

Sengupta, Debashish; Verghese, Aniiisu K.; Rys, Maciej

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Article

Motivations of Volunteering during Crises—Perspectives of Polish Youths during the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

Debashish Sengupta ^{1,*}, Anisus K. Verghese ² and Maciej Rys ³¹ Praygan Advisory, Gurugram 122102, India² Department of Management, Alliance University, Bangalore 562106, India³ Department of Management, University of Information Technology and Management, 35-225 Rzeszów, Poland

* Correspondence: debashishsenguptaresearch@gmail.com

Abstract: Volunteering work has always played a key role in dealing with crises around the world. Understanding the motivations behind volunteering during a crisis could not only explain such behaviour but also become a guide for the government for future policies, to non-governmental organizations for attracting and recruiting more volunteers, for companies to attract and engage young talent and for society to encourage volunteering more. The present military conflict between Russia and Ukraine has resulted in an influx of over six million Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Given the phenomenal response of Polish people towards welcoming the Ukrainian refugees and, in general, the favourable attitude of the youth in Poland towards extending humanitarian aid to them, our present study examines the motivations of Polish youths behind volunteering during crises. The study also examined how volunteering has influenced their lives and future, besides understanding the barriers to volunteering. The research participants were Polish youths aged between 17–30 years of age. The participants were from both genders, students as well as working professionals. To take part, they had to prove that they took an active role in volunteering during a crisis and were able to share their personal stories and emotions in English. The findings of the research revealed normative, hedonic, eudaimonic and personal motivators behind volunteering during crises, with greater dominance of hedonic motivators, followed by normative, then eudaimonic and personal motivators. The influence of a mix of collectivist and individualistic cultures of Poland, with a progressive lean towards individualism, is clear in shaping the motivations behind the volunteering of these Polish youths. The role of intrinsic motivation is more pronounced when it comes to volunteering during crises.

Keywords: volunteering; motivations; crises; youth; Poland; Ukrainian refugees



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1. Introduction

Volunteering is valuable for building and maintaining a civil society and enhancing participatory politics (Wilson and Musick 1999). It is defined as a helpful activity in which time is given willingly to other people, groups or causes without expecting anything in return. As a citizenship behaviour, the act of volunteering is different from an instantaneous engagement to help someone in need to those that directly impact the immediate households or friends (Wilson 2000; Raza et al. 2023). As a non-obligatory action, it has a few components; it is performed for the benefit of others, especially society as a whole or a specific organization; it is unpaid; and is organized (Dekker and Halman 2003; Davenport et al. 2021).

Volunteers engage in this act based on self-understanding or from a cost-benefit analysis of the impact they can potentially make (Briones et al. 2021). Volunteering is performed by millions across Europe and can take place sporadically based on events or situations or they can be long-term (Pater 2021), indicating calls for a renewed emphasis on

this crucial aspect of societal engagement. The European Economic and Social Committee proposed making 2025 the European Year of Volunteers. Extant studies have focused on the impact of volunteering on subjective or objective well-being (Wilson 2000). Limited attention has however been paid to the key drivers of volunteering, especially during crises.

Globally, black swan events are becoming the norm and unlike other crises, are unprecedented (Lagadec and Topper 2012; Coombs 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, one such crisis, has had a profound impact on organizations and people. Due to the low chances of such crises occurring and the inability to interpret how they unfold, organizations can become lulled into a false sense of security resulting in catastrophic consequences. Therefore, making sense of the situation demands focused attention and engaging stakeholders early and meaningfully (Weick 1988).

Crises create situations that can put the volunteer at risk and impact them in ways that are much different than in regular engagements. Understanding key drivers of volunteering during crises is crucial as the world faces increased geopolitical and social crises. The migrant inflow to Europe, the COVID-19 pandemic and more recently, the war in Ukraine have created unprecedented crises which countries such as Poland had to cope with. Supporting and integrating a stream of refugees into Poland, which has taken in the highest number of refugees are opportunities for volunteering. This paper hopes to contribute to the growing body of work in volunteering because such actions are often encouraged by the government and corporations with policies that allow staff to take days off. What motivates volunteers to step up during a crisis? How do cultural norms and values influence and shape these motivators? Lastly, what are the key reasons that can prevent volunteers from participating during a crisis?

Addressing these questions and gaining deeper insights from the lived experiences of volunteers can help governments, organizations and leaders redesign their initiatives and encourage more volunteering, thereby benefiting civil society.

2. Background

Poland and Ukraine have always had a strong connection thanks to joint history, cultural proximity and current business and strategic relationship. Due to events of the Second World War, many Ukrainians either speak Polish or still have families or descendants in Poland (Szeptycki 2016). Another factor is that due to the favourable economic situation, many Ukrainian citizens have been working in Poland for years. Once the war began, Poland naturally became the leading destination for refugees, with more than four million people crossing the border within the first three months (Duszczuk and Kaczmarczyk 2022). The Polish response was unplanned, spontaneous, unexpected and overwhelming. An innumerable number of bottom-up initiatives and incentives started hours after the news about the war was announced in the media—people were standing at the border, waiting with hot drinks, meals and clothes even before the refugees arrived. The entire country and the majority of Polish youths warmly welcomed Ukrainians and invited them to their homes, reducing the necessity of creating temporary camps. Later, more prominent organizations and governments have begun more comprehensive initiatives, allowing for crisis coordination and management (Duszczuk and Kaczmarczyk 2022).

Millennials and generation Z, the younger generations all over the world are more social-minded than the previous generations (Sengupta 2021). The volunteering rates of these two generational members are also higher (Ertas 2016). Poland is no different, where younger people show greater appreciation towards volunteering than the older generations. Polish youths have a much broader perspective on volunteering (Gliński 2011). The findings of another research conducted to identify the difference between volunteers and non-volunteers in Poland showed a great deal of disparity between young volunteers and non-volunteers. Young people are not only more pragmatic in terms of their attitude towards volunteering, but also have significantly higher-level of awareness when it comes to short-term volunteering (Basińska and Jeran 2014).

