

STUDENT VOLUNTEERING – GENDER DIFFERENCES

Scientific paper

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Abstract

Purpose – A high unemployment rate of young highly-educated people as a consequence of economic crisis is one of the main problems the Croatian economy is facing today. In order to increase their future competitiveness on the labour market, students are encouraged to involve themselves in different types of volunteering activities. The purpose of this paper is to determine if there are differences in attitudes towards volunteering between male and female students. These differences should be used as a base for promotion of volunteering in a way to specifically handle the observed gender divergences.

Design – In order to determine the differences this paper explores students' attitudes and their assessments of the impact that volunteering has on their personal development, transferrable skills, academic life and future career prospects.

Methodology/Approach – For this purpose, during the academic year 2012/2013, the research was performed using a questionnaire on the population of 1,000 full-time students of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija (FTHM). To achieve the survey's goals, descriptive statistical analysis was performed.

Findings – Gender differences are observable in all explored aspects. Women view the effects of their own volunteering more in the sphere of the broader community and tend to act more out of altruistic motives, which not necessarily related to improving their own level of competitiveness. Male students assess the positive effects of volunteering on their transferrable skills and especially on employability much higher than their female colleagues

Originality – The potential of volunteering, as a type of experiential learning is not sufficiently exploited for the purpose of increasing the competitiveness of students on the labour market. This paper provides insights into the attitude differences towards volunteering between female and male students. These observed differences are a solid foundation for differentiated approach to promotion of volunteering in student population.

Keywords: students, volunteering, gender differences, competitiveness

1. INTRODUCTION

Under the influence of economic crisis and depression, the Croatian economy is facing the problem of increased unemployment rate. This is particularly true and worrying for the population of young people with higher education and will undoubtedly have long-term negative effects for the national economy as a whole.

This paper observes volunteering as a way of improving students' future competitiveness and employability. Volunteering is assumed to produce a number of outcomes: from providing opportunities to make friends, developing students' sense of civic duty to enhancing students' employability.¹ However, it is unlikely that one

¹ Hustinx, L. et al., "Monitorial Citizens or Civic Omnivores? Repertoires of Civic Participation Among University Students", *Youth & Society*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2012, 95-117.

activity can meet such an impressive range of outcomes; rather, students are able to choose from a variety of different volunteering opportunities that meet one or more of these outcomes.² This paper focuses on volunteering for individualistic reasons: future students' competitiveness and employability. While it is argued that employability is not sufficient reason to volunteer, and that many positive attributes could be lost if improving skills and employability chances alone are stressed, some research show that this dimension is nevertheless, the most commonly stated volunteering motive.³

Despite numerous potential positive effects and roles of volunteering, the research shows that, as a type of experiential learning, it is only marginally presented in the curricula of Croatian universities.⁴ Also very low is the inclusion of the student population in volunteering activities.⁵

The purpose of this paper is to determine if there are differences in attitudes towards volunteering between male and female students. The literature review shows mixed results on gender as the socio-demographic factor determining the volunteerism.⁶ However, given the prevailing number of female students in tourism, economics and business studies⁷, the prevailing number of female workers in tourism⁸, and the existing need to improve their position in general and particularly their position and share in management structures, the question of assessing differences in volunteerism attitudes between male and female students presents itself as very topical and worthy of research.

Namely, if differences do exist, that implies that the same motivation strategies cannot be used for both genders, since they will not produce balanced results. If the majority of students are women, than the majority of university's actions and motivation strategies should be shaped in accordance with their preferences and goals, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of the university: to create individuals with competitive knowledge, skills and competencies. If this goal can be achieved while balancing between the curriculum goals and students' social engagement, than all three classic university roles (research, teaching and community service) could be met.

² Holdsworth, C., p. 422.

³ E.g. Holdsworth, C., „Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations For Student Volunteering“, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 2010, p. 424ff.

⁴ Ćulum, B., Ledić, J., „Učenje zalaganjem u zajednici – integracija visokoškolske nastave i zajednice u procesu obrazovanja društveno odgovornih i aktivnih građana“, *Revija za socijalnu politiku*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 71-88.

