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Factors of Students' Psychological Resistance to Volunteer Activities and Pedagogical Approaches to their Elimination

Factores de resistencia psicológica de los estudiantes a las actividades de voluntariado y enfoques pedagógicos para su eliminación

Аккenzhe Ussenova[1] , Berdaly Abdikalikov[1] , Mukhamejan Tusseyev[2] ✉ , Shadiyar Altynbekov[3] , Aygul Spatay[4]

[1]M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University, Department of General Pedagogy and Psychology. Shymkent, Kazakhstan.
[2]Central Asian Innovation University, Department of Pedagogy. Shymkent, Kazakhstan.
[3]M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University, Department of Mathematics. Shymkent, Kazakhstan.
[4]Central Asian Innovation University, Department of Languages and Literature. Shymkent, Kazakhstan.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: volunteering represented a significant social phenomenon among student communities, yet many young people demonstrated psychological resistance to participation. The aim of this study was to analyze the key psychological barriers preventing students from engaging in volunteer activities and to propose pedagogical strategies for overcoming them.
Method: a quantitative survey method was applied, involving 60 Kazakh university students. The survey aimed to identify the most influential psychological and socio-cultural factors hindering or promoting students' involvement in volunteering.
Results: the findings revealed that the major barriers to volunteering included lack of free time, poor self-organization, social passivity, and absence of material incentives. Conversely, opportunities for gaining new skills, making friends, and achieving social recognition were found to be powerful motivating factors. Socio-cultural influences, particularly peer communication and academic environment, played a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to volunteer.
Conclusions: the study concluded that psychological resistance to volunteering could be reduced through targeted pedagogical interventions, such as incorporating volunteer activities into educational settings and offering preparatory training. Recognizing and addressing students' motivational drivers proved essential in promoting active volunteer engagement and fostering a culture of social responsibility within the academic environment.

Keywords: Barriers; Learning; Motivation; Students; Volunteering.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el voluntariado representó un fenómeno social significativo entre las comunidades estudiantiles, aunque muchos jóvenes mostraron resistencia psicológica a participar. El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar las principales barreras psicológicas que impiden a los estudiantes involucrarse en actividades de voluntariado y proponer estrategias pedagógicas para superarlas.
Método: se aplicó un método de encuesta cuantitativa, en el que participaron 60 estudiantes universitarios kazajos. La encuesta tuvo como finalidad identificar los factores psicológicos y socioculturales más influyentes que dificultan o promueven la participación estudiantil en actividades de voluntariado.

Resultados: los resultados mostraron que los principales obstáculos para el voluntariado eran la falta de tiempo libre, una deficiente autoorganización, la pasividad social general y la ausencia de incentivos materiales. En cambio, las oportunidades para adquirir nuevas habilidades, hacer amistades y obtener reconocimiento social resultaron ser factores motivadores poderosos. Las influencias socioculturales, especialmente la comunicación con los compañeros y el entorno académico, desempeñaron un papel crucial en la disposición de los estudiantes a participar en acciones voluntarias.

Conclusiones: el estudio concluyó que la resistencia psicológica al voluntariado puede reducirse mediante intervenciones pedagógicas específicas, como la integración de actividades voluntarias en los programas educativos y la oferta de formación previa. Reconocer y abordar los factores motivacionales del alumnado resultó esencial para fomentar una participación activa en el voluntariado y para desarrollar una cultura de responsabilidad social dentro del entorno universitario.

Palabras clave: Barreras; Aprendizaje; Motivación; Estudiantes; Voluntariado.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological resistance of students to participation in volunteer activities is a phenomenon observed in different countries of the world, regardless of their level of socio-economic development. In the international dimension, resistance has been formed under the influence of various factors. In particular, this is influenced by the limited resources and time to social attitudes and cultural traditions. At the same time, the nature and intensity of this resistance vary significantly depending on the historical background, the level of development of civil society and state support for volunteer initiatives. Hence, most countries, including Kazakhstan, are increasingly paying attention to the evolution of the youth volunteer movement, which is encouraged both at the state level (in educational policy) and within the framework of individual educational programs.[1,2]

Within this general context, the situation in Kazakhstan has a number of specific features related to transformational processes in the field of education. For example, the adoption of the State Program for the Development of Volunteering in the Republic of Kazakhstan resulted in the regulation of the active work of NGOs and individual initiative groups, volunteer associations and individual volunteers, which indicates the importance of this issue for further national development.

