Educational and Social Support for Children during the Pandemic Provided by Young Volunteers Working in the Dialog Foundation in Białystok: Research Report

ABSTRACT
The aim of the paper is to present the specificity of work of young volunteers in the service of children in the pandemic (types of activities they undertake, problems and benefits they and their pupils experience). The first part of the text presents theoretical assumptions of social and educational support for children. Volunteering in the pandemic in Poland in the third sector has been covered based on the latest research results and the activities of the Dialog Foundation in Białystok. The second part of the text shows methodological assumptions of qualitative research, which was conducted using the method of individual cases in March 2021 among volunteers of the Dialog Foundation. Chosen research results concerning the social and educational support provided to children during the pandemic by young volunteers have been showed. In the light of the results of my research, social and educational support provided to Foundation’s pupils by volunteers is of great importance in their daily functioning during the pandemic, prevents school failures and reduces the feeling of loneliness. The results of the research may hopefully contribute to the development of educational research in regard to the functioning of volunteering in aid of children with educational and social deficits.

Keywords:
volunteer, volunteering, COVID-19 pandemic, educational and social support, non-governmental organization, the Dialog Foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the lives of people around the world. Family, professional and social functioning has changed. Poor or complete absence of social contacts causes and will continue to cause disastrous effects for a long time. The lack of direct relationships with parents, grandparents and peers is undoubtedly of great importance in the social development of children. Elderly or disabled people who have been isolated for many months often suffer from loneliness. Children, seniors and people with disabilities are supported by volunteers who, despite difficult times, are not indifferent to the fate of those in need. In this article, I present the results of qualitative research on volunteering during the pandemic, which was conducted in March 2021 among young volunteers from the Dialog Foundation – a non-governmental organization in Białystok. The purpose of this text is to present the specificity of the work of young volunteers in the service of children, which consists of the types of activities they undertake to support children educationally and socially, as well as the problems and benefits they experience during the pandemic.

ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN THE PANDEMIC

The idea of volunteering, which has been known in Poland for a long time, is based on selfless service to others. Helpers were called social workers or altruists in the past, and the term ‘volunteering’ was not used. It was defined in Poland only in the 1990s by the Voluntary Centre Association in Warsaw as conscious, voluntary (free-will) and gratuitous action for the benefit of others that goes beyond family and friendship relations (Jordan, 2009). According to Sakowicz (2001), volunteering is people, a team of people, a form of activity or a set of values – that is, the sense of fulfilling a mission. Another definition that takes into consideration costs and benefits of volunteering sees it as an activity undertaken by an individual when the perceived benefits of volunteering outweigh its costs (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999). Although volunteering has been developing dynamically in Poland for thirty years, Górecki (2013) believes that it is still a new term with an undisclosed meaning. Volunteering has been regulated in Poland by a legal act in 20032. According to this act, a volunteer is a person who volunteers and without remuneration performs

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services in accordance with the principles set out in the act. Volunteers may provide services corresponding to the performance of work for:

1) non-governmental organizations as well as legal persons and organizational units operating on the basis of regulations on the attitude of the State to the Catholic Church in the Republic of Poland, about the attitude towards other churches and religious associations in the scope of their statutory activities, in particular in the field of public benefit activities;
2) public administration bodies, with the exception of their commercial activities;
3) organizational units subordinate to public administration authorities or supervised by these authorities, with the exception of those running business;
4) medical entities within the scope of their medical activities (The Act of 24 April 2003…).

Volunteering most often develops in non-governmental organizations that are very susceptible to all kinds of changes in the environment. One such a change that has undoubtedly affected many nonprofits is the COVID-19 pandemic. In the light of the results of the research about the situation of NGOs in the pandemic, conducted in April 2020 by the Klon/Jawor Association, 33% of NGOs in Poland were forced to suspend their activities, and a similar percentage of the organizations (27%) suspended most of their activities. Only 25% of the organizations actively implemented most of their activities, suspending only a few, and another 14% of non-governmental organizations did not cease their activities at all, although they may have been carried out in a changed form. Unfortunately, many organizations operating in the local environment on a daily basis could not transfer their activities to the network. The report from the research shows that most organizations suspended their activities in the area of sport (80%) and culture (73%), while 57% of the organizations in the area of social welfare carried out most or even all of their activities in a remote form (Charycka & Gumkowska, 2020).