⁵ Maškarin Ribarić, H., Radović Nimac, K., Nađ, M., „Volunteering and competitiveness on the labour market in times of crisis: Students' attitudes“, in 2nd International Scientific Conference *Tourism in Southern and Eastern Europe 2013*, Proceedings, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management Opatija, May 15 – 18, 2013, 217-229.

⁶ Wilson, J., „Volunteering“, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26, 2000, 215–240; Austin, A.W., Sax, L.J., „How undergraduates are affected by service participation“, *Journal of College Student Development*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 1998, 251-263.

⁷ In the gender structure of study programmes for economics and tourism in Croatia, female students prevail, and account for a share of 66%.; http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2012/SI-1445.pdf (01.09.2013.)

⁸ According to official statistics, in 2012, women made up 55% of all employees of the “accommodation and food service activities” in Croatia, compared with the average of 46% for the entire Croatian economy; http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/ljetopis/2012/sljh2012.pdf(01.09.2013.)

2. EXTENT OF VOLUNTEERING

Different descriptions and definitions of volunteerism result from different traditions and the cultural and social context of a particular nation or state. The basic document defining volunteerism in Croatia is the Law on Volunteering which defines volunteering as: “every voluntary investment of personal time, effort and skills used to perform services or activities for the wellbeing of other persons or for common good (...), without the existence of monetary payment or any other kind of material gain for the performed volunteering (...).”⁹

According to Hustinx et al.¹⁰ volunteering by university students involves activities that are:

- non-compulsory or spontaneous (so extracurricular)
- unpaid
- externally oriented
- not necessarily conducted within an organisational framework
- not necessarily limited in time and/or kind of activities and
- taking place inside and outside the university setting.

The motive for involvement in volunteering activities is never financial or any other material (tangible) benefit, but solely inner motives and grounds such as belonging to a community, personal satisfaction or aspiration to improve existing and gain new knowledge.

In 2011 close to a quarter of citizens of the EU were involved in a voluntary activity (either on a regular or occasional basis). However, this involvement varies noticeably between Member States. Involvement in volunteering is very widespread in the Netherlands, where more than half the respondents carry out a voluntary activity (57%), 31% on a regular basis. This is also the case in Denmark (43%, 21% on a regular basis). More than one-third of respondents are involved in a voluntary activity in Finland (39%), Austria (37%), Luxembourg (35%), Germany (34%) and Slovenia (34%). Conversely, Malta (16%), Spain (15%), Greece (14%), Romania (14%), Bulgaria (12%), Portugal (12%) and Poland (9%) are well below the EU average.¹¹

2.1. Student volunteering

The growing unemployment rate of young, highly educated people with no job experience of any kind urges the need to bring volunteering closer to them and to introduce volunteering as a means to improve knowledge, skills, and competencies,

⁹ Zakon o volonterstvu, NN 58/07, <http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/298299.html> (12.07.2013.)

¹⁰ Hustinx, L. et al., “Bifurcated commitment, priorities, and social contagion: the dynamics and correlates of volunteering within a university student population”, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 26, No. 24., 2005, p. 527-

¹¹ Volunteering and Intergenerational Solidarity, Eurobarometer 75.2.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2011/juillet/04_07/rapport_%20eb75_2_%20benevolat_en.pdf (01.03.2014).

gain working experience and in this way increase their competitiveness and employability on the labour market.