Despite the active support and promotion of various volunteer projects, a significant part of students ignore such activities and demonstrate psychological unpreparedness - lack of necessary knowledge, skills or emotional readiness to participate in volunteering - or deliberate resistance, which means a conscious rejection of this form of social activity. In the first case, it is mainly about insufficient experience, uncertainty or low awareness of volunteering opportunities, while in the second - about purposeful avoidance, emotional detachment and the spread of skeptical assessments of the significance of volunteer work.[3,4] This phenomenon is usually caused by low motivation, ignoring volunteer activities, emotional detachment, and the formation and spread of skeptical assessments of the importance of volunteer work.[5] Such resistance can be caused by objective (social, cultural, educational) and various subjective (personal, psychological) factors. Together, they significantly complicate the opportunities for engaging young people in practical activities for social development. In the context of the changes in modern Kazakh society, the education system, which is focused on humanistic values, has also transformed.[6,7] In such circumstances, it is essential to use all pedagogical opportunities to overcome psychological barriers and promote the evolution of the volunteer movement. Therefore, the relevance of the proposed research is high, due to the need for a comprehensive analysis of problem factors and the development of some practical strategies for pedagogical use, which would significantly contribute to the formation of a conscious understanding of the role of volunteering in the modern world, including as an opportunity for self-realization, further acquisition of practical experience, development of social intelligence, and activation of civic position.

Modern studies have repeatedly emphasized the importance of involving students in volunteer activities in voluntary training to acquire practical skills.[8] Other scholars have also pointed out that volunteering is part of the modern philosophical and social discourse, requiring a broad discussion involving government officials.[9] The achievements of those specialists who have studied student participation in volunteer projects in different countries are essential. For example, it was noted that in Moroccan realities, an essential component is the observance of North African ideals of integrity and decency, essential for supporting volunteering among representatives of higher education students.[10] In Israeli realities, consolidating is an essential motivator for participation in voluntary projects.[11] A study of the volunteer experience of Jordanian students indicates the need for enthusiasm and its support in pedagogical circles.[12] Student volunteers in China are actively using the opportunities universities provide to participate in volunteer projects to gain a broad experience of social interaction.[13] The proposed studies are also critical because they indicate the popularity of volunteering

worldwide. On the other hand, some studies point to the motivating components of volunteering: self-motivation is the best argument for participating in volunteer projects.[14,15] However, only a few studies use empirical information to substantiate their results. In particular, they emphasized possible factors of resistance to participation in volunteer activities [16] and the need to take into account other factors that do not allow distractions from studying.[17,18,19] Therefore, a serious drawback is the lack of empirical measurements and surveys that would allow us to identify the problems that stand in the way of engaging students in volunteer work.

However, given the attention of scholars to the issue of volunteering, there are some gaps in understanding students' psychological resistance to this type of voluntary activity, including in the context of Kazakh higher education institutions. While other researchers have primarily focused on the motivational components of volunteering, including benefits and incentives, little attention has been paid to the barriers to such participation, especially psychological discomfort, cultural misunderstandings, etc. Given the increasing emphasis on civic responsibility and practical participation in national education strategies, such issues are highly relevant nowadays. The novelty of the proposed study lies in the empirical focus on psychological barriers, which allows for a new interpretation of the existing theoretical discourse.

This article aims to analyze the main factors of students' psychological resistance to participating in volunteer activities in Kazakh higher education institutions, as well as to develop pedagogical approaches and recommendations aimed at overcoming this resistance and intensifying volunteer activity among young people. The realization of this goal involves consideration of the following tasks:

- Identify the main psychological factors that cause students' resistance to volunteering in Kazakhstan.
- To establish the socio-cultural environment that affects the perception of volunteering by students.
- To identify pedagogical strategies that can reduce psychological resistance to volunteering among students.