It is interesting that the pandemic has stimulated the undertaking of new activities by many non-governmental organizations, such as information activities, social campaigns, and the development of educational materials on topics not previously covered by the organizations. 17% of the organizations in response to the pandemic began to help people from risk groups or those in quarantine. 12–13% of the organizations undertook online educational classes, sewing masks, and remote support, e.g., in the form of a helpline. Less than every tenth organization that started to implement new activities in response to the pandemic began
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to distribute food, organize volunteering, or help the health service (Charycka & Gumkowska, 2020).

Due to the fact that the pandemic has been going on for more than a year, and fear and panic have given way to routine, people have become used to the uncertain and constantly changing situation, the results of the research from a previous year turn out to be not entirely up-to-date. In spring 2021, the research was repeated in a revised and extended formula by the Klon/Jawor Association. The results of the report from 2021 indicate that as many as 65% of the surveyed non-governmental organizations believe that the pandemic has worsened their situation. 41% suspended most of their pre-pandemic activities, 39% of the organizations did not conduct any online activities, and the same number took new measures in response to the pandemic for seniors (40%), doctors or paramedics (30%), sick or disabled people (28%), and in quarantine (27%). 17% of associations and foundations that took new action in response to the pandemic ran a helpline, remote support, counseling or therapy. 38% of the organizations collaborated with other entities in connection with the pandemic (Charycka & Gumkowska, 2021).

Interestingly, more than half of the organizations (52%) see the positive consequences of the pandemic for their organization. Most organizations (30%) appreciate the fact that they can develop their online activities. Every fifth organization notices that it has learned a lot thanks to working in new, crisis conditions and has introduced changes in the way the team works, such as remote or hybrid work. However, it is worrying that as many as 36% of the organizations have lost volunteers. The decrease in the number of volunteers is most often reported by organizations operating in the field of social services and social assistance, which is probably related to the difficulty in organizing volunteering in the prevailing sanitary restrictions. The number of volunteers also decreased in non-governmental organizations dealing with culture (Charycka & Gumkowska, 2021).

Given these unprecedented times, countries in North America, Europe, and Asia have imposed measures for social distancing to limit COVID-19’s spread. These social distancing measures have created negative impacts on leisure activities including: recreation, sport, parks, travel, and tourism. Beyond these leisure activities, one particular activity inherently linked with other leisure-based activities that has also been negatively impacted by COVID-19 is traditional volunteering (Lachance, 2021, p. 104).

Lachance (2021) emphasizes the virtual volunteering as a strategy during the pandemic and beyond that has already developed and disseminated around the world. Undoubtedly, such a form of volunteering has a lot of positives such as creating accessibility, but also some challenges like the management process.
It is worth adding that despite the fact that many non-governmental organizations suspended the activities of volunteers during the pandemic, or transferred them to the network, the pandemic became an impulse to undertake new voluntary initiatives.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many medical universities worldwide, including the Poznan University of Medical Sciences, launched student volunteering projects (SVPs) […] Although it caused a serious disruption of health professions education, it also gave rise to a number of valuable SV initiatives around the world (Chawłowska et al., 2021).

Also in the UK, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in volunteering behaviours. Three main types of volunteering emerged during the pandemic: formal volunteering, social action volunteering, and neighbourhood volunteering (Mak & Fancourt, 2021).

**VOLUNTEERING AT THE DIALOG FOUNDATION (DURING THE PANDEMIC)**

The Dialog Foundation, one of the largest non-governmental organizations in Białystok, was established in 2001. Since its inception, it has been promoting volunteering within the Foundation’s Mentoring and Volunteering Centre. The tasks of the Centre include training mentors, volunteers and coordinators, coordinating the work of mentors and volunteers, running an information point for candidates for volunteers and mentors, as well as for people in need of help, mediation between volunteers and people in need of support, promotion of volunteering and mentoring in public administration, non-governmental organizations or educational institutions, as well as keeping documentation on volunteering. The Centre offers various opportunities for voluntary work, among which mentoring-based programmes are very important. They consist in matching mentors–volunteers in pairs with mentees, who are struggling with educational, social, or emotional difficulties. Among the charges there are children from dysfunctional families, from foster families, as well as foreign children. Mentors meet with their mentees at least once a week to support them as needed. A large group of volunteers from the Dialog Foundation helps foreign children in learning during weekly educational classes at the organization’s headquarters. Volunteers also conduct various types of activities and workshops with children regarding their interests and passions. Moreover, volunteers work in care and educational facility The House of Return, run by the Foundation since 2020, they are also involved in various types of cam-
campaigns or events organized by the Foundation, such as picnics on the day of foster parenting.

