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Klymenko I. V.,

PhD (Candidate of Psychological Sciences),
Associate Professor (docent) of
Social Psychology Department,
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
E-mail: ivklimenko251@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-4539-1087

THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING AIMED AT HELPING THE COMBATANTS AND VICTIMS OF THE WAR, ON VOLUNTEERS' FAMILY WELL-BEING

У статті ми проаналізували інформацію щодо потенційного впливу волонтерської діяльності на психоемоційний стан та сімейне благополуччя волонтерів, зокрема тих, які здійснюють свою діяльність в екстремальних умовах. Ми проаналізували особливості діяльності українських волонтерів, які здійснювали допомогу комбатантам та постраждалим від війни в період найгострішого воєнного протистояння на Сході України в 2014–2016 роках, та виявили, що їх діяльність могла справляти негативний вплив на соціально-психологічний клімат та функціонування їхніх родин з огляду на тривалий, напружений, емоційно насичений та подекуди ризикований характер.

Ми здійснили дослідження особливостей подружніх стосунків та окремих показників сімейного благополуччя (рівень задоволеності шлюбом та шлюбним партнером, особливості комунікації, налаштованості на взаємодію, рівень взаємоповаги та емоційного тягіння) в родинях активних учасників волонтерського руху, які спрямовували свої зусилля на допомогу військовослужбовцям та цивільному населенню в період активних воєнних дій.

Було проаналізовано взаємозв'язок сімейного благополуччя волонтерів з характерними особливостями їхньої діяльності. Окрему увагу було приділено аналізу специфіки діяльності та стосунків з родиною волонтерів, чії сім'ї зрештою розпалися (кожний п'ятий учасник дослідження розлучився в період активного залучення до волонтерської діяльності). Також були проаналізовані показники психоемоційного стану добровольців: фіксація та соматизація тривоги, депресія.

Виявлено ряд чинників, що можуть негативно впливати на сімейне благополуччя та психоемоційний стан волонтерів, що діють в умовах воєнних дій, зокрема інтенсивність та тривалість здійснюваної волонтерської діяльності, велика особиста відповідальність, висока емоційна залученість, відсутність підтримки членів родини.

Ключові слова: волонтерська діяльність, волонтери, сімейне благополуччя, подружні стосунки, воєнні дії.

Introduction

Volunteer movement in Ukraine with the beginning of the occupation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 and the Anti-Terrorist Operation in the East of Ukraine in April 2014 has gained unprecedented scope. Hundreds of volunteer communities, associations, charitable foundations have been founded during 2014–2016 and undertook the realization of important tasks which the state was not able to cope: material and technical support of the military in the area of warfare, the development of tactical medicine, rehabilitation, search missing persons, release of prisoners, assistance to internally displaced persons from the Crimea and Donbass, support of residents of front-line territories, etc.

The volunteer movement in Ukraine during this period is an example of an effective form of self-organization of citizens. It has united people who selflessly worked on solving tasks, were emotionally involved, and gave priority to socially significant affairs. For many volunteers during the period of active military operations in the East of Ukraine volunteering became the main place of work, their life changed radically, well-established value system broke up, the war became part of their everyday existence. All these factors have affected the psycho-emotional state of volunteers and the characteristics of their marital relationships, especially in families where only one person from the married couple was engaged in active volunteering.

Problem challenge. The impact of volunteering on relationships within the family and the family well-being of volunteers do not often fall into the field of view of researchers. Many researchers focus on the specifics of the impact of volunteering on the related aspects of personality: mental and physical health, subjective well-being, social integration, (Binder, 2014), (Stukas, Hoye, Nicholson, 2014), (Piliavin & Siegl, 2015), (Raposa, Laws, & Ansell, 2015), (Tabassum, Mohan, and Smith, 2016), (Wilson and others, 2016), (Whillans, Seider, Chen and others, 2016). Features of marital relations and family well-being of volunteers who work in extreme conditions, in particular in the zone of

military conflicts, remain insufficiently studied, which prompted us to conduct our own research.

The purpose of the article is to identify the features of marital relations and psycho-emotional state of volunteers, who provided assistance to combatants and civilians in the war zone, and to analyze the factors that determine the features of volunteers' family well-being.

