

# EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN VOLUNTEERING, WELLBEING, AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: THE ROLE OF NGOS AND WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMS

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## Abstract

This abstract summarizes recent research on the benefits of volunteering, particularly for students, and highlights its potential positive impact on personal development, skill improvement, and social and psychological well-being. The aim of the study is to show how volunteering can help students develop practical skills, a sense of commitment to social transformation, and a deeper understanding of social issues. The method involves collecting data from students, teachers, and social organizations to evaluate the learning process and the impact of volunteering. The results indicate that volunteering can provide individuals with a sense of purpose, meaning, and social connection, and contribute to their personal and professional growth. The important features of the study include the practical benefits of experiential learning, the value of applying knowledge in a real-world context, and the potential positive impact on personal and social well-being. The original value of the study lies in its emphasis on the potential benefits of volunteering, particularly for students, and its call for further research to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of volunteering. The conclusion encourages incorporating learning programs linked to volunteering for promoting personal growth, social responsibility, and well-being.

**Keywords:** Volunteering, qualitative research, work placement programs, social responsibility, social well-being.

## I. Introduction

The university is adapting to changes with the creation of the European Higher Education Area, resulting in universities developing open, flexible, and decentralized curriculums (García & Veiga, 2015) to meet society's demands. Cívico-Ariza et al. (2020) found positive results in volunteering, which students should consider as an aid that depends on social, professional, and personal

motivations. Since youth employability is becoming an emerging issue, many countries are adopting mechanisms to improve their employability (Brooks & Youngson, 2016). In recent years, there has been increased awareness of volunteering due to the low rate of youth employability. Charities are providing young people with volunteering opportunities to develop vital skills that enhance their career aspirations (Evans & Yusof, 2023). Employability is more

than just getting a job, it is an opportunity to gain skills and characteristics that enable one to succeed in a job (Matsouka & Mihail, 2016).

Social entrepreneurship is becoming a means of change and a possible response to emerging challenges in the political-social sphere, which should be incorporated into the educational space for the construction of critical citizenship (López-Rodríguez, 2017). The university sector has neglected the voluntary sector; thus, university degrees should promote this activity, offer students opportunities to work with different charities, and improve their training (Simon, 2019). The existing literature shows that the ethical dimension of the profession, reflective exercises, pedagogical structures, and reflective experiences all promote the development of practical thinking (Zayas et al., 2019; Lobanova, 2020). Universities and businesses should create links and partnerships to stimulate employability (Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016). This practice can be beneficial as a source of study, where students can apply what they have learned from their disciplines in commercial enterprises and put case examples into practice (Ferns et al., 2019).

Volunteering has been recognized as a valuable activity that can positively impact both the individual and the community. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in exploring the link between volunteering and wellbeing, as well as the role of NGOs and work placement in facilitating this connection.

According to a study by Han et al. (2019), volunteering can have a significant impact on one's subjective wellbeing, especially in terms of increasing happiness and life satisfaction. Furthermore, they found that the relationship between volunteering and wellbeing is mediated by the sense of social connectedness that volunteers experience.

This sense of social connectedness is also emphasized by Daly et al. (2021) who argue that volunteering can lead to the development of a sense of purpose and belonging, which in turn can contribute to greater wellbeing. They suggest that NGOs can play an important role in fostering this sense of purpose and belonging by providing volunteers with opportunities to engage in

meaningful activities that align with their values and interests.

Work placement is another context in which volunteering can be facilitated (Forret & Love, 2008; Sornsri & Zhu, 2019). They argue that work placement programs that incorporate volunteering opportunities can have a positive impact on both the individual's personal and professional development. They suggest that such programs can help individuals develop skills and competencies that are valued in the workplace, such as teamwork, communication, and leadership, while also providing opportunities for personal growth and self-discovery.

The link between positive psychology and volunteering is also explored by Wray-Lake et al. (2019) who suggest that volunteering can enhance one's sense of personal growth, autonomy, and self-esteem. They argue that these outcomes are consistent with the principles of positive psychology, which emphasizes the importance of focusing on one's strengths and values, and cultivating positive emotions and relationships.

Overall, these authors highlight the important role that volunteering, NGOs, and work placement programs can play in promoting wellbeing and personal development. By providing opportunities for social connectedness, purpose and belonging, personal growth, and skill development, these activities can contribute to a more fulfilling and satisfying life.

