

The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Solving Socio-Economic Problems of the Society (Sharing Experiences of Student Club of Anadolu University)

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Abstract

Today, people live in bad conditions, receive not a good education and they are malnourishing. A great deal of institutions and organizations, nongovernmental organizations (civil society organizations) endeavor to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups by carrying out social responsibility projects.

What are these social responsibility projects? How can these projects be carried out? What are the contributions of organizations and institutions to the realization of these projects? What are the contributions of several responsibility projects to the welfare of the society? What are their roles in the society? What are the limitations? How can civil society organizations fill these inadequacies?

The aim of this paper is to search for possible answers to the listed questions above by the help of experiences gained in the student voluntary club named "Voluntary Social Services Club" of Anadolu University.

Keywords: Civil Society Organizations; Social capital; Social responsibility projects

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Introduction

Today, the importance of social responsibility increasingly continues. The influence of the people who have difficulty in adapting to the changing conditions of our country can not be denied in this situation. Throughout our history we have been through hard times and we continue to deal with those difficult times. For this reason, we are aware of how important it is to help each other.

While these aids have long been limited to food and clothing, various voluntary organizations now offer a more professional and comprehensive volunteer service. This ensures the quality, diversity and continuity of the service.

The volunteer staff has a great effect on the effectiveness of a volunteer organization. In the results of the surveys conducted, we see the proportion of participants who volunteered in the past year, different reflections of the reasons for participation and the contribution of these experiences to them. The surveys also show the reasons why the participants didn't volunteer in an organization. These reasons not only show us the various limitations of the voluntary organizations but also provide some clues to develop voluntary organizations.

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In addition to these organizations, volunteer communities of universities continue to work within the scope of their own schools with various social responsibility projects. Anadolu University Voluntary Social Services Club, with its gigantic staff consisting of approximately 600 volunteers, continues its existence among these communities with the 8 projects effectively.

1. What is social responsibility?

Social responsibility term that is always mentioned in the projects of state and civil society organizations is a step which is taken for the future generations. The term “responsibility” is used to define the duties which one needs to fulfill for himself and the other people. This term already contains social responsibility. Likewise, being responsible means one carries out some duties for the sake of other people as if they are his own duties. While there is a "necessity" situation in the definition of responsibility in general, this kind of obligation can not be mentioned as social responsibility mostly covers action which is done in the name of "society and humanity".

Social responsibility, a very broad concept, is that all organizations in the society work collectively for the "common living ideals" and that they develop projects which serve this purpose.

All the actions to ensure that problems that are likely to exist in the future or exist today, but which will prevent the problems that will affect more and more people by increasing the effects in the future, the development of projects to prevent them and all actions to raise people's consciousness is a part of social responsibility. As actions are more effective when done in unity, social responsibility must be taken care of by every segment of society as a whole. Health, environment, and education” triangle are basic principles of social responsibility. The main objectives of social responsibility are; The development of health services, the availability of education by everyone and the improvement of quality, the protection of the environment and the creation of environmental awareness.

Society’s coming together to "create solutions in a harmonious manner" means that the projects of social responsibility reach success. All projects developed to ensure social justice are also part of social responsibility. Thinking about people's interests, not only their own interests, but society and the interests of mankind will show that there is a sense of social responsibility.

2. Who is the volunteer?

Volunteering is defined as the support to the actions of civil society organizations or a social initiative willingly to increase the quality of life of the individuals’ except his family or relatives without any expectation of financial reward or of an interest. Volunteerism is such a terminological word that unfortunately neither definition can be done correctly, nor can it be perceived in the same way by everyone. Let's start with the definition of Turkish Language Institution: Taking a responsibility willingly while there is no obligation. Let’s look at the other meanings of volunteerism in

different languages: “Volunteer” in English is same as “freiwilligendienst” in German and “fuad” in Arabic. The root of the "volunteer" word in English comes from the word "will", ie, "willingness". We can say that volunteerism is a situation of willingness for English. Volunteerism in German is more complicated because it consists of three words, “frei-willigen-dienst”. In English, “Frei” means free, “willigen” means willingness, and “dienst” means service. It means a service with no charge. In Arabic, “fuad” which means volunteerism has a deeper meaning. It means “heartsick”. It is more impressive, isn't it?

Volunteering addresses the abstract part rather than the concrete part of the person. However, its equivalent in Western languages is a shallower term like a free time activity and willingness. Nevertheless, in Turkish there are many proverbs and idioms about volunteerism and they have a great importance in Turkish culture. Volunteerism requires continuity and sustainability. Volunteerism is just believing in oneself ignoring today's jargons and ideologies that is, all-ism. Volunteerism is keeping away from narrow-mindedness, bigotry, and blimpishness.