METHOD

Type of study

Type of study: descriptive cross-sectional study conducted using a questionnaire method. Hence, to achieve the primary goal of the proposed article, a quantitative empirical approach was applied, which consisted of using a questionnaire survey, which became the primary method of collecting information. The field phase of the study took place in January–February 2025 at higher education institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (both public and private). Such a methodological strategy made it possible to find out the most common reasons for psychological resistance to participation in volunteer projects, to carry out a qualitative assessment of the influence of socio-cultural contexts on students' attitudes towards the implementation of volunteer projects, and also to find possible pedagogical mechanisms for overcoming such resistance in the future.

Population and sample

The sample was formed using the principle of purposive sampling, selected through intentional, non-probabilistic techniques. First, the study was aimed at people who could potentially have experience or formal knowledge of participating in volunteer projects. The total sample of survey participants was 60 students from Kazakhstani higher education institutions (private and public). Participants were selected based on specific established criteria:

- Confirmed status of higher education applicant. Only those studying at universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan during the experiment (January-February 2025) were invited to participate in the survey. Preference was given to participants studying at a bachelor's degree (1–4 years). Accordingly, those people who expressed a desire to participate in the survey but did not have or could not confirm their student status were not allowed to participate.
- Clear age limits. The respondents who participated in the survey ranged from 18 to 23 years. This range corresponded to the typical age of student youth. This also made it possible to investigate volunteer activity within the framework of formal education.
- Specialization. First, those students who studied mainly in socio-humanitarian specialties (pedagogical, sociological, psychological, philological, cultural, etc.) were invited to participate in the survey. This criterion was applied because such areas interact most with the social sphere, in which the implementation of volunteer projects is most indicative. Also, those higher education applicants who studied in specialties where volunteering could be an additional professional resource were allowed to participate.
- Previous experience. Higher education applicants with, if not previous experience, then at least a general idea of the role and significance of volunteering (this was determined because of the use of introductory control questions) also participated in the survey. This approach made it possible to focus

on analyzing psychological attitudes, rather than identifying a lack of information about volunteering.
- Voluntariness of participation. All respondents who volunteered to participate in the experiment gave their consent to participate in the research entirely voluntarily. The questionnaire for completion provided introductory information with detailed explanations of the purpose of the study, the conditions of anonymity and confidentiality of the data obtained.

Exclusion criteria
Persons who did not have or were unable to confirm their status as a student of a higher education institution.
Respondents whose age did not meet the established limits.
Participants who did not agree to the terms of voluntary participation.

Inclusion criteria
Respondent's refusal to participate at any stage of filling out the questionnaire.
Identification of non-compliance with the initially declared inclusion criteria.

Analyzed variables
The following variables were analyzed in the study:
- Previous volunteer experience (availability, types of volunteering).
- Level of motivation to participate in volunteer projects.
- Psychological resistance - through assessment of emotional readiness, attitude to volunteer work and the presence of barriers
- Influence of sociocultural factors.

Data collection
The research instrument was the author's questionnaire with open-ended questions, in which respondents entered short answers. The questions were grouped into thematic blocks, each of which corresponded to specific research objectives:
- Determining the experience of participating in volunteer projects.
- Identifying existing psychological barriers and analyzing the impact of motivational factors.
- Assessing the impact of the socio-cultural environment.
- Determining the presence of practical pedagogical actions and strategies to increase the level of student participation in volunteer activities.

The questionnaire questions were constructed with the possibility of additional open clarification, which allowed for deeper qualitative data. The questionnaire questions were structured with options for open-ended clarification. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested at the pilot testing stage among 10 students who were not included in the main sample. The questionnaire was adapted to the socio-cultural context of Kazakhstan. The data collection procedure took place in January-February 2025 in an online format using Google Forms. The anonymity of respondents was guaranteed due to the terms of the survey.