Theory

Analysis of recent research and publications. Research by J.A. Piliavin and E. Siegl demonstrated the positive impact of volunteering on the psychological state (reduced depression, increased positive mood), increased physical activity, improved self-reported health (Piliavin and Siegl, 2015, 450–464).

Martin Binder notes that volunteering has a positive impact on life satisfaction and mental well-being, which may be regarded as support for the statements that volunteering can play a protective role for individuals and increase their subjective estimation of their own well-being compensating the other unsatisfactory living conditions. (Binder, 2014, 874–885).

In a study by Whillans, Seider, Chen, and others it had been shown that volunteering can have long-term benefits for well-being promoting social relationships, encouraging a sense of competence and performance, and protecting against the negative effects of stress (Whillans, Seider, Chen, Dwyer, Novick and others, 2016, 35–50).

Some studies also note the positive impact of volunteering on family welfare and marital relationships. So Marie Hartwell-Walker notes that volunteering, which involves the whole family, expands opportunities for communication and gives a sense of satisfaction with working together that strengthens and deepens family relationships (Hartwell-Walker, 2018).

Among the benefits of volunteering for family relationships are also the strengthening of a common value system, increased satisfaction with family relationships, and pride for family members. Volunteers' children note that they value and respect their parents more by seeing how they care for the community, and they tend to perceive their brothers and sisters who are involved in volunteering as role models (Littlepage, Obergfell, Zanin, 2003, p.2–3).

Are the results of such research focused on “civil” benefits of volunteering activity relevant to the volunteer movement in Ukraine associated with activities in the context of military aggression? The positive impact of volunteering on the individual and his interpersonal relationships, which was observed in these studies, manifested itself in the situation of stability, the usual course of events when volunteering enriches life with additional

senses and is carried out not under the pressure of circumstances. The activity of Ukrainian volunteers during the specified period was exercised under the pressure of external circumstances, the military action dictated requests and related tasks for volunteers. Such activity could not be postponed, it was often difficult to delegate. This activity was sometimes psycho-traumatic and even risky and was comparable with activity in extreme conditions or in actual military service.

The study of volunteering in extreme conditions indicates not so much the positive but the negative effects of such activity on physical and emotional health. For example, the study of 506 Indonesian Red Cross volunteers working in an earthquake setting showed that even 18 months after the disaster they had high levels of PTSD symptoms and subjective health complaints (Thormar, Gersons, Juen, Djakababa, Karlsson, Olff, 2014).

Sigridour Bjork Tormar had analyzed 9 studies of volunteers who worked in extreme conditions (earthquakes, explosions, aviation disasters, tsunami and bus accidents) and she found that volunteers which are involved in overcoming the consequences of such events had higher risks of deteriorating emotional and psychophysical conditions than those of professionals (rescuers, firefighters, law enforcement officers) (Thormar, 2015, 45–79).

The main negative effects of volunteering in extreme conditions are associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, losses of resources, sleep disorders, etc. These manifestations are intensified in the case of volunteers identifying themselves with the victims and depending on the degree of catastrophic events and the availability of special support after the disaster. At the same time, there was no significant difference in the intensity of the manifestations of PTSD symptoms between the victims of the disaster and those who came to work on the elimination of the disaster from the outside as volunteers (Thormar, 2015, 113–139).

We can also track the negative effects of volunteer work in extreme conditions on the well-being of their families.

Sean Cowlshaw, Lynette Evans, and Jim McLennan studied relationships in 102 couples, in which one partner was an Australian emergency services volunteer-firefighter. They found that the level of emotional involvement of volunteer-firefighters, the manifestations of the post-traumatic syndrome, and time-based investments (the need for volunteers to spend several hours of training or call trips during the fire season) have led to a higher level of conflict in such families, burnout and lack of support from partners. More than half of the study participants showed increased levels of anxiety, sleep disturbances. Volunteers' marital partners experienced difficulties associated with additional housework,

dissatisfaction with the frequent change in family plans, and the absence of family-friendly events, 35% of them were convinced that for their marriage partners the family has a lower priority than volunteering (Cowlshaw, Evans and McLennan, 2010, 169–178).

