

UDC 342.97.29.2-67.316.35

Yuliia Shulha

Sumy State Pedagogical University named after A.S. Makarenko

ORCID ID 0000-0002-9161-1442

DOI 10.24139/2312-5993/2023.10/236-247

INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENT YOUTH IN THE ACTIVITY OF RELIGIOUS VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS IN POLAND AND UKRAINE

The article is devoted to the review of the process of involving student youth in the activity of religious volunteer organizations in Poland and Ukraine. The desire to help people is an important factor in the involvement of student youth in religious charity activity. For student youth, volunteering is a means of self-realization, widespread in institutions and various organizations of Ukraine and Poland. The role of religious volunteer organizations in the life of students is a topic that is considered in a multidisciplinary way by many researchers. For a detailed study of this issue, available scientific research in the field of motivation for volunteering was analyzed.

Key words: *religious organizations, volunteer activity, volunteers, student youth, life of student youth, volunteer activity, volunteer organizations in Poland and Ukraine.*

Introduction. The difficult circumstances of modern life have a negative impact not only on the environment, but also on the quality of human life. Over time, attention to support has grown and gained a large scale around the world. Religiously affiliated student volunteer organizations deserve special attention. The formation of multiple religious volunteer teams contributes not only to the improvement of the lives of people and animals, but also to the realization of children's natural competitive needs and healthy competition.

The most convenient way of involving student youth in the activity of religious volunteer organizations today is considered to be the formation of several volunteer initiative groups from students of different grades, united on a voluntary basis by interests. Such volunteer squads can be of different ages (primary and high school students) or of the same age (for example, several squads in the same grade or in parallel grades).

The main tasks of the school volunteer movement are considered to be: uniting the school team around good deeds; satisfaction of spiritual interests and needs of schoolchildren; fostering patriotism; organization of meaningful leisure time; prevention of abnormal forms of behavior and harmful habits; promoting a healthy lifestyle; support of pro-social initiatives for children and student youth; establishment of partnerships of schools with state authorities and public organizations for the implementation of pro-social initiatives.

Analysis of current research. The involvement of student youth in the activity of religious volunteer organizations in Poland and Ukraine is a relevant and important topic that is under careful study in literary sources. Researchers and authors of thematic articles emphasize the importance of interaction between religious volunteer organizations and student youth. Taking into account the psychological characteristics of teenagers and young people is an important aspect in focusing their attention on religious volunteering.

Among modern national researchers, V. Matwash, M. Vasin, V. Sirko, O. Dshatlyk, P. Horinov, Y. Reshetnikov, I. Kunderenko, V. Khromets, V. Chornopyshka, M. Malysh, R. Drapushko and others were interested in the issue of involving student youth in the activity of religious volunteer organizations. Among foreign researchers, J.P. Willem, G. Davy, D. Pocklington, V. Haber, and R. Treyer were engaged in the study of this issue. Research studies show that active participation in volunteer organizations contributes to the development of moral values, tolerance and social responsibility among young people.

The aim of the article. The main goal of the study is to determine the motivation of schoolchildren's participation in religious volunteer organizations, methods of their involvement, to identify the challenges they face, as well as to study the impact of such participation on their personal development and social activity.

Research methods. To realize the goal of this study, the following general scientific research methods were used: analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization.

Results. Religious volunteer organizations carry out a large number of charitable, social and educational projects, which contribute to the improvement of people's quality of life and promote the spread of religious values. The attractiveness of religious voluntary organizations for young people is that they allow them to feel like useful and influential members of society.

To study this issue, we suggest to outline the key concepts of the study, the main motives and methods of involving student youth in the activity of religious volunteer organizations, consider examples of such centers, and deal with the main challenges that schoolchildren encounter on their volunteer path.

For a detailed analysis of the given topic, we consider it necessary to clarify the meaning of the term "*volunteering*". Having analyzed a number

of thematic sources, we determined that this concept has several interesting interpretations, namely:

- a useful deed performed without expecting financial reward;
- a voluntary choice of activity that depends on personal views and chosen opinions;
- an activity that is not coercive and based on the desire to help;
- active participation of a person in social life that is expressed through joint activity within various associations and contributes to the improvement of the quality of life;
- a form of active participation in socially beneficial affairs, a method of collective interaction and an effective mechanism for solving current social problems;
- a national idea of charity and benevolence, philanthropy, etc. (Skidanovych, 2018).

According to V. Kostina, “volunteering is responsible participation and the practice of civil solidarity, dedicated to overcoming economic, social, cultural, religious and political injustice” (Kostina, 2020).

Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine “On Volunteering” states that “volunteer activity is a voluntary, socially oriented, non-profit activity carried out by volunteers through the provision of volunteer assistance” (On Volunteering, 2024). Below the signs of volunteering are described in more detail.



Fig. 1.1. Signs of volunteer activity

In addition, the Law of Ukraine “On Volunteering” defines the principles on which all activity of volunteer organizations is based. Among them are:

- equality;

- voluntariness;
- legality;
- non-profitability;
- being free of charge;
- humanity (ibid.)

Religious volunteering is voluntary work for establishment of social justice through the promotion of mercy. The activity of religious volunteer organizations is aimed at: overcoming poverty, establishing justice and restoring human dignity, regardless of their religion, skin color, nationality, political or worldview beliefs.

Volunteer religious organizations provide students with a unique opportunity to gain valuable experience and useful skills, demonstrate their commitment to religious values, and get involved in important public affairs. One of the motivations for participating in religious volunteer organizations may be the desire to contribute to a charitable cause and help those in need of protection, support or assistance. In addition, participation in volunteer activity can be a source of personal satisfaction, development of emotional fulfillment and increase in self-esteem.

It is worth noting that the legislation establishes a restriction for youth aged 14 to 18 years, which prohibits volunteering in the provision of volunteer assistance to eliminate the consequences of man-made or natural emergencies and the provision of volunteer assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other military formations, law enforcement agencies, state power during a special period, legal regimes of emergency or martial law, as well as providing volunteer assistance in medical facilities (ibid.). Religious organizations explain volunteering as a way to respond to the inner spiritual calling of every believer and parishioner.

There are many religious communities in Poland and Ukraine that actively involve student youth in their activity. This is done through various activities, such as: seminars, lectures, summer or winter camps, youth meetings, etc. Workshops and masterclasses are organized for schoolchildren, where young people can:

- gain experience in providing first aid;
- learn about volunteering in other countries;
- develop their creative abilities;
- learn to communicate with different people (Matviyko, 2015).

Religious volunteer organizations help form young people who will treat their faith responsibly, be able to help others and develop social

consciousness. This contributes to the formation of the general public and cooperation of various social groups in society. Thanks to this, young people have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of faith, as well as find themselves in a religious community.

Young people can participate in various charitable activities, such as helping the homeless, the sick, people with special needs, etc. Such actions help young volunteers develop their social skills, engage in their own self-realization and affect the improvement of other people's lives (*Working with children, youth and families - Caritas of Ukraine, n.d.*).

Participating in faith-based volunteer organizations can also make a number of challenges. First of all, schoolchildren may face difficulties in combining volunteer activity with studies and other responsibilities. Also, some students may face discouragement or rejection of their activity by other people, which can create difficulties in further motivation and involvement in volunteer activity. However, participation in religious volunteer organizations can have a significant impact on the personality development of schoolchildren. It can contribute to formation of values, development of moral principles and responsibility. Also, through interaction with different people and participation in collective activity, schoolchildren can develop leadership qualities and the ability to cooperate with others. Volunteering can stimulate the development of self-discipline, organization and teamwork skills (*ibid.*).

One of important success factors in attracting student youth to religious volunteer organizations is creation of a favorable environment for their participation. Ensuring the availability and variety of volunteer programs that take into account the diverse interests and needs of young people is a key factor in the interest of schoolchildren in such activity.

It is also necessary to consider the role of education and providing information in attracting student youth to religious volunteer organizations. Initiatives aimed at informing about the possibilities and benefits of volunteering contribute to a conscious choice made by young people to participate in such organizations. Ukraine and Poland are noted for the active development of religious volunteer organizations that offer various projects for student youth. This may include participation in charitable actions, social support of vulnerable population groups, development assistance and assistance in the field of education, etc. (*Matviyko, 2015*).

Volunteering is an undeniably unique phenomenon that does not depend on borders and financial situation of the volunteers. In the period

of crisis and aggravation of the situation in the countries, it acquires certain dimensions. Today, there are many volunteer centers, organizations and individual charity representatives in Ukraine. Among them are religious volunteer organizations, which we offer to get acquainted with in this study. We consider the interfaith cooperation of the centers and their international dialogue to be a particularly significant positive feature of religious volunteering (Kostina, 2020).

Under the slogan “Believe and act”, the charity fund “Together for Ukraine” united representatives of various religious organizations within the framework of one of the areas of activity, which included the centers of other countries of the world. Volunteer activity of religious organizations can be considered an indicator of social development of society. Within the framework of this fund, it was emphasized that interconfessional dialogue has existed for a long time. It is this that provides an opportunity to help within Ukraine, and contributes to such help coming to Ukraine from other countries (Kostiuk, 2015).