Volunteering, as understood by Holdsworth and Brewis (2013), is an opportunity for young volunteers to achieve individual and social transformation by developing skills, improving employability, or contributing to social good. It can be used as a methodology based on action, social commitment, and values, providing a connection between students and society (Gil-Gómez et al., 2016), as well as a model for improving the educational quality of students (Camilli et al., 2022). It establishes a web of collaborative networks between the university and social organizations, seeking both academic and civic training (Páez & Puig, 2013). Volunteering aims to help young people face daily challenges and is motivated by altruistic values, allowing them to acquire skills and improve employability

(Bocsi et al., 2017; Holdsworth & Brewis, 2013; Pantea, 2013). The paper's main objective is to view volunteering as a response to reshape individuals' lives, gaining clarity on the benefits of volunteering for the personal and professional lives of participants (Jardim & Marques da Silva, 2017).

Participation in volunteering is increasingly seen as a way to develop professional competencies and gain valuable experience that can enhance future job prospects (Granziera et al., 2022). As Castelló (2013) argues, Social Education offers a new way of doing things, emphasizing a methodology and sensitivity to interpret and understand social issues, as well as specialization in competencies related to monitoring, proximity, communication, and mediation (p. 33).

Volunteering benefits both society and individuals by helping them better understand themselves and their place in the world. To be a volunteer, one must dedicate their time freely and without profit, with the collective being the ultimate beneficiary of their efforts (Roszkowski et al., 2014). It is important to continue working with the student community to strengthen the link between volunteering and the university (Maran et al., 2009). Creating spaces where the university community can promote voluntary activity with greater awareness and social responsibility, while also acquiring competencies linked to the community (Tejada, 2013), is essential.

According to González-Anleo and López-Ruiz (2017), the level of education influences participation in volunteer activities, with a large number of students participating and reflecting a strong interest in volunteering. Krstikj et al. (2021) introduce volunteering as a teaching innovation practice where students learn in contexts of real need, such as disadvantaged communities where our project has been developed. This approach helps students acquire social awareness and reinforces their sense of solidarity and social responsibility.

Based on the literature cited above, it is clear that volunteering can have significant benefits for students in terms of practical skill development, personal growth, and a sense of commitment to social transformation. Therefore, the aim of our

study is to explore these benefits in more detail and provide a deeper understanding of the ways in which volunteering can contribute to personal and professional development. By doing so, we hope to encourage more students to engage in volunteer activities and promote the use of service-learning programs as a means of enhancing student learning and social impact.

## 2. Method

This study is an interview-based research using qualitative methods and an ex post facto design, with a descriptive and cross-sectional approach.

### 2.1. Sample

The sample used in this study was intentional and non-probabilistic, focused on meeting the needs of participants. Therefore, the sample consisted of ten individuals holding management positions in different non-governmental or non-profit organizations that carry out socially impactful activities. These NGOs include volunteering programs, which is a collaborative activity that allows educators and those interested in assisting socially excluded individuals to put their theory into practice.

The purpose of this study is to help students understand the social responsibility involved in serving the community of Melilla, a Spanish city located in North Africa known for its cultural diversity. The participating centers have an agreement with the Faculty of Education and Sport Sciences of Melilla (University of Granada), and are institutions and centers within the Autonomous City of Melilla that are relevant to the objectives of these integrated internships. All participants provided informed consent before taking part in the study, which was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and with the approval of the Social Responsibility Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Sport Sciences of the Melilla Campus. The research is part of the Training and Teaching Innovation Plan (FIDO) project by the Quality, Innovation, and Foresight Unit of the UGR.

These centers can be grouped according to their characteristics and the bodies on which they depend. There are Non-Governmental Organizations (Melilla Acoge, Proyecto ALFA, Proyecto Hombre, Asociación Melillense de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (Amlega), Cruz Roja, Autismo Melilla), a Centre for Temporary Stay of Immigrants (CETI) dependent on the Government Delegation and the Consejería de Políticas Sociales, Health and Animal Welfare ("Gota de Leche" Assistance Centre, "Fuerte la Purísima," and "Divina Infantita" Protection Centre for Unaccompanied Minors, the latter managed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)). As can be seen, the diversity of contexts and practical activities allows for a broad vision of the work of the Social Educator for students. This research was conducted through ten governmental organizations, and interviews were conducted with the directors of these associations.