Data analysis
To process the information obtained, we used the methods of analysis, descriptive statistics (determination of frequencies and percentages), synthesis and interpretation of the data obtained, considering the experiment's objectives, and graphical interpretation of the results (diagrams and tables). A qualitative correlation analysis of the factors identified during the survey was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between psychological barriers, motivational factors, and sociocultural context.

Ethical aspects of the research
The study was conducted in compliance with the basic principles of ethical behavior in the social and pedagogical sciences, in particular the principles of voluntariness, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.
Before the start of data collection, respondents confirmed their consent by filling out an electronic informed consent form. All responses were anonymous; no identifying data was collected or stored. The information collected was used exclusively for scientific purposes.

RESULTS
The survey demonstrated the everyday experiences of Kazakh higher education students from several universities, making it possible to identify the problems and prospects of this promising student activity. Respondents were asked to answer questions about their participation in volunteer projects (figure 1).
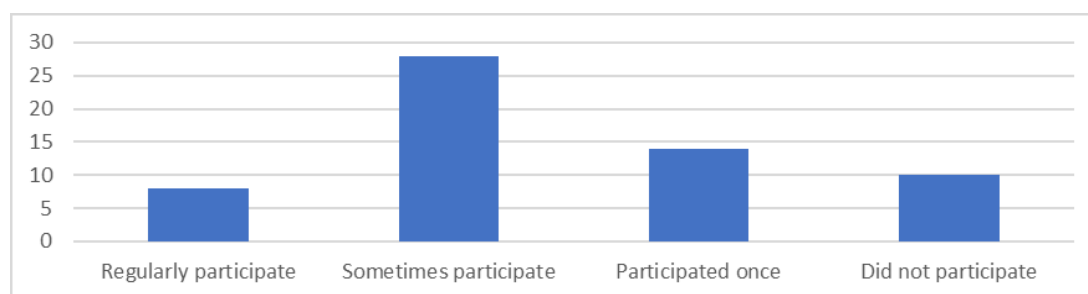
Figure 1. Actual participation in volunteer activities

Therefore, most of the surveyed students participated in volunteer activities. Almost half of them (28 people) noted that they had been involved in volunteer activities more than once during their studies, which can be considered a high indicator. At the same time, only 10 students out of 60 had never participated in volunteer activities, while 8 respondents indicated that they were engaged in such activities regularly. All students must know about volunteer work, which makes it possible to identify further the factors that "stop" students from participating in volunteer projects (figure 2).
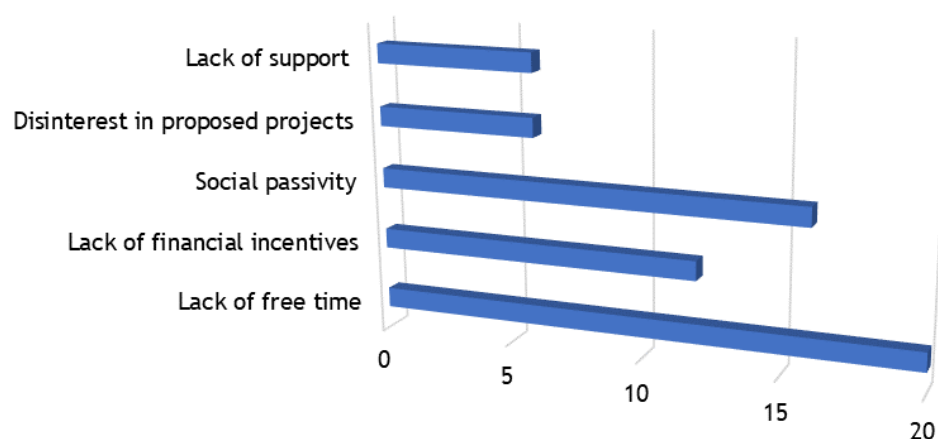