This compelling need is recognized both on the EU and the Croatian national level. Special importance and responsibility is given to universities since their students will take the leading roles in the future as politicians, lawyers, professors, etc. This is also evident from the Higher Education Act (Official Gazette 45/09) which states that higher education is based on interactions with the social community, and that higher education institutions are obliged to develop social responsibility in students and other members of the academic and scientific community.¹²

Among the classic university roles – research, teaching and community service – the social engagement of universities and their impact on civil society should be particularly highlighted. Although the inner structural transformation processes and those associated with their environment often speak in favour of the ever more accentuated market orientation of higher education, parallel to this orientation efforts to reinforce the civic role of universities, their social responsibility and their role in developing the active society are also growing stronger.¹³

Volunteering and service learning are excellent means for accomplishing the goals of universities explained above. With regards to direction, learning outcomes and relationship to the communities, there are three major types of experiential learning: practical work within the teaching process, volunteering and academic service learning (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Differences between practical student activities

Type of experiential learning activity	Direction, learning outcomes and relationship to the community
Practical work within the teaching process – professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is the beneficiary /user • Professional development is the primary goal • The emphasis is on acquiring new knowledge and skills • Learning outcomes are defined in advance by curriculum • The community context is neglected
Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community is the primary beneficiary /user • The care for community is principal • The emphasis is on (varied) community activities • Learning outcomes are not connected with curriculum • Learning context is not of primary importance

¹² Skočić Mihić, S., Lončarić, D., Rudelić, A., “Volontiranje studenata s djecom i mladima s posebnim odgojno-obrazovnim potrebama”, *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, Vol. 18 No. 3, 2011, pp. 580-581. <http://hrcak.srce.hr/75437?lang=en> (6.7.2012).

¹³ Ledić, J. (Ed.), *Volontiranje je cool: Društveno odgovorno Sveučilište – poticatelj kulture volontiranja*, Zaklada Sveučilišta u Rijeci, Rijeka, 2007, http://uniri.academia.edu/Bojana_Culum/Papers/1375840 (18.07.2012).

Academic service learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reciprocal collaborative relationship between student - community • Professional and personal students` growth and care for community are of equal importance • Needs / problems of the community and adequate solutions are equally important • Balance between the curriculum goals and outcomes of social engagement (volunteerism) • Balance of the curriculum, community and student learning
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Source: Ćulum, B., Ledić, J., "Učenje zalaganjem u zajednici – integracija visokoškolske nastave i zajednice u procesu obrazovanja društveno odgovornih i aktivnih građana", *Revija za socijalnu politiku*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2010, p. 79

The three types of activities described above can be observed within the Croatian context as three development phases, out of which only the first phase has been completely implemented in the curricula of most of the universities. For the second phase (volunteering), the formal legal framework which gives the declarative incentive to the inclusion (especially) of young people in volunteering activities has been developed. The third phase represents a demanding and attainable, but at this moment very distant, goal for most Croatian universities. According to Handy et al.¹⁴ only 15.5% of Croatian students were exposed to some form of institutional service learning at their universities, with volunteering or community service either being compulsory or optional, as opposed to students in Corea (81.0%), Israel (80.0%) or India (75.5%). Additionally, models of formal assessment of acquired competencies through volunteering and service learning are yet to be developed and implemented.¹⁵

2.2. Gender differences

According to a number of researches, there are significant gender differences in attitudes towards volunteering, depending on the aspect and way of exploring the issue.¹⁶ Even though the population of this research is a group of highly-educated young individuals, and it could be expected that a traditional determinant such as gender could have negligible influence, researches show that this is not necessarily truth.¹⁷ According to Taniguchi¹⁸ and Wymer¹⁹, differences between men and women are manifested

¹⁴ Handy, F. et al., "A Cross-Cultural Examination of Student Volunteering: Is It All About Resume Building?", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2010, p. 508.

¹⁵ Maškarin Ribarić, H., Radović Nimac, K., Nađ, M., op.cit. p. 221.

¹⁶ e.g. Bianchi, S.M., „Maternal employment and time with children: dramatic change or surprising continuity?”, *Demography*, Vol. 37, No. 4., 2000, 401-414.; Wilson, W, "Volunteering", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26, August, 2000, 215-240; Wymer, W., "The implications of Sex Differences on Volunteer Preferences", *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2011, 831-851; Hustinx, L. et al., "Monitorial Citizens or Civic Omnivores? Repertoires of Civic Participation Among University Students", *Youth & Society*, Vol. 44, No.1, 2012, 95-117.