## 2.2. Instruments and/or techniques

The information from the trainee educators was collected through a semi-structured interview created specifically for this study. As the sample was located in a cross-border environment in North Africa, where one of only two land borders between Europe and Morocco is situated, the questions asked in the different NGOs focused on the main objective of the research, which is volunteering as a tool for knowledge and the possibility of future employment (see Table 1 and Appendix 1).

The first 8 questions focused on socio-demographic data. The first category within the data was general knowledge of the centre, which aimed to gather information on the essential and historical characteristics of the NGOs (questions 1-4). The second category, user profile, focused on understanding the actions of the NGOs and the population they serve (questions 5-8). The remaining 11 questions were grouped into two categories: professional profile (questions 9-16) and centre climate (questions 17-19). The interview can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Categorization and interview questions

CATEGORIES	CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA THAT ALLOW US TO KNOW THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NGOS INTERVIEWED.	Location of the center	
		Period of existence of the center	
		Functions performed by the center	
		Organization chart of the center	
		Profile of the population served by the center	
		Evolution of the center	
	USER PROFILE		Socio-economic and socio-cultural level of the target population
			Evolution of the type of population in recent years

INSERTION VOLUNTEERING	AND PROFESSIONAL PROFILE AND OTHERS	Assessment of the professional's profile
		Needs at the personnel level (general and, especially, those who deal with or work on cultural diversity).
		Volunteer profile (training, gender, age, education level, ...).
		Experience and assessment with volunteers in the center/agency/entity.
		Attitudes of the center's professionals in relation to volunteering.
		Attitudes of the center's volunteers in relation to volunteering.
		Actions taken by the center to encourage staff training.
CLIMATE OF THE CENTER/ ORGANIZATION/ ENTITY		Assessment and description of the climate of the center/agency/entity
		Attitudes of professionals, families and users regarding the problem they have had to deal with.
		Attitudes and degree of acceptance of professionals, families and users with respect to policies, programs, actions, actions... related to the issue to be addressed.

To validate the interview, the credibility criterion was used, which involved triangulating information from different sources. The data saturation was also ensured through the review of reports by the interviewees. Transferability was achieved by interviewing all the students in the penultimate year of the studied degree. The criteria of dependence and confirmability (Ruiz-Olabuénaga, 2009; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015) were controlled by external evaluators who provided guidelines for data collection and interpretation, to avoid errors or biases. Nine

experts were involved in the audit, and their consensus was used to evaluate the content validity index of the interview (Galicia et al., 2017). The relevance, appropriateness, and congruence of each question were evaluated using a Likert scale with three values. Questions with a response rate of over 80% and with values centred on "adequate" were considered. The final agreement rate was 91%. The purpose of the interview was to assess knowledge of the importance of volunteering and the possibility of future employment. The interview questions can

be found in Table 1.

### 2.3. Procedure

It is great to hear that the interviews were conducted ethically and with the prior consent of the participants (ethical protocols of the Helsinki Declaration, guaranteeing their anonymity). The duration of each interview was 30-35 minutes. During the interview, the interviewers explained the objectives and purpose of the study and made any necessary clarifications. The interviews were conducted with all interviewees during the years 2021 and 2022.

The content analysis method you have used, where categories were extracted inductively from the transcribed interviews, is a valid commonly used approach (Pereira et al., 2023). It is also important to note the number of categories and codes that were extracted (extracted is 4 and the number of codes is 8 (see table 2)), as this provides an overview of the scope and depth of the analysis. I look forward to hearing more about the perceptions of the NGO managers that were interviewed and the insights gained from the study.

Table 2. Categorization and coding system.

Categories	Category description	Coding system.	Frecuency
1. Characteristics of the NGOs interviewed	Functions and organization chart, history and evolution of the center	Features	8
		Development of the center	6
2. Profile of users	Evolution of the Center	Population served	16
		Professional profile and actions, as well as volunteer profile	
3. Professional profile		Professional Profile	12
		Volunteer Profile	11
		Professional Attitude	10
		Volunteer Attitude	9
4. Center climate	Assessment and description of the climate of the center/organization/entity	Description of the center's climate	10

The interviews were conducted in Spanish and transcribed in the same language using NVivo software (International Qualitative Software

Research (QSR International, 2020)) for data analysis in the latest version of the program. To ensure data reliability, a data triangulation was

performed with three experts in the field, and a fit and concordance study was conducted, resulting in a K=92% agreement. Any codings deemed unacceptable were modified before inclusion in the analysis.