The vast majority of those in care of the Dialog Foundation are children and adolescents who experience isolation and loneliness in a special way during the pandemic. According to UNICEF, “childhood is a critical period in any human’s life, which marks the foundation of the personality and emotional resilience’s capacity of any person” (UNICEF, 2020, p. 3). Distance learning, although very often conducted in a reliable, interesting and creative way, will not replace direct relations in the classroom with the teacher and other students. Children often cannot cope with it, they need parental support. The situation becomes even more difficult when the parent or legal guardian is unable to help the child because he or she is not fluent in information technology himself. A significant part of the Foundation’s pupils are children covered by family forms of foster care. The largest group are related families which, in accordance with the legal act from 20113, are made up of the child’s ascendants or siblings. Grandparents, sometimes taking care of several grandchildren at various stages of remote education, face a real challenge. Right now, even more than before, they need the support of volunteers.

The Dialog Foundation cooperates with around 50 volunteers annually. The outbreak of the pandemic temporarily suspended the direct activities of the Foundation’s volunteers. Due to numerous restrictions, volunteers were not allowed to visit their mentees, but tried to support them through phone calls or information technology. Virtual volunteering became the only possible way to keep contact with the children and try to help them. As the Foundation’s workers did not have any experience in such a form of volunteering, they had to learn the whole management process from scratch. Supporting volunteers and monitoring relations without direct contact also became a challenge for them.

While learning at home, children struggle with numerous difficulties of an educational and social nature, which often aggravate the problems with operating distance learning programmes. Young volunteers who participate in remote learning themselves understand these difficulties better than others and support the charges and their guardians both in terms of education and technology. Fortunately, due to the loosening of the restrictions, most of the volunteers resumed meetings in direct contact in May 2021.

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3 The Act of 9 June 2011 on Supporting the Family and the Foster Care System. JoL 2011 No. 149, item 887.
EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES AT RISK

The pupils of the Dialog Foundation, who often do not have supporters close to them, count on the help of volunteers. Young volunteers provide them with social and educational support, depending on their individual needs. Social support appears in many areas of life. It is a complex and multi-faceted concept. Social support can be defined as any human action aimed at improving the well-being of another person. The concept of social support is difficult to define, broad meaning refers to help available to an individual in difficult situations (Kawula, 1999). On the basis of social pedagogy, it can be defined in two ways. In the first approach, it is help provided to an individual or a group in difficult, stressful, breakthrough situations, which that person or group is not able to overcome without other people. In the second approach, social support is a type of social interaction undertaken by one or two parties in a problematic situation, in which emotional or instrumental information is exchanged. This exchange can be one-sided or two-sided, it can be constant or it can change (Kawula, 1996).

Stanislaw Kawula (2005) distinguishes five types of social support: 1) emotional – giving messages that confirm the acceptance of the other person, 2) evaluating – providing evaluative messages, 3) instrumental – providing specific help and services, 4) informational – giving advice and information, and 5) spiritual – occurring when other types of support fail and the individual is still in a hopeless situation. The task of the volunteer is to help the child who, due to various reasons, is in a difficult situation. It carries out this help primarily through emotional, evaluative, instrumental, informative, as well as spiritual social support.

Volunteers also provide children with educational support. Education is the basic concept in pedagogy, covering all multidimensional activities and processes serving the upbringing and education of people or social groups (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000). Depending on the adopted criterion, there are various forms of education. The age of a person allows us to distinguish pre-school, early school, elementary, middle school, high school, higher, postgraduate, and adult education. According to the criterion of the place where education occurs, school, out-of-school, family, non-school, post-school, and parallel education is mentioned. Due to the scope of education, there is global, regional, and local education (Gajewska, 2009). In this article, I focus mainly on the support in school education, usually at the early school and primary level, because most of the Foundation’s pupils are at these stages of education. Because of various difficulties they experience, support in education is extremely important and necessary for them.
Currently, there is a tendency in education to depart from traditional teaching in favour of supporting learning, and thus to help students learn, acquire knowledge independently and approach it critically (Puślecki, 2008). The people who should support students are primarily teachers, as well as colleagues, educators and other people operating in the organizational and social structure of the school. According to many researchers of this issue, unfortunately, these people often do not provide students with sufficient support (Gajewska, 2009). Parents play a great role in helping children in education. The most favourable situation is the balanced cooperation between the family and the school in order to provide the best possible support for children in their education. It is the most advantageous when both the school and the family fulfil their educational functions perfectly, because their subjectivity and socialization are so high that they do not require intensive and broad social support or substitute forms (Gajewska, 2009). The situation is worse when the family or school fulfils its educational functions to a moderate extent, the most difficult when both the school and the family constitute inadequate environments in terms of education. Many of the Foundation’s pupils are brought up in dysfunctional families, or so called families at risk, defined by Kantowicz (2016) as families that experience internal or external tensions, crises, problems as a result of social problems affecting them and thus become the subject of interest and support in the area of social and educational work. In such families, parents or guardians do not properly fulfil their care, upbringing and educational functions, that is why volunteers who support children in learning are of great importance.

**METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The qualitative research, the results of which are presented in this text, was conducted in March 2021, a year after the outbreak of the pandemic. According to the naturalistic approach in social sciences, which definitely favours the researcher’s readiness to take up topics that are close to personal interests (Lofland et al., 2009), I took up a subject that is very important to me as a former volunteer and a person who has been working in the Dialog Foundation with volunteers for more than 15 years. The subject of my research was the specificity of work of young volunteers during the pandemic. The purpose of the exploration was to identify activities undertaken by volunteers during the pandemic in the field of social and educational support, as well as their problems, benefits and needs in this regard. The main research problem was formulated in the form of a question: What is the specificity of work of young volunteers during the pandemic? The main research
question was followed by detailed questions such as: What types of activities do volunteers undertake to support children educationally and socially? What kind of problems do they undergo while volunteering in the pandemic? What kind of benefits do they experience during the pandemic? What are the needs of children during the pandemic? I conducted the qualitative research with thirteen volunteers from the Dialog Foundation in Białystok. The selection of the sample was deliberately representative due to the features of the general population represented in the study sample. I applied the method of individual cases, in which I used the technique of an interview. For the analysis of qualitative data, I applied elements of the concept of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (2000), which consists of the following activities: data reduction, data representation, as well as deriving and verifying conclusions. According to this concept, apart from the description, matrices and networks are used to present data.

SELECTED RESEARCH RESULTS

Eleven female volunteers and two male volunteers of the Dialog Foundation, aged 14–26, participated in the research. Such a large representation of women proves the feminization of voluntary work, especially in the field of social assistance. The largest group of respondents, as many as 9 people, are secondary school students, two people are still studying in primary school, while two have already completed higher education. It is worth mentioning that the majority of volunteers working in the Dialog Foundation are young people, usually students of secondary schools, sometimes last grades of primary schools or universities. They work in aid of children who are sometimes their peers. The voluntary experience of the respondents varies. Almost half of the volunteers (6 people) have been working in the Foundation for less than a year, so they have started their activities during the pandemic. Three people have been volunteers of the Foundation for less than two years, also three people have been working voluntarily in the Foundation for almost three years, while one has been volunteering in the organization for over three years. Four people, apart from volunteering in the Dialog Foundation, are also engaged in voluntary work in other organizations, as well as in school volunteering clubs. Out of all the respondents, two volunteers work twice a week, the vast majority volunteer once a week.

Among the reasons for undertaking voluntary work, altruistic motives dominate among the respondents, such as the willingness to help others, especially children, indicated by as many as 9 people. Two volunteers mention instrumental motives such as the chance to get to know oneself and others better, as well as the
possibility of one’s own development. Other reasons for volunteering are related to the willingness to spend free time, persuasion of a parent and “the desire to leave the comfort zone” [male volunteer, age 17]. Surveyed volunteers emphasize that during the pandemic they feel needed and they know their work is desirable and appreciated more than ever before, so their motivation to help is growing.

All surveyed volunteers work with children. Some of them work using the mentoring method with children from foster care, while others with foreign children. Among the activities undertaken by volunteers, helping children with learning and with their homework dominates. Volunteers working by means of mentoring also indicate psychological support, conversation, spending time together, accompanying and helping in problem solving. On the other hand, volunteers working with foreigners emphasize conversations, teaching Polish language through playing, as well as organizing various types of educational and integration activities. The activities undertaken by the surveyed volunteers are presented in Matrix 1, in accordance with Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (2000) concept of the analysis of qualitative data.

**Matrix 1. Types of the Activities Undertaken by the Surveyed Volunteers in the Pandemic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The activities undertaken in the pandemic by the surveyed volunteers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>working with children from foster care and dysfunctional families</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>working with foreign children</td>
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Source: Author’s own research.

