

This text is a summary in English of the original text available in Spanish: “Voluntariado ante el espejo”. The summary has been prepared by Nabilah Binti Muhammad Adib Doyle as part of her course requirements in the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies at the University of East Anglia (UK) in 2021.

'A Reflection of Volunteering: Organisations value the task of solidarity'

Plataforma del Voluntariado de España (PVE), 2020. *El Voluntariado Ante El Espejo: Las Entidades Valoran La Tarea Solidaria*. Madrid: Plataforma del Voluntariado de España (PVE). Pp. 1-64.

Overview

This is a research publication published by the Platform for Volunteering in Spain (PVE) with the intention of recognising the value that volunteering contributes to the organisations. The purpose was to create a clear and informative concrete document, where common people could go to, about the immense activities done by volunteers to contribute to these entities. Areas of focus include the subjective perceptions and opinions the surveyed people have on volunteering, the costs of carrying out volunteering activities, the way volunteers are managed in an organisation, as well as the visibility they are given when participating. The study came around as a result of the Volunteer Observatory within PVE having done numerous analyses and investigations on the many factors that come with volunteering.

Methodology

To perform this study, PVE decided to adopt a quantitative method based on a survey to Managers and Professionals of PVE partner organisations or those associated with them. **Managers** are those with positions on the Board of Director with responsibility in the direction or management of the organisation. **Professionals** are those who work in any area of the organisation with some kind of direct relationship with volunteers. They chose to classify participant readings into simple single groups of Managers and Professionals as the response rate was lower than expected – only making analysis on specific roles that made significant impact. Questions differ slightly between the 2 groups of study.

Structure of the collection of data is as follows:

Groups of study:

Managers and **Professionals** of PVE partner entities or entities associated with them (extensive census)

Instrument for research:

Self-administered structured questionnaire collected through the Internet.

Sample size for study:

1,200 managers and professionals with distribution according to the number of declared territorial units.

Quota:

According to role in the organization

Field work details:

Between May 15 and July 31, 2019. The survey has been distributed among the partner entities, indicating to each one the number and profile of the people to be surveyed.

Responses:

751 valid answers out of 1200

Margin of error:

±3.3 %, showing a confidence level of 95% $p=q=50$

Findings

1. Sociodemographic profile of the participants surveyed

Initial point of analysis from data collection shows that there is a higher presence of women than men, suggesting significant feminisation within volunteering. Moreover, roles in the organisations within this social sector are not equally distributed at all, with men holding tasks of greater responsibility and women of those related to day-to-day activities. Logically in this day and age, organisations should take the time to reflect and act on this as it may reflect badly on their values and management to the common people. Regarding the demographic factor, is a notable amount of youth within the professional group of employees in the organisations which fortunately does not clash with the maturity in age of the managing group. These sociodemographic factors play a huge role in the results of the survey.

2. The Value of Volunteering

This sector measures the value given to volunteering according to the opinions and perceptions of the people surveyed. PVE categorised the results into 2 subcategories: volunteer role and profile, and its impact on activities.

a) Volunteer role and profile

PVE notices that the value lies in the personal characteristics, competencies and values of the volunteers, suggesting a greater human perspective than a professional one. From this, a basic value in the volunteering activities would be 'ordinary people helping other ordinary people', while the values of others aspects within the organisations will be different due to their specific roles. Moreover, the majority of the responses agree that volunteering is an integral part of the image of the organisations, while also noting that volunteering, its inclusion and its management shows effort given by these organisations.

b) Its impact on activities

Within the sample of participants, the impact of voluntary action on the activity of organisations is looked at in a homogeneous manner whereby they believe that organisations develop more and better oriented and

strategic activities intended to the beneficiaries of the missions. This shows a positive impact on the activities of organisations. In addition, due to the necessary role of volunteers mentioned above, the beneficiaries of the organisation to which volunteer action is directed to will be given an enriched and planned attention where they will gain all that is intended for them. The human and personal touch of volunteers will allow for a good relationship between them and the beneficiaries, thus impacting the volunteer activities in a positive way.