3. Volunteerism in Turkey

8 Important Volunteer Institutions in Turkey

LÖSEV

Founded in 1998, LÖSEV is a supportive organization for children with leukemia.

TEGV

TEGV gives educational support and personal development and self-expression ability to the children in primary and secondary school age who are the guarantees of our future.

TOG

TOG was founded in 2002, aiming to improve young people's participation in social responsibility projects and to carry out studies on issues such as human rights and education.

TEMA

TEMA, established in 1992, is an occasion to protect nature against the danger of erosion, deforestation and desertification.

AIESEC TURKEY

AIESEC, founded in 1948 by European students to contribute to world peace after World War II, is an international platform where young people can explore and develop their own potential.

GREENPEACE TURKEY

Greenpeace is an independent global organization dedicated to protecting the environment and promoting peace.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is an international non-governmental organization committed to advocating and promoting any human right as determined by the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.

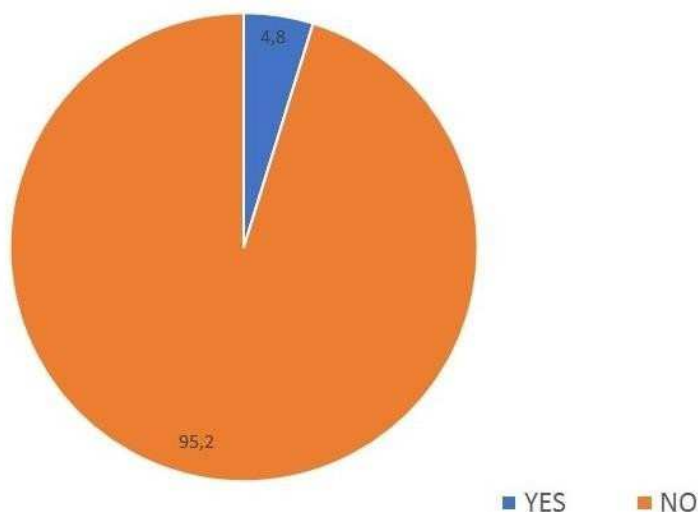
MAKE A WISH TURKEY

The basic aim of the association is to fulfill the wishes of children who have suffered a life-threatening illness in order to strengthen the feelings of hope, strength and joy of the people around Turkey.

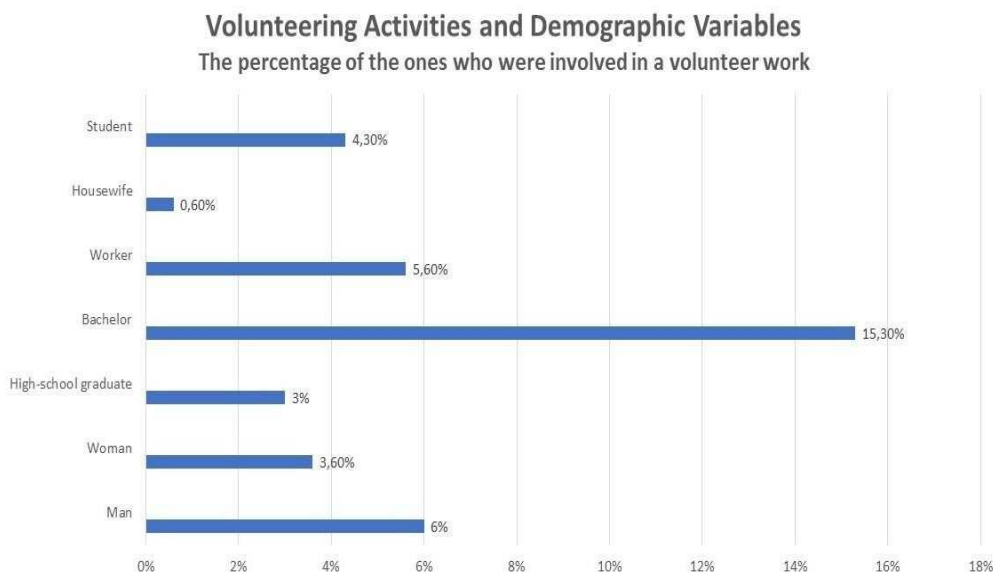
Besides these CCOs, university volunteer communities are also included.

