

## Cultural, philosophical and legal aspects of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan: Current challenges

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**Abstract.** The relevance of the study of volunteer activity in Kyrgyz society is due to the epistemological need for a comprehensive understanding of this sphere of human activity at the current stage of development of Kyrgyzstan. This is due to the insufficient conceptualisation of this issue in the country's scientific space. This study uses two main theoretical and methodological approaches: axiological and praxeological. The survey method was chosen for the empirical part of the study. The total number of participants in the study was 284. The purpose of the study is to analyse the motivation and features of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan, taking into account historical contexts, current conditions, legal framework, and potential areas of development. Volunteers in Kyrgyzstan actively support educational and cultural projects, focusing on the development of society in these areas. Social projects are less of a priority. The main motivations for volunteers are social responsibility and personal interests, while traditional and religious factors are less important. The professionalisation and standardisation of volunteering is becoming increasingly prominent, given the rational motivations. The main challenges for volunteers and volunteer organisations in the country are lack of funding and resources, difficulties in organising projects, and limited access to professional training for volunteers. Social and legal aid, education, youth support, healthcare and medical care remain priority areas for volunteering in the current environment. Most respondents expressed optimism about the future of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan. They are confident that it will continue to develop and play a more important role in society. Improved funding, stronger cooperation with government agencies by introducing a legal framework for volunteer activities, development of the infrastructure and global cooperation are seen as key

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factors for effective organisation of volunteer activities and addressing social and legal challenges in the future. The study contains valuable information for government institutions related to volunteering and will be useful for the development of high-quality state policy in this area

**Keywords:** religious attitudes; traditional values; rationality; globalisation; altruism; volunteer rights

## Introduction

The multifaceted and multi-aspect nature of volunteer activity in Kyrgyz society stimulates research aimed at exploring both cultural foundations and modern determinants and predictive constructs capable of anticipating the future state of this sphere of human activity. The relevance of a comprehensive analysis of volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan is associated with the epistemological need to identify cross-cultural and unique national features of volunteering in this country. This is necessary, primarily, for understanding the overall picture and architecture of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan.

S. Dzhuraev (2021) notes that during the pandemic, not only did the vulnerability of the state become apparent, but also the remarkable resilience of society as a whole. Even in the absence of medical personnel and medicines in hospitals, thousands of volunteers stood up to defend society. These volunteers were diverse groups of people, including medical students, businessmen, and ordinary citizens. The results of the study identify three key roles of volunteers at different stages of the pandemic. In the initial period of the crisis, the volunteer movement was growing to provide support to the most vulnerable socio-economic groups.

I.A. Akhmetova *et al.* (2022) analysed the historical roots of volunteering in Kazakhstan. They note that volunteering in the Kazakh steppe has formed and developed over many centuries, combining national identity with sociocultural characteristics. Volunteering in the Kazakh steppe has its own path. By exploring the formation and development of this sphere of human activity, researchers identified three historical sources of volunteering in Kazakhstan: the development of Islamic culture in the Kazakh steppe as a voluntary institution; tribal aid in traditional Kazakh society as a social institution; the transmission of volunteering ideas by Kazakh educators.

A study conducted by A. Kireyeva *et al.* (2022) analysed the influence of women volunteers on the process of government management in palliative care for patients in Kazakhstan. Their study included interviews with two groups of respondents: volunteers and employees of medical institutions and charitable organizations. The interview results showed that women volunteers play a key role as intermediaries between the government administration and the palliative care system. The contribution of these women volunteers is associated with providing financial support, organising training and workshops for doctors, especially in the field of oncology, providing additional beds for patients, and consultations.

R. Yorick *et al.* (2021), analysed the success of the project Tajikistan Health and Nutrition Activity (THNA), which was funded by the US Agency for International Development "Food for the Future". Within this project, 1370 volunteers in 500 rural communities were trained to improve the nutrition of children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. The results of the study indicate the success of joint activities in the field of agriculture and health in improving the nutrition of children, and these models can be applied in other contexts. However, the researchers express concerns about

the need to adapt such interventions and models of public volunteers to the local context. It is also emphasised that despite success in implementing interventions, volunteers experienced exhaustion and needed additional motivation and substantial support.

A. Baimbetova *et al.* (2021) examined the specifics of volunteer activities in the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is in the stage of formation and integration. The researchers identified a low level of motivation in this sphere of volunteer activity. To address existing problems of volunteer motivation, the following methods were proposed: creating volunteer infrastructure at the regional level; financial support for volunteer organizations; implementation of educational events for volunteers; creating a legal environment that mitigates legislative barriers for volunteers. M.N. Khushnazarova (2023) suggests a step-by-step approach to preparing graduate students in social work for the implementation of Uzbekistan's state policy in the field of volunteering. She highlights three levels of educational operations: the information level – forming knowledge about the nature of volunteering in solving important societal problems; the relationship level – actualising volunteering as a positive phenomenon in society; the behaviour level – attracting and encouraging students to engage in volunteer activities.