Given the phenomenal response of Polish people towards welcoming the Ukrainian refugees and in general the favourable attitude of the youth in Poland towards extending humanitarian aid to them (Goldstein and Krawatzek), understanding the motivations of the Polish youths behind volunteering during a crisis could not only explain such behaviour but also become a guide for the government for future policies, to non-governmental organizations for attracting and recruiting more volunteers, for companies to attract and engage young talent and for society as a whole to encourage volunteering more.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Volunteering

Volunteering is understood to be interest-free, non-profit actions conducted to support local communities who may not have their complete needs fulfilled by government or public bodies. It covers individual, corporate and social entities. Volunteers fill the gap where civic service fails (Morawski and Szczegielniak 2021). It can be performed individually or by supporting the actions of employers, either directly or online (e-volunteering), as a one-time activity or independently through a recipient, usually a foundation or charity (Korzeniewska and Siwiński 2020).

Volunteering brings benefits not just for the beneficiary but also for the volunteer and for society (Wilson and Musick 1999; Wilson 2000; Kosewska 2015). It can be understood through the lens of social capital theory where structured and defined actions hinging on trust, values and rules can bring about positive change in the community. Social capital is defined as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Wilson and Musick 1999, p. 14). Social actions influence social capital when trust is built and, therefore, forming social identities is valuable (Hamer and Gutowski 2009).

These pro-social actions impact physical health, anti-social behaviours, citizenship behaviours, mental health and occupational achievement and individual benefits often go beyond the act and sustain over time. The benefits of volunteering are extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Wilson and Musick 1999) and improve the satisfaction and commitment of staff while giving them opportunities to gain new skills (Korzeniewska and Siwiński 2020). Psychological, normative and societal factors are motivators for volunteering. Volunteers get a sense of enjoyment, feel valued, align with social norms and believe they are impacting society at large (Kosewska 2015). National culture influences how volunteering is perceived and practised. Poland as a nation has experienced tumultuous changes over decades and its inclusion into the European Union has created conflicts in social identities, which determine pro-social behaviours such as helping others. Polish youths tend to identify first with their families, then the nation, neighbours and citizens and, finally, all of humanity (Hamer and Gutowski 2009).

3.2. Volunteering in a Crisis

While crises have been studied in the literature and have ranged from the refugee influx to Europe in 2015 (Maestri and Monforte 2020) to the recent COVID-19 epidemic sweeping the world (Bazan et al. 2021), there is limited research on the motivations and value for volunteers to help in such situations. A Jordanian study shows that volunteering during the pandemic has had a positive impact on the volunteers and has resulted in them acquiring new skills (Alhajjaj and Al Nabulsi 2022). Another study conducted on emergency volunteering in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shows that volunteering in emergency situations has proved to be important both for the responding stakeholders as well as for the victims, thereby reducing human and monetary losses (Alzaghal and Momani 2017).

A recent study performed on volunteer motivation in Africa (Ghana, South Africa and Tanzania) revealed that while novice volunteers are motivated more for social reasons, regular volunteers were motivated primarily for altruistic reasons (Compion et al. 2021). A study on healthcare students volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia brought out the motivations and barriers behind volunteering. While

patriotism, desire to gain experience, being of help when one can be and religious rewards were the main motivators; lack of interest in volunteering, protocols for volunteering, knowledge about volunteering, personal health issues and transportation difficulties during the pandemic were cited as the main barriers (Alomar et al. 2021). A similar study conducted on health sector students during COVID-19 vaccination in Al-Ahsa, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia showed that gaining and improving practical skills, a will to gain a new experience, a desire to help others and an objective to develop their personal skills were the main motivators behind volunteering. Few did it just for fun. University commitments of the students and long hours of commute to do the volunteering work were cited as the main barriers (Mousa et al. 2021).

For example, a study among 580 volunteer medical students in a single medical university in Poland serving at different healthcare units during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic (March–September 2020) indicates that while the risks were perceived to be high, the participation was perceived positively and they experienced a greater sense of satisfaction. Participants also believed it provided them with valuable professional experience. Although medical students are not officially considered emergency workers, based on their contributions, there is a case for such volunteers to be included in future crises (Bazan et al. 2021).

A few attempts are made to appreciate volunteers' motivations and dilemmas. Volunteering during crises often highlights moral and ethical contradictions. The inability to differentiate which people deserve help and which do not put a strain on how volunteers perceive their roles and the macro-environment (Maestri and Monforte 2020). Using in-depth interviews with 72 volunteers, Bańbuła (2021) discovered that the refugee crisis surfaced volunteers' paradoxes and coping mechanisms used to manage interactions, balance emotions and make decisions. Volunteers try to be non-judgmental, focus on task execution and accept complexities of the political and collective actions (Maestri and Monforte 2020). It is also important to note that among the key motivators for volunteering among Polish youths is to make a difference, align with values and share knowledge (Korzeniewska and Siwiński 2020) while barriers to volunteering are ignorance, self-centrism, helplessness, fear, idealization, confidence and physical factors (Kosewska 2015).

Global studies on the relationship between volunteerism and the millennial generation have indicated that social events, opportunities to uphold values and principles and the use of information technologies improve their awareness of inequalities, injustices and societal issues that need interventions (Adha et al. 2018). Moreover, as a digital-first generation, they see no limits to communication, sharing information and volunteering—leaving a trace encouraging others to volunteer and recruit people (Perić et al. 2021).

3.3. Volunteering in Poland

Volunteering in Poland is relatively new with most non-governmental organizations starting or resuming operations in 1989. Civil society continues to evolve, is small scale and practised in pockets (Gliński 2011). Called the third sector, the concept of a volunteering organization is non-existent with most either coined as public benefit, non-governmental or community entities (Basińska and Jeran 2014). From a cultural perspective, the word 'volunteering' is barely understood in Poland because there are deeper familial bonds amidst the village and clan networks where helping each other does not count as volunteering. The socialist historical background and occupation by the Soviet Union also cemented thoughts of worker support without expecting anything in return (Hamer and Gutowski 2009).

There has been a significant increase in the number of civil society organizations over the 30 years in Poland with more than 8600 non-profit organizations in the country and about 143,000 social organizations working in various areas. Engagement levels in civil society participation have improved with 43% of Polish youths providing unpaid time to volunteer in civil society organizations (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022). While the philanthropic potential of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region is valued at EUR 3.3 billion of which EUR 2 billion are donated already, it is comparatively less than what

Americans donate. After adjusting for population, the amount donated in the region is 3.7% of that of the United States. However, Poland donates the highest among the CEE countries studied, with most funding going to crises to address when people are impacted. Volunteering is quite popular among young people, up to the age of 30 (38%), indicative of the value of such support in the future (Korzeniewska and Siwiński 2020). Volunteering has been noted to have a significant impact on the economy with one study putting the value at 2.6% of Poland's GDP in 2011 (Pater 2021).

