

Volunteering among Teachers in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace through an Intervention Program Analysis of Characteristics, Perceptions and Attitude Change

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Abstract: The present study focuses on enhancing the volunteering behavior of teachers in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, through the implementation of a targeted intervention program. The objective of the research was to investigate the characteristics, perceptions and habits of teachers in relation to volunteering, as well as to evaluate the impact of the intervention on changing attitudes and enhancing their intention to participate in volunteer activities. The intervention program was designed to inform and raise awareness among teachers about the role of volunteering in modern society, emphasizing the European dimension of volunteering. As part of the program, targeted information material (links, videos, articles and information leaflets) was distributed, the profile of the European Volunteer was presented, and online lectures and discussions with experts were held. The program was concluded with the re-administration of a questionnaire (after the intervention) in order to record any change in the participants' attitudes. Statistical analysis of the data showed that the intervention had a positive effect on the key dimensions of volunteering, such as social contribution, personal empowerment and understanding of the social context of action. Participants showed increased levels of intention for future participation, improved understanding of the institutional and social role of the volunteer and greater acceptance of the values associated with active citizenship. The results indicate that similar interventions can function as effective tools for strengthening the volunteer culture in teachers, contributing substantially to both their professional development and social cohesion. This research enriches the field of scientific study of volunteerism in education, demonstrating the need to integrate volunteerism into the professional culture of teachers through organized and experiential educational initiatives.

Keywords: Volunteerism, Educators, Intervention program, Social participation, Attitudes and perceptions, EMTH Region

Introduction

Citizens' participation in voluntary actions constitutes one of the key pillars for strengthening social cohesion and democratic participation (Dekker & Halman, 2003). In the broader European context, volunteering is recognized as a fundamental tool for strengthening active citizenship and solidarity, contributing substantially to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 11 on "Sustainable Cities and Communities" and Goal 17 on "Partnerships for the Goals" (UNDP, 2020).

Teachers, as agents of attitude and value formation, play a key role in promoting volunteerism, not only as a pedagogical practice but also as a personal attitude to life (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010). Cultivating a volunteer culture through education has the potential to strengthen democratic principles, develop social empathy and promote the active participation of young people (Rochester and al., 2010). However, the integration of volunteerism into the professional culture of teachers is not always self-evident, as it depends on personal perceptions, experiences, but also on the institutional and cultural context (Brudney & Meijs, 2009).

In Greece, and especially in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, opportunities for participation in organized voluntary actions remain limited, while the available structures do not systematically utilize the human potential of education (Sotiropoulos, 2014). The systematic strengthening of volunteerism through interventional educational programs, with an emphasis on information, awareness and empowerment, can contribute substantially to the development of positive attitudes and to increasing readiness for voluntary action (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001).

The present study is part of this context and attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of a targeted intervention program, which was designed to enhance the perceptions and intentions of teachers of the EMTH Region regarding their participation in volunteer activities. The theoretical background of the research is based on the VFI (Volunteer Functions Inventory) model, which identifies six basic dimensions of volunteer motivation: values, understanding, personal empowerment, social acceptance, professional development, and

protective factors (Clary and al., 1998). This specific tool is used internationally to measure motivation for volunteering and provides reliable data for interpreting attitudes and intentions.

Based on the above framework, this article presents the intervention, analyzes the research data before and after its implementation, and suggests ways of institutionally utilizing similar interventions in educational policy.

Theoretical Background

Volunteering in education is a critical mechanism for strengthening social cohesion, active citizenship and community empowerment (Clary and al., 1998; Rochester and al., 2010). Particularly in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (EMTH), where a particular socio-economic and multicultural profile is recorded, the promotion of the volunteer potential of teachers can contribute decisively to the sustainable development of the local society (Sotiropoulos, 2014).

Teachers, as attitude-formers and role models for social behavior, have a privileged role in fostering a volunteer culture, both through their personal involvement and through their impact on students and the local community (Brudney&Meijs, 2009). Teacher volunteering can enhance democratic education and participation and is associated with positive indicators of job satisfaction and personal development (Holdsworth &Quinn , 2010 ; Dekker &Halman, 2003).

Clary 's et al. (1998) functional theory of motivation and the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) tool allow the categorization of the factors that motivate individuals to volunteer, such as values, social networking, career, protection, knowledge and the enhancement of self-esteem. Especially in the case of teachers, value and cognitive factors seem to dominate, reflecting a commitment to the public interest and continuous professional development (Meijs&Hoogstad , 2001).

The European Union has recognized the importance of strengthening volunteering through institutional initiatives, such as the European Solidarity Corps, while in Greece there is a constant need for institutional support and promotion of good practices (UNDP, 2020). In this context, the present study focuses on strengthening the voluntary behavior of teachers through an interventional awareness and training program in the EMTH Region.

The aim is to record and analyze the attitudes and intentions of teachers before and after the intervention, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and to identify the key factors that facilitate or prevent their involvement in volunteering. The study contributes to the research discourse on the institutional promotion of volunteering in the field of education and provides empirical data for the design of targeted policies.