Sally Duckworth and Jaci Sinko, who studied the relationships of the families of volunteers-firefighting in New Zealand, obtained similar data. Although researchers noted the positive impact of volunteer activity on the family (a sense of pride, community status, and expansion of social relationships), the negative effects still took place. Volunteer families experience constant tension, uncertainty due to the frequent challenges for volunteers. It affected the physical and emotional health of marriage partners of volunteers, as well as welfare and mobility. It also affected the financial conditions of their families. Families with young children, low-income families, families of volunteers of the first year of service, and those who hold high or specialized roles have been especially vulnerable to negative consequences (Duckworth and Sinko, 2017, 5).

The destructive nature of volunteering in extreme conditions affects the relationships of volunteers with their marital partners. When volunteers experience stress and trauma, it affects their mood and behavior at home. Volunteers can be quiet, distracted, abusive, or annoying after a critical incident, and this causes tension at home. Some partners feel that volunteering is always in the first place, and the family is always in second place, which hinders their relationship. Partners in such situations often feel guilty, accumulate mutual grievances. Also, the unfinished or postponed due to volunteering activity housework or family obligations can be perceived as an irritating factor (Duckworth and Sinko, 2017, 12–16).

The situation in the families of Ukrainian volunteers can be compared not only with the experience of families of volunteers who work in extreme conditions but also with the experience of families of servicemen. Particularly similar is the experience not of the military personnel who serve directly in the combat zone, but of the military or law enforcement officers who serve for a limited period (for example, in Ukraine such are guardsmen of the National Guard who serve for 2–3 months on the 2nd, 3rd line of defense).

The study of the peculiarities of the functioning of families of such servicemen in Ukraine, which Didyk N.F. conducted, have revealed the following problems: increased anxiety (fear of the health and life of a marriage partner, the experience of atypical emotional and behavioral manifestations of children), fatigue due to an increase of the household problems and worries, the tensions in communication between spouses due to mutual unreasonable expectations in emotional support, the distrust and

conflicts, isolation and alienation of a man upon returning home, coldness in relations between father and child; failures of intimate relationships, lack of time for leisure with the family between military tasks.

Consequences of emotional tensions, combat stress, PTSD symptoms cause servicemen to relinquish their loved ones in order not to harm them; they often avoid the manifestation of emotions in the presence of relatives; detach from household matters, feel unnecessary (Didyk, 2017, 41–57).

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the problem. The theoretical review we conducted showed that the volunteer activity of one of the spouses could influence on the psycho-emotional state of the volunteer and his relationship with the family. This influence can have positive effects (improving the psycho-emotional state, self-esteem, subjective well-being of the volunteer, having a sense of pride for this person by family members, strengthening family values, mutual support), and be associated with certain negative consequences. Among them are the following: socio-psychological discomfort in the family, specific stresses caused by direct or indirect involvement of the family in certain extreme circumstances of volunteer life, socio-economic difficulties, communicative, emotional, and socially adaptive issues (limited communication, absence of systematic rest, etc.). If the character and direction of volunteering are associated with dangerous conditions (war zone, natural disaster, occupation zone), this leads to increased tension in the family due to constant experiences and fears for the partner.

Particularly distinctly, such tendencies could occur in families of volunteers who helped the military units during the active phase of the military confrontation in the East of Ukraine (2014–2016). During this period, volunteering activity was mostly aimed at helping the front: these were tasks that demanded urgent solutions, continuous efforts, full commitment. The unusual, dramatic nature of the events contributed to the deep emotional participation of volunteers, they experienced the front-line incidents as much as the military themselves. Family life, which was far from military events, could have fallen out of the focus of priority tasks; there was a rapid reevaluation of values that could not properly affect the welfare of the family.

We hope that our research will help to refine the understanding of the impact of volunteering aimed at helping combatants and civilians in the war zone, on volunteers' family relationships, and identify factors that most significantly affect the family well-being of volunteers.

Methodology

Based on the results of the theoretical review of the influence of volunteer activity on the psycho-emotional state of volunteers and their

relationships with spouses, we have put forward a number of hypotheses regarding the main factors that could affect the family well-being of participants of the volunteer movement 2014–2016, which include: gender of the volunteer, experience, and orientation of volunteer activity, degree of emotional involvement, support/absence of support of a spouse, etc. These factors, in our opinion, could significantly influence such aspects of married life as satisfaction with marriage and spouse, the character of communication in the family, psycho-emotional state of the volunteer, and overall emotional background in the family.