Figure 2. Reasons that do not encourage participation in volunteer work

The main reason that stops students from participating in volunteer projects is the lack of free time due to a high pedagogical load and problems with self-organization. Factors such as general social passivity and lack of material incentives were also noted. Although the latter option is quite conditional for volunteering, it indicates the general situation with the attitude of young people to the conditions of volunteer projects, and not exclusively to the remuneration problem. The least destructive factors are the lack of support from teachers or other students and a lack of interest in existing projects. The most motivating factors that would contribute to the broader involvement of students in volunteer projects were also identified (figure 3).
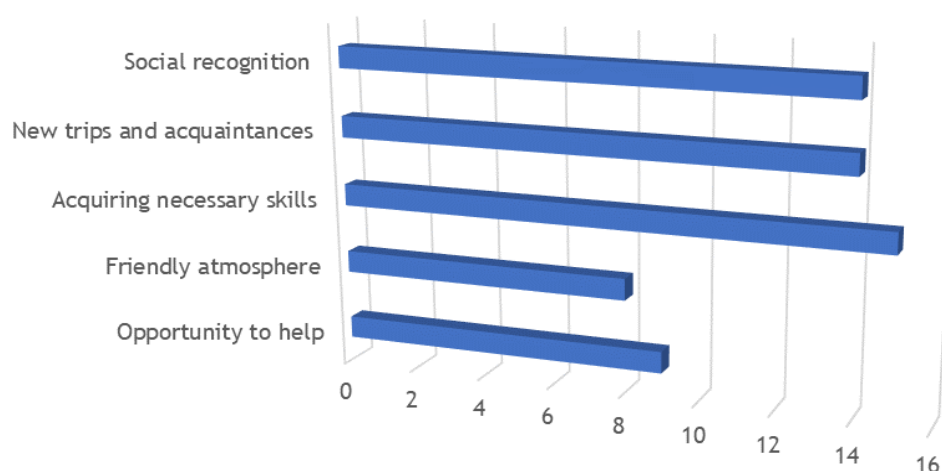

Figure 3. Factors with the most significant influence on interest in volunteering

The respondents identified acquiring new skills as a potent motivator for participating in volunteer projects (15 people). At the same time, it should be noted that along with this item, the opportunities to make new friends and social recognition were recognized as equally important (14 people each). The importance of helping and working in a friendly team was rated much less by the students surveyed. Students are reasonably practical in assessing the importance of volunteer work, which they choose based on the benefits they can receive.

An essential step in the study was to determine the potential impact of the socio-cultural environment on the decision to participate in volunteer projects. Respondents were asked to answer several questions about the existence of such an influence and the extent to which particular aspects determine interest in volunteering. Figure 4 shows students' answers regarding the influence of the socio-cultural environment.
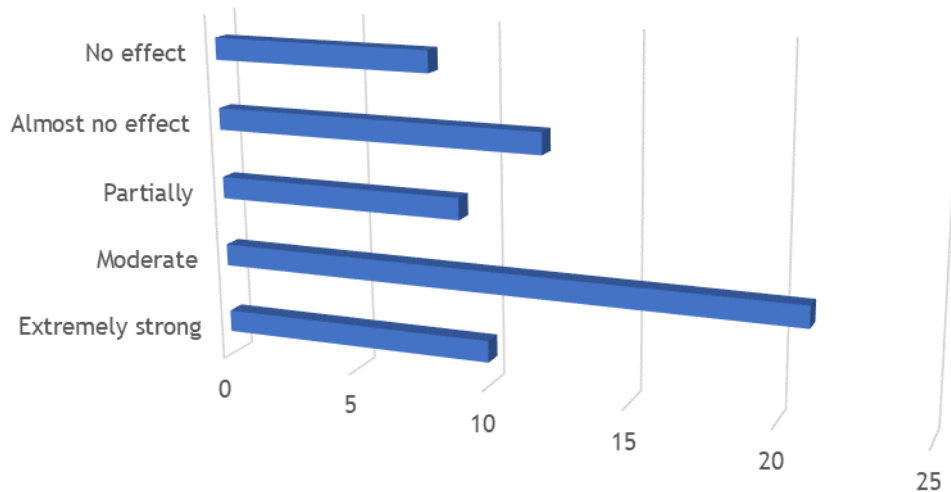

Figure 4. Influence of sociocultural environment

Most respondents (21 people) determined that the socio-cultural environment moderately influences interest in volunteering. Together with those who determined such influence to be extremely strong (10 people), this indicates that most respondents determine the existence of such influence to be extremely strong. In contrast, only 8 people deny such influence. Therefore, it is also essential to determine which of the socio-cultural influences is most important (figure 5).