### 3. Results

#### Functions Performed by the Centers:

The functions performed by various centers focus on groups experiencing social exclusion, emphasizing the social function of help and integration for women, children, immigrants continuing their migratory process, sexual diversity, and therapeutic functions for drug addicts, alcoholics, and gambling addicts.

"We perform a social function and cater to women and children at risk of social exclusion" (MI-1D). "When people from third countries arrive here, especially from North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, etc., we provide them with immediate coverage of their basic needs. This includes accommodation, food, clothing, health care, legal and administrative assistance, and educational training for their integration" (CE-1D). "The functions are organized in several projects. The main project with which we were awarded the grant, through which we rent this headquarters, is the Melilla Observatory against LGTBiphobic hatred, which is called OMCEOL" (AM-1D). (AM-1D).

All the centers have qualified staff and a minimum of five people hired up to a maximum of 26. Some of them also have external services in the health, legal, and training areas. They also have volunteers who collaborate in the actions they develop and in their programs and projects.

"Three nuns and two coordinators are the general organizational chart, but apart from that, we also have teachers, integrators, social workers, social educators, and leisure and free-time monitors" (MI-2D). "They have a director, an administrator, and ministry staff to carry out their functions" (CE-2D). "It is organized by a board of directors: the president (general coordination), vice-president (coordinator of members and volunteers), secretary (coordination of education

and health), treasurer (coordinator of the 'Pride of North Africa'), and three members" (LG-2D).

#### Profile of the Population They Serve:

The centers interviewed cater to a population with many difficulties, such as women with children abandoned by their husbands or partners, in a situation of social exclusion, and abused. Another profile they work with are people going through very difficult moments in their lives, problems of uprooting, cultural shock, spatial and personal disorientation, people who have experienced strong processes of violence in their countries, sexual exploitation in the case of women, people treated as slaves because of war, immigrant population, and asylum seekers. One profile to highlight is that of girls who do not know the language or have any kind of education. Many of the users have been used as trafficked immigrants, some of them abandoned by their parents. They are people who come with a significant emotional imbalance. We also highlight the profile of the population that receives harassment and all kinds of LGTBiphobic hate crimes, and the profile of the addiction group, which is not an easy group or with a specifically defined profile, i.e., people of any economic status, gender, with structured and unstructured lives.

"In terms of the origin of the people who come to us, throughout our history, we have had a wide range of backgrounds. We have even had people from 46 different countries in the center" (EC-2P). "They have been immigration traffickers, some of them abandoned, others who have brought them here, in short, they all have a somewhat complicated and complex life. Others have come fleeing from their parents in Morocco" (DI-2P). "There is the LGTBI group in general and the LGTBI asylum seeker group, which is a profile of people seeking international protection" (LG-2P).

#### Evolution of the Characteristics of the Population in Recent Years:

The evolution of the centers has been specific to each center. One of them highlights that fewer and fewer teenage girls are arriving. Young people aged 25 and above have started to arrive at some of the centres, where they work with border women and attend to foster children and families without resources. The evolution of the population

has been seen in the level of education acquired, where the users have learned the language and know how to read and write. The main characteristic of one institution is polyvalence and the ability to adapt, and there has been a shift from individual care to family group care. The institution has also experienced an evolution in its attention to gender issues. The number of women arrivals has increased dramatically, with a tougher migratory profile than that of men, which is why they need psychological and pedagogical attention, workshops on female empowerment, and dealing with situations of gender violence.

One NGO receives most of the young people in need of protection, accompaniment, or to have a test, etc. The more adult population that the association receives arrives with an interest in participating and forming part of the voluntary work. It is a population that wants to provide help rather than receive a service.

In addiction reception centres, the participating population has not undergone any significant evolution as they do not have an exact profile that participates in their programmes. The centres are open to work with anyone who needs it, and it has been noticed that the number of foreign minors participating in their programmes has increased.