The purpose of the empirical study was to identify the socio-psychological characteristics of marital relationships in the families of participants of the Ukrainian volunteer movement during the most acute phase of military confrontation in the East of Ukraine.

The objectives of the empirical phase of the study were:

- a. Carrying out a pilot study to specify the problem.
- b. Selection of techniques to study the problems identified.
- c. Selection of respondents who were actively involved in volunteer activities during the period 2014–2016.
- d. Conducting a basic study aimed at identifying the main socio-psychological characteristics of marital relationships in volunteer families.
- e. Processing and interpreting the results of the study to identify major factors that can significantly affect the family well-being of volunteers, including the development of a crisis of married life.

Methods. To identify the socio-psychological characteristics of marital relationships in the families of volunteers, we used such methods: in-depth interview, Questionnaire “Spouses’ Responses to Conflict” (Kocharyan, Kocharyan, Kyrychuk), Questionnaire “Understanding, Emotional attraction, Authority” (Volkova), test/questionnaire of marriage satisfaction (Stolin, Romanova, & Butenko).

The questionnaire “Spouses’ Responses to Conflict” (Kocharyan, Kocharyan, Kyrychuk) was developed for the diagnosis of individually specific protective models of spouses and their structure. The questionnaire includes scales of protective and defensive behavior, non-constructive attitudes for marriage, depression, aggression, somatization of anxiety, fixation on psychological trauma, control scale. The technique does not involve the participation of a couple and has a female and male version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire contains 89 questions. In our study, the questionnaire was used to diagnose the individual reactions of volunteers who are experiencing certain crisis conditions in married life. In calculating the results, special attention was paid to the respondents who divorced during the period of active volunteer activity, as well as to

groups of respondents whom we conditionally attributed to the risk group (active participation in volunteer movement for a long time, a high degree of emotional involvement in volunteering, lack of support from the family).

The Questionnaire “Understanding, Emotional attraction, Authority” (Volkova) is designed to assess the degree of understanding, emotional attractiveness, and respect of partners in marriage. The questionnaire consists of 45 statements regarding relationships between married partners. The questionnaire contains three scales. The Comprehension Scale assesses the subjective vision of the partner’s personality, the ability to evaluate his feelings, knowledge of his individual characteristics. The Emotional attraction scale evaluates the attractiveness of a partner, the desire to communicate. The Authority (Respect) scale is an indicator of how much a partner is accepted as a personality, how much a subject shares his / her worldview, interests, thoughts, and accepts them as a standard. In our study, the questionnaire allowed us to assess the degree of understanding, emotional attractiveness, and authority of a partner in volunteer families during the study period or in the last months of their married life in the event of divorce.

The test/questionnaire of marriage satisfaction (Stolin, Romanova, & Butenko) is intended to express diagnostics of the attitudes to one’s own marriage. In designing the questionnaire, the authors suggested that subjective satisfaction / dissatisfaction with marriage is, by its nature, a generalized emotion, a generalized experience, rather than the consequence of rationally evaluating the success of marriage on certain parameters. The questionnaire has a one-dimensional scale consisting of 24 statements pertaining to different spheres: self and partner perception, thoughts, attitudes, etc. In our study, volunteers used the questionnaire to subjectively assess satisfaction with marriage (the last months of marriage in the case of divorce) during active volunteer activity.

The study was conducted in the form of face-to-face and distance surveys of members of volunteer associations, communities, and within closed volunteer groups.

The sample was 119 people from different regions of Ukraine took part in the main research phase. The study did not include a survey of married couples and was aimed at revealing personal experiences and evaluations of marriage and marriage partners by participants of the volunteer movement. The majority of the study participants consisted of individuals aged 35 to 45 years (45%), aged 45 to 55 years (29%), and aged 25 to 35 years (22%).