¹⁷ Hustinx, L. et al., „Monitorial Citizens or Civic Omnivores? Repertoires of Civic Participation Among University Students", *Youth & Society*, Vol. 44 No.1, pp. 95-117; Holdsworth, C., "Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations For Student Volunteering", *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 2010, 421-437.

¹⁸ Taniguchi, H., "Men`s and Women`s Volunteering: Gender Differences in the Effects of Employment and Family Characteristics", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 6, 2006, 83-101.

¹⁹ Wymer, W., *Ibid.*, p. 8.

through inner motives and reasons that prompt individuals to engage in volunteering activities. Women volunteer primarily driven by the desire to help others, create new contacts and acquaintances, whereas men are more motivated by the desire to succeed and prove themselves.²⁰

Gender differences are also observable in different preferences regarding type of volunteering organizations: women prefer and support organizations that take care of babies, children and young people, while men select organizations and activities which require physical work and readiness, and where there is adrenalin and stress involved. Furthermore, for women it is important that they feel comfortable in the volunteering environment, that there is a good communication culture, and that they can make new friends and feel connected with other volunteers. For men it is essential that they have a feeling of dominance, success and receive recognition for their work.²¹ These results are in line with results of researches conducted in Croatia²², according to which men volunteer mostly for political parties and local communities, and women for kindergartens, schools and churches. Women are also more prone to help unknown organisations with whose missions and goals they are not familiar.²³

An analysis of socio-demographic variables in different researches shows that the involvement itself in voluntary work is not influenced by gender: both women and men are on average equally involved in volunteering activities. The numbers presented in different researches result from the variously interpreted concept and scope of volunteering activities, sample size, country where the study is conducted, etc.²⁴ The study conducted in 2006 in Croatia²⁵ showed that there are only minor gender differences in involvement in voluntary work: 46.6% of women and 45% of men volunteer.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The efforts to promote volunteerism have been intensified over the past five years at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (FTHM) in Opatija. Volunteering activities are a consistent part of the Diploma Supplement. In spite of intensified efforts, the number of students involved in volunteering is still very low. Furthermore, promotional activities, undertaken by both FTHM and the students' association, focus almost exclusively on the altruistic aspect of motivation, whereas the aspect that is extremely important for the student population – growth and self-development opportunities – is practically neglected. The importance of this motivational aspect is

²⁰ Taniguchi, H., Ibidem, p. 86, Einolf, C. J., "Gender Differences in the Correlates of Volunteering and Charitable Giving", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 6, 2011, p. 1093.

²¹ Wymer, W., Ibidem, p. 847.

²² E.g. Čulum, B. et al., *Stanje volonterstva u jugoistočnoj Europi i CIS regiji, Nacionalni izvještaj*: Republika Hrvatska, SMART, Rijeka, 2009, p. 4.

²³ Ibidem, p. 3.

²⁴ Wilson, W, Ibidem, p. 217.

²⁵ Forčić, G., *Volonterstvo i razvoj zajednice – sudjelovanje građana u inicijativama u zajednici*, SMART – Udruga za razvoj civilnog društva, Rijeka, 2007., p. 89 http://www.ufri.uniri.hr/files/Volontiranje/Volonterstvo_istrazivanje_2006.pdf

even greater if the present economic crisis and unemployment rate are taken into account.

Given the prevailing number of female students, the goal of the paper is to determine if there are any significant gender differences in volunteering activities and attitudes towards volunteering, and if so, to use these differences to better and more adequately shape the activities and measures of FTHM aimed at the promotion of volunteering and its benefits.

During February 2013, research was performed using a questionnaire on a sample of 1,000 full-time students of under-graduate university studies. This study partly used the template of the survey “Exploring Impacts of Volunteering on University Students in London”²⁶. The original questionnaire contains 51 questions. Not all of them were applicable to students of FTHM. In an attempt to preserve the structure of the questionnaire and still include all relevant variables, a questionnaire containing 24 questions was created: six questions for all students included in the survey (basic socio-demographic data, students’ activities during the study); 15 questions only for those students who volunteer, and three questions only for those who do not volunteer.²⁷

A pre-test was performed on a test group of 15 students, following which minor linguistic ambiguities caused by translation (and retranslation) were removed.