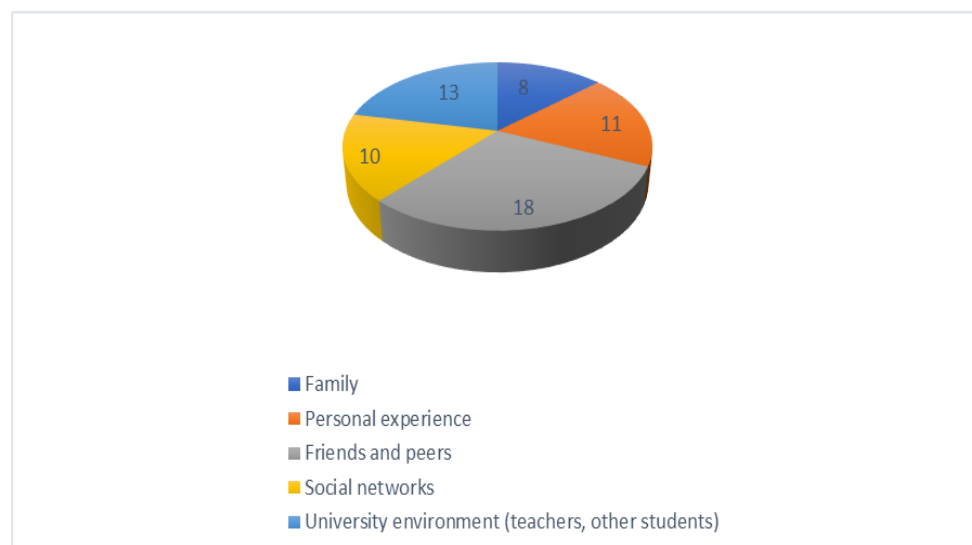**Figure 5.** Sociocultural factors influencing perceptions of volunteering

Thus, respondents identified communication with friends and peers as having the most significant impact on their interest in volunteering. At the same time, studying at the university and communicating with teachers and other students (in fact, very often peers) took second place in the survey, while personal experiences,

social networks, and family relationships rounded out the ranking. This influence classification demonstrates significant trends, such as the spread of volunteering primarily among peers, while other environments have less influence. The role of universities in such a structure will continue to grow, given the role of these educational institutions in social development. A qualitative correlation analysis was carried out based on survey responses to offer a more organized perspective on the link between different parameters. Several significant trends emerged from the analysis. The first finding was a high positive link between students who said they had trouble organizing themselves and those who said they didn't have enough spare time to volunteer. This suggests that poor time management is a prevalent factor. Second, there was a favorable association between real volunteer project participation and motivational elements such as the desire to learn new skills, social recognition, and meeting new friends. This implies that students are more willing to volunteer if they perceive immediate social or personal rewards. Conversely, there was little association between participation and variables like public awareness of volunteering, demonstrating that information alone is insufficient to spur action. These results underscore the necessity for focused educational interventions that highlight tangible, relevant benefits of volunteering while addressing internal impediments.