The majority of the study participants (79.83%) started volunteering since 2014 and continued to do so at the time of the study, another 19.32%, volunteered exclusively in the period of active hostilities in the East of

Ukraine in 2014–2016. Episodic assistance to military or civilians affected by military conflict was provided by 22.69% of respondents, the largest proportion of respondents (57.98%) provided systematic assistance; for 19.33% of the respondents volunteering became the main form of activity (they created their own NGO or charitable organizations). 21.01% of respondents went to the war zone to support militaries and local residents up to 10 times, and 33.61% of volunteers made such trips more than 10 times.

Procedure. The empirical study was conducted in three stages.

Stage I – was a pilot study, which was conducted in the form of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with several active members of the volunteer movement and allowed us to specify the directions of the basic research. To identify factors that could affect the nature of marital relationships in volunteer families, we developed a Volunteer Questionnaire at the main stage of the study, which contained standard questions about age and gender; questions that characterize the volunteer's family (family age, family composition, changes in marital status, and family composition since the outbreak of hostilities in the East of Ukraine); a block of questions to characterize the nature of the volunteer activity of the respondents (experience, the direction of volunteer activity, communication with the area of combat, the degree of emotional involvement).

Stage II – the main study, which involved a survey of volunteers who have given personal consent and pre-processing of the received data.

Stage III – was the analysis of empirical data. Analysis of the results was carried out using data processing in SPSS. We used different procedures of the distribution by certain variables (to select and compare groups with different socio-demographic characteristics, and the features of volunteer activity), correlation analysis (finding a connection between the indications in marital life and the features of volunteer activity), t-test (to find a difference in marital relations between certain groups of volunteers), simple and multiple linear regression analyzes for a deeper study of the causes of crisis and conflict situations in volunteer families.

Results

Basing on the data processing and analysis of the research results of social and psychological characteristics of marital relations in the families of participants of the Ukrainian volunteer movement in 2014–2016 years, we can present a generalized picture of the family well-being of volunteers in a certain period, as well as present significant correlations between individual psychological indicators in marital relationships of volunteers, and the features of their volunteer activities.

A pilot study was conducted to clarify the problem and to identify a tendency for changes in the family life of volunteers who were active during the acute phase of military confrontation in the East of Ukraine. The survey included 50 respondents of both sexes, ages 29 to 58, from different regions of Ukraine. The researchers were asked to answer a series of questions regarding their demographic characteristics, the type of their volunteer activities, the duration of their marriage, and the changes that have taken place in their married life since 2014.

Most of the respondents started their volunteer work in 2014 and continued to be involved in public affairs at the time of the survey. Almost half of the volunteer activity was related to visiting the war zone (28% of the volunteers interviewed went to the war zone more than 15 times, 16% up to 15 times); 56% of respondents assisted the military, their families, or internally displaced persons in their place of residence. 84% of the volunteers were married at the time of the start of the hostilities. At the time of the pilot study, the matrimony of 24% of volunteers had broken up and another 18% noted that marital relations had deteriorated or become strained.

In-depth interviews conducted with several participants in the pilot study showed that volunteers, especially those who carried out systematic volunteer activity and went to the war zone, showed increased sensitivity and tendency to emotional burnout, felt reducing partner support towards continuing to volunteering, misunderstanding of the expediency of such activity. Some of the respondents noted an increase of tension in the family relationships, alienation, and an increase in the frequency of conflicts. Volunteers noted that the main conflicting factors in the family are the mismatch in the value priorities between the volunteer and his or her partner (for example, the feeling that the duty to the mission is more important than caring for the family), lack of support from the partner, and forced distance from solving family problems and everyday housework.

The pilot study showed a tendency of deterioration of family relations among volunteers who had carried out long-term volunteer activities during the acute phase of military confrontation in the East of Ukraine. The factors that potentially influenced the psycho-emotional state of the volunteers and their family well-being were investigated more details during the main phase of the study, conducted jointly with the graduate student of the Psychology Department G. Mykhalchuk during 2017–2018.