The research questions are aimed and grouped to investigate the impact of student volunteering on:²⁸

1. personal development
2. transferrable skills
3. academic life
4. future career prospects
5. social and cultural impact.

A total of 537 students completed the survey (response rate = 54%): 392 (73%) female and 145 (27%) male students. The gender structure of respondents reflects the actual structure of all enrolled students.

Table 1: Gender structure of respondents

Year of study	Female	Male
1	85	29
2	81	34
3	103	31
4	123	51
Total	392 (73%)	145 (27%)

²⁶ Braime, J., Ruohonen, M., “Exploring Impacts of Volunteering on University Students in London”, 2011, www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/resources/.../4642.pdf (15.01.2013).

²⁷ This questionnaire and part of the results were previously used and the results were partly presented in the paper: Maškarić Ribarić, H., Radović Nimac, K., Nađ, M., *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Braime, J., Ruohonen, M., *Ibidem*, p. 5.

Sixty-four percent of students engage in some kind of *paid work* during the academic year – male students to some extent more often than female (68% male; 62% female). Thirty-six percent of female students perform this work only during term time, and 24% both during vacation and term time, as opposed to male students of which 34% work only during vacation, and 32% both during term and vacation time (Table 2).

Table 2: Engagement in paid work

During this academic year, have you done any paid work?	Female	Male
Yes, during vacation and term time	24%	32%
Yes, during vacation only	36%	34%
Yes, during term time only	3%	3%
No	38%	32%
Total	100%	100%

When asked the question if, since starting university, they have given any unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations – which includes volunteering, students answered as shown in the following table (multiple answers/activities were possible).

Table 3. Volunteering and unpaid help during university study

#	Types of unpaid help	Female	Male
1	Raising money or taking part in sponsored events	28%	21%
2	Leading a group or being a member of committee (e.g. student clubs or societies)	5%	8%
3	Organising or helping to run an activity or event	25%	21%
4	Visiting people, or providing care or support	11%	4%
5	Teaching, tutoring or helping with reading or other skills	9%	13%
6	Befriending or mentoring people	9%	12%
7	Giving advice, information or counselling	9%	13%
8	Secretarial, administrative or office work	3%	3%
9	Providing transport or driving	3%	7%
10	Coaching or refereeing sports	8%	22%
11	Other practical help (e.g. environmental work, gardening, decorating)	9%	7%
12	Campaigning (e.g. ecological, political)	5%	7%
13	Other	6%	6%
14	I've not given any unpaid help	53%	57%

Although the absolute numbers (i.e. differences in the number of students who actually volunteer), differ significantly (given the unbalanced gender structure), when analysing the answer-structure of female and male respondents, the differences are less substantial. In general (total), out of the overall number of female respondents, 47% of them volunteer, whereas the share of men is slightly lower – 43%. As for the types of volunteering activities, larger variances are observable within the following activities: “coaching or refereeing sports” – 22% of male, and only 8% of female students are involved in this unpaid activity; “raising money or taking part in sponsored events” – 28% female and 21% male students; and “visiting people or providing care or support” – 11% female and only 4% of male students. These results are in line with previously mentioned researches²⁹, according to which men prefer volunteering in organizations where physical readiness is required and women volunteer more frequently in organizations that involve providing help to others and taking care of people.

Men volunteer more frequently than women. Namely, in the analysed sample, 60% of male and 52% of female stated that they volunteer the whole year round (not only during term or during vacation time). Furthermore, 19% of men and only 8% of women volunteer at least once a week, and 24% of men but only 13% of women at least once a month.

When assessing the benefits from the volunteering they provide (Table 4), women tend to assess themselves as being more altruistic: 76% of female students believe that the broader community (groups, clubs, organizations, other people) primarily benefits from their work, as opposed to 69% of male students. Ten percent of male, but only 4% of female, students consider that other students primarily benefit from their work (through students’ society, unions).

