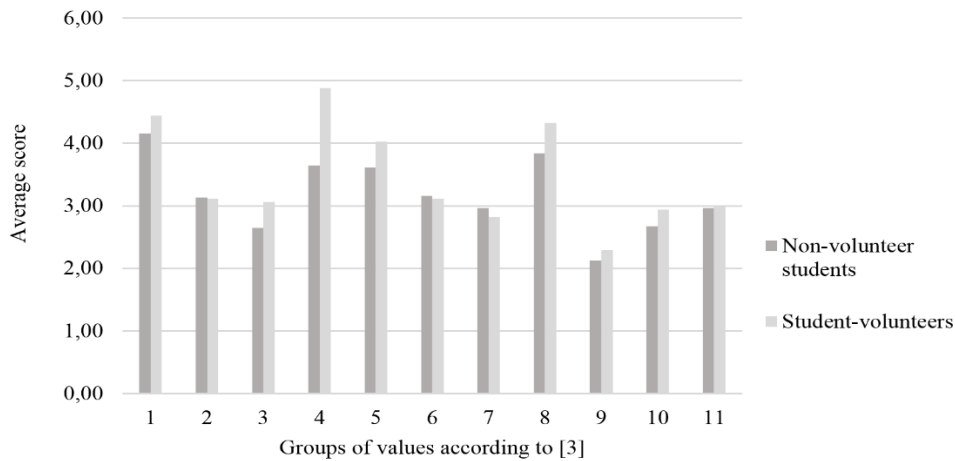


Fig. 1. Structure of value orientations (average score) of student-volunteers and students who are not engaged in volunteer activity.

In this case, we should also check the equality (homogeneity) of the variances of the independent samples, which will be carried out using Fisher's F-test [2, p. 86]. The test results, which are shown in table 1, showed that for the three groups of values (7, 9, and 10) the value of

$F_{emp} > F_{cr}$, which is equal to 1.62. This confirms the hypothesis of dispersion inequality at the level of $\alpha < 0.05$. Therefore, in these cases, it is necessary to apply the Welsh t-test, which is a modified Student's t-test for independent samples with inhomogeneous variances [2, p. 86] and takes into account, in particular, the different sample sizes.

Table 1. Fisher's F-test

Value group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Fisher's F-test	0.50	1.41	1.18	0.51	0.55	1.06	2.06	0.87	1.97	1.64	1.37

The next step is to find the Student's t-test for samples with homogeneous variances and the Welsh t-test for samples with inhomogeneous variances and then compare

them with the critical values determined for a given probability level ($\alpha=0.05$). The obtained data, as well as the generalized results of experimental data processing, are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Generalized results of determining the indicators of value orientations of student-volunteers (S-V) and students who are not engaged in volunteer activity (NV-S)

№	Value group	Average values		Ranking indicators		T-criterion	
		S-V	NV-S	S-V	NV-S	Student's	Welsh
1	A pleasant pastime and rest	4.44	4.16	2	1	1.020	---
2	High material well-being	3.12	3.13	5-6	6	-0.033	---
3	Search and enjoyment of the beautiful	3.06	2.65	7	10	1.053	---
4	Help and mercy towards other people	4.88	3.65	1	3	3.547	---
5	Love	4.03	3.61	4	4	1.447	---
6	Knowledge of the new in the world, nature, man	3.12	3.16	5-6	5	-0.115	---
7	High social status and people management	2.82	2.97	10	7-8	---	-0.405
8	Recognition and respect of people, influencing others	4.32	3.84	3	2	1.475	---
9	A social activity to achieve positive changes in society	2.29	2.13	11	11	---	0.492
10	Communication	2.94	2.68	9	9	---	0.949
11	Health	3.00	2.97	8	7-8	0.098	---

Since the empirical value of the Student's t-test for the 4th group of values (help and mercy towards other people) is more critical for the probability level $\alpha = 0.05$ ($t_{emp}=3.547 > t_{cr}=1.999$), the differences between the samples are statistically significant. In all other cases, the empirical values of the Student's t-test are less than critical for the probability level $\alpha=0.05$. A similar picture can be observed for groups of values for which the Welsh t-test was determined (7, 9, 10): in these cases, the empirical values of the t-test are also less than the critical one ($t_{cr}=2.000$). This means that the differences between the samples are statistically insignificant.

The noted differences in the average scores for the value groups "love" and "recognition and respect for people and influence on others" were not confirmed at the level of

probability $\alpha=0.05$. At the same time, for the probability level $\alpha=0.2$, the empirical values of the Student's t-test are greater than the critical one ($t_{cr}=1.296$). That is, statistical differences between these samples exist, but they can be described as insignificant. At the same time, for the 4th group of values ("help and mercy towards other people") the empirical value of Student's t-test is more critical not only for the probability level $\alpha = 0.05$, but also for the probability levels $\alpha=0.01$ ($t_{emp}=3.547 > (t_{cr}=2.660)$) and $\alpha=0.001$ ($t_{emp}=3.547 > t_{cr}=3.456$). It means that this group of values, which directly reflects the altruistic attitudes of the individual, distinguishes volunteering students from students who are not involved in volunteering.

Conclusions. Thus, altruism as a psychological phenomenon is a rather complex and ambiguous phenomenon.

Most often, it is associated with selfless help, compassion, care, guardianship, and sometimes-even self-sacrifice, which has a personality-oriented nature. As for the empathy it is believed to be the source of true altruism, and its manifestations are related to two motives - moral duty and moral compassion.

Altruism is closely linked to the volunteer movement, the most numerous and active part of which are students by themselves. A characteristic feature of a volunteer's per-

sonality, including a student-volunteer, is his altruistic orientation. An important feature of altruism is that it is based on the human value system. Because of the study of the system of value orientations of students, it was found that altruistic orientation is quite characteristic of students in general, and it becomes a priority for volunteering students. It gives grounds to the claim that altruism is the psychological basis and the leading motivation for volunteering students.

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