Methodology – Intervention Program

The present study was based on the implementation of a quantitative research design using a questionnaire, which was developed based on the theoretical model of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) of Ajzen (1991), adapted to the context of sports volunteering. The questionnaire was designed to record the opinions, attitudes, motivations and intentions of the participants regarding volunteering, giving particular emphasis to the three main pillars of TPB: attitude towards the behavior, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. The research was addressed exclusively to teachers working in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, regardless of level and specialty. The sample consisted of 64 teachers who answered the questionnaire anonymously, ensuring research ethics and free expression. The data collection took place after the completion of an intervention program to raise awareness and strengthen voluntary behavior.

The program included:

- Presentations and lectures via an online platform on the role of volunteers in sports and education.
- Display of informational material (videos, posters, European campaigns), including references to European Solidarity Corps and the values of the European Volunteer.
- Sending electronic links and documents on topics related to social cohesion, active participation and volunteering opportunities.
- Conducting structured discussions between teachers to exchange experiences and good practices.

The structure of the questionnaire included:

1. Demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, level of education, prefecture, etc.)
2. Questions about volunteering attitudes and habits, such as previous experience, duration of participation, personal beliefs, feelings after actions.
3. Statements of intention to participate in future actions, measured on a Likert scale (1–5).
4. THSquestions , organized into sub-groups:
 - Attitude towards volunteering

- Social influences (subjective norm)
- Perceived behavioral control
- Intention to participate in the future

Data analysis was performed using Jamovi software, focusing on descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), reliability tests (Cronbach's alpha), as well as comparative analysis between pre- and post-intervention statements, where information was available. The purpose of this methodology was to investigate whether the intervention contributed positively to strengthening the attitude and intention of teachers to engage in voluntary actions, focusing on the cultivation of positive values and social awareness, in accordance with the European orientation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7, 11, 17).

Results

This chapter presents the results of the quantitative analysis that emerged from the participants' responses to the questionnaire. The statistical processing was carried out through the Jamovi software, with the aim of extracting descriptive indicators for the demographic variables and the main dimensions of volunteer behavior. Initially, the descriptive indicators are listed (means, variations, minimum and maximum values), while then the answers to the main questions of the questionnaire are analyzed, with the aim of interpreting the profiles and attitudes of the respondents.

Variable	N	Missing	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
SEX	65	1	1.98	2.00	0.79	1	3
AGE	64	2	1.98	2.00	0.50	1	3
EDUCATION	64	2	1.47	1.00	0.50	1	2
FAMILY STATUS	63	3	2.21	2.00	0.88	1	3
EDUCATION LEVEL	64	2	1.39	1.00	0.49	1	2
LAW	64	2	2.52	2.00	1.25	1	5
How many years have you been involved in volunteering?	64	2	2.36	2.00	1.23	1	4
Someone is considered a volunteer when they participate in voluntary actions for at least:	64	2	—	—	—	—	—
After every volunteer activity with my active participation, I feel like it was for me.	64	2	2.97	3.00	1.72	1	6

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire variables

Note: The variable “Is someone considered a volunteer...” contains verbal categories (e.g. 0–2, 4–6, >8) and was not analyzed with numerical descriptive statistics.

The descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the sample and the main variables of the questionnaire revealed important data about the profile of the participants and their relationship with volunteering. The total number of respondents was 65 people, with the majority having answered all questions, while minimal missing data values were observed (from 1 to 3 in specific variables). Regarding gender, the mean was 1.98 (coding: 1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = other), indicating a slight preponderance of women in the sample. Regarding age, the mean value was 1.89 (1 = 31–40, 2 = 41–50, 3 = >51), indicating that the majority of participants belong to the 41–50 age group.

Regarding the level of education, the average value was 1.47 (1 = university, 2 = postgraduate), indicating that the largest percentage of participants are university graduates. In terms of family, the average of the variable “Marital status” (1 = single, 2 = married, 3 = married with children) was 2.21, indicating that the majority are married or married with children. The average value of the variable “Education level” (1 = 1st degree, 2 = 2nd degree) was 1.39, with a majority in the primary level of employment. The geographical distribution showed a mean value of 2.52 in the variable “Prefecture”, where code 1 corresponds to Xanthi and 5 to Evros, an element that reflects a distribution across various prefectures of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. In the variable “How many years have you been involved in volunteering?” (1 = 0–2 years, up to 4 = >8 years), the mean value was 2.36, indicating that a significant percentage of the sample has intermediate or even multi-year volunteer experience.

Finally, on the question “After each volunteer activity... I feel like it was for me”, which was rated on a 6-point scale, the average of the responses was 2.97, very close to the neutral value, with a standard deviation of 1.72, indicating a relatively high degree of variation in the responses. This question was answered by 64 participants. The above results form a clear picture of the social and professional profile of the participants, as

well as their degree of commitment to voluntary actions, creating the basis for further correlational and explanatory analysis.

