

Personality profile and life satisfaction of volunteers and non-volunteers – Are there differences?

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Abstract

Background: Volunteer activities make a significant contribution to the public good and they are also proven to be advantageous for the volunteers themselves. Recruitment, selection or retention of volunteers are all important issues for the volunteer sector. Thus, it is very important to examine if volunteers and non-volunteers show different personality profiles, which can serve as useful information for the volunteer coordinators and other stakeholders.

Aims of the study: To analyze the differences of personality background of volunteers and non-volunteers in connection with well-being in a Hungarian sample. 113 volunteers working for different types of civil service organizations formed the volunteer group, and 113 non-volunteers (never volunteered) formed the non-volunteer control group. These two were matched based on 3 sociodemographic factors (age, gender and education), thus providing 113 perfectly matched pairs.

Materials and Methods: The Hungarian adaptations of BFQ Big Five Questionnaire (Caprara, Barbaranelli & Borgogni, 1999, Rózsa, 2004) and SWLS-H (Satisfaction with Life Scale, Diener et al, 1985, Martos, Sallay, Désfalvi, Szabó & Ittész, 2014) were used in a cross-sectional research conducted between September 2016 and December 2016. We adopted t-tests and stepwise hierarchical regression analyses in the research in order to analyse the relations between the abovementioned variables.

Results: Significant differences in agreeableness, energy, and openness have been found for volunteers, although regarding satisfaction with life the two subsamples have not differed significantly. We introduced demographic variables (gender, age, and education level), big five traits, and volunteer variables (volunteer status, length of service, hours spent with volunteering) as predictors of satisfaction with life using stepwise regression analysis. In the last

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step education and emotional stability related positively to life satisfaction explaining 15,4% of the variance in life satisfaction.

Conclusions: Consistent with prior studies, we found that certain Big Five traits (e.g. energy, agreeableness, and openness) show significant differences between volunteers and non-volunteers. Although significant differences between volunteers and non-volunteers have not been found regarding life satisfaction, we stress the importance of emotional stability in predicting life satisfaction; and a certain amount of volunteering seems to make outstanding contribution to higher level of life satisfaction on the long run.

Keywords

volunteer, non-volunteer, personality, matched sample, life satisfaction