Table 4: **Primary beneficiaries of student volunteering**

Beneficiaries	Female	Male
Me, personally	20%	21%
Other students (e.g. through a student society, Students’ Union)	4%	10%
The broader community (e.g. groups, clubs, organizations or people not connected with the university)	76%	69%
Total	100%	100%

The respondents were offered a choice of 9, i.e. 10, sources of information on volunteering (Table 5). Men are more likely to gather information on volunteering opportunities by contacting the organization directly (40% of male, and only 24% of female students), while women, more often use friends or family as an information source (65% of female and 54% of male students). Friends and families are for both genders the most frequently used information source, followed by school, college and the Internet. Volunteering centres (University or others) are underutilized information sources – for only 11% (female) and 6% (male) of students.

²⁹ E.g. Wymer, Ibidem.

Table 5: Information source for volunteering activities

#	Information source	Female	Male
1	School, college	45%	40%
2	University	38%	30%
3	Friends or family	65%	54%
4	Youth organizations	28%	27%
5	Religious organizations	10%	17%
6	Employer	5%	11%
7	Volunteering centre	11%	6%
8	Internet	44%	40%
9	Direct contact with organization	24%	40%
10	Other	12%	19%

Students were offered a list of 13 reasons for starting volunteering. For each of the stated reasons they were asked to indicate whether the reason was important or not for their decision to volunteer. Altruistic reasons are the most important for both genders (improving things/helping people). Among 13 offered reasons, there are five that are associated with students' education at the university, i.e. with gaining additional and improved knowledge, skills and competencies (marked in italics in the table). Although "developing skills" and "gaining work experience and developing my CV" are both assessed as being important reasons, it is obvious on the other hand, that students do not have formal incentives (by the University) to involve themselves in volunteering activities: "enhancing learning from my university course" is not a particularly important reason to volunteer, and "it was part of my university course" is an important reason to only 12% of female and 19% of male students. Equally, students do not attach significant importance to the chance of gaining an award, certificate or accreditation (since they are not included in the formal evaluation of students' achievements).

Table 6. Importance of reasons for starting volunteering

#	Description of reasons	Female	Male
1	Improving things / helping people	94%	81%
2	Meeting new people / making friends	74%	76%
3	<i>Developing skills</i>	75%	73%
4	<i>Gaining work experience / developing my CV</i>	66%	63%
5	The fact that my friends /family are volunteering	22%	25%
6	<i>To enhance learning from my university course</i>	32%	24%
7	My religious beliefs	24%	30%
8	My personal values	81%	73%
9	Feeling there was no one else to do it	26%	30%

#	Description of reasons	Female	Male
10	<i>The chance to gain an award, certificate or accreditation</i>	17%	16%
11	Wanting to fill spare time	49%	56%
12	<i>It was part of my university course</i>	12%	19%
13	I was asked	23%	32%

The largest gender difference is observed for the item “improving things/helping people” – this is important for 94% of female and for 81% of male students. When compared with men, women assessed four out of five reasons connected with university to be more important for their volunteering decision (skills development, work experience, learning for university course and certificate).

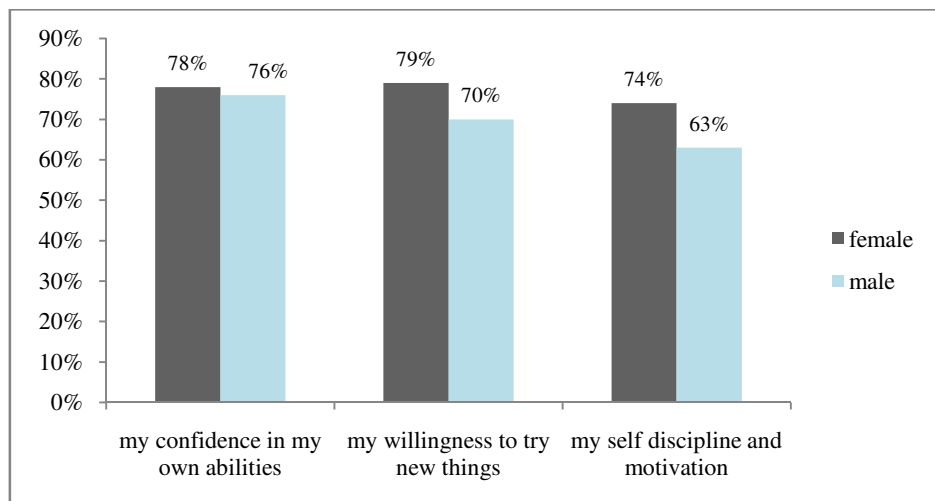
It is worth noting here that, although friends and family are the most important source of information for volunteering, the fact that they do volunteer is an important reason for volunteering for only 22% and 25% of the population.