The Social Impact Alliance study led by Korzeniewska and Siwiński (2020) shares that 4 in 10 employees in Poland would like to engage in volunteering for 2–3 h a month and, for 3–4 days a year. Although just 14% of CEE citizens state that their employers allow them to volunteer during working hours. In all such actions, one of the elements of time, funds and resources are used to be considering a volunteering effort. Volunteering is performed sporadically with most contributing once a year followed by once a quarter providing predictable and repeatable support (Korzeniewska and Siwiński 2020). A CBOS [Social Opinion Research Center] study indicates that the rate of individual–community civil involvement improved with 36% of the Polish youths acknowledging active participation in NGOs and voluntary work on behalf of the needy or the local community (Gliński 2011) although volunteering, even by those working in the not-for-profit sector, is treated as a luxury and prestigious (Basińska and Jeran 2014).

Earlier studies indicated that volunteering in Poland was low compared to other nations in Europe although events such as the European Year of Volunteering in 2010 and the Euro 2012 soccer championship increased interest levels (Gliński 2011; Kosewska 2015). Individual civil society was less engaged due to the cultural neglect of society during communist-influenced Poland and the decline of collective thinking and civic values. Younger people are known to have a broader appreciation of volunteering while the older generation takes a narrower perspective. The non-governmental sector is also small, young and underdeveloped with a majority of entities beginning after 1989 (Gliński 2011).

The concept of volunteering is expanding due to the changing realities of society, the diversity of roles available and the motivations. As compared to classical volunteering, new volunteering provides opportunities to individually participate, choose the organization, field of action, choice of activity, duration and type of engagement (Basińska and Jeran, p. 2bas014). The popularity of this type of volunteering is growing among Polish youths who see multi-motivations and benefits that go beyond the event or activity. These motivations include positive emotions, career boosts and reinforcement of personality traits such as responsibility and organizing (Kosewska 2015). Volunteering is also classified as time- and skills-based. The former is focused on bringing about social change through interventions through the free and voluntary support given in areas including education, experience or qualifications and the latter provides more extensive engagement with knowledge sharing as a priority (Korzeniewska and Siwiński 2020).

Another perspective taking shape is the expanded definition of what a philanthropist is—a person not just donating funds for social good but also devoting time, sharing knowledge and experience, or even lending contacts or image to support philanthropic goals (Korzeniewska and Siwiński 2020).

4. Methods

This study is a qualitative study using narrative research as an inquiry strategy. Using this method not only helped us to focus on the experiences and ideas of the participants but also made it possible to reach detailed data in its natural setting. Being interpretative in nature, it allowed us to interpret the data as well. In short, narrative research not only allowed us the opportunity to gather data from real life and experiences, but it also helped in understanding the outcomes of interpretations, rather than explanations (Polkinghorne 1988; Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Gudmundsdottir 1997; Gudmundsdottir 2001; Cresswell 2003; Kramp 2004; Moen 2006).

The personal narratives of the participants were documented using semi-structured interviews, in a setting that allowed free-flowing responses from the participants to fully express their narratives. Thematic analysis was used alongside the narrative research approach (Braun and Clarke 2006) to crystallize the narratives into themes that helped understand the motivations of the Polish youths behind volunteering during a crisis.

A total of 13 participants from Poland aged between 17–30 years participated in the research (refer to Table 1). To take part, they had to prove that they took an active role in volunteering during a crisis and were able to share their personal stories and emotions in English. All interviews were conducted online on a platform which allowed for easy and comfortable connection, allowing complete anonymity for the participants. Videos were recorded and transcribed to allow for complex and holistic analysis.

Table 1. Participant profile.

Code	Age	Gender	Profession	Volunteering Experience Prior to Ukraine War
P_1	25	Male	Student	Pandemic; Academia Future.
P_2	24	Female	Student	Volunteering in school/college; Polish Associates; Manus Foundation; govt. training for differently abled people; Women in Tech Summit.
P_3	30	Female	Lawyer, student	Volunteering for a Polish foundation.
P_4	26	Female	Psychologist	Children with psychological issues/trauma; refugees of Chechen war; domestic abuse victims.
P_5	17	Female	Student	No volunteering experience prior to stepping up for Ukrainian refugees.
P_6	22	Female	Student	Organizing cloth-swap at Nike; Project on Green City; mobilising people on Facebook; activism against fashion industry sweatshops.
P_7	20	Female	Student	Community support; volunteering as a trainer for underprivileged kids; fundraising activities.
P_8	25	Female	Event manager	Helping locally in various activities.
P_9	29	Female	Coordinator	Local activist at Subcarpathian Voivodeship; helping at Polish–Belarusian border.
P_10	26	Female	PhD candidate, coordinator	Supporting animal rescue centre; local centre for disabilities.
P_11	28	Male	Marketing specialist	Helping at animal shelters.
P_12	21	Male	IT specialist, event manager	Collecting clothes, helping in organizing events.
P_13	17	Male	Student	Helping in organizing ecological events.

The sample size was decided by following the principle of data saturation (Fusch and Ness 2015; Guest et al. 2020; Hennink and Kaiser 2022). The saturation was reached at the 10th interview. Beyond the 10th interview, the interviews did not yield any new data or themes. However, for the purpose of rigour, a ‘stopping criterion’ of 3 more interviews was added to the original 10, taking the total number of interviews conducted to 13 for this research (Hagaman and Wutich 2016).

The participants were identified using the snowball sampling method, using the network of the researcher and those of the initial participants. Complete confidentiality of

the identity of the participants was ensured and all the research ethics were followed in the entire research process to ensure participant confidentiality.

To ensure the validity of the research, the stories after restoration were taken back to the respective story owners to confirm the accuracy; peer debriefing was used to enhance the accuracy of accounts (Cresswell 2003).

5. Findings

The findings of our research helped us to understand the motivators of young men and women in Poland during a crisis, who were volunteering for the Ukrainian refugees.

5.1. Normative Motivators

The Polish youths volunteering for the Ukrainian refugees for volunteering during a crisis have expressed a desire to give back to society. Their feeling of contentment and a sense of gratitude for what they have received in their lives, at the same a sense of material guilt, motivated them to give back and pay forward when others need them the most.