We, as Anadolu University Volunteer Community Services Club, are among these communities. Our mission is to spread awareness of social responsibility and social responsibility. Nursing Home Visits, Society for the Protection of Children Visits, LÖSEV Campus, A Library for Every School, Preschool for the Future, A Hope for Every Child, Children's Festival, Make a Wish are among the projects we are conducting

The percentage of the ones who made something voluntarily in the last year



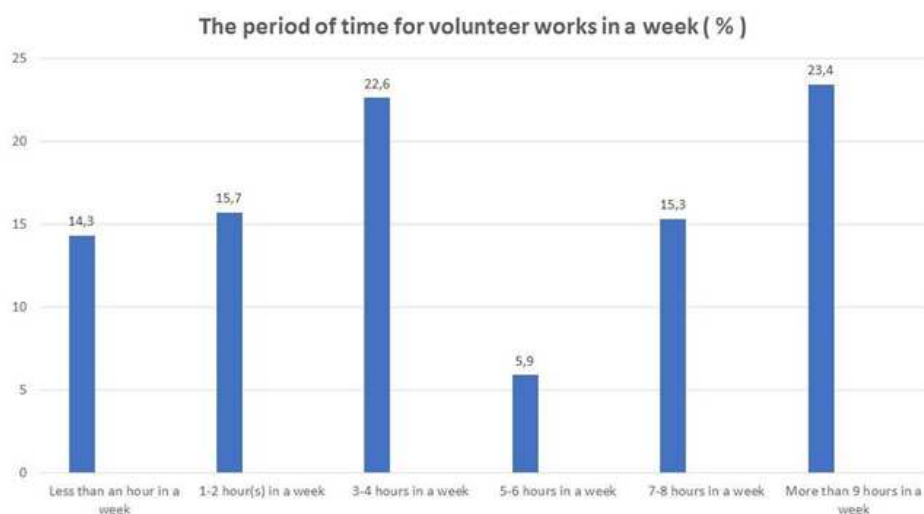
According to TEGV's "Volunteering in Turkish Youth and Social Capital" final report, only 5 percent of the young people aged 18- 35 living in urban areas in Turkey stated that they have worked in a job that is beneficial to other people in the past year. The fact that 95 percent of the population is away from voluntary activities determines the main problem of the research work.



When the relationship between the main demographic variables and participation in volunteer activities is examined, some hints are obtained which can be used for detailed multivariate analysis.

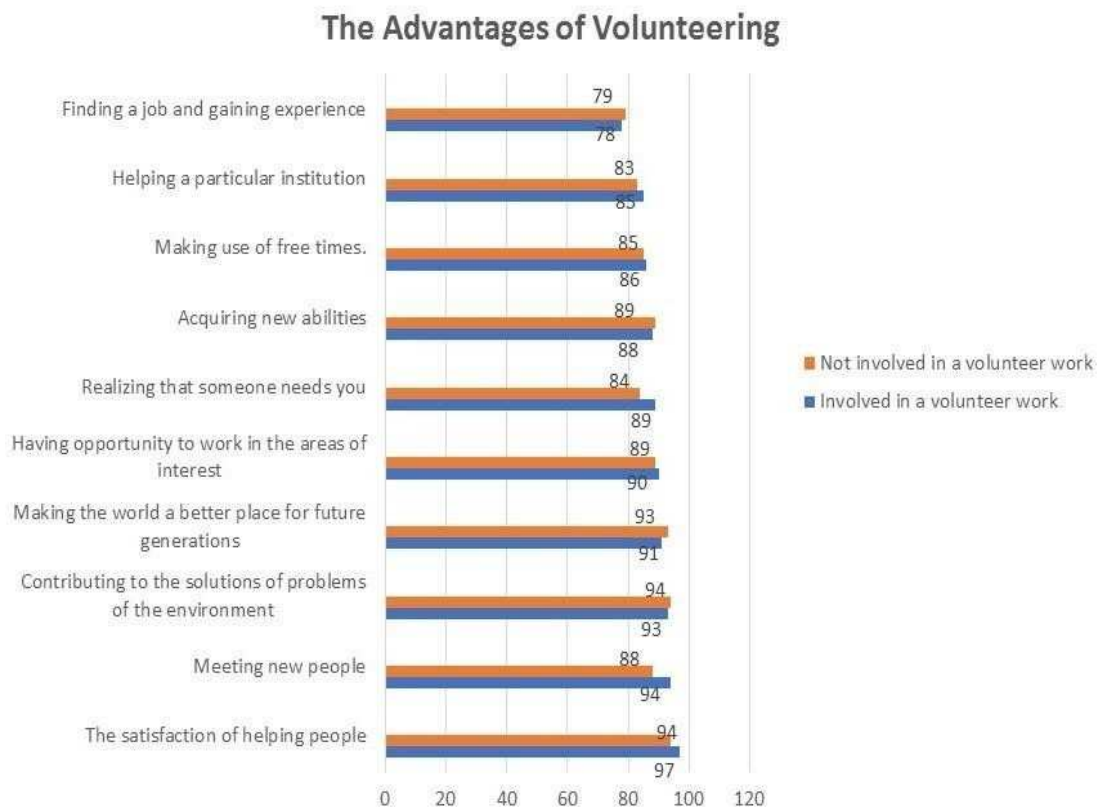
As you can see in the graphic above men are more volunteer than women and higher educated participants are more volunteer than low educated ones. On the other hand, it is worth emphasizing that volunteer activity among housewives / daughters is rarely encountered. TEGV, Turkish Institution for Public Education and Spreading Kemalism, Reading Hall, Disability Associations, some professional organizations, and Eğitim-SEN participants are volunteers.

