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# Motivations of Hospice Volunteers at the Beginning and During Their Service

## ABSTRACT

Hospice volunteering is a very specific type of volunteering connected with care for the sick and dying in the terminal period of a disease. The subject of the article are the motivations of hospice volunteers: the ones they had when they came to the hospice, and those they have after a period of service. The aim is not only to describe and compare them, but also to present their outlook depending on the age of volunteers, the length of their ministry, and the type of service. Thanks to this research, motivations emerge as to why someone might choose to become a hospice volunteer, as well as what makes someone able to persevere in this service. This is an important question for those responsible for recruiting new volunteers.

In the theoretical part of the article, the basic notion connected with hospice volunteering and its motivations were shown. The research part is the analysis of the results obtained through the survey method. The fruit of the research are conclusions regarding the motivation at the beginning of the ministry and later, as well as differences in motivation depending on the age, length and type of the respondents' service.

KEYWORDS  
hospice volunteering,  
motivation, volunteer,  
perseverance in  
service, altruism

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## Introduction

Each candidate who wishes to join hospice voluntary service is asked about the motivations to take up such work. Most candidates have specific reasons why they want to become volunteers. The ones who lack such motives usually quit. Those who stay sometimes change the reasons why they volunteer. And then another motivation appears.

The paradigm that became the basis for this research was structural functionalism within which a certain role played by hospice volunteers was assumed (Babbie 2013). This role is connected with those people's particular motivations. The subject of this article is also the difference among motivations with which volunteers come to the hospice and those with which they continue working there.

In the theoretical part of the article, I described the basic terms connected with volunteering, hospice reality and motivation. In the next part, we presented the analysis of the author's own survey among the volunteers of St. Lazarus' Hospice in Krakow.

## The meaning of hospice volunteering

The term "hospice" comes from Latin *hospes* which means hospitality, guest house, inn, accommodation (Weber 2009). However, hospice is not necessarily connected with a particular place. Hospice means people who give the dying "hospitality of the heart." The founder of the first hospice in the world (St. Christopher's Hospice—established in 1967) was Cicely Saunders. She claimed that "the scientific centre of interests of a hospice team is fighting with pain" (Saunders 1980: 266). According to Saunders, hospice work is situated around the *care system* which should complement the *cure system*, i.e. treatment (Saunders 1980). If possible, a hospice patient should be given physical and psychological comfort. Saunders believed that, while performing hospice service, "we are obliged to fight for life, not for prolonging dying" (Saunders 1980: 271). Hospice is not a place for passive euthanasia, but a place for symptomatic, palliative treatment. It is also a place where you can meet "good people who always find time to patiently listen to another person, to serve

with sympathy, tact, full commitment and peace at the same time” (Saunders 1980: 287).

Eugeniusz Dutkiewicz, the founder of the hospice “Pallottinum” in Gdańsk, said that hospice spiritual care is “leading the dying person towards the thresholds of eternity” (Dutkiewicz 1997: 111). According to Eugeniusz Dutkiewicz, “hospice (...) wants to restore the deserved and proper place in medicine to such values as the suffering patient’s dignity and service to others” (Dutkiewicz 1997: 115). Defining the concept of a hospice, Dutkiewicz stated that “the key of the hospice care philosophy is time which enables its being full of the hospitality of the heart” (Dutkiewicz 1997: 119). Thus, “a hospice team must be a group of friends who have the same view of a hospice idea, the same objective and orientation” (Dutkiewicz 1997: 119).

Volunteers are very important in the work of hospices. In her report, Jadwiga Przewłocka gave the definition of a volunteer:

A volunteer is an individual who, voluntarily and without a salary, provides services to non-governmental organisations, Church (religious) entities, social associations, as well as bodies of public administration or their subordinate units (Przewłocka 2010: 7).