"I'm very satisfied with my life. I really enjoy what I am doing. I really like what I do in my life. A lot of people struggle a lot and have much harder life then mine. I feel volunteering is a way of giving back to the society, especially during a crisis when people need us the most" (P_1)

"It is scary to hear a six-year-old telling you that he spent eight days in a basement. I see refugees in stations coming-out crying. When I see all this, I feel it is my social responsibility to give back to the society and volunteering is a great way of doing the same" (P_7)

"I found myself having a bit of free time and decided to give back to society from which I have received so much. Volunteering, especially when it needed most, is my way of giving back and passing forward the goodness that I have received from others" (P_11)

The Polish youths also feel that reaching out to help others in distress and contributing when there is a crisis has always been a part of their national history. They feel that their nation occupies higher esteem in the world because of its ability and readiness to help those in distress. This sense of pride in their own nation's position and history motivates them to volunteer.

"The present military conflict between Ukraine and Russia, I consider that I am part of the war. It's not just the war between Ukraine and Russia. It's so something very complicated. We polish people are already involved already in world. We not only help by the logistics but also take care of the refugees in every matter. It's very important to like that I need to do something because it's the most important event in my life" (P_1)

"I think that helping people in distress is a very Polish thing. We have this organization in Poland that helps organize help for poor families and those in need. I had a friend in my class, and she was from such a family. We wanted to her, so we organized something for her. My close friend's problem is my problem. As I talked with more people, I realized that many people share similar thoughts, so I think this is something we always have been doing" (P_5)

Serving humanity driven by compassion was another big motivator for the Polish youths. Any crisis, whether the present Ukrainian refugee crisis or any other crisis places many through unspeakable hardships and what they need most is a compassionate heart and a helping hand.

"When I am helping animals during the crisis, I feel so much compassion for them. They cannot say anything, neither can they help themselves. I help those who cannot do anything for themselves. It is really motivating. The same feeling when I helped people with disabilities" (P_2)

“So basically, I met this gentleman at the border. He was waiting for his family from Mariupol. It was beginning of the war, so it was still possible to reunite this family. We had to find his son, his wife, the brother, and wife of the brother because they were still there in Mariupol, and we didn’t know if they are alive. First, I gave him money for the car, but it was very difficult to send money. We were trying to, do it through humanitarian aid because we knew that situation there was very difficult, but it was not possible to send because the city had been taken over by Russians. We were trying to send somehow check if his family was still alive. But it was not possible at all. So, then I’ve bought a car and, uh, this car is now used to like drive and deliver a humanitarian aid. The person who drove this car checked on the family and we were, we’ve been able to reunite the family from there” (P_4)

“Volunteering made me feel empowered, in some sort that humanity can make a difference, can help to rebuild the earth. My sister asked me to help her, and we went to the border to provide meals for the people” (P_8)

The majority of the more than 6 million Ukrainian refugees who have crossed over to Poland are women and children. Lending them a helping hand, and providing them with food, supplies and shelter has been a motivation for Polish youths volunteering during this crisis.

“Women Empowerment issues are very close to my heart. I specially volunteered to help the Ukrainian girls and women. I met this Ukrainian woman at the border. She was a military medic and had given birth to her child recently. We helped her and her child. Later, I helped her to buy a uniform, buy some medical equipment” (P_4)

“There are a lot of people who are trying to escape Ukraine. Mostly women and children are camping at the border because of the delays. We are trying to help them” (P_12)

5.2. Hedonic Motivators

Motivation for volunteering during the crisis for many Polish youths comes from the fact that they gained rich personal experiences in the process. These experiences not only provided them with a sense of happiness but also helped to alleviate the pain that they might experience arising from the crisis. Such experiences also contributed to their growth as a person.

“Volunteering has always meant rich personal experiences for me. As a child, I was a shy, skinny boy child who was not confident at all. I didn’t have any friend. I really hated school and it was very tough time for me. Volunteering helped me to meet great people that contributed a great deal in developing my personality and develop confidence. It is my style of life you know. I used to travel a lot. Since 2021, I have travelled to 10 countries, met a lot of great people. Volunteering for the Ukraine refugee crisis has also given me an opportunity to meet some great people. I feel I can share my feeling with others” (P_1)

“So, I think that the biggest shock was when I saw like the mothers and kids who were crying. They were terrified. But when they saw us with essentials for them, their eyes lit up and they had a smile on their face. In this situation of struggle, they have this one like a moment of hope. And when I see them hopeful again, it was an amazing feeling” (P_5)

“Volunteering is not about money. It’s about the experience. I love the kind of experiences I have when I did volunteer work. It has helped me gain a different perspective of life” (P_6)

“I am a person who always to try something new and whenever I have a chance I will do just for the sake of experience. Volunteering during such time has provided me with valuable experience. I am doing all this stuff with my friends, so it has given us a great time to bond” (P_7)

“I think volunteering has helped me meet new people and helped expand my knowledge of local communities and the ecology” (P_8)

“Honestly, volunteering is also a lot of fun. You get to meet other people, hang out with them, do fun things, talk and always be cheerful. It’s always very welcoming, very warm, unlike the boring work” (P_12)

Motivation from volunteering during this crisis also comes from their ideological beliefs. Many of the Polish youths feel that this is an unfair war and volunteering is their way of extending support to the Ukrainian people who are in distress.

“I personally feel that it is a very unfair war. This is one of my main motivations to volunteer for the Ukrainian refugees. It also helped me to be closer to my family during such a crisis” (P_4)

“People from the right wing have some objections against the Ukrainian refugees. They might not be so happy to help them. It’s just you know perspectives of these people. But that does not mean that we will not reach out to the people in need” (P_8)

“I am volunteering, organizing various events, holding demonstration. This conflict is a lot political and through my volunteering I am not giving away things to people in need but also raising their voices” (P_12)

Taking up volunteering for many Polish youths is a way to bring about change. Things do not just happen, it needs participation. Volunteering is their way to participate and change things for the better.

“Climate crisis is one of the most urgent issues that needs to be handled. I want to bring about a change in the way fashion industry operates. Outsourcing clothes manufacturing to poor countries and not caring about the working conditions of the workers there is not being responsible or sustainable. The roof of factory collapses and 1000 workers die. This is not acceptable. My volunteering and activism are to raise awareness about such issues” (P_6)

“I always try to be kind to people. I want to save people in distress. I want to do something for others and not just think about myself. Caring for others makes me feel I can influence and change things. I feel I have contributed in some small way towards making a positive change. So many people hear about such crisis, but they do nothing about it, but I feel I can change the situation” (P_9)

“We are trying to bring about a change, raising awareness about the real issues at hand and convincing people by talking to them” (P_13)

Volunteering also provides many a personal sense of satisfaction. The fact that they are able to help someone in crisis and create a moment of hope for them, brings an inner satisfaction which in turn motivates them to do more such acts.