From this point of view, there is a need to point out possible pedagogical actions that would reduce psychological barriers to participation in volunteer projects. The results of this survey are presented in figure 6.
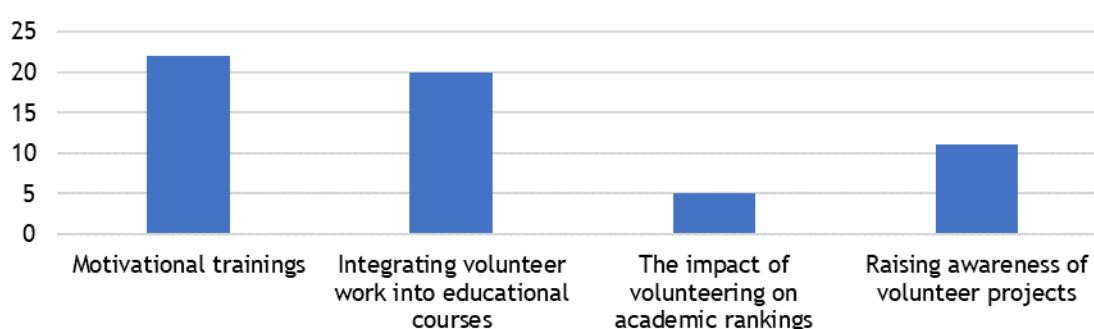

Figure 6. Pedagogical actions to overcome barriers to involvement in volunteer projects

Among the pedagogical scenarios for overcoming psychological barriers to volunteering, the idea of the need for special training, in fact, classes that would explain all the benefits of participating in the volunteer movement, dominate. At the same time, continuing the line of practicality of modern students, the second place is occupied by the combination of volunteering and education (integration into educational courses). Such projects in specific fields of humanity do not seem unimaginable, so the possibility of implementing such a scenario is quite promising. Students also ask for more information about the organization of volunteer projects, as there is a need to engage young people who are not focused on relevant social media groups or do not communicate much with peers or volunteer friends.

The study's findings allowed us to formulate some theoretical and practical conclusions and recommendations for improving the organization of volunteer work. Volunteering can be seen as a part of professional training, a particular school of acquiring the necessary skills, and a basis for successful self-realization. Integration with academic disciplines would make it possible to interest more students, reducing psychological resistance to volunteering. More active work of higher education administrations and teaching staff should help to make the benefits of participation in the volunteer movement more widely known.

In general, a close relationship was found between the lack of free time and problems in self-organization. These two factors were the leading psychological barriers. However, they are completely interrelated: problems in planning study or work time directly reduce the readiness of students to participate in extracurricular volunteer projects. This made treating these two factors as a single cognitive-behavioral barrier possible. In contrast, among the motivational factors, the most positive manifestations and influences on participation in volunteer projects were made by such factors as the opportunity to acquire new skills, the search for new acquaintances, and social recognition. All three factors were highly correlated with students' actual participation in volunteer activities, indicating the prevalence of a pragmatic approach to motivating modern youth. For most students, volunteering is a way of self-realization, professional orientation, and social inclusion.

It was also determined that the socio-cultural environment, primarily the assessment of friends and peers and the university environment's influence, had a moderate but stable impact on the readiness to participate in volunteer work. The least correlated factor was general awareness of volunteering: although all respondents had a general idea about volunteering, this did not guarantee actual participation. Therefore, without motivational reinforcement, knowledge of the importance of volunteering does not constitute a compelling incentive to act.

DISCUSSION

Volunteering in modern conditions is an integral part of social life. The involvement of young people in this process (primarily students in higher education institutions) is an essential element of developing this social sphere. The purpose of the proposed article is to identify the main factors of psychological resistance of students to participate in volunteer activities in the conditions of Kazakh higher education institutions, as well as to recommend specific pedagogical measures to overcome this resistance and intensify volunteer activities among young people. This task involved the implementation of specific issues, in particular, the identification of the main psychological factors that cause students' resistance to volunteering in Kazakhstan, the establishment of a socio-cultural environment that best influences students' perception of volunteering, and the formation of specific pedagogical strategies that can reduce psychological resistance to volunteering among students.