Thus, the scientific discourse on volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan has low intensity. Given this state of the issue, there is a need to fill this research field with a relevant and comprehensive study that could reveal the essential aspects of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan. Based on this, the purpose of the study is to determine the motivational and operational components of volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan, considering historical foundations, contemporary realities, and potential development prospects. To achieve this purpose, the following tasks were set: to record the cultural and religious paradigms of volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan; identify contemporary challenges and problems faced by volunteers and volunteer organizations in Kyrgyzstan; highlight prospective vectors for the development of volunteering in Kyrgyz society.

## Materials and methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is two main approaches – axiological and praxeological. The axiological approach focuses on examining values, ideals, and beliefs that shape the philosophy and motivation of volunteers. The use of the axiological (value-based) approach in researching the cultural-philosophical aspects of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan was very useful in several cognitive dimensions. The study focused on values considered most important in the context of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan. This may include values of solidarity, social justice, cooperation, empathy, and others. Traditional values and religious beliefs that have historically formed in this society were also considered. For example, the concept of "atke zhatkan keremet" (helping one's fellows), which is an important part of the country's culture; traditional agricultural cooperation

known as “aiyldyk kenesh.” Furthermore, much attention was paid to the personal values of the volunteers in the form of beliefs and ideals that inspire them.

The use of a praxeological (practical) approach in researching the cultural-philosophical aspects of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan was valuable because this approach focuses on the practices and experiences of volunteers. The emphasis was primarily on specific types of activities that volunteers perform in Kyrgyzstan. It explored which practices are most popular and how they interact with the cultural and philosophical features of the country. In addition, the experience of volunteering was considered. An analysis was conducted to understand what kind of experience individuals gain through volunteering and how it influences personal and professional development.

The theoretical part of the study is also supported by general scientific methods: analysis, synthesis, and comparison. The joint use of analysis and synthesis allowed for breaking down complex phenomena into components and then assembling them back into a comprehensive understanding. The heuristic potential of this methodology lay in the ability to dissect various aspects of volunteering into parts and then

synthesise these parts to understand their interconnection. Comparative analysis allowed for juxtaposing volunteering in Kyrgyzstan with the experience of other countries and regions to identify common trends and features. This method helped understand how cultural and philosophical aspects of volunteering differ or converge in different contexts.

As a basis for the empirical part of the study, a survey method was used. The sample consisted of 284 respondents. The survey was conducted throughout the year, from October 2022 to October 2023. This study aligned with the ethical principles of research, including anonymity, confidentiality, and beneficence. Ethical approval of the study was obtained from the Ethics Commission of the Kyrgyz National University named after Jusup Balasagyn.

Residents of Kyrgyzstan who were engaged in volunteering on a permanent or partial basis were interviewed. The respondents were selected using the snowball sampling technique. This is due to the specific object of the study, which included respondents with a special field of activity. The questionnaire was distributed in the format of a Google Form. The questionnaire had both closed and open-ended questions (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Example of questionnaire questions

Question	Answer options
1. How regularly do you participate in volunteer activities?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regularly (several times a month).</li> <li>2. Sometimes (a couple of times a quarter).</li> <li>3. On a semi-regular basis (a couple of times every six months).</li> <li>4. Rarely (once a year).</li> <li>5. Very rarely (every few years).</li> <li>6. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
2. Which event or organisation of volunteer activity is most interesting to you?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assistance to the needy (for example, assistance to the homeless, distribution of food).</li> <li>2. Environmental projects (for example, garbage collection, tree planting).</li> <li>3. Cultural events (e.g. festivals, exhibitions, concerts).</li> <li>4. Educational programmes (for example, assistance in teaching children, support for schools).</li> <li>5. Medical care and health care (for example, patient care, charity in medicine).</li> <li>6. Support for families and children (for example, work with orphans, family programmes).</li> <li>7. Social rehabilitation (for example, assistance to former prisoners, drug addicts).</li> <li>8. Other.</li> <li>9. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
3. What is the main factor that inspires you to volunteer?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faith and religious values motivate me to help others.</li> <li>2. Protection and promotion of cultural traditions and customs of my people or community.</li> <li>3. The desire to improve social well-being and help those in need.</li> <li>4. I want to actively participate in the improvement of society and make it better.</li> <li>5. I participate in volunteer activities because it is interesting and satisfies my personal interests or hobbies.</li> <li>6. Volunteering helps me develop skills that are useful for my career.</li> <li>7. Volunteering brings me joy and satisfaction.</li> <li>8. Other (specify).</li> <li>9. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
4. What motive can influence your decision to participate in certain events or projects?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My religious beliefs and obligations may influence the choice of volunteering.</li> <li>2. Participation in events that observe the cultural traditions or customs of my people or community.</li> <li>3. My inner beliefs and moral values can influence the choice of a particular volunteer activity.</li> <li>4. Other (specify).</li> <li>5. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
5. How strong is the influence of religion and religious organisations on volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Very strong.</li> <li>2. Moderate.</li> <li>3. Minor.</li> <li>4. No influence.</li> <li>6. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
6. What aspects of religion can influence volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan?	An open-ended question.

Table 1, Continued

Question	Answer options
7. How do you