3. The Cost of Volunteering

On top of what volunteers contribute to the organisations by way of institutional aspects and the development of activities, it is necessary to take into account the risks and costs involved in the management of volunteering to be able to visualise the net contribution it brings to organisations. This section is not all to do with monetary value, but of the quality of work life/positions within organisations, the institutional aspects of it all, as well.

a) Professionals

Women and younger professionals tend to judge the factors that go into the costs of volunteering more; they favour the acceptance of volunteering to be more integrated into the activities of the organisations. According to the results, the size of the organisation determines this perception whereby volunteer action was assessed as less positive/accepted in larger organisations. Opinions show that volunteering represents an overall low cost compared to the value that it brings to the organisations, which is a positive result and should be encouraged.

b) Managers

It has been analysed that those responsible for the management of the organisations attribute a higher costs than the professionals, but still, does not pose as a major obstacle as the average values of responses are in the moderate scale. This part of the survey applicable to the Managerial group and their responses demonstrate that the impact of volunteering has to do with the 'costs' of budget, volunteer management, logistics and organisation, and on the working environment. Of course, this is dependent on the size of the organisations, with a lesser impact on large organisations.

4. The Management of Volunteers

Data shows that organisations put in their greatest efforts with regards to management and organisation. They record that volunteer management is fairly well oriented and integrated into the activities held by organisations. However, on the other hand, some obligations such as insurance and the reimbursement of expenses are not always taken care of like they should be. Internal relationships between employees and volunteers are generally harmonious but are also always prone to some friction that requires management attention. In terms of the universality of volunteering, it is understandably under pressured within organisations as it is difficult to facilitate the access of volunteering for everyone. Although there is no sign of discrimination against volunteers in the management of volunteering, there are still signs of inequality, especially in the feminisation of volunteering. PVE believes that organisations must fight against this stigma by attracting more men to forcefully break the tendency in reproducing sexist roles in volunteering activities.

5. Visibility of Volunteers

Participants agree that volunteers are a symbol of organisations and should deservedly be recognised and given high visibility as they contribute to the greater identification and loyalty of the organisation. They also recognise that volunteering plays a very important role in the activities, social image and reputation of the organisations, and it should enjoy preferential attention and, therefore, be taken into account in all documents referring to the management of the institution. PVE has grouped the types of documents where volunteering is a component and listed them as Political, Operational and Innovation. Responders believe that attention to volunteering is more operational than innovative or political, which means that volunteering activities are only reflected in organisations' annual programming and activity reports, not higher scale innovation documents that plan for the improvement of these activities and organisational development. Such innovation documents are the Quality and Equality plan to promote the visibility of volunteers and their activities, as well as balancing out the feminisation of the whole structure. Also, PVE believes that greater emphasis should be placed on the participation of volunteers in collaboration with the management of activities to generate friendlier environments. This is to portray that organisations do have a high level of commitment to the situations and are willing to improve perceptions to integrate their principles for higher value and recognition

Conclusion

PVE has demonstrated a clear and informative single document that is accessible to the public for their own knowledge on the values that volunteering brings to an organisation. This report highlights that sociodemographic factors play a huge role in the perception and working culture of the organisations, sampled by their Managers and Professionals. A majority of the results show that there is generally a greater sense of acceptance and activity of volunteering from women and young people in each area investigated, portraying feminisation in the culture. Respondents highly value volunteers and perceive volunteer action contributes positively to beneficiaries and the organisations themselves. Moreover, results from both groups of study reveal that the costs of volunteering is barely an obstacle the organisations have to overcome as compared to the value it brings to them. The survey has brought positive perceptions to the management of volunteering as it integrates and plans activities well, although some believe that this social sector should have higher universality. Finally, the incorporation of volunteering into the 'innovation' documents, particularly the Equality Plan, seems particularly relevant, since there is still a long way to go in terms of equality due to the feminization of volunteering. PVE believes that organisations should be thinking about ways to innovate globally and strategically, keeping in mind all factors and structures such as those above, to successfully deliver the principles of volunteering.