The proposed results show that most of the surveyed students have already participated in volunteering. All students must know about volunteer work, indicating that this phenomenon is widespread. At the same time, the main reason that stops students from participating in volunteer projects is a lack of free time, which is caused by a high teaching load and problems with self-organization. Other factors noted were general social passivity and lack of material incentives. The results confirm the findings of other researchers who pointed to the spread of volunteering among students.[20] Researchers have repeatedly emphasized the importance of volunteer work in student environments, which is generally a widespread phenomenon worldwide.[21,22] At the same time, it has also been noted that social passivity and lack of free time are real obstacles to attracting more students.[23] Several studies identify social passivity as the main reason for non-participation in the volunteer movement.[24,25] It is necessary to consider the regional context of the survey.

The study also indicates that acquiring new skills is a potent motivator for participation in volunteer projects, although opportunities for new acquaintances and social recognition are no less important. At the same time, the socio-cultural environment has a moderate impact on interest in volunteering. Respondents noted that communication with friends and peers greatly impacted their interest in volunteering. At the same time, studying at the university and communicating with teachers and other students (in fact, very often peers) took second place in the survey, while personal experiences, social networks, and family relationships rounded out the ranking. The findings confirm the conclusions of other researchers,[26] who identify communication with peers as part of the socio-cultural environment[27] and the importance of acquiring specific skills as essential motivators for volunteering.[28] Some scholars argue that not all respondents are aware of the socially beneficial work they do[28] and that they focus more on positive experiences of communication or practical activities.[29,30] This approach deserves attention in the following analysis of this issue.

The proposed results show that among the pedagogical scenarios for overcoming psychological barriers to the desire to engage in volunteer work, the idea of the need for special training, in fact, classes that would explain all the benefits of participating in the volunteer movement, dominates. Another critical area is combining volunteering with education (integration into educational courses). As a result, some theoretical and practical conclusions and recommendations for improving the organization of volunteer work have been made. First, given the integration of volunteering into professional training, a possible direction would be to include such activities in the curriculum. Other studies have also discussed similar results.[31,32,33] On the one hand, integrating volunteer work into the educational process may be relevant for certain humanitarian specialties, which is associated with acquiring new skills and practical work.[34,35,36] Modern research argues that the emphasis should be on disseminating information about volunteer work in student communities for all specialties.[37,38,39] The second approach seems to be more reasonable, as it allows for considering the desires of the students themselves rather than the requirements of the educational program.[39,40,41]

The methodology used in the study has certain limitations that should be considered in the following study of this issue. The relatively small sample of surveyed students also allows us to talk about specific trends, but in the longer term, there is a need to expand the sample further, which will make the study more general. However, despite these limitations, the results of the study are significant and can serve as a reliable basis for further larger studies. Increasing the number of respondents will also help avoid the vast influence of subjectivity on the empirical results.

CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, in modern conditions, volunteering is an essential phenomenon of public life that unites many higher education students. At the same time, it was essential to address the psychological resistance of students to participate in volunteer activities in the conditions of Kazakh higher education institutions. It was noted that most respondents were involved in volunteer activities in one way or another. The most important reasons that stopped students from participating in volunteer projects were a lack of free time, problems with self-organization, general social passivity, and a lack of material incentives.

At the same time, it was determined that acquiring new skills was a potent motivator for participation in volunteer projects. However, opportunities for new acquaintances and social recognition were equally

important. Socio-cultural factors such as communication with friends and peers, studying at the university, communicating with teachers and other students (often peers), and gaining personal experience had the most significant impact.

Relevant pedagogical scenarios for overcoming psychological barriers to volunteering include the importance of special training. The possibility of combining volunteering with education is recognized as a helpful tool that would be a relevant addition to existing educational programs.

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AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION
Conceptualization: Аккenzhe Ussenov**a,** Berdaly Abdikalikov, Mukhamejan Tusseyev, Shadiyar Altynbekov, Aygul Spatay.

Drafting - original draft: Аккenzhe Ussenov**a,** Berdaly Abdikalikov, Mukhamejan Tusseyev, Shadiyar Altynbekov, Aygul Spatay.

Writing - proofreading and editing: Аккenzhe Ussenov**a,** Berdaly Abdikalikov, Mukhamejan Tusseyev, Shadiyar Altynbekov, Aygul Spatay.