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THE PECULIARITIES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ONLINE VOLUNTEERING

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Abstract. The author actualizes the actual problem of modern Ukrainian society such as providing volunteer work, in particular university students' volunteering. The article describes the main issues of university students' online volunteering. The focus is on such peculiarities of online volunteering as the great potential to mobilize different kinds of people from all over the world, its flexibility and availability 24 hours a day as well as very low cost, both in terms of time and effort. It is emphasized that online volunteering is attractive to university students and motivate and facilitate their access to volunteer work in society.

Keywords: university student, volunteer work, online volunteering, university students' online volunteering.

It is obviously that in the last few decades, the Internet becomes the dominant part of human social life and it influences almost all aspects of modern social activities, including volunteer work. The definition of volunteer work in contemporary public sciences is understood as a service to a person or an organization in need performed willingly and without any financial gain. According to Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Volunteering" (2011), volunteer work is

voluntary, altruistic, socially oriented nonprofit activity that is carried out by volunteers and volunteer organizations by way of rendering volunteer aid. Volunteer work is a form of charity. Volunteer work is based on the principles of lawfulness, humanity, equality, voluntariness, freedom of cost, altruism and non-profit nature [4].

Nowadays scholars explore the different kinds of online volunteering, created by the Internet (K. Ackermann, & A. Manatschal, 2018; F. Silva, T. Proença, & M. Ferreira, 2018), discuss the unique qualities of the Internet as a means of successful providing the wide variety of online volunteer projects (S. Bren, 2005; W. Wallace, 2004), and describe the positive aspects of Internet volunteering (Y. Amichai-Hamburger, 2008; J. Cox et al, 2018; J. Oraves, 2000).

It is necessary to emphasize that today university student youth is an essential part of volunteering movement in Ukraine. In pedagogical, psychological and social theory and practice, a considerable number of researches on the issue of university students' volunteering have been conducted (E. Balashov et al, 2016; Z. Bondarenko, 2007; A. Kolomiets et al, 2019; T. Rudiakievych, 2004). They determine university student volunteering as an excellent way to develop valuable personal and professional skills, to gain self-realization, etc.

Speaking about modern university youth we focus on the fact that they are representing the "generation Z" (born after 1995) that is growing up in digital environment and used to use the Internet for different purposes, in particular volunteer work. Modern students are well-web literate and they often spend their spare time surfing the Internet. On the Internet they can find various ways to help different people as well. Thus, online volunteering seems to be particularly attractive to younger generations for whom university students belong. So, a number of modern aspects of university students' online volunteering required further study.

The aim of this paper is to review the main peculiarities and benefits of university students' online volunteering.

Specialist in online volunteering sphere D. Mukherjee considers that online volunteering is “a type of civic engagement where the volunteers perform their tasks using the Internet either from their home or other offsite locations” [3, p.253].

Today the Internet provides manifold options to volunteer online such as:

- running online volunteer projects;
- unpaid writing an informative materials on a forum or blog;
- recording a non-commercial educational YouTube video;
- moderating a Facebook group;
- designing websites of a group or organization which help people in need;
- creating study materials for free online use;
- free offering legal/economic/psychological support or expertise, etc.

Besides, the Internet often serves to organize the volunteer project that takes place offline. It means that the Internet serves as an online center to run the volunteer project, while the whole operation itself takes place in real life.

According to some researches [1; 2], online volunteering has the great potential to mobilize different kinds of people and connect them all over the world; it is flexible and available 24 hours a day, and may be given over the Internet at very low cost, both in terms of time and effort.

On the Internet, university students have got the strong possibility to volunteer for whatever and whenever they want. This flexibility in time and place is especially attract young people who are still in education because they want to combine studying at the university with starting their professional career as well as social development, and civic and political engagement.

The virtual communication in the Internet volunteer group is to support students' emotional and volitional attitude to volunteer activity. The prompt feedback helps to organize the process of free communication, exchange of ideas, and

judgments, which stimulate the future volunteer work. It should be underlined that the feedback allows the university student to comprehend and correct their own activities appropriate to the most advantageous strategy of volunteer activity in the Internet created environment as well as directly apply their experience in real life.

Thus, we believe that these peculiarities of online volunteering are attractive for university students and should also motivate and facilitate their access to online volunteering.

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