Personal development

A set of three questions considered the students’ assessment of the influence that volunteerism had on their personal development. The majority of students reported an increase in all three selected aspects of personal development: their self-discipline and motivation, willingness to try new things, and confidence in their own abilities.

Female students gave higher scores than their male colleagues to the positive influence of volunteering on their personal development for all three aspects.

Figure 2: **Impact of volunteering on personal development – % of students with improved personal skills (self-assessment)**

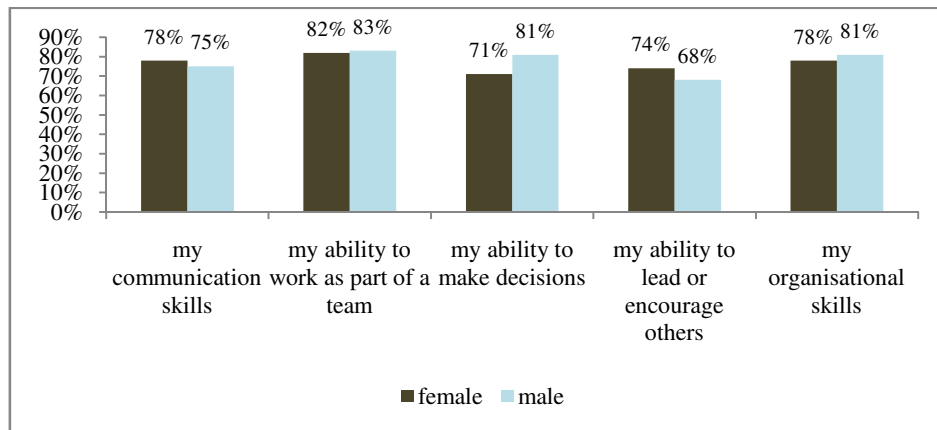


Transferrable skills

Skill development has proved to be an important stimulus for volunteering – 75% of female and 73% of male students stated that this is an important reason for volunteering.

Five types of transferrable skills were listed and students were asked to assess the influence of volunteering on those characteristics (improved, unchanged or deteriorated). The following figure presents the results.

Figure 3: **Impact of volunteering on transferrable skills – % of students with improved transferrable skills (self-assessment)**



Academic life (development of understanding of course content)

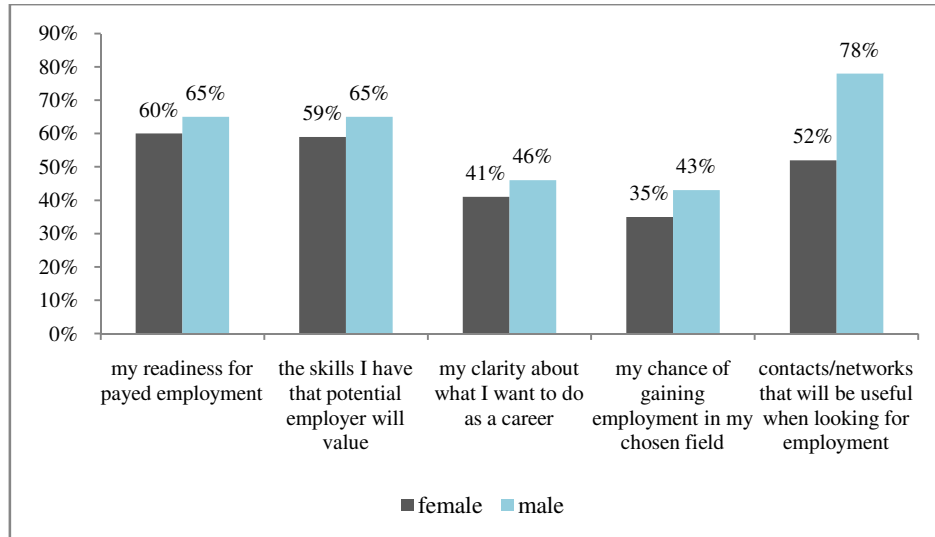
In assessing the influence of volunteering on their knowledge of a university course, there is almost no difference between male and female students. Out of both groups only a smaller part of the students stated that their understanding of course content has improved: 33% of female and 32% of male students.