And according to Marta Gumkowska, “voluntary work means unpaid, voluntary service to others, going beyond family or friendly relations” (Gumkowska 2005: 3). A similar definition is also given by Piotr Krakowiak who refers to the Service Department of the Social Initiative Movement writing that voluntary work is unpaid, conscious, voluntary service to others, going beyond one’s relations with family or friends (Krakowiak, Janowicz 2008). In the light of the *Act on voluntary work*, a volunteer is a person who “voluntarily and without a salary provides services according to the principles specified in the act” (*Ustawa o działalności pożytku publicznego i wolontariacie [Act on public benefit and voluntary work]* 2003, art. 2).

On the basis of the above definitions, we can conclude that voluntary work involves conscious performance of voluntary and unpaid services to others. Also, we can talk about voluntary work if such services are not related to the support provided to a person’s family or friends.

Hospice voluntary work is related to helping the sick, the dying and their families, which is a very difficult and specific kind of



volunteering. The motivation that makes people get involved in such work is often different than the motivation in other kinds of voluntary activities.

## Motivation to take up voluntary work, including hospice volunteering

According to psychologists, motivation is

(...) on the one hand—a disposition to activate, maintain and direct given forms of behaviours (...), and—on the other hand—the current process of activity focused on fulfilling more or less specified objectives, which is accompanied by various feelings (emotions) and which involves other forms of psychological life (e.g. thinking, memory) (Gasiul 2002: 223).

In the report on voluntary and charity activities in Poland, Jadwiga Przewłocka provided the following motives making the Poles take up voluntary work: pleasure (43%), the belief that if I help someone, someone shall help me (32%), values (29%), contact with people and spending time (23%), gaining new skills (21%), imitating friends (18%), inability to say “no” (13%), a debt to pay off (4%), gaining experience for future work (2%) (Przewłocka 2010).

The survey concerned the general population of the Poles. In case of young people, these motives are slightly different. The motivations for volunteering were analysed in a group of secondary school students (Kapuścińska 2012). Ninety-six students from classes 2 and 3 were surveyed. 27.1% of the respondents said that they were motivated by pleasure and satisfaction with such work. 21.9% said that they help because others do the same. 18.7% hoped that one day someone shall help them, too. 16.7% declared the willingness to meet new people while performing voluntary work. 11.5% decided that this is what the situation requires and 4.1% were motivated by the lack of activities or other motives. As we can see, in the group of young people less volunteers derive pleasure from such work, and many of them are motivated by the willingness to meet new people through voluntary activities.

In other studies, in the group of 81 volunteers, 20.1% people believed that we should help others, and 4.9% hoped that in future someone shall help them, too (Ożóg 2012). 21.9% found it pleasant, 4.9% was unable to say ‘no’, and 17% wanted to learn something new. 4.9% of the respondents counted on some trips with the selected organisation, 1.9% wanted to become employed there, 18.5% wanted to do something good, 4.9% felt that they are called to support others, and 1.5% had different motives. This survey also involved people at various ages, but most of them were rather young. It included a motive related to non-governmental organisations working in different countries, i.e. related to the opportunity to use voluntary work as the way to get to know those countries. Such motives are noticeable in the replies of 29 volunteers working in China. It turned out that 14% of those respondents were motivated by the willingness to travel; 72%—the willingness to help others; 62%—the willingness to gain new experience; 45%—personal development; 21%—gaining practical experience, 3%—escaping from the requirements of life; and 3%—having a break from everyday life (Jackson, Adarlo 2016).

The volunteers’ motivations are analysed in different manners. For example, the Chinese volunteers were surveyed through a questionnaire (Wu, Li, Khoo 2016). 362 were surveyed and 5 motivating factors were discovered: internal motivation, identified regulation, external regulation, introduced regulation and amotivation.

In the above-mentioned investigations, one of the motives for volunteering included the willingness to gain professional experience (Bacter, Marc 2016; Goodman, Tredway 2016). Also, it turns out that volunteers are characterised by a lower level of professional burnout and stress (Ramos, Gunter, Brauchli et al. 2016).

In 2013, in the group of 67 men and 226 women scientists analysed the relation between the identification with pro-social motivations and the internalization of social norms (Winterich, Aquino, Mittal, Swartz 2013). The people who properly internalize social norms, ideals or so-called high objectives, are more oriented at others and ready to take up voluntary work.

