

# **YOUTH VOLUNTEERING: THE WAY TO THE REGIONAL LABOR MARKET OR SOURCE OF HUMAN RESOURCES LOSS?**

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## **Abstract**

Volunteering has a high popularity among the youth in all countries including Russia. This social phenomenon is included in the different social processes, it brings benefits both to society and each volunteer. Volunteering is a social institution that interacts with education, politics, culture, labor market, etc.

This article presents the results of the monitoring research - survey of the students of one of the largest and economically developed Russian domains – Sverdlovsk region. Students of 14 universities took part in the survey (N-1802).

The data of the research has allowed to construct a secondary variable and to divide young people into two groups: volunteers and those who have never worked as a volunteer. We have found out that youth volunteering activity correlated with their employment. Volunteer students are more competitive in the labor market. They have a higher level of social activity, but also are more likely to have part-time jobs while studying at university. Volunteers more often have experience in their profession and they are more often going to work in the specialty after graduation. We also learned that youth, who had been engaged in volunteer work, more often wish to continue their education or find a job abroad.

**Key words:** volunteering, the labor market, youth

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## **Introduction**

Globally and within certain countries volunteering is a socially significant phenomenon. As reported by Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), according to Gallup's WorldView poll of 2013 Russia took the 8th place in the rating of the countries on the number of volunteers working for non-profit organizations. The number of volunteers in Russia is 21 million people

(calculation was based on the UN data on adult population; the data shows the number of engaged volunteers the month previous to the poll) (World, 2013).

In the XX century researchers noted that the number of volunteers among youth had been much lower than among teenagers. In many respects, it was explained by getting social freedom and childless life. Volunteering reaches its peak at a middle age (Menchik, 1987). In the XXI century volunteers all over the world become younger. The most considerable growth of volunteers percentage was mentioned in the age group from 15 to 24 years old, from 18,4% in 2011 to 20,6% in 2012 (World, 2013). Officially, in Russia the highest number of young volunteers is among students. It is connected with the realization of public policy. There exists one of governmental management efficiency indicators of the Russian Federation constituent entities called "the percentage of young people who have taken part in voluntary activity, in total number of youth (%)". It was fixed at a level of 18% for 2012 (Methodical ..., 2010). The Concept of Assistance to Charity and Volunteering Development in the Russian Federation has been passed since 2009. It contains measures for supporting development of the charity and volunteering. Mass international sporting events (XXVII World Student Games, the Olympic Games in Sochi) also had essential impact on the increase in the number of volunteers among the youth.

Volunteer activity gets the greatest development in higher education. In many respects, it is connected with the fact that volunteering is related to educational and professional spheres. It contributes to some of the core activities of higher education, including teaching and learning, employability, and public engagement. University environment accumulates the most active youth, provides organizational and information resources for volunteering.

The executive board of Russian higher education institutions is interested in development and management of students' public engagement. It corresponds to tendencies which begin to appear today in the majority of the countries when organization of volunteer activity within higher education institutions becomes more formal, and volunteering plays a signaling (an essential) role for each student in creating their individual educational and labor market strategies (Handy, 2009).

Students' volunteering can be considered as a well-established tradition of contributing to communities where youth study (Holdsworth, 2013) or as a type of leisure time activity (Stebbens, 2006). When volunteering involves some part of their own leisure practices which they are ready to place at the service of others, without charge, this generally leads to the creation of a correlation of collusion and preferences, marked by shared tastes and common inter-

ests that could be considered as the bartering of interrelational values (Bellefleur, M, 2003). This way educative function is realized. It is owed to «the impact of volunteering on subjective and objective well-being. Positive effects are found for life-satisfaction, self-esteem, self-rated health, and for educational and occupational achievement, functional ability» (Wilson, 2000).