Today, the “Caritas” network of charitable organizations takes an active part in volunteering in Ukraine. The organization “Caritas-Spez Ukraine” is part of the international confederation “Caritas Internationalis” and a member of “Caritas Europe”. Currently, “Caritas-Spez Ukraine” is engaged in charity work in many directions. One of the priority directions of the organization’s work is the involvement of student youth in its activity.

Thanks to this organization, children get the opportunity to attend summer camps and develop their social skills, learn leadership skills and participate in interesting activity. Children are offered:

- conferences and seminars;
- language camps and schools;
- rehabilitation of those with special needs;
- workshops and classes;
- tourist holiday, etc.

Older youth have the opportunity to learn how to improve their social competence, try themselves in the role of animators, group leaders. The active participation of schoolchildren in the volunteer programs of “Caritas-Spez Ukraine” contributes to their personal growth and the introduction of positive changes in society (*Community - Religious Mission “Caritas-Spez”, n.d.*).

The next organization that is engaged in active volunteering in many cities is “Caritas of Ukraine”. It is currently one of the largest international

networks of charitable organizations in the world and Europe. The “Caritas of Ukraine” organization recognizes the importance of empowering young people through community activity and strives to expand their rights and opportunities. “Caritas of Ukraine” has a target program aimed at developing the potential and abilities of children and youth, as well as the development of traditions of charity and mercy in Ukraine (*Work with children, youth and families - Caritas of Ukraine, n.d.*).

Furthermore, “Caritas of Ukraine” gives young people an opportunity to take on social responsibility, which is critically important for the future development of the country. This is achieved by involving young people in public activity, for example, volunteering, fundraising, participation in various social initiatives. The following activities are organized for schoolchildren:

- practical grades on financial literacy;
- culinary and creative masterclasses;
- foreign language courses;
- various workshops;
- cultural and recreational activity;
- sports lessons and competitions (*Preparing children and youth for the future - Caritas of Ukraine, n.d.*).

These activities provide student youth with practical experience, skills and knowledge that can be used to promote positive change in their communities. Group and individual consultations, preventive workshops and mutual support groups with a psychologist are held with the parents of schoolchildren. Thanks to these efforts, “Caritas of Ukraine” helps form a generation of socially conscious young people who are able to positively influence their society and the world around them (*ibid.*).

Another important religious organization engaged in volunteering in Ukraine that is worth mentioning is All-Ukrainian association “Alraid”. It is a public union that is a platform for young people to show initiative and creativity. The aim of the association is to help war veterans, families of fallen soldiers and other vulnerable population groups by increasing their social activity and support in legal matters, social adaptation and integration. Involvement of youth is one of the central aspects of this organization (*Comprehensive development of youth and children, n.d.*). As part of its activity, “Alraid” organizes:

- a large number of workshops for young people;
- flash mobs on hot social topics;

- evening gatherings dedicated to the cultures of different nationalities of Ukraine;
- chess tournaments and various festivals.

The work of the “Alraid” association with student youth enables schoolchildren to feel like a part of a large organization and to do good on a volunteer basis. The main values taught by “Alraid” are: piety, moderation, purposefulness, professionalism, dedication, solidarity and creative approach (ibid.).

In addition to the mentioned organizations, there are many religious volunteer centers and projects in Ukraine that are not so large-scale. They provide humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable population and are engaged in providing them with the necessary things, psychological and social assistance. Participating in such activity allows volunteers to bond with each other, deepen their understanding of faith, and improve their personal spiritual development. Religious volunteer organizations in Ukraine work on a voluntary basis, often involving help from different countries of the world. They create an auspicious atmosphere where everyone can contribute to charitable activity and development of religious values.

Work with young people in religious volunteer organizations in Poland is an important component of the spiritual development of the young generation. Poland is known for its numerous religious communities that actively work with schoolchildren, directing them to spiritual development and active participation in church life. Religious organizations in Poland have created special programs and projects aimed at attracting and bringing youth closer to religious values.

One of the most important areas of work with young people in religious organizations in Poland is the formation of moral values and ethical principles. Young people are given the opportunity to study scriptures, spiritual literature and participate in spiritual conversations and discussions. Such lessons help young people understand and express their spiritual aspirations, reveal their inner potential and grow as individuals. Among other aspects, work in religious organizations in Poland contributes to the development of intercultural and interreligious tolerance. Students from different religious traditions have the opportunity to meet and communicate, learn and understand other beliefs and traditions. This helps to strengthen mutual understanding and contributes to the building of harmonious coexistence of different religious communities in Poland.