The narrative research carried out among 14 short-term volunteers working in the New Scotland-Gambia Association showed the influence on creating a stronger bond with the voluntary work (Campbell, Warner 2016). It turned out that the ones who were more

involved in the relations with the local people were later more committed to the voluntary work.

According to the research carried out among 5515 other volunteers, the organizational aspect and the atmosphere of non-profit organizations is very important for their motivation (Van Schie, Gunter, Oostlander, Wehner 2015; Nencini, Romaldi, Maneghini 2016). Such atmosphere is a kind of “mediator” between the internal motivation and satisfaction.

Also, it turned out that social competences of people involved in voluntary work are very important for staying in a given organisation (Li, Wu, Kee 2016).

In a research carried out in one of religious charities in Australia, religious motivation turned out to play a significant role in the motives for taking up voluntary work (Erasmus, Morey 2016). It influences the satisfaction with helping and with social behaviours, which was confirmed while analysing the sample consisting of 107 people, including 63 women and 44 men.

A very specific kind of voluntary work is the involvement in scientific research. It is also very complex in terms of motivations (Kwakye, Garner, Baldwin et al. 2016). In such a work, financial motivation is very strong. Nevertheless, in such kind of volunteering there are also other motives, e.g. the willingness to help the scientists or be a part of a bigger project.

In a volunteer's work, egoistic motivation often struggles with the altruistic one (Włodarczyk 2011). The very fact of taking up voluntary work cleans egoistic motives and motivation becomes more altruistic. That is why, on the one hand, we can motivate people to voluntary work through arousing their altruism, but—on the other hand—through presenting the benefits such as gaining professional experience and new skills, making social contacts, as well as individual profits and satisfaction (Basińska, Nowak 2010).

There is no doubt that a specific kind of voluntary work is helping the sick and the disabled. In the narrative interview of 10 volunteers working with deafblinds, the following motivating factors appeared: the need to satisfy one's needs related to values; the need to understand the world; the need to build one's own hierarchy of values; the ability to gain professional experience; the need to find one's group and adjust to it; and the willingness to understand and cope with

one's problems (Sobolewska-Popko 2012). The analysis of the motivation to voluntary work during the Olympic Games for the disabled was carried out among 252 people (Kumnig, Schnitzer, Beck et al. 2015). The scholars surveyed their socio-demographic features, satisfaction with life and mood, as well as satisfaction with the tasks they perform. It turned out that satisfaction with life and good mood are good predictors for getting involved in voluntary work. On the basis of the study conducted among hospice volunteers, Mirosław Górecki divided the motivation to hospice volunteering into the following kinds: altruistic (46.3%), task-based (21.8%), ideological (14.8%), affiliative, i.e. related to searching for the environment of people who think in a similar way (9.2%), and egoistic (7.9%) (Górecki 2000). In 2005, interviews with volunteers (10) were carried out in three hospices in Sweden (Andersson, Ohlen 2005). They showed that the motivation to perform voluntary service is very complex. In the group of the interviewed people, altruistic motivation was inseparably related to the fulfilment of one's interests through volunteering.

In 2008 the scholars analysed 192 volunteers in terms of their motivation and satisfaction with the service (Finkelstein 2008). The ones whose initial motivation was the willingness to help others are more satisfied with the work than others. The former stay in charity organisations for a longer time.

In the research related to the social profile of hospice volunteers it turned out that most often these are white, married women at a medium age, satisfied with their financial situation, non-working, and religious (Starnes, Wymer 1999). Their motives for voluntary work can be both altruistic and personal ones, related to the situation of a particular person.

A lot of elderly people get involved in hospice volunteering. The analysis of the motivation of volunteers at different ages showed that younger people are more focused on building new relations (Omoto, Snyder, Martino 2000), while elder people are more altruistic and willing to serve others.