As you can see, volunteering activities are almost entirely carried out under the roof of an institution, and more than half of these institutions operate in the field of education. Culture- art, environment and health are some of the more prominent institutions, but the differences are low. The duration of voluntary activities is about 2 years on average and often less than 3 years.



We can not say that all volunteers have similar behaviors in terms of the amount of time spent on volunteer activities in a week. While approximately 50% of the

participants devote at most 3 hours per week to volunteering activities, there is a 40 percent quantile that indicates that it is more than one or two hours a day.



When asked for the participants what kind of benefits a person would have in volunteering in the research study, the first place was "the satisfaction given by helping people. At the lowest level - however, with a percentage close to 80 percent – getting a job and gaining experience seems to be perceived as a relative insignificant gain of volunteering. The most important difference between those who do volunteer activities and those who do not, is to meet new people. While 94 per cent of volunteer activists consider it as a significant achievement of voluntary activity, among those who do not voluntarily participate, the percentage of those who agree with this view remains at 88 percent.

4. How are these projects carried out?

Nursing Home Visits

We visit nursing homes every weekend in the scope of our Nursing Home Visits project and spend time chatting with nursing home residents. Besides, we plan different activities so we plan to make them participate in social life.

A Hope for Every Child

We visit the children who stay in hospital, Osmangazi University Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Unit and we aim to cheer them up and give them moral support. We organize visits on weekends and plan to watching cartoons and book reading activities on every visit with a toy and stationery that has a big role in child development.

Preschool for the Future

We give material support to the kindergartens in disadvantaged areas within the scope of our Preschool for the Future project. These materials are provided by our members from both their own handmade objects and materials from sponsors. Our goal in this project is to provide maternal support to the kindergarten and to improve the physical conditions and make it suitable for education.

A Library for Every School

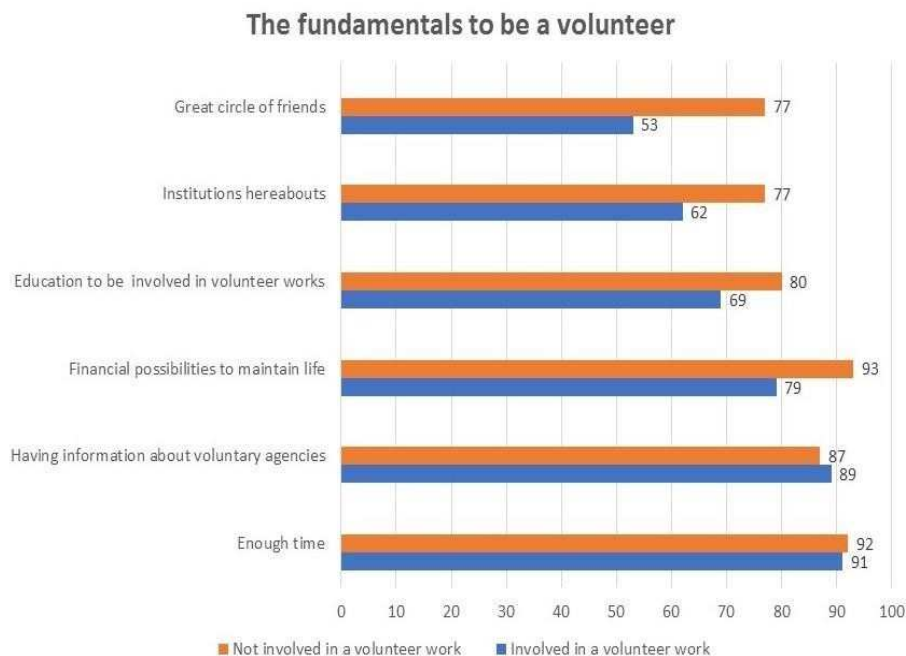
We give material support (bookcases, books, bookmarkers, tables, chairs, stationery equipment etc.) to libraries in schools that do not have a library or are insufficient in content within the scope of Our A Library for Every School Project. We also send books upon request. The books we send are collected with the support of our members, colleagues and students.