The Volunteer Questionnaire data allowed to separate for the analysis the families with different dynamics of marital relations during the involvement of one (both) married partners in volunteer activity in the active phase of military confrontation (marriage did not break up / marriage

broke up; marital relations worsened / stay mature / improve) and to find the relationship between the features of marriage and the following factors:

- the subject of volunteer activity: husband / wife / family in general;
- direction of volunteer activity: related to military activities (assistance to the military in the war zone, wounded, search and identification of the killed military, etc.) / related to the social consequences of the military action (assistance to the displaced persons, families of the military, residents of the zone of demarcation, etc.);
- intensity of volunteer activity: episodic nature of volunteer activity / permanent nature of volunteer activity while maintaining the main professional activity / volunteering as the main activity;
- degree of involvement in volunteer activity: weak emotional level of involvement / high level of emotional involvement (personal acquaintances with the wards, constant communication with them, the empathy of events on the front line; visits the war zone, etc.).

The overall analysis of the data revealed the following results.

We found a tendency of decreasing the satisfaction with marriage and the indicators of evaluation of marital partners by volunteers who were actively engaged in public affairs during the most acute phase of hostilities in eastern Ukraine. At the beginning of hostilities, 81% of respondents were married. The majority of respondents were persons who have mature marriages: 10–17 years of married life – 32%, 17–25 years – 20%, 7–10 years – 14%, 3–7 years – 11%, more than 25 years – 11%. In 65% of the volunteers interviewed at the stage of the basic study, the marital status has not changed, 19% – have divorced. A significant percentage of dissatisfied with the marriage was also found among volunteers whose marital status has not changed (15% are not satisfied with the marriage they are in, another 24% have shown average satisfaction with the marriage). Multiple linear regression analysis demonstrated the relationship between volunteer activity related to hostilities with non-constructive attitudes for marriage and decreased levels of marriage satisfaction.

We found a moderate and weak positive relationship between changes in volunteer marital status since 2014 and indicators of marital satisfaction ($r = 0.389$) and ratings of relationships with a spouse on the scale of the Authority ($r = 0.381$), Understanding ($r = 0.183$), and Emotional attraction ($r = 0.287$). Further one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant difference in the indicators of marriage satisfaction in terms of the dynamics of marital status of the respondents ($F = 9.94$; $p = 0.000$), in indicators on the scale of Understanding ($F = 3.07$; $p = 0.031$), Authority ($F = 9.89$; $p = 0.000$) and Emotional attraction ($F = 5.95$; $p = 0.001$). We also found a weak and inversely proportional statistically significant

correlation between the intensity of volunteer activity and satisfaction with marriage ($r = -0.182$).

The lowest level of marriage satisfaction was found among those volunteers who eventually have divorced (according to the study, they evaluated their relationship in the last months of their marriage). Their marriage satisfaction averaged 23.56 points, this indicator correlates with a family disadvantage. Divorced volunteers showed the lowest levels of understanding of the partner, they were inclined to record mutual misunderstandings in the relationship, lack of a clear picture of the partner's personality, difficulty in interpreting, explaining the partner's thoughts, feelings, and actions. They also rated the partner's authority the lowest, and this indicates a loss of respect and a tendency to accept the partner as a benchmark. Divorced volunteers had low indicators on evaluating the emotional attractiveness of a partner, indicating difficulty in communicating with partners, feeling the tiredness of each other. Equivalent rates are also observed in 15% of volunteers whose family status has not changed.

Non-constructive marriage attitudes among all volunteers who participated in the study were generally average. Such attitudes are clearly evident in 72% of volunteers whose marriages were eventually broken up, and about 11% of those who remain married also show fairly high indicators on this scale.

Among the study participants whose families eventually have broken up, the majority were volunteer women (89%) of middle age (84% – 35–55 years). Obviously intensive volunteer activity of wives for a long time, with a forced distance from family affairs, is a significant factor in reducing the level of family well-being. Divorced respondents are the most active part of the volunteer community (94% have been involved in volunteering since 2014 and up to the current time, 67% were engaged in such activity systematically, 16% were NGO leaders). Such volunteers are most emotionally involved in their work, 61% of them have extensive personal contacts with those they help (they met with them personally, maintain constant contact, empathize with them). Their activities are fraught with tension and risk, they have repeated visits to the war zone (56% have made 10 or more such trips).