“I met this lady, a Ukrainian refugee. She was like 55 years old. She was without accommodation. She couldn’t really find some accommodation, so I helped her. Finally, I could get her a decent accommodation. I felt a sense of satisfaction and just for that it was worth the volunteering effort” (P_1)

“It felt very good. I know that during crisis people forget about their animals. The same happened during the Ukrainian crisis. Animals were abandoned near the borders. Rescuing such animals and helping them find shelters is immensely satisfying. I was also involved in collecting food and clothes for people. But very few people think about animals” (P_2)

“I think maybe you feel satisfied, a sense of goodness. So, if you ask me what’s my key takeaway from the volunteering experience it will be a feeling that I have done something right” (P_3)

“It was super rewarding, helping these people who would go for days being cold and hungry. It made so much sense to be there and helping these people” (P_11)

“Since the war began, I felt so numb to know about the destruction and suffering. I wasn’t even able to cry. I felt sad and depressed. Volunteering for the refugees has helped me feel better and as if I am able to secure the lost peace and security in some way. The war destroyed my harmony and sense of security. Volunteering made me feel strong again” (P_4)

All volunteers were proud of their volunteering work. It makes them feel worthy of their existence and a sense of purpose. Volunteering also makes them feel worthy in front of others. Such a feeling of self-actualization further motivates them to volunteer.

“Volunteering during this crisis in many ways define one of the purposes of my existence. I can either choose to stay at home and be busy with my phone. I chose to volunteer because I am not only thinking of helping others, but I am also thinking about helping with my ego and with my morality. It felt worthwhile to dedicate more time to volunteering then spend time on my phone” (P_2)

“Volunteering at the beginning was very stressful, but then I met these amazing people. They were scared, but we could comfort them. I felt good about my actions” (P_10)

“There are a lot of people who are less fortunate than we are, and we can all be nice to them. We can do good things. It’s just a great feeling. I don’t think everyone feels this way. But I feel my purpose is defined by such acts. The sheer fulfilment of helping somebody is unmatched. You feel warm inside” (P_12)

“In general, I am a very compassionate person. My values are not like consuming reality around me. I don’t find happiness in shopping or any form of consumption. Maybe it has to do with my upbringing, but I feel a sense of guilt somewhere that I need to do something for people around me who are struggling. It is my human responsibility to help them, especially in such a drastic and extreme situation” (P_3)

5.3. Eudaimonic Motivators

For some Polish youths, volunteering was a wonderful opportunity for demonstrating leadership and networking. The crisis was like a crucible for learning and testing their leadership capabilities.

“Volunteering gave me an opportunity to develop my leadership skills. When I was volunteering, I was working with a group of girls, and I was commanding them to various projects and tasks. This is a great motivation for me to lead from the front. It also helped me with networking and building my network. I feel good about myself and learned a lot. The younger students at our university, they didn’t make such good network because of Covid. They have an excellent opportunity to volunteer for the Ukrainian refugees and us this opportunity to build their network” (P_2)

“I learnt a lot about leadership and leading people who were strangers to me in the beginning. Understanding them and aligning them towards the purpose was indeed a great learning” (P_13)

Motivation for volunteering also came from the fact that it provided them with an opportunity to build their personal capital. They could sharpen the conceptual knowledge related to their profession while doing acts of volunteering.

“My studies have been focused on exotic and domestic animals. I have volunteered in the past for animal rescue center in Brazil. My volunteering relates to endangered species which is a crisis in itself. I always connect my volunteering work and my studies with animals. It has enabled me to expand my knowledge and help at the same time” (P_10)

“Let’s call it personal capital. Volunteering for me has always been rewarding. It is a great way to contribute, but also expand your knowledge and experience at the same time. It is the best way to make a change and to put words into action” (P_11)

5.4. Personal Factors

Some of the young Polish volunteers had family connections in Ukraine. They had families and friends living in Ukraine. This sense of connection motivated them to volunteer during this crisis. It was like caring for your own family.

“Probably the reason why I started this was probably quite different. Once the war started, I saw refugees coming in and I too have family roots from Ukraine. Taking care of them felt like taking care of my own people” (P_1)

“I could sort of relate to the Ukrainian crisis. I have heard stories of my grandma. She was a child during the time of war. So, I know what the hardships they went through. I have family and friends in Ukraine. So, I feel that connection” (P_3)

“I didn’t have much time to decide. It was like my first like thing that I wanted to help them. I have many friends that make have their families in Ukrainian. So, it was my priority to help them. My neighbourhood on the Facebook groups made ads like these adverts and the posts told us that we can help by collecting things and that everyone can help. I felt scared when I like imagined the dire situation that Ukrainian people were finding themselves. And it’s near my country. It’s like our neighbour and I have many friends from this country. I felt obligated to help them and I think it is also my right as a human to help other humans in crisis” (P_5)

Motivation for volunteering for Polish youths also came from their family influence. Seeing their parents and other older members of their family volunteer, motivated them to extend a helping hand as well.

“My parents were also involved in volunteering for the Ukraine refugees. My family is great, particularly my parents are amazing people. They are also very kind and I have learnt so many things from them. They are a very strong influence behind me volunteering for the Ukrainian refugees” (P_1)

“My mom was my inspiration to volunteer during this crisis. She was doing everything. I still do not have a driving licence. So, she would drive us around when we were doing the volunteering. She also saw posts on Facebook and told us how we could help” (P_5)

“It was because of my parents. My father was driving next to the railway station, collecting stuff that people would give away for the refugees. Honestly, volunteering for me got initiated by accident, but then I felt it was easiest way to get involved and contribute” (P_12)

5.5. Volunteering Experience and Its Influence on Volunteers

Volunteering experience had a positive influence on the lives of the volunteers. They recalled their volunteering experience during a crisis with keenness and agreed that it left an indelible mark on their lives, in many ways.

Volunteering helped them to make new friends and develop positive relationships. They had an opportunity to meet a lot of people and some of them became very good friends.