"Fewer and fewer young girls are coming, now we are seeing more and more of them, aged 25, 26, 30 and above, and we have worked a lot with women from the border" (IM-1P). "The number of women is also increasing, so we need measures in these cases, because these women may face a much tougher migration process than others. So we need to develop workshops on female empowerment and deal with situations of gender-based violence" (CE-1P). "Over the years, with the increase of unaccompanied foreign minors, this population has become more present in our programs, and we have seen an increase in participation" (MA-1P).

#### Professional and Volunteer Profile:

In the centers where the interviews have been conducted, the workers have the necessary formal training for their contracts. They all emphasize the fact that their employment contracts depend on state subsidies and aid, so hiring depends on the amount available at any given time and is temporary. Only managers are hired on a

permanent basis. However, they offer semi-permanent contracts if the results obtained are adequate and they can continue to maintain programs with demonstrable quality criteria. In the first center, they state that they are not demanding in terms of work experience and they do consider it relevant to hire employees with previous volunteering experience and an official qualification. It should be noted that, regarding the work of social educators, they have qualified teachers.

"We have a social worker who is in charge of all social issues, such as home visits, making files, reports, accompanying both women and children. We also have teachers, all of whom are qualified" (MI-3PP).

Among the staff of the second organization interviewed, there are social workers who try to advise residents on all available resources. The work is done as a team, and when any difficulties are observed, they are referred to the responsible specialist. They have a psychologist who works when subjects have psychological or addiction problems, a social educator and social integrators who make them aware of the resources available at the center. These professionals focus on controlling the cleanliness of the children, coordinating and controlling the assistance in carrying out educational activities. On the other hand, they have teachers for infant and primary education, adult education, and physical education and sports. As in the previous case, the hiring of teachers for social educator functions stands out

"...In this center, it feels like a mini-city where the educational act takes place in all senses: cultural, social, and by being attentive to possible difficulties that may arise and be solved...". (CE-3PP).

However, despite having female professionals on staff, as the users are girls, they rarely have male workers.

"Being a center for girls requires a female profile more than a male one, but there have been some cases where boys have worked. The assessment is very positive." (DI-3PP)

The centers interviewed also stress the importance of management, having five professionals with



diverse job profiles on their staff. The technical profiles are responsible for economic and administrative management, justifying the management of all programs subsidized by the Ministry. The other professionals are program monitors specialized in certain areas. They prioritize experience in a given subject over academic qualifications. They also give priority to hiring people from their group of users.

"You have to balance between needing highly professional people and hiring from the collective to help with labor market insertion problems. If they are not highly professional but are from the collective, we give them priority." (AM-3PP)

In other centers, the work of the social educator revolves around projects and workshops, supported and complemented by psychologists and integrators. They provide center-specific training depending on the actions to be carried out.

"The only thing that is very useful are the projects, the workshops, all that stuff that you say I have done a thousand projects, in the end, we work with that. It is our basis of work - objectives, justification, evaluations, activities, and here we work with that too, workshops, workshops, workshops and more workshops." (PH-3PP)

#### Volunteer profile:

Regarding volunteering, the profile is very diverse, but most NGOs interviewed state that students who participate in social education internships in their centers continue later as volunteers. Volunteers tend to be people with a strong interest in the field. Retirees have also volunteered, participating in a program where they teach residents how to play games like Parcheesi and checkers. The idea is to facilitate an exchange of ideas and experiences between immigrants and the city's native population. Volunteers are usually older relatives of some members who get involved to collaborate. In some cases, they are trained to become volunteers. If hired, priority is given to volunteers who have been trained and are familiar with the center's work.

"The boys and girls who come to do internships in social integration, social education, social worker

and leisure and free time monitor who we take on internships are the ones who stay because once they see our work, they like it and do voluntary work with us." (IM-3PV)"They are given the protocol and are trained as volunteers of the NGO, and once they have passed this training, they can interact alone with the users, always making sure that each volunteer is accompanied by one of our therapists." (PH-3PV)

#### Attitudes of the centre's professionals:

The center's professionals emphasize the importance of teamwork, communication, and shared values for effective development of their work. They believe that it is crucial for all workers to be in sync with each other's values; otherwise, they cannot make progress. They consider volunteers as part of their team and include them in all activities. The professionals view their work as therapeutic, as it makes them more aware of users' lives and appreciate what they have.