The cross-tabulation presents the frequency of responses to the question “*After every volunteer activity with my active participation, I feel that it was for me*” in relation to the gender of the participants. It is observed that women (code 1) are mainly concentrated in answers 1 (11 people) and 2 (3 people), indicating a stronger emotional connection with the volunteer activities. Correspondingly, men (code 0) show a greater distribution in answers 4 (11 people), 2 (7 people) and 1 (9 people), indicating a slightly different pattern of experience. To statistically investigate the relationship between gender and perceived emotional value of volunteering, a chi-square test was performed. The results showed that the correlation is not statistically significant ($\chi^2(5) = 4.65, p = 0.460$), which suggests that there is no significant difference in the distribution of responses between men and women. In other words, both men and women seem to experience similar emotional satisfaction after participating in volunteering.

Degree of Agreement (1–6)	Men (0)	Women (1)	Total
1	9	11	20
2	7	3	10
3	2	3	5
4	11	4	15
5	4	5	9
6	3	2	5
Total	36	28	64

Table 2: Presentation of χ^2 test results

Subscale	Average (M)
Understanding	5.63
Social	4.74
Career	4.21
Protective	4.93
Values	6.31
Enhancement	5.89

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for each VFI subscale before intervention

The table presents the averages of the six subscales of the VFI questionnaire before the implementation of the intervention program in the teachers of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. It is observed that the highest averages are found in the subscales "Values" (M=6.31) and "Enhancement" (M=5.89), which reveals the participants' particular emphasis on ideological motivations and their personal development through volunteering.

In contrast, the subscale "Career" (M=4.21) has the lowest mean, indicating that professional ambitions are not a primary motivation for volunteering. The intermediate values of the "Understanding", "Social" and "Protective" subscales demonstrate the relative importance of acquiring knowledge, social relationships and protecting self-esteem, respectively.

Inquiry	Average	Standard Deviation
I plan to volunteer for at least one hour per week for the next few months.	3.70	2.10
I will try to volunteer and participate in various activities regularly in the coming months.	4.78	1.63
I am determined to volunteer and participate in various activities regularly in the coming months.	4.83	1.73
I will make my schedule to facilitate my participation in volunteer activities.	4.84	1.56
If I wanted to, I could volunteer for at least one hour a week for the next few months.	5.11	1.52
It is entirely up to me whether I could volunteer for at least one hour per week for the next few months.	4.92	1.49
How much do you think you can control by volunteering for at least one hour a week for the next few months?	5.05	1.64
Most people who are important to me believe that I should volunteer at least one hour a week.	4.41	1.60

Most people who are important to me believe it is right for me to volunteer at least one hour a week.	4.66	1.55
Most people who are important to me believe that it is necessary for me to volunteer at least one hour a week.	4.22	1.52

Table 4: Means and standard deviations of self-reported volunteering intention questions after the intervention (N = 64)

The results after the implementation of the intervention show a general increase in the intention to participate in voluntary actions, with the highest values observed in self-efficacy and internal control statements (e.g. "*If I wanted to, I could...*" and "*It completely depends on me...*" with means >5). Statements regarding social influence (e.g. "*Most people...*") show slightly lower means, which suggests that personal motivation seems to have a stronger effect on the change in intention.

The overall picture indicates that the intervention had a positive effect, strengthening both the intention to participate and the dimensions of self-determination, individual competence and social acceptance of voluntary action.

Question (short title)	M (Before)	SD (Before)	M (After)	SD (After)
I intend to volunteer.	3.20	1.44	3.70	2.10
I will try to volunteer.	3.98	1.36	4.78	1.63
I am determined to participate.	4.00	1.30	4.83	1.73
I will make my schedule.	3.86	1.49	4.84	1.56
If I wanted to, I could volunteer.	4.50	1.48	5.11	1.40
It depends on me whether I could act voluntarily.	4.38	1.49	5.08	1.35
How much do you think you can control your actions?	4.63	1.32	5.05	1.29
Most people believe that they should	4.12	1.37	4.41	1.26
Most people believe it is correct.	4.16	1.35	4.60	1.22
Most people believe it is necessary	4.05	1.50	4.22	1.24

Table 5: Comparative Table of Averages "Before" and "After" the Intervention

The paired sample statistical test (Paired Samples T- Test) for the overall average of the 10 questions before and after the intervention showed:

- $t(63) = 13.35$,
- $p < .001$

The analysis showed a statistically significant improvement in the participants' intention and readiness to undertake voluntary action after the intervention. Specifically, the means improved across all statements, demonstrating the positive impact of the intervention program in enhancing the participants' voluntary intention and perceived ability to participate.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The intervention proved effective in enhancing teachers' intention and ability to participate in volunteer activities. The means on all statements increased significantly after the implementation of the program, while statistical analysis confirmed the existence of significant differences ($p < .001$). The findings demonstrate that targeted interventions, when including information, motivational enhancement and social empowerment, can substantially enhance participation in volunteering.

It is proposed to continue and expand similar programs to a larger sample of teachers and to incorporate relevant topics into training seminars, with the aim of continuously cultivating volunteer awareness in the educational community.

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