Make a Wish

“Within our "Make a Wish" project, we try to do something good for the children who have a risk of death from 3 to 18 years with the support of the "Make a Wish Turkey" association. We learn their wishes and try make their wishes come true. This process is carried out by trained club members.

Children' Festival

As part of the "Children's Festival" project, we spend a day full of activities such as workshops, various dances, games, contests and rhythm work with children living in villages in Eskişehir and having difficulty in education in villages.



The most important differences between volunteering and non-volunteering activities are the answers to the question "What should a person need to have in order to be volunteer?" First of all, both volunteers and others agree that they need to have enough time and need to identify the institutions they can volunteer for. However, the

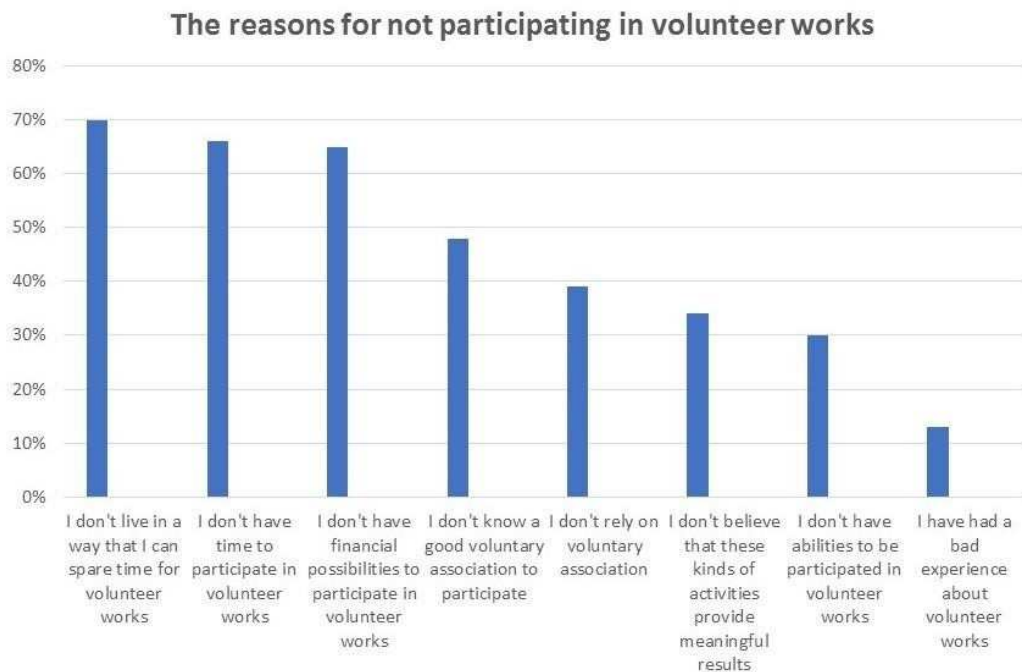
people who did not take part in volunteer works in the last year believe that the fundamentals below are necessary to be a volunteer:

- Financial possibilities to maintain life (% 93);
- Education to be involved in volunteer works (% 80);
- Institutions hereabouts (% 77);
- Great circle of friends (% 77)

It is clear that this difference constitutes an important distinction on the subject of volunteerism.

5. What are the contributions of volunteerism to community?

Participation in voluntary activities is very influential on the individual's personal development. People who actively participate in volunteer activities become more tolerant, more respectful to democratic values, more self-reliant, and active in social activities.



6. What are the limitations?

The participant who said that they did not volunteer during the last one year was asked why they did not volunteer. The most important reason mentioned above is the absence of time as shown in the graphic above. While 70 per cent of the participants say that they can not allocate a regular time, two-thirds of the participants also say that there is no time. 66 percent of the reasons for not volunteering are explained by the lack of financial means. There are also some institutional reasons. While it is about 40 percent of not knowing the right institution and not trusting the institutions, we can add that this group might be "I had a bad experience before". Finally, there is

also a significant segment of the three-way union that says that they do not believe that their activities provide a meaningful result.

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