Volunteers in this organization are considered colleagues in the team and participate in all activities. Working with vulnerable groups is challenging, but when working in a good team, everything becomes easier, and the results are positive. The professionals require more commitment and activism from volunteers to improve the association, but they also recognize that volunteers cannot be treated like hired employees. Therefore, they consider it necessary to have a contracted staff to carry out projects effectively.

In summary, the center's professionals highlight the importance of teamwork, communication, and shared values for successful work development. They consider volunteers as part of the team and appreciate their hard work. Working with vulnerable groups is challenging, but the professionals find it rewarding to contribute to the improvement and wellbeing of people's lives.

"We have had a bit of everything, but I have to say that most of them walk hand in hand with the centre, i.e. the same values as the other coordinator. (IM-3AP)

"I think that the experience we have had, both the

experience we professionals have had and the experience the volunteers or trainees have had, has always been very positive because when it comes down to it, we integrate the volunteers or trainees into the team, obviously they can do more or they could do less depending on their ability, but in terms of work, they are part of the team". (CE-3AP)

"She was next to me and we both did it, she saw what I was doing, I told her to do this so that she could learn, so that she could see, you know, I know that there are people who, for example in care services, tell them look no, you can leave this care service, I can't, that is, if you really want to learn and want to get involved here for me you will do it". (MA-3AP)

"When everything happens and you see that this person is well and in the end they go out or the children in care, you see them in the street and they greet you. In the end that's what you take home with you and it's worth saying that I'm contributing, even if it's just a little bit, to making these people's lives better" (PH-3AP).

#### Attitudes of the centre's volunteers:

The centre's professionals have very positive opinions about the volunteers they work with. The volunteers are committed, respectful, hard-working, and punctual. The professionals appreciate the fresh ideas and energy that the volunteers bring to the association. The volunteers who come to the centre have usually received some kind of training from the NGO responsible for them and have prior experience working in the centre.

The centre demands that all workers, whether they are employees or volunteers, serve as role models for the users. The professionals acknowledge that the volunteers have a strong social calling and are motivated to work for the NGO. They consider the volunteers as a source of new perspectives and fresh ideas that can help improve and even rethink the way they work. Through their constant feedback, the volunteers contribute to improving the work that the professionals do.

"They often give you ideas because over the years

they wear you out and your mind can't take any more, I'm delighted, I'm the one who always welcomes volunteers..." (IM-3PV).

"All the people who have come are because they have previously had some kind of experience in the centre, they have known it again through an internship or a talk we have given" (CE-3PV).

"The person who does the voluntary work has to serve as a mirror for the girls, transmitting responsibility, optimism, maturity, etc. to them. Helping them to improve their relationship with others and with society" (DI-3PV).

"They open the doors of the house and we get new air that questions us and helps us by contributing new things that perhaps we are missing" (PH-3PV).

#### Climate of the centre.

The professionals also highlight that they strive to maintain a good climate among all the workers, including volunteers, as it is essential for the development of the work they carry out. They emphasize that they promote mutual respect and tolerance, and try to maintain a good relationship with everyone. In addition, they try to provide emotional support to each other and encourage a positive attitude in the face of difficulties. They recognise that this is a key factor in creating a positive environment and avoiding burnout.

Regarding the users, they emphasize that they try to create a warm and welcoming environment for them, where they feel comfortable and safe. They strive to create a routine for the users that is both structured and flexible, so that they can adapt to the needs of each individual. They promote the development of personal autonomy and responsibility, and they try to foster a positive attitude towards the future. The professionals highlight the importance of empathy and sensitivity towards the users, as they work with people who have gone through traumatic experiences.

In summary, the climate at the centre is characterized by a positive and educational atmosphere, where teamwork and communication are essential. The professionals and volunteers

work together in a respectful and supportive manner, and they try to create a welcoming and safe environment for the users. While there may be moments of stress and overwhelm, the overall atmosphere is one of commitment and motivation towards the work they do.

"The climate is very positive, there is a good atmosphere here because we don't allow others, so I value it positively and also those of us at the top of the pyramid transmit it. So no matter how bad they want to behave, we don't let them, nor can they because we are good people, to be honest. We have something special, we are not an NGO" (IM-3CC).