The research conducted among 955 elder volunteers aged 50+ showed that their individual resources connected with personal relationships strongly influence their involvement in voluntary work (Principi, Naegele, Di Rosa, Lamura 2016). According to the results of the research carried out among 277 volunteers of Oshar Lifelong



Learning in the USA, elder peoples' volunteering is one of the ways to practice lifelong learning (Yamashita, Lopez, Soligo, Keene 2017).

Seeing the importance of the volunteers' satisfaction in different organizations, people responsible for charity work create programs aimed at arousing the motivations of young people who get involved in voluntary work (Chien 2017). One of such programs includes special training sessions organised in Taiwan for volunteers. The investigation of the sample of 289 volunteers showed that the participation in the project was important for the further commitment to scientific voluntary work and feeling satisfied with it.

Building both the external and internal motivation, people responsible for volunteers create special preparatory programs for them (Stukas, Snyder, Clary 2016).

## Research procedure

The author's own research was carried out in 2017 among 46 volunteers of St. Lazarus' Hospice in Krakow. The subject of the survey included their initial motivations to undertake hospice volunteering, as well as the motivations of the people who have been performing this service for some time. The theoretical objective included discovering how the motivations can change. The practical objective was related to gaining knowledge on what makes the volunteers continue their service—often for several years. The main problem was formulated in the question: "What is the difference between the motivations that made the volunteer start volunteering, and the motivations that make him/her still work as a volunteer?" The detailed problems were formulated in the following three questions: (1) What is the relation between the volunteers' motivation and age, as well as the length of their service? (2) What is the relation between the volunteers' motivation and the kind of involvement in voluntary work? (3) What is the difference between the volunteer's initial motivation and current motivation?

The variables in the research were: the volunteers' motivation at the beginning of their service and now; their age; the length and kind of their involvement in voluntary work. The indicators of the motivation included the selection of the kind of motivation from the two lists: one was connected with the beginning of the service;

another—with the current moment. The research method was a poll; the technique—a survey, and the tool—a questionnaire prepared by the author. The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the existing investigations. It includes various kinds of motivations that were given in the books and by the candidates during the recruitment interviews conducted by the author from 2012 to 2018. Such motivations include: the lack of specific reasons for taking up the voluntary work; loneliness; the need to correct one's mistakes in caring for family members; searching for a friendly environment; trying to deal with one's own problems; taking someone's advice in selecting a particular field of voluntary work; following higher values; the willingness to share the good one had received from God; pleasure derived from such work; expecting support from others on the basis of reciprocity; the willingness to meet new people; the desire to gain new skills; imitating friends; the inability to say 'no' to the request for help; the willingness to pay off a debt; the willingness to gain experience; the need to feel appreciated; a case of cancer in the volunteer's family; and other reasons. Apart from the questions concerning socio-demographic data, two other questions appeared in the questionnaire. One of them referred to marking the motivation with which the volunteer came to the hospice. The other one was related to the current motivation—the one that makes him/her persist in working there. Thus, the former question referred to a retrospective look at one's motivations, and the latter—to their current status. The role of such questions was educational, as it enabled the volunteers to reflect on their service.

The research sample was purposefully selected among the volunteers working in St. Lazarus' Hospice in Krakow. It consisted of the volunteers who participate in the volunteer meetings held once a month. They were informed about the objective of the research. The study was anonymous. It was not obligatory for the volunteers to participate in it. The survey was carried out by Bożena Wąż—a co-ordinator in charge of the team of volunteers. 46 volunteers were researched. Their average age was 57 ( $s^1 = 13.93$ ), and the average time of working in the Hospice was 6 years ( $s = 7.23$ ). The group included 37 women and 9 men.

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<sup>1</sup> S—standard deflection

Most of the volunteers completed a course which was organised in 2017. However, after dividing them into two groups, it turned out that, before 2012, 14 of the surveyed volunteers took part in the course, and after 2012—32 of them took part in it. 2012 was important for St. Lazarus' Hospice because that year a coordinator left, who had managed the team of volunteers for 20 years. The volunteers were in close relations with her, which is reflected in the fact that a lot of people prepared by her (30%) still perform voluntary work.