For the most active part of the volunteer community, whose marriage satisfaction was lowest, or whose marriages eventually have broken up, the lowest indicators in the rating of a married partner on the Authority scale are inherent. Obviously, their own active life position was not consistent with the position and values of the partner, which led to a decrease in respect for him (or her) as a person. Alienation, misunderstandings about

the redistribution of family roles and responsibilities, the grievances accumulated over a long period of volunteer activity by one of the family members are correlated with the low indicators of the spouse on the scale of Emotional Attraction inherent in such families.

It is significant that divorced respondents had the lowest rate of the family support (28% of families did not support volunteers in their activities at all, 72% provided occasional assistance only, while 61% of the constant family provided occasional or systematic assistance for the volunteer, and in 18% of cases it became a family affair).

It is interesting that the volunteers who participated in the study, and especially those who eventually divorced, were characterized by defensive mechanisms in response to marital conflicts related to distortions of reinterpretation of events leading to conflict situations, evasive or passive defensive positions (the moderate inversely proportional statistically significant relationship between dynamics of marital status and indicators on the scale Defensive – 0.364)).

Also we compared the characteristics of marital relationships in volunteer families with different involvement of family members in volunteering.

For most of the respondents, their families did not participate in their volunteer activities or provided only occasional assistance (71.43% of cases), volunteering became a family affair only in 15.97% of cases.

We found a weak and positive statistically significant relationship between family members' engagement in volunteer activity and the Understanding scale ($r = 0.230$), Emotional attraction ($r = 0.303$), and we also found a moderate positive statistically significant relationship with marriage satisfaction ($r = 0.372$). One-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in families with varying degrees of involvement of family members in volunteer activity with a marriage satisfaction ($F = 6.56$; $p = 0.000$), Understanding scale ($F = 3.31$; $p = 0.023$), and Emotional attraction ($F = 4.09$; $p = 0.009$). We found that the highest average indicators of marriage satisfaction were among those who actively volunteer with relatives and the lowest among those who volunteer without family support. The highest mean indicators on the scale of Understanding and Emotional attraction were found in those who actively volunteered together with relatives and the lowest in those who were not supported by the family.

In the context of the features of volunteer activity, we found a weak negative relationship between the indicators on the scale of Fixation of anxiety and the indicator of involvement in volunteering ($r = -0.198$) and a moderate negative relationship between the Depression Scale ($r = -0.340$)

among those actively involved in volunteering. Further one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in the Depression Scale in terms of frequency of trips to the war zone ($F = 4.67$; $p = 0.004$). Thus, active volunteering in a difficult period for the country helped reduce depression and negative emotional expression among the study participants.

All respondents were characterized by sufficiently high rates of somatization of anxiety (about 11% had high indicators, about 70% had average). This indicator is higher among divorced volunteers and those who have demonstrated high activity and intensity of volunteer activity. One-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in indicators of Somatization of anxiety in terms of the intensity of volunteer activity ($F = 2.62$; $p = 0.05$): somatic manifestations were higher among those respondents who carried out the most intensive volunteer activities and more involved their family members.

Discussion

This study demonstrated that volunteer activities aimed to help civilians and combatants in a war zone can significantly affect married life, family well-being, and the psycho-emotional state of volunteers. Volunteers who are intensively involved in such activities are at risk of certain difficulties in marriage partners relations (the emergence of mutual misunderstandings, reducing the emotional attraction and the authority of the marriage partner, not involved in volunteering, decrease in overall satisfaction with marriage). Such results are generally correlated with studies related to the impact of volunteering in extreme conditions on family well-being, in particular with the study of family relationships of volunteer firefighters (Cowlshaw, Evans and McLennan, 2010), (Duckworth and Sinko, 2017). It is noteworthy that in previous studies, the respondents were mostly men, while we found that the biggest family problems arose where women were active in volunteering. This raises an interesting question about the impact of gender on volunteers' family well-being.

Our results showed that the risk of family relationships deteriorating is significantly lower in families where family members have actively supported the volunteer, or where volunteering has become a family affair. Such results correlate with a number of other studies, including the Marie Hartwell-Walker study (Hartwell-Walker, 2018).

We found that the nature of the problems that may arise in the families of volunteers who have assisted servicemen and civilians in a military conflict zone is similar to the problems in the families of volunteers working in extreme conditions, as well as in the families of the combatants (Didyk, 2017).