“Caritas Poland” is the largest religious volunteer organization in Poland that is responsible for national campaigns and providing international aid, supporting various vulnerable categories of the population. One of the most difficult and important tasks that “Caritas Poland” is engaged in work with young people. Thanks to its programs and projects, it supports young people in their social and educational development. The main goal of the organization’s work with student youth is to create a positive environment for their growth and self-realization (*Poland - Caritas, n.d.*).

At “Caritas Poland”, they understand the importance of psychological well-being of young people, so they conduct various workshops, seminars and consultations for this purpose, thanks to which young students get an opportunity to develop their skills, acquire new knowledge and reveal their own creative abilities. The organization actively promotes education of young people and organizes Caritas school clubs that help children get a quality education and develop their potential (*ibid.*).

It is important to note that “Caritas Poland” promotes interaction with other cultures and countries, therefore it actively supports international youth exchanges. Student youth are actively involved in the religious organization “Caritas Poland” and participate in volunteer work. This allows schoolchildren to participate in various charitable and social projects, to help those who need support.

“WOL Poland” (Word of Life Poland) is an important religious organization that’s doing volunteer work in Poland. The activity of “WOL Poland” is based on the principles of mutual understanding, patience and benevolence. They create a friendly and open atmosphere that promotes the development of personality and faith in God. “WOL Poland” is an organization that offers various opportunities for spiritual growth, communication with people who share common values, and providing assistance to those in need. Their approach to work is characterized by friendliness and mutual understanding.

The organization “WOL Poland” actively works with student youth with the aim of their social and educational integration. The activity of this organization is aimed at development of youth initiatives, support of their talents and provision of proper conditions for self-realization. “WOL Poland” constantly organizes workshops and masterclasses aimed at developing creativity and leadership skills among student youth (*Giving - Word of Life Fellowship, Inc., n.d.*).

A big advantage is that the organization gives schoolchildren the opportunity to participate in various volunteer activities, which stimulates the active participation of young people in public life. Such activities help young people reveal their potential and find their place in society. It is important to note that “WOL Poland” takes care of partnership relations with other youth organizations and develops international cooperation. All this makes work with the youth of the “WOL Poland” organization an indispensable component of the process of forming active and involved youth. It is known that “WOL” actively works in Ukraine and several other countries of the world ([ibid.](#)).

Volunteer activity of the religious organization “Catholic world mission” in Poland is a significant component of global public activity aimed at supporting people. This organization focuses on providing assistance in the field of education, healthcare and social needs. As part of its volunteer activity, “Catholic world mission” offers many opportunities for active participation in various projects. This often includes supporting schools and other education institutions located in vulnerable communities. Volunteers provide assistance both in the field of financing and in organizational and pedagogical activity. The “Catholic world mission” organization pays considerable attention to work with young people.

The organization shows great concern for education and support of young people, contributing to their professional and personal growth. One of the main aspects of working with young people is providing educational opportunities. The organization provides young people with access to quality education, training programs and courses that help them realize their potential and develop the necessary skills. Involvement of schoolchildren in this organization begins at an early age.

In parallel with educational programs, this religious union develops a culture of volunteering among students. The organization provides opportunities to participate in charitable and social projects, where young people can contribute to the improvement of various spheres of society. Such work contributes to the involvement of young people in public activity, forms a sense of responsibility in them and develops leadership qualities. Young volunteers of “Catholic world mission” make a significant contribution to creating a better future for those who are experiencing difficulties today (*Donate that Catholic Charity Work & Missionaries in Poland, CWM, n.d.*).

There are many religious volunteer organizations in Poland that are engaged in various types of charitable and voluntary activity. They

promote the values of faith, help those in need and carry out social projects. Religious volunteer organizations in Poland operate in various fields. Some of them specialize in helping low-income families, the homeless or immigrants. Some provide food, clothing, medical or legal assistance. Other organizations focus on holding charity events, raising funds for children with cancer, or helping to build schools and hospitals in third world countries. In addition to charitable activity, religious volunteer organizations conduct thematic events, catechisms, retreats and other events that contribute to the spiritual growth of citizens.

Conclusions. From the abovementioned, we can see that the involvement of student youth in the activity of religious volunteer organizations in Poland and Ukraine is an important component of the formation of humane values and responsibility in children. Teaching schoolchildren to volunteer is important not only for the youth themselves, but also for the entire society. Religious volunteer organizations of Poland and Ukraine play an important role. They are a symbol of solidarity, mutual help and love for the neighbor. Their activity is aimed at improving both the material and spiritual condition of people, and make a significant contribution to the social development of both countries.

We believe the prospect of further research on this issue is the study of legal framework for involvement of student youth in the activity of religious volunteer organizations in Poland and Ukraine.

