

SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL BASIS OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the essence of volunteering as a type of human activity based on classical literature. It also systematizes theoretical views related to volunteering.

Keywords: Volunteering, social capital, adaptive functions, the concept of "organic solidarity", prosocial behavior, civil society, altruism model.

Introduction

Social activism, civic responsibility, and solidarity are central to the development of modern society. In these processes, volunteering is becoming not only a form of practical assistance, but also a social institution. Volunteering is prosocial behavior, that is, an individual's activity aimed at benefiting society, in addition to material gain.

In the sociological approach, volunteering performs an integrative function of the social system, serves the formation of social capital and strengthens mutual trust in society. As R. Putnam noted, one of the main indicators of "social capital" is participation in public affairs on a voluntary basis [1.-P.288.]. Thus, volunteering can be interpreted not only as "helping", but also as an institutional form of social solidarity.

In sociology, the concept of social activity is one of the central categories. Max Weber defines social activity as "meaning-oriented action." In his opinion, in order for any action to acquire a social character, it must depend on the behavior of other people [2.-P.447.]. Volunteering meets these criteria: the volunteer's action is aimed at the benefit of others and is evaluated by society. interprets social activity as a source of social cohesion. According to him, social institutions (including voluntary organizations) play an important role in unifying society and forming a collective consciousness.

In the 20th century, T. Parsons's structural-functionalist theory considered the harmony of various roles and institutions to be important for maintaining the stability of a social system. Volunteering is one of the "adaptive functions" that serve the interests of society beyond personal interest [3.-P.270].

Durkheim's concept of "organic solidarity" is very important in understanding volunteerism. According to him, in modern society, as a result of the division of labor, people become dependent on each other. To strengthen this dependence, moral unity is necessary. Volunteering strengthens this solidarity, because it is based on the principles of human empathy and social responsibility, in addition to economic benefit.

Durkheim also put forward the concept of "anomie". Anomie is a state of moral decay and



instability in society [4.-P.432]. Volunteering is a social mechanism that counteracts anomie. Because it unites people towards a common goal, strengthens social control and cooperation. Weber argues that volunteering can be interpreted as “meaningful social action.” According to him, social actions are divided into the following types:

1. Goal-oriented (instrumental) action – for example, an activity undertaken by a volunteer to gain experience or develop professional skills.
2. Value-driven action – volunteerism based on altruism, compassion, or religious-moral values.
3. Traditional action - providing assistance based on ancient customs and traditions (for example, the Uzbek tradition of hashar).
4. Affective action is help based on feelings and emotions.

Therefore, volunteering is, in Weber's terms, a meaningful social action.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, sociological research on volunteerism expanded. R. Putnam's work "Bowling Alone" highlights volunteerism as a key source of social capital.

Also, according to P. Bourdieu's concept, volunteering is important not only in the formation of social capital, but also in the formation of cultural capital . Because in the process of volunteering, people acquire new knowledge, communicative skills, and social experience.

In modern sociology, volunteerism is interpreted as follows:

- Prosocial activity (activity that benefits society over personal gain).
- A form of civic activism (self-organization of citizens in a democratic society).
- A tool for social integration (a bridge connecting different layers).
- Personal development mechanism (gaining skills, experience, social connections).

The role of volunteering in civil society is explained as follows:

- it is an intermediary mechanism between the state and society;
- a tool that strengthens the social responsibility of citizens;
- an institution that puts democratic values into practice.

Therefore, assessing volunteering as a component of civil society allows us to understand it not only as a means of social assistance, but also as a mechanism of social self-governance and democratic participation.

Robert Putnam is one of the most famous sociologists who developed the theory of social capital[1.-P.288.]. According to him, social capital is a set of mutual trust, networks, and norms of cooperation between people that increase the efficiency of society.

Volunteering is manifested in the following forms of social capital:

1. Bonding social capital – solidarity within close groups (for example, volunteering in neighborhoods).
2. Bridging social capital – strengthening connections between different social strata (communication with people from different professions through student volunteering).
3. Linking social capital – strengthening connections between citizens and government institutions (for example, government cooperation with volunteers in emergency situations).

Bourdieu also interprets social capital in terms of human resources. According to his theory, through volunteering, people acquire not only social but also cultural capital (knowledge, skills, language, and communication resources).

Thus, volunteering is seen as a mechanism that generates social capital and strengthens social networks in society.



Volunteering is often based on the concept of altruism . Altruism is the act of putting the interests of others ahead of one's own.

- Auguste Comte, in his theory of solidarism, emphasized that the basis for uniting society is altruistic values. According to him, human "service to others" is the foundation of social development.
- Herbert Spencer, on the other hand, explains altruism as a natural result of social evolution. He believes that as society develops, altruistic behavior becomes stronger.
- In modern sociology, the term "prosocial behavior" is used. It refers to a person's willingness to help others, support them, and engage in social cooperation.

Psychological research also shows that volunteering demonstrates a high level of altruistic motivation. For example, D. Batson, in his "Empathy-Altruism Model," argues that a person's tendency to help is directly related to the level of empathy [5.-P.288.].

Therefore, volunteering is a practical manifestation of solidarity and altruism, a force that strengthens social cohesion in society.

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