“During volunteering, I met this girl. She is about 23 years old. We became really good friends. I am still in touch with her and speak to her every other week. That’s a great personal outcome for me. I made a great friend” (P_1)

“Volunteering during this crisis helped me to make good utilisation of my free time. You not only help others, but it also helps you. I could meet a lot of amazing people and make good friends” (P_2)

It left them with good memories, something that they recall with fondness.

“If you ask me outcome of volunteering, it is a bunch of happy emotions, a feeling that I too perhaps needed in this moment of crisis” (P_7)

Volunteering during a crisis throws up a lot of challenges as well. Overcoming such challenges exposed them to a lot of practical learning, contributing to their personal growth.

“Volunteering has not given me any money, not that I expected any in the first place. But it has given me much more important than money. It has helped me to grow as a person and become the confident self that I am today” (P_1)

“Volunteering has helped me somewhere to come out of my bubble and comfort zone. It has made me much stronger” (P_9)

Volunteering also helped them to develop skills that helped them develop personal and professional acumen.

“I am a volunteer and an activist for bringing sustainability in fashion industry. I feel climate crisis is a very imminent crisis that we should all be concerned about and sustainability in clothing is one way to address this crisis. When I was in Nike, I organized clothes swap. During volunteering, we were coordinating to teach how to make clothes. I didn't learn all this in my academics” (P_6)

“I have not only made new friends but volunteering has helped me gain a lot of skills, especially in terms of building societies, building the communities. I think it has also helped me become quite open-minded. I also learned how to make a movie” (P_9)

For some of them volunteering has helped reset their future. Their future goals and choice of careers may be dictated by how these experiences have shaped them as a person.

“My dream is to create a big charity organization in the future and help as many people as possible during such crisis or those who facing personal hardships and crisis” (P_1)

5.6. Barriers to Volunteering during Crisis

When asked about the barriers to volunteering and what would prevent many from volunteering, the self-centeredness of some was cited by the volunteers as one such barrier.

“Most people are focused on what they have in their daily lives. They are so consumed with themselves that they fail to see the pain and sufferings of other people. We spend so much time on our phones and social media these days, most of which is unnecessary. Yet we fail to get time to volunteer, even during a crisis” (P_1)

“I feel some people only think about money. Afterall, volunteering does not pay you anything and hence such people find no motivation” (P_6)

“Some people, you know, they are so dissatisfied with their lives. They want to do something to improve their situation, so they need to focus on their jobs, money, etc. They cannot free up their mental space for things like volunteering” (P_1)

Many volunteers also feel that the busy lives of the Polish youths, lack of time and burnout from the daily grind of life were also reasons that prevented many from volunteering.

“I think it is burnout many a times that prevents people from volunteering. They have so much responsibility and they feel that they are overwhelmed. Volunteering on the other hand they feel offers them nothing substantial to gain from it” (P_3)

“It is a busy society and frankly it is a bit overwhelming at times. A lot of us just do not have time for volunteering” (P_7)

“I think a lot of people have this fear of commitment. They are not sure whether they will be able to dedicate time for volunteering and manage to do enough” (P_10)

Lack of awareness regarding volunteering, myths around volunteering during a crisis, especially about safety concerns, is also a barrier according to the young Polish volunteers.

“People do not see options, they do not know how they can volunteer, in what areas they can volunteer, how can they use their current skills to volunteer. Many people confuse volunteering with working for free. It's not working for free; it's about helping others in distress” (P_2)

“I think in the current situation, safety concern might have been a barrier to many in terms of volunteering. Many feel that ensuring their safety and that of their families is more important” (P_5)

“Fear is a barrier. The fear results from propagation of lot of lies about the situation. This scares people from taking-up volunteering work” (P_9)

6. Discussion

Motivating reasons help understand why a person does something. Normative reasons explain why a person should or should not do something (Mc Naughton and Rawling 2018). The dual psychology of behaviour is built on the assumption of the hedonic interface theory that behaviour is controlled by two fundamentally different psychologies: the intentional psychology of the cognitive being and the stimulus–reflex psychology of the reflex machine. However, over the years research has made it increasingly apparent that these two psychologies can be dissociated in the control of motivated instrumental behaviour by the brain. In short, the imperative for goal-directed action stems from the motivationally compelling nature of conscious hedonic experience (Dickinson and Balleine 2010).

Hedonic motivation is the intention to initiate behaviours that increase positive experiences which are pleasant or good and reduce negative experiences (Kaczmarek 2017). This is contrasted against eudaimonic motivation that seeks personal excellence (Huta and Waterman 2014). Furthermore like many of the concepts of psychology, there is not one way to define eudaimonia. The two theories that explain eudaimonia include the theory of psychological well-being proposed by Carol Ryff in 1989 which includes self-acceptance, growth, purpose in life, positive relationship with others, environmental mastery and autonomy (Kafka and Kozma 2002), and the self-determination theory built on autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Ryan and Deci 2000).

The motivators of Polish youths volunteering during a crisis, with specific reference to the present Ukrainian refugee crisis, can also be divided into normative, hedonic, eudaimonic and personal motivators. Motivators such as giving back to society, national pride, being driven by compassion and helping women and children were normative motivators. While the joy of rich personal experiences, ideological beliefs, for bringing about a change, personal satisfaction and self-actualization were more hedonic motivators. Volunteering for leadership and networking opportunities and building personal capital were eudaimonic motivators. Finally, volunteering owing to connections with families and friends back in Ukraine and due to family influence were the personal motivators (Figure 1).

Polish culture scores high in power distance and uncertainty avoidance, average in terms of individualism and moderately above average in masculinity (Nasierowski and Mikula 1998). National culture has been defined by Hofstede as a collective programming of the mind that differentiates the members of one people from another (Hofstede and Hofstede 1991).