Only three volunteers do not experience any difficulties in volunteering during the pandemic. One volunteer believes that “only illness can be a problem” [female volunteer, age 16]. Some volunteers point out that traditional meetings are held less frequently than before the pandemic, which is a problem, because establishing and maintaining relationships with a mentee in a remote form is very difficult, especially in case of mentoring. Children who are shy and introvert have difficulties opening up to the volunteers, especially when they do not know each other well. Mentoring pairs that function longer than the pandemic have much easier
task, as the two entities know each other well, because they had a chance to meet in a traditional form before. One of the volunteers notices that “the mentees are often depressed. They have no contact with friends, learning difficulties arise, and often the difficult environments in which they live give rise to new problems” [male volunteer, age 19]. Another volunteer working at the Foundation with foreign children draws attention to communication difficulties, which in the situation of remote work become harder. Among other difficulties, volunteers indicate the lack of contact with more people at the same time, which makes group activities impossible to conduct. Due to the inability to meet live and the restrictions on the functioning of local community entities, volunteers cannot take their charges to the cinema, theatre, museum, or other facilities. They also mention problems with the Internet connections and with arranging a convenient date for a remote meeting. Moreover, volunteers point out that the attention span of children in front of the computers is also shorter than in a face-to-face meeting, especially that they spend hours using computers during school classes. That is why volunteers spend a lot of time on preparation to the virtual meetings with their pupils in order to be interesting for them.

Undoubtedly, volunteering brings a lot of benefits, especially now in the pandemic. They can be considered from the perspective of the volunteers, pupils or the organization itself, in which or on behalf of which the volunteers work. The surveyed volunteers perceive numerous benefits of their work. Everyone agrees that volunteering in aid of children in need, also, and especially in the pandemic, gives them a lot of joy and satisfaction. Only one person indicates the typically instrumental profits from volunteering, which are additional points at school. Most of them treat volunteering as an opportunity to develop their inter- and intrapersonal skills, such as patience, understanding, sensitivity to harm towards others, establishing and maintaining contacts with children. Therefore, the respondents see volunteering as an opportunity for self-development. According to one of the volunteers, “working with another person is very developing. It is also a satisfaction. Thanks to my voluntary work, I understand other people better, and my perception has changed in many aspects. I am more sensitive to human harm” [male volunteer, age 19].

According to the respondents, their charges also, and perhaps above all, reap many benefits thanks to the support of volunteers. Everyone emphasizes helping with learning, with homework, and preparation for tests as the most important benefit of their volunteering. The respondents point out that, in the situation of the pandemic, support in distance learning is of great importance. A volunteer who works with a foreign child claims that the school did not meet the challenge
Educational and Social Support for Children during the Pandemic of remote education, and the additional factor of a different nationality, which is related to it, often the lack or insufficient knowledge of the language of the host country does not facilitate education for children from other countries. The girl notices that “these children cannot be educated at home and that is why they study with us” [female volunteer, age 15]. Most of the respondents, apart from educational support, also emphasize social support as very important during the pandemic. The mentees confide in volunteers, share their experiences and problems, they know that they can always count on them. This is confirmed by the statement of one of the volunteers, “my mentee can contact me any time, I always help in every situation as much as I can, I try to serve great support any time of the day” [female volunteer, age 18]. Volunteers become friends of children, accompany them, help them in problem solving, try to understand and support as much as possible. Only one of the volunteers notices the possibility of having fun together, which children gain thanks to volunteers. The effects of virtual volunteering in the pandemic, highlighting benefits and problems of the volunteers and children, have been presented in Matrix 2.

**Matrix 2. The Effects of Virtual Volunteering from the Perspective of the Volunteers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The effects of virtual volunteering</th>
<th>benefits</th>
<th>problems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>acquiri ng new skills concerning communication tools</td>
<td></td>
<td>difficulties with establishing and maintaining relations with pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing new personal qualities like patience, perseverance, humility, creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>difficulties with communication with children</td>
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<tr>
<td>adjusting and coping with new situation</td>
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<td>difficulties in getting the child interested and keeping his attention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>longer time for preparation for the virtual meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no chance for group activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>no possibility to take children do the theatre, museum, cinema, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>help in remote education</td>
<td></td>
<td>difficulties with establishing and maintaining relations with volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>social and psychological support</td>
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<td>difficulties with attention span</td>
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<td></td>
<td>difficulties with sitting in front of the computers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s own research.