Volunteer engagement during degree course gives the benefits of professional skills, employability and personal worth of the young. Often volunteering matches with practical trainings, in several educational programs it can be integrated with learning. It is typical for such professions as social workers, teachers, psychologists, doctors, etc. In other case, students can participate as volunteers at their leisure time. Nevertheless, all of them equally develop their professional potential, increase their "social capital" anyway.

Thus, we suggest not considering volunteering only as the way of preparing students for a social and civil responsibility. We assume that volunteering can be considered as professional advancement, it refers to employability. In this context, it is important to emphasize that Russian labor market is objectively characterized with difficulties in employment for young specialists after graduation and a great percentage of graduates having jobs not related to their degree (Didkovskaya, 2009; Vishnevskiy, 2011).

## **1 Data and Methods**

In the research we used the data of the poll taken among students of the largest and economically developed Russian domains –Sverdlovsk region. The poll sampled third year students of 14 Ural universities (2012; N-1802; stratified random sampling). For realization of the research objectives, the modular approach was used to create the polling questionnaire: one module of questions was aimed at studying professional self-realization of the students, the other – at studying public engagement of the students.

The participants were comparable to the overall university population. according to sex, form of education (government-subsidized or study-for-fee) and educational area. All specialities of the regional universities were divided into four areas: humanitarian, technical, natural sciences and economics. According to the data of official statistics students of certain faculties and different specialities selected in a random way were examined.

The first module of the questionnaire included questions aimed at studying students' attitude to their future profession, substantial employment conditions for students while they study at university. We investigated the content of part-time employment, if they have income

or not, the connection between education they get and their possible future employment, professional and career plans of the youth.

The second module of the questionnaire included questions aimed at studying students' participation in volunteering, frequency and content of voluntary activity, motivation for this engagement and their future plans to continue volunteering.

The students were asked two questions essential for our survey: "Have you taken part in some voluntary activity for the last year?" and "Would you agree to become a volunteer in the future?" In the course of analytical data processing the secondary variable was constructed. All students were divided into two groups. The first group included those who had worked as a volunteer at least once in life and agree to continue volunteering in the future. The second group included students who had never taken part in volunteering. That allowed eliminating students who had been "volunteers by chance". In our opinion, the respondents who tried working as a volunteer and don't want to continue doing that couldn't be considered as potential and actual members of volunteer community.

## 2 Results

The data of conducted survey allows giving an assessment of student volunteer community of Sverdlovsk region. For the last year 54% of respondents have worked as volunteers. The frequency of this activity is shown in Table 1.

**Tab. 1: The frequency of volunteering among student volunteers of Sverdlovsk region**

<i>The frequency of volunteering</i>	<i>Permanently</i>	<i>Have occasionally taken part in several projects</i>	<i>Worked as a volunteer once or twice by chance</i>
	14 %	36 %	50 %

Source: author's calculation

14% of respondents work as volunteers on a constant basis, 36% of respondents are incidentally involved in volunteer activity, every second from the number of respondents (50%) worked in particular volunteer projects by chance.

Here is the introduction of certain characteristics of the members of the student groups given in our research: volunteers and "not volunteers". If among young men only every sec-

ond student (50%) is a volunteer, then there are 55% of volunteers in female group. The majority of students(56%) who was born and lived in large cities before entering a university are volunteers, every second student from the cities with population up to 500 thousand people is a volunteer. The minority of volunteers (only 42%) are from the countryside.

40% of student volunteers we examined get humanitarian degree, every fifth of them gets socioeconomic education, 28% of respondent volunteers study technical subjects and almost every tenth of them (11%) study to get a degree in natural sciences.

According to our methodology we will characterize a part-time employment of student volunteers and “not volunteers” upon its existence and frequency. We will present division of students’ answers to a question "Are you employed?" in Table 2.