There is research evidence that national culture influences the psychology and behaviour of the population (Dovidio et al. 2010; Wood et al. 2021; Ng et al. 2022). Values make up the deepest layer of culture and significant difference between national culture is found at the level of values (Hofstede et al. 2010). Poland, like many other former socialist nations of central and eastern Europe, shows equal division of adherence to both individualistic and collectivistic values (Oyserman et al. 2002). The strong collectivistic influence comes from four decades of functioning under the communist rule of the USSR and due to the dominance of the values propagated by the Catholic Church (Boski 2006). This explains the normative motivators behind volunteering during a crisis of the young Polish volunteers. A desire to give back to society, national pride in lending a helping hand to those in distress, volunteering out of compassion and helping women and children are all reflective of the partly collectivist mindset of the Polish youths. The high-power distance in the Polish culture is reflected in why those who are perceived as physically weak are protected more, something that explains why helping women and children came out as one of the normative motivators. A recent study based on a systematic literature

review shows that the limited knowledge about women empowerment on part of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) serves as a barrier to their ability to serve for the advancement of women and sustainable development. Therefore, the study recommends that these non-governmental institutions carry out their endeavours towards initiating systemic changes to ensure the social inclusion of women and create sustainable women empowerment in the communities (Al Hakim et al. 2022). Involving and understanding the motivations of volunteers may prove to be very helpful for the NGOs to gain a ground-level understanding of real issues that women refugees face during this crisis.

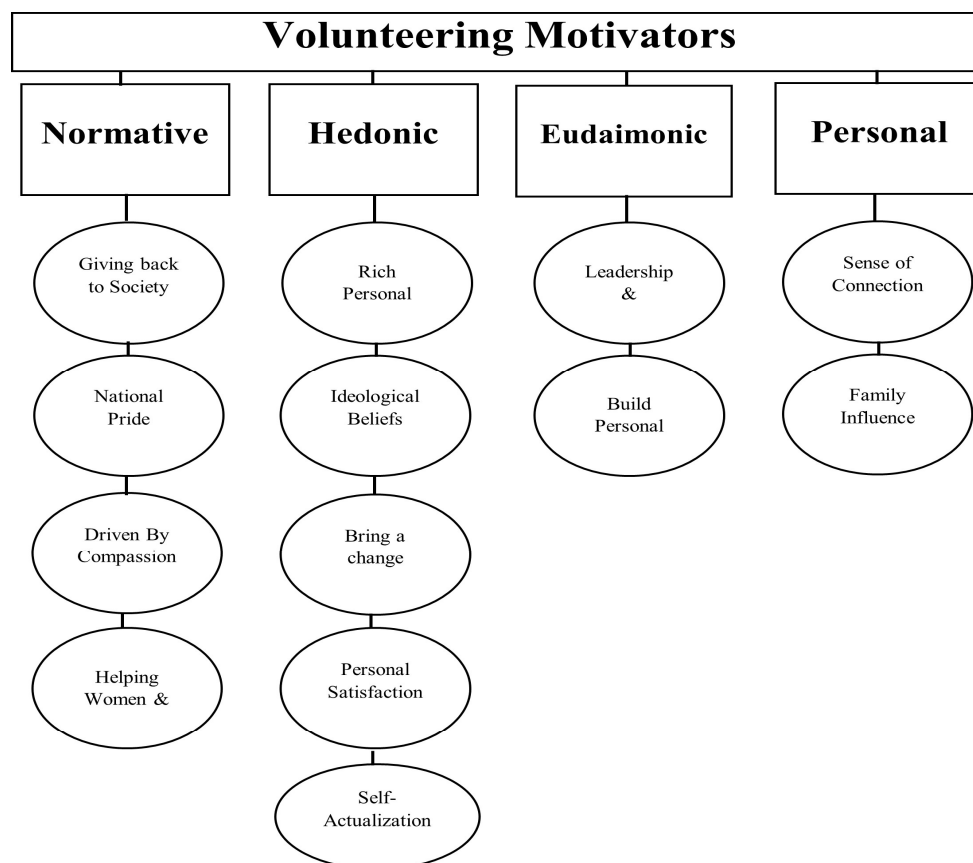


Figure 1. Volunteering motivators of Polish youths during crises.

Furthermore, the end of communism in Poland in the 1980s and implementation of the western values have resulted in an intertwining of individualistic and collectivist values. There is, however, a gradual shift towards greater individualism (Boski 2006; The Hofstede Centre 2015). This explains why most of the motivators that we found in our research had an individualistic appeal to them. Hedonic, eudaimonic and personal motivators are all representative of individualistic cultural values. Hedonic motivators are an individual's desire to engage in actions that enhance positive emotions and decrease pain or negative emotions. Volunteering to gain rich personal experiences, acting on one's own ideological beliefs, a belief that one can bring about a change, deriving personal satisfaction out of volunteering and volunteering for self-actualization are all reflective of an individualistic mindset. Similarly, eudaimonic motivators refer to an individual's desire to involve themselves in actions that lead towards personal excellence. Volunteering for leadership and networking opportunities and for building personal capital shows an individual's desire to use volunteering in a symbiotic manner that not only provides them with an opportunity to help others in dire need but also to build their personal excellence. People in individualistic cultures are expected to take care of themselves and of their near

family members and friends. The personal motivators of volunteering owing to a family connection or because of the influence of the family are congruent with such values.

The largely positive attitude of Polish people, especially of the Polish youths towards Ukrainian refugees evident in our findings is supported by a very recent study that reveals that there has been a transformation in Poland's migration context. There has been a shift in public perception and political narratives on refugees and other migrants, and Poland as a country is changing from a largely homogeneous society closed to the world outside to a progressively major destination for refugees and migrants (Hargrave et al. 2023).

The findings of our research can be compared with that of a recent study conducted in an Islamic Collectivist context. A study was conducted to understand the motivations behind volunteering by young women in Bahrain, volunteering during a crisis, with a focus on the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Sengupta and Al-Khalifa 2022a). Bahrain is a strongly collectivist society (Bastian 2017). Most of the motivators behind these young women volunteering for the RT-PCR drives and later vaccination drives were normative in nature. Out of the six motivators identified in this research, four were normative in nature, which include the call of the homeland, philanthropic zeal, a desire to contribute as a woman to society in distress and religious values. The Islamic religious values such as 'Ummah' consider a community like a body and if any part of the body is in pain, then the whole body is in a state of suffering and hence an individual is expected to engage in acts that alleviate this suffering was a big motivator. The normative motivators found in our research draw some similarities because of the collectivist influence of values in Polish culture. Interestingly, both show an influence of the nation and a desire for philanthropy. The role of religion may be more indirect in the case of Poland, not so pronounced as in the case of Bahrain. The other two motivators in the Bahrain study were personal in nature. The motivators in the case of young men volunteering during a crisis in Bahrain were not too different from those of women. Barring one that bordered on a utilitarian motivator, the rest of the motivators were the same. Hence there were no hedonic or eudaimonic motivators in the strong collectivist culture. However, in our Polish study, individualism values are more pronounced behind the motivation for volunteering during a crisis with hedonic, eudaimonic and personal (family connection) motivators.