REFERENCES

- Preparing children and youth for the future - Caritas of Ukraine* (n.b.). Caritas of Ukraine. <https://caritas.ua/cyf/gotuyemo-ditej-ta-molod-do-majbutnogo/>.
- Comprehensive development of youth and children* (n.b.). Congress of Muslims of Ukraine. <http://www.arraid.org/ua/vsebichniy-rozvitok-molodi-ta-ditey>.
- Kostina, V. V. (2020). *Social security of vulnerable population groups*. KRPOCH. <https://doi.org/10.26697/sri.krpoch/kostina.vv2.2020>.
- Kostiuk, B. (2015, September 10). *Church and war: how religious communities of Ukraine engage in volunteering*. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27237619.html>.
- Matviyko, W. S. (2015). *Volunteering as a social phenomenon* (thesis, National Aviation University). erNAU – Repository of the National Aviation University. <http://er.nau.edu.ua/handle/NAU/15318>.
- On volunteering, Law of Ukraine No. 3236-VI* (2024). (Ukraine). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3236-17#Text>.
- Work with children, youth and families - Caritas of Ukraine* (n.d.). Caritas of Ukraine. <https://caritas.ua/cyf/>.
- The community is real "Caritas-Spez" mission* (n.d.). Rel is hygienic "Caritas-Spez" mission. <https://Caritas-Spez.org/ua/page/gromadi/spilnota>.

- Skidanovych, V. (2018). Psychological structure of student volunteering. *Collection of scientific works: psychology*, (22), 62-68. <https://doi.org/10.15330/psp.22.62-68>.
- Taran, V. Y. (2018). *Administrative and legal regulation of activity of public organizations in Ukraine* (Master's thesis. Sumy State University). eSSUIR – Electronic Sumy State University Institutional Repository. <http://essuir.sumdu.edu.ua/handle/123456789/71889>.
- Participants of Wikimedia projects (2010, April 16). *Caritas of Ukraine - Wikipedia*. Wikipedia. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caritas_Ukraine.
- Donate to Catholic Charity Work & Missionaries in Poland* CWM (n.d.). Catholic World Mission. <https://catholicworldmission.org/poland/>
- Giving - Word of Life Fellowship, Inc.* (n.d.). Giving - Word of Life Fellowship, Inc. <https://give.wol.org/opportunity/161>.
- Poland - Caritas* (n.d.). Caritas. <https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/europe/poland/>.

SUMMARY

Шульга Юлія. Залучення студентської молоді до діяльності релігійних волонтерських організацій у Польщі та Україні.

У статті окреслено особливості залучення студентської молоді до діяльності релігійних волонтерських організацій у Польщі та Україні. Важливим фактором залучення студентської молоді до релігійної благодійної діяльності є бажання допомагати людям. Для студентської молоді волонтерство є засобом самореалізації, спільним для закладів та різноманітних організацій України та Польщі. Роль релігійних волонтерських організацій у житті студентства є темою, яка розглядається багатьма дослідниками в мультидисциплінарному ключі. Для детального вивчення даного питання проаналізовано наявні наукові дослідження у сфері мотивації до волонтерської діяльності.

Складні обставини сучасного життя негативно впливають не тільки на навколишнє середовище, а й погіршують якість життя людини. Згодом увага до підтримки в усьому світі зростає й набула великих масштабів. Особливої уваги заслуговують релігійні студентські волонтерські організації. Формування багатьох релігійних волонтерських команд сприяє не тільки покращенню життя людей і тварин, а й реалізації природних конкурентних потреб дітей та здорової конкуренції.

Найпродуктивнішим способом залучення студентської молоді до діяльності релігійних волонтерських організацій сьогодні вважається формування кількох волонтерських ініціативних груп зі студентів різних класів, об'єднаних на громадських засадах за інтересами. Такі волонтерські заходи можуть бути різновіковими (учні початкових і старших класів) або одновіковими (наприклад, кілька загонів в одному класі або в паралельних класах).

Основними завданнями шкільного волонтерського руху вважаються: згуртування шкільного колективу навколо добрих справ; задоволення духовних інтересів і потреб школярів; виховання патріотизму; організація змістовного дозвілля; профілактика аномальних форм поведінки та шкідливих звичок; пропаганда здорового способу життя; підтримка просоціальних ініціатив дітей та студентської молоді; налагодження партнерства шкіл із органами державної влади та громадськими організаціями для реалізації просоціальних ініціатив.

Ключові слова: релігійні організації, волонтерська діяльність, волонтери, студентська молодь, життя студентської молоді, волонтерська діяльність, волонтерські організації в Польщі та Україні.