Further analysis of the material collected during the research, described and reduced for the first time in Matrices 1 and 2, enables to construct Network 1,
showing the specificity of the work of the surveyed volunteers in the pandemic, which consists of the undertaken activities, as well as the benefits and problems resulting from virtual volunteering.

**Network 1. The Specificity of Work of the Surveyed Volunteers in the Pandemic**

Source: Author’s own research.

Experiencing difficulties related to voluntary work during the pandemic, almost all respondents can count on the support of their parents and other family members. Among the supporters there are other volunteers, friends and coordinators from the Foundation. According to the respondents, an effective way to cope with difficulties
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is dialogue. Many volunteers deal with the difficulties that arise at work on their own, trying to understand their charges and finding an appropriate solution. Responsibility and a sense of duty do not allow them to give up, as one of the surveyed says, “I try to be very optimistic and strong because I know that someone is counting on me and needs my support and help” [female volunteer, age 18].

According to the surveyed volunteers, their pupils need emotional support, contact, closeness and conversation with other people during the pandemic. The respondents emphasize that children also need “peace and assurance that the situation will soon return to normal” [female volunteer, age 17]; “support, words of encouragement that everything will be fine” [female volunteer, age 26]. All respondents also indicate the need for educational support in case of distance learning. According to one of the volunteers, “remote learning in the younger classes is less effective. The charges need help with their homework” [male volunteer, age 19]. Learning at home in front of the computer, often with the camera turned off, unfortunately does not mobilize students to learn, therefore volunteers indicate that children need motivation to learn and self-discipline. According to the volunteers, children also need various forms of activities, so that they do not have to spend the whole days in front of computers. The needs of the pupils have been presented in Matrix 3.

Matrix 3. The Needs of Children in the Pandemic from the Perspective of the Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The needs of children in the pandemic from the surveyed volunteers’ perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td>assurance that the pandemic will end soon</td>
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<tr>
<td>help with learning and homework</td>
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<tr>
<td>diverse activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>spending time together, accompanying</td>
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<tr>
<td>psychological and social support</td>
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<tr>
<td>motivation to learn, self-discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>migrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help with learning and homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help with learning Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integration activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>return to traditional education at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s own research.
The analysis of the data collected during the research, described and reduced for the first time in Matrix 3, enables to construct Network 2, demonstrating the needs of children in the pandemic from the surveyed volunteers’ perspective.

Network 2. The Needs of Children from the Surveyed Volunteers’ Perspective
Source: Author’s own research.

The results of the research and participant observation of the researcher allow to formulate a hypothesis that many of the Foundation’s pupils would experience school failures or deepen their anxiety states and isolation if they were not supported educationally, emotionally and socially by the surveyed volunteers. That is why their work should be continued after the pandemic as well. The effort and engagement of the volunteers have been noticed not only by the parents or guardians of the children and volunteers’ coordinators in the Foundation. Thanks to exemplary work during the pandemic, two of the Foundation’s volunteers were awarded in the 26th Białystok edition of the Polish National Self-Government Competition of Teenagers “Magnificent Eight”.
CONCLUSION

The pandemic changed the lives of all the people in the world. It was during the pandemic and the lockdown that children from families at risk needed (and still need) help more than ever. Fortunately, many local and international organizations such as UNICEF have already focused on the well-being of children and their support in the situation of the pandemic (Richardson et al., 2020). One of the local non-governmental organization supporting children in the pandemic in Białystok is the Dialog Foundation. Many of the Foundation’s pupils are children from family foster care, raised mainly by grandparents or just grandmothers. Remote education with the use of a computer, the Internet and modern communication software is often a real challenge for them. In addition, the educational difficulties that arise in this form of education, as well as social problems resulting from long isolation of children, pose a huge challenge for caregivers. In the light of the results of my research, an important role in supporting children in a pandemic situation and remote education is played by volunteers, who find time, willingness and strength to help others who struggle with more difficulties. Virtual volunteering that has developed during the pandemic, even though it cannot replace traditional form, became the only possibility. Through social and educational support, volunteers try to help the children in their situation, which even before the pandemic was far from satisfying. That is why social support, similarly to volunteering, either in traditional or virtual form, due to its special humanitarian values and being a specific antidote to expensive and often incapacitating care and help, deserve special attention of modern social pedagogy (Winiarski, 2005). I treat the presented, selected research results as an implication for a broader and in-depth reflection on volunteering during the pandemic towards children at risk of social exclusion.

References


Legal acts