Research also indicates that intrinsic motivation is positively associated with a volunteer concept of self, pro-social personality, time devoted by the volunteer and strength of their motive. This was found to be particularly true for the internal motives, satisfied by volunteering itself (Finkelstein 2009). Most of the normative and hedonic motivations of young Polish volunteers found in our research are intrinsic in nature. Extrinsic motivations are more closely associated with external motives such as career aspiration and require an outcome more than the volunteer work for them to be fulfilled. The eudaimonic motivators of young Polish volunteers were directed at the outcome of personal excellence other than the volunteering work.

Millennials as a generation have lived in transformational times that have significantly altered their mindsets, attitudes and behaviours (Sengupta 2017). Pandemic-imposed remote work arrangements have caused a kind of work-life integration in their lives (Sengupta and Al-Khalifa 2022b). Generation Z are the ones who have been raised by generation X and similarly have experienced events that were never seen before. Global crises such as environmental degradation, the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts between nations have been witnessed by them since childhood (Singh 2014). Such transformations have altered their attitudes and behaviours significantly. They are growing up to be a much more social-minded and socially responsible generation than the older generations. They feel this is the only way to save their planet and bring about a positive change (Sengupta 2020). Youth, in general, these days experience much more large-scale transformations than generations have experienced before and hence are most affected by such changes. Hence, they are most likely to respond to them to reshape their ways of living. Volunteering is one such response (Jardim and da Silva 2018). In the earlier section of this paper, our literature review also showed evidence of volunteering being more popular among young people

and the fact that younger people have a broader appreciation of volunteering than the older generation, who take a narrower perspective. Our research findings are congruent with the literature. Almost all the participants in our research had volunteered in the past as well. As much as they consider the present military conflict in Ukraine resulting in large-scale migration of Ukrainian refugees in Poland as a crisis, they also consider other crises such as the climate crisis, the pandemic crisis and likewise. There is also evidence that they volunteer for hedonic motivations, and the belief that volunteering can actually bring about a change is present.

Many of the volunteers feel that government has no role in encouraging volunteering. Some even felt that government should focus on what it ought to do, instead of getting involved in volunteering. They feel that volunteering is non-governmental in nature and government should not become involved so that there is a clear demarcation between governmental and non-governmental institutions. However, they feel that if the government has any role, then it is to provide policy support, reduce bureaucracy and make things easier. They feel the government can also help by raising awareness about volunteering by providing the right information and removing misconceptions about volunteering. The young Polish volunteers show a clear preference to work for companies who are social-minded and are angry with those companies who are just busy making profits. They want companies to educate their employees about volunteering and give time off to volunteer.

"I would like my employer to provide 2 days a year as a volunteering day-off". (P_11)

"I do not mind having a volunteering agreement clause in my employment contract and have some time-off every week or month to do volunteer work". (P_5)

A recent study finds that effective cooperation between government administration, local governments and non-governmental organizations will be critical in deciding the preparedness of the Polish state authorities in dealing with the refugee crisis (Goniewicz 2022).

We strongly recommend companies consider a volunteering day off at least once or twice a year. This could not only be a great way to encourage volunteering, considering that many potential volunteers are unable to do such work because of a paucity of time but also, a great engagement strategy.

Many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) require long-term changes in the attitude and behaviour of people. Volunteerism not only helps in strengthening civic engagement bringing about social inclusion and deepening of solidarity, but also helps in changing the mindsets of people by elevating the level of awareness by championing changes that inspire others (UN Volunteers 2020). Volunteers also feel that people or the public in general can also do things to encourage volunteering. Volunteer Interest Groups can create an online city page inviting people for volunteering, providing information about various volunteering opportunities, especially micro-volunteering opportunities; universities and schools can run programs to teach and educate people about volunteering.

The findings of our research also hold importance for public health policy makers and health workers in Poland. Recent studies reveal that European nations might experience public health threats due to the large influx of war refugees (Lewtak et al. 2022). The involvement and participation of the volunteers will be critical for the health sector in Poland to thwart threats posed to public health because of the refugee crisis. Understanding the motivation of Polish youth behind volunteering during crises can be helpful for public health institutions to attract and recruit volunteers.

7. Conclusions

Our research helped us to understand the motivation of the Polish youths, to step up for the Ukrainian refugees, and for volunteering during the crisis. There were normative, hedonic, eudaimonic and personal motivators (Figure 1). The normative motivators reflect their collectivist values that instil in them a sense of social responsibility to give back to society and also reduce their material guilt. The hedonic, eudaimonic and personal

motivators are more reflective of their individualistic cultural values. Hedonism drives actions that increase positive emotions and alleviate negative emotions. Volunteering during a crisis is one such act. Eudaimonic motivators are those that support actions that help in attaining personal excellence. Their family and friend connections in Ukraine are their personal motivations for volunteering during this present crisis arising from the war between Russia and Ukraine. The role of culture in shaping these motivators is quite evident. The mix of collectivist and individualistic cultural values in Poland, with a greater leaning towards individualism in present times explains why our findings reflected the influence of both these values in the motivations behind volunteering.

The literature shows evidence that millennials and generation Z cohort members share a great deal of similarity in terms of their attitudes, mindsets and behaviour across the world, considering the transformed environmental context in which they have grown up. They are highly social-minded and exhibit behaviour that shows their inclination to engage in activities for social development and giving back to society. Volunteering is one such behaviour. It is in this context that the findings of our study become important and motivations behind volunteering during crises can be generalized across these generational cohorts. Having said this, the cultural context cannot be ignored. The generalizability of our findings increases in cultures that are like that of Poland—a mix of collectivist and individualistic values, leaning more towards the latter. This, therefore, also presents a limitation of our study, that such motivations cannot be completely asserted in cultures that are different from the Polish culture, although they may apply in parts. The comparison of the findings with one of our earlier studies discussed in the discussion section is evidence of the same.

In the future, research can be conducted to investigate volunteering during a crisis in different cultural contexts. A longitudinal study can be conducted in a Polish context to see volunteering motivations during non-crisis situations as well. Motivations behind volunteering during a crisis as well as normal times could help the government, non-profits and corporates in creating policies and strategies that help attract, recruit, engage and retain the younger generations at work.

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