This result only confirms that volunteering is not connected with the syllabus or university curricula.

Future career prospects (employability)

Gaining work experience and developing one's personal CV is an important volunteering motivation for all students. Assessment results are shown in the following figure.

Figure 4: **Impact of volunteering on future career prospects – % of students with improved employability (self-assessment)**



Improvement of employability, evaluated through five items, is assessed much lower than other previously elaborated items. The lowest improvement in the female population’s assessment is measured for “my chance of gaining employment in my chosen field” – only 35% of women consider their chances to be improved (and only 43% of men). Men rated their improvements higher than women did for all measured items. The biggest differences are observed for the item “contacts/networks that will be useful when looking for employment” – 26 percentage points: 78% of men and only 52% of women consider their networks to be improved by their volunteering.

Students who do not volunteer...

One hundred and eighty-seven female students (53%) and 65 male students (57%) have no volunteering experience. When asked to assess the importance of the possible reasons listed for not volunteering the answer with the highest frequency for both groups was “insufficient time due to study obligations”: 71% for female and 75% for male students.

4. CONCLUSION

Regarding gender, the student population explored in this research is not balanced – the share of women is higher. But, this imbalance is also present in the industry that the students are about to join after their study – i.e. tourism and hospitality – which actually means that the imbalance is a “normal state” for this particular research.

The research was started with the idea that gender differences in attitudes towards volunteering do exist and that these differences should be used, not necessarily in order to implement differentiated motivation strategies, but in order to use the acquired knowledge to promote volunteering for both genders in a way to specifically handle the observed weaknesses.

While the share of female students who volunteer is higher than the share of male students, male students volunteer more frequently. Women view the effects of their own volunteering more in the sphere of the broader community, while men tend more frequently to perceive the effects as being more immediate, more direct – i.e. positive effects for their fellow-students. Furthermore, as a motive for volunteering, “improving things/helping people” is stated more often by female than male students. Hence, women volunteer more often out of altruistic motives, which is praiseworthy, but not necessarily related to improving their own level of competitiveness. Male students assess the positive effects of volunteering on their transferrable skills and especially on employability much higher than their female colleagues.

The goal of the universities should be to shape (produce) a young individual who sees volunteering both as a way and means of making one’s own contribution to the better development of civil society, and (in the context of the current economic situation, no less important) as a mean of acquiring and improving the level of one’s own knowledge, skills and competencies to reach a higher level of individual competitiveness at the labour market. Ultimately, even this second goal can and should be viewed as a support to the betterment of society, since the student, after finishing studies can immediately be included in the working processes in a more efficient way.

Therefore, the only logical conclusion arises: Students do not need any extra incentive to volunteer; what they need is new content and additional objectives for volunteering that would fall within the sphere of their own professional goals.

Current efforts of the university community for the promotion of volunteerism and service learning apparently have not yielded satisfactory results. Good strategy requires quality action plans which would more closely connect volunteering and service learning, as types of experiential learning, with study curricula. This also implies the necessity of developing a common (European) methodology and instruments for the effective monitoring and documenting of specific outcomes of volunteerism.

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