In the group of the surveyed volunteers, 40 people provide in-patient hospice care, and 6 people provide outpatient hospice care. In the Doctor Deszcz' Club one volunteer from the research group is involved. There is one person committed to the prayer group, and another person is involved in administrative voluntary work. Some of the researched volunteers are involved in several kinds of service.

### Analysis of research results

The research results were analysed through statistical tests. Since the motivation is a two-value variable, non parametric tests were applied: Spearman's rho test and Wilcoxon's pair test which counts the differences in the variable in two dependent groups. The description of particular research problems was completed with the discussion on the results.

### Motivation of the researched volunteers at the beginning and now

The surveyed volunteers were to use the questionnaire to mark the reasons why they started to work in the hospice and why they are working there now.

The most frequently chosen motivations were: following the values (sum = 36<sup>2</sup>) and pleasure derived from such service (sum = 24). The third place is occupied by the need to share the good one had received from God (sum = 20). Also, it is worth noting that following the values and deriving pleasure from such a service are also the

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<sup>2</sup> The sum consists of the number of selections of a given motivation by the surveyed volunteers.

motivations chosen by the majority of the volunteers ( $\text{mod} = 1$ ). Each motivation was selected by someone ( $\text{min} = 0$ ,  $\text{max} = 1$  in each case).

Also, at present, the volunteers are most often motivated by: following the values ( $\text{sum} = 39$ ), pleasure derived from such work ( $\text{sum} = 25$ ), and the desire to share the good one had been given from God ( $\text{sum} = 21$ ). In this case, too, most of the researched volunteers chose the motivations such as following the values and wishing to share what they had been given from God ( $\text{mod} = 1$ ). Each reason was chosen by someone from the group. However, to see if there is a difference in selecting the motivations that appeared at the beginning and now, the Wilcoxon's pair test was used, which is a non parametric test analysing the significance of the difference between the dependent variables. In order for this test to have the power of 0.90, the number of the group members should be at least 15, which means that it can be conducted within the sample of 46 people.

The first statistically important difference can be noticed in the motivation that is specified as: taking someone's advice in choosing voluntary work ( $p = 0.027$ ;  $Z = 2.201$ ). It was the reason why eight people started working in the hospice. Only two people believe that they still perform voluntary work for this reason, which means that the reason is still important for only two people. Another motivation in which there is a statistically important difference between the initial and the current situation, is the motivation specified as: the occurrence of a cancer in the family ( $p = 0.027$ ;  $Z = 2.201$ ). Fifteen people claim that it was important for them when they took up the service in the hospice, and nine volunteers still find it an important motivation. A statistically important difference also appears while providing other motivations, related to more personal experiences ( $p = 0.024$ ;  $Z = 2.242$ ). While starting the service, as many as nine people had other motivations than the above mentioned—the reasons were more connected with personal experiences. Now there is only one person with such motivations. To sum it up, we can say that the volunteers' motivation to continue their work is related to the influence of external situations or people unrelated to the hospice. Perhaps those motivations become more internal as the voluntary work continues.



## The dependence between the volunteers' motivation and their age and length of service

In order to analyse the relation between the age and motivation of the volunteers, Spearman's rho test was carried out. The power of the test is 0.80 for a research sample of 45 people.

An important correlation ( $p < 0.05$ ) appeared in the case of the motivation at the beginning of working in the hospice: the desire to gain new skills ( $\rho = -0.294$ ), and—in the case of current motivation: the desire to correct one's mistakes in caring for the family members ( $\rho = 0.325$ ), the desire to gain new skills ( $\rho = -0.444$ ), imitating friends ( $\rho = 0.293$ ) and the occurrence of cancer in the family ( $\rho = 0.301$ ). We can notice that the older the volunteer is, the smaller is their willingness to gain new skills—both at the beginning and now. The older the person is, the more important are: the desire to correct the mistakes of the past, imitating friends, and the occurrence of cancer in the family.