"In the centre, from what experience has taught us is that going to wage war on your own, to work on your own and so on, in the end you will end up burnt, you will end up generating many more problems than you are trying to solve, so here, in a way, we try in all areas to respect the work of each area, but we try to be communicative, that is to say, what the social area detects that could be interesting for us is communicated to us and we work on it, and when we detect something that is interesting, which is digital, we tell them about it, that is to say, in that aspect we are fine and the trust between colleagues is... is total. ... is total" (CE-3CC).

"I would describe the climate of the centre as educational-family. Educational: focused on education, accompanying them in their educational development for integration into society. Family: as there is family coexistence, they all consider themselves as a large family and as such there is always control of everything, food, hygiene, clothes, etc." (DI-3CC). (DI-3CC)

"The climate is sometimes a bit... stormy (laughs) in general, let's say that we are fine, we have our... sometimes we are a bit of a cage of crickets, sometimes it's a bit complicated, I don't know, maybe I'm going to be a bit prejudiced too, but as a collective, sometimes we are very tremendous, and then sometimes it's difficult for us to maintain a certain harmony, we are sometimes for that, we explode too much, so that we understand each other". (AM-3CC)

#### 4. Conclusions and Discussion

The research suggests that volunteer activity help students develop practical skills and a sense of commitment to social transformation, which can in turn reinforce their self-esteem and help them become more active and engaged members of society. By working with people who are at risk of social exclusion, students can also gain a deeper understanding of social issues and develop a more critical perspective on the world around them. Overall, volunteer activity can be a powerful tool for personal and professional development, as well as for promoting social change (Lipschultz, 2017) and inclusion. It's great to see that the students are gaining valuable insights into the needs of society and the potential for their future careers through their volunteer work. It's important to recognize that volunteering is not just a short-term activity, but can have long-lasting effects on one's personal and professional growth. By understanding the needs of the community and the importance of being prepared through training and education, students can become more effective and committed volunteers and professionals in the future. This can also lead to a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment in their lives.

The positive evaluation of the learning process by students, teachers, and social organizations is an important aspect of the research. The students' appreciation of the application of knowledge in a real context highlights the practical benefits of the learning process. By providing a service to the community, the students are able to see the impact of their work and gain a greater appreciation for the value of their education. Additionally, the motivation and creativity generated in the students by learning in a practical way and in contact with professionals highlights the importance of experiential learning in enhancing student engagement and interest in their studies. This positive evaluation indicates that the learning process in the context is an effective educational tool that can benefit both students and the community (Cruz et al., 2013).

The research highlights the importance of volunteering and its positive impact on individuals and society. From a positive psychology perspective, volunteering is often linked to well-

being as it provides individuals with a sense of purpose and meaning, and fosters positive emotions such as gratitude and compassion. The acquisition of transversal competences and potential job placement that come with volunteering can also contribute to an individual's overall well-being by enhancing their personal and professional growth. Encouraging more people to participate in voluntary work can also create a ripple effect of positive change, not only for the individuals involved but for the wider community as well. By expanding the research to more contexts and incorporating other data collection methods, we can further understand the benefits of volunteering and potentially enhance its impact on well-being. It is important to raise awareness about the benefits of volunteering and to encourage more people to participate in voluntary work. This can help increase the number of volunteers and enhance the impact of voluntary activities (Dawson et al., 2019). The project discussed in this research has shown some of the benefits of volunteering, including the acquisition of transversal competences and the potential for job placement (Perić-Prkosovački et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that the research has been conducted with a small sample of NGO managers, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, it may be valuable to extend the study to more contexts and incorporate other data collection methods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of volunteering (Lobanova, 2020).

The conclusion of the research highlights the multiple benefits that volunteering can provide in terms of personal development, skill improvement, and social and psychological well-being. These findings are in line with the principles of positive psychology, which focuses on promoting well-being and flourishing in individuals and communities. Volunteering can provide individuals with a sense of purpose, meaning, and social connection, which are all important factors in promoting well-being. Moreover, the idea that volunteering can lead to job placement and career development further emphasizes the potential positive impact that volunteering can have on an individual's life. Therefore, incorporating learning programs linked to volunteering can be an important aspect to

consider for promoting personal growth, social responsibility, and well-being.

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