The issue of the psycho-emotional state of volunteers whose activities are related to military conflicts is also debatable. On the one hand, such volunteers are at risk of deteriorating emotional and psychophysical condition. This pattern is highlighted in studies of volunteering in extreme conditions (Thormar, 2015). Psychosomatization of anxiety was the most pronounced trend for our respondents. On the other hand, research has shown that active volunteering, even at risk, can reduce depression and suppress negative emotions. In this context, the results of our study are consistent with other studies (Binder, 2014), (Piliavin & Siegl, 2015), (Wilson and other, 2016), (Whillans, Seider, Chen, Dwyer, Novick and other, 2017). Obviously, the impact of such volunteering on the psycho-emotional state of volunteers still needs to be studied in detail.

Conclusions

The results of the study showed a significant impact of volunteer activity on the family well-being of volunteers, which can affect the level of marital satisfaction, emotional attraction, mutual understanding, and under certain circumstances, can lead to family conflicts and even divorce. Volunteers whose activities are associated with extreme conditions, changes in the established course of events, high levels of emotional involvement, systemic and long-term involvement are in a particular risk group.

Volunteers who assisted the Ukrainian military and the victims of the hostilities in the period of the most acute confrontation in the East of Ukraine (2014–2016) were at risk group according to all of these indicators. Therefore, the results of the study of their psycho-emotional state and the family's well-being proved to be comparable to the hypotheses. Many respondents had low rates of marriage satisfaction, decreased levels of emotional attraction, mutual understanding, and respect for a partner. The marriages of every fifth volunteer who participated in the study have broken up. The most vulnerable to the problems in family relationships were women-volunteers, respondents with high activity and intensity of volunteering, high emotional involvement, as well as those who did not have family support.

Recently, significant efforts of the state and the professional psychological community in Ukraine have been directed at supporting combatants and their families. However, as our research has shown, volunteers working with the military and the victims of the hostilities as well as volunteer families need the same attention and support.

Prospects for further research are detailing ideas about the impact of the coherence of values and social roles in the families of volunteers on

their family well-being, a more detailed study of the features of family communication and interaction, which will allow developing effective target programs of psychological support for volunteer families in times of crisis, including programs aimed at harmonizing family relationships, prevention of somatic disorders, distress, overcoming social and psychological discomfort.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Abstract

Klymenko I. V.,

PhD (Candidate of Psychological Sciences),
Associate Professor (docent) of
Social Psychology Department,
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
E-mail: ivklymenko251@gmail.com

THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING AIMED AT HELPING THE COMBATANTS AND VICTIMS OF THE WAR, ON VOLUNTEERS' FAMILY WELL-BEING

In the article, we have analyzed the information that concerns the potential impact of volunteer activity on the psycho-emotional state and the family well-being of volunteers, in particular those who carry out their activities in extreme conditions.

We have analyzed the peculiarities of the activities of Ukrainian volunteers who assisted the combatants and victims of the war during the most fierce military confrontation in the East of Ukraine in 2014–2016 and found that their activities could have a negative impact on the socio-psychological climate and the functioning of their families due to prolonged, tensional, emotionally intense and sometimes risky nature of activities.

We have researched the peculiarities of matrimonial relationship and some indicators of family well-being (level of satisfaction with marriage and marriage partner, peculiarities of communication, readiness for interaction, level of mutual respect and emotional attraction) in the families of active participants of the volunteer movement, who directed their efforts to assist the military and civilian during a period of active military confrontation.

We have analyzed the correlation between the family well-being of volunteers and the peculiarities of their activities. Particular attention was paid to the analysis of the specifics of activities and relationships with marital partners for volunteers whose families eventually have broken up (every fifth of studied participants have experienced a divorce during active engagement in volunteering).

The indicators of the psycho-emotional status of volunteers (fixation and somatization of anxiety, depression) were also analyzed.

We have identified a number of factors that can negatively affect the family well-being and the psycho-emotional state of volunteers who

operate in conditions of military confrontation, in particular the intensity and duration of volunteering activity, significant personal responsibility, high emotional involvement, lack of support from family members.

Key words: *volunteering, volunteers, family well-being, marital relations, military confrontation.*



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