The relation between motivation and the length of performing the voluntary work was also researched in Spearman's rho test. There was only one significant correlation ( $p < 0.05$ ). It occurred between the lack of current motivation and the length of service ( $\rho = -0.369$ ). The longer the person works in the hospice, the rarer it is for them to lack a specific motivation. It is compliant with the fact that people without specific motivations quickly leave the hospice volunteering.

## The dependence between the volunteers' motivation and the kind of involvement in the voluntary work

Since, among the volunteers, there are not many people who take up tasks other than those included in the inpatient care, the Spearman's rho test was only applied in the group of the volunteers providing inpatient services. There were 40 of such people, and the power of the test was 0.70.

The correlation between the volunteers' motivation and the kind of work they perform was calculated through the Spearman's rho test. Several statistically important dependencies appeared. Providing inpatient care services in the hospice is correlated, to

a statistically important degree ( $p < 0.05$ ), with such initial motivations as: loneliness ( $\rho = -0.425$ ), searching for a friendly environment ( $\rho = -0.459$ ), the attempt to deal with one's problems ( $\rho = -0.330$ ), and the current motivation inspired by the occurrence of cancer in the family ( $\rho = -0.297$ ). In all the cases, the motivations of the people who took up such service were weaker than those of the people who do not take it up.

## Discussion on the results and final conclusions

The most popular motivations analysed in the groups of Polish voluntary workers include: pleasure (43%), expecting support in future (32%), and values (29%) (Przewłocka 2010). While surveying hospice volunteers, Mirosław Górecki concludes that their most popular motivation is altruism (46.3% of the volunteers) and the willingness to perform tasks (21.8% of the volunteers) (Górecki 2000). This research has confirmed that the most frequent motivations of getting involved in hospice volunteering are (both at the beginning of the service and later): values, pleasure derived from such work, as well as the desire to share the good received from God.

The existing research indicated that the internal motivation related to the values, understanding of the service and experiencing the support from others is a better predictor for staying in hospice volunteering (Finkelstein 2008). This is confirmed by the author's investigation. The motivations related to the influence of third parties, personal motivations, as well as those related to looking for help for family and friends suffering from cancer, are decreasing to a statistically important degree. Also, this research has also proven that there are correlations between providing inpatient hospice care and the volunteers' motivations. Positive correlations also appear with such motivations as: loneliness, searching for a friendly environment, dealing with a family member or a friend suffering with cancer.

The existing research indicates that younger people are more motivated to build new relations (Omoto, Snyder, Martino 2000), while older volunteers are more altruistic in serving others. Individual resources of the older volunteers, related to their personal relationships, influence the involvement in volunteering (Principi, Naegele, Di Rosa, Lamura 2016). Such volunteers are motivated by

the generativeness related to the willingness to help the next generations, as well as personal development and good mood (Yamashita, López, Soligo, Keene 2017). This research has partially confirmed it. The longer the service and length of work, the more specific the motivation becomes. For the older volunteers, irrespective of their years of experience, cognitive motivations are less important (gaining new skills or knowledge). More frequently, they wish to correct past mistakes, imitate friends, or cope with a close person's cancer.

The research carried out among the hospice volunteers shows why these people come to the hospice and why they stay there. With time, their motivation becomes more and more specific, while the people who do not really know what they want, quit. In order to stay in the service, the volunteers build internal motivation and the meaning of external motivation—related to the need of the moment or the influence of other people—decreases. Older people hardly ever stay in the hospice because of the willingness to learn new skills. However, most of the volunteers working in the hospice treat it as a special environment in which they can overcome loneliness and meet good people. It confirms the thesis that, from the beginning, hospices became homes both for the sick and dying, and for the workers.

The research results may be helpful in recruiting new volunteers. Analysing their motivation makes it possible to predict—to a certain degree – how persistent they shall be in their service. People without specific motivations rarely stay in the hospice for a longer time. However, under the influence of voluntary work, some people change and become mature, which is to be taken into account while accepting or rejecting a candidate's application.

The basic limitation of the research was the fact that the surveyed people specified their past and current motivation. Thus, the data is not the same. In future, it would be good to conduct longitudinal research that enables the comparison of motivations over the years.

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