**Tab. 2: The frequency of part-time employment of student volunteers and non-volunteers of Sverdlovsk region**

<i>Frequency of employment</i>	<i>Group of volunteers</i>	<i>Group of non-volunteers</i>
Regular employment	15	9
Temporary employment (from time to time)	34	24
No employment	51	67
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: author's calculation

Actually almost every second student (51%) among volunteers works while studying at university and that is 16% more than among the students who have never been engaged in voluntary activity. 15% of volunteers have regular employment and 34% work from time to time. Indexes of regular and temporary employment among non-volunteers are much lower, 9% and 24% respectively.

We suppose that volunteer activity has a close connection with social activity and professional employment of the Russian youth. The correlation between part-time employment during studying at university and their degree is reflected in Table 3.

**Tab. 3: The correlation between job and education for students of Sverdlovsk region who work while studying at university**

<i>The correlation job and education</i>	<i>Group of volunteers</i>	<i>Group of non-volunteers</i>
High correlation	20	14
Low correlation	29	21
No correlation	51	65
Total:	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: author's calculation

According to survey findings, every fifth respondent among those who work while studying at university and have experience in volunteering is employed according to their degree (20%). Professional knowledge and skills of 29% of volunteers are demanded for their jobs. In the group of students without any experience in volunteering high correlation between job and education was noted by only 14%, low correlation – by every fifth respondent (21%).

The analysis of the connection between students' employment and a degree which they get at a higher education institution allowed revealing quite an interesting tendency. Actually, half of working students who have experience in volunteering have a job somehow connected with their future degree, while this connection was noted by only 35% of respondents among the students who don't have experience in volunteering.

We have analyzed students' answers to a question: "What would you like to do after graduation?". Plans of students according to distinguished groups are reflected in Table 4.

**Tab. 4: After-graduation plans of student volunteers and non-volunteers of Sverdlovsk region**

<i>Options</i>	<i>Group of volunteers</i>	<i>Group of non-volunteers</i>
To work according to the degree	42	44
To have a job not connected with	7	6

the degree		
To continue education, engage in research activity	13	11
To become a private (self-employed) entrepreneur	16	14
To go abroad for further education or a job	12	6
No plans	6	14
Other	4	5
Total:	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: author's calculation

Monitoring data (students' estimation of their plans after the graduation) demonstrates the difference in the percentage of those who don't plan their future. Only 6% of volunteers don't plan their future after the graduation, while this option was chosen by 14% of the second group students. At all possible alternatives of answers to the question the essential difference (6% and 12% respectively) has been revealed in choosing the alternative reflecting intentions to go to study or work abroad. Among those who have any experience in volunteering, the number of students who want to leave the country to work and study abroad is twice as high.

## Conclusion

Our research has led to the following conclusions. First, volunteer activity has a close connection not only with social activity of modern Russian students but also with their employment. Students having experience in volunteering get a job more successfully, find time for volunteering and successfully combine their work and education. Volunteering provides favorable conditions for employment. Perhaps volunteering as preparation for paid employment might be a rational decision (Jones, 2011), when the labour market and the enhanced global competition for graduate employment (Holdsworth, 2013). In our opinion, volunteer activity along with part-time employment allows upgrading professional skills of students as well as reaching mutual understanding between students and potential employers. It helps students to understand the way their education can be used on a labor market and be in demand among employers.

In our opinion, it could be connected with some objective reasons (existence of practical experience in any activity, social ties) as well as with subjective personality of student volunteers. Canadian researchers prove that among the types of job-related skills, such as people skills (social, interpersonal skills, team work, conflict resolution), work attitudes and behaviors (discipline, hard-working, personal development, time-management, organizing, planning, initiative, responsibility, loyalty, leadership) are better evolved with the help of volunteer activity, in comparison with educational process and part-time employment (Krahn, 2002).

Secondly, we have found out that working students having experience in volunteering have a job according to their degree or connected with their professional area in every second case. They plan their future more often and, consequently, start realizing their plans while studying at university.

Thirdly, volunteering creates the environment for realization of different types of mobility: social, occupational, geographical. Among those who have some experience in volunteering, the number of students who want to leave the country to work and study abroad is twice as high as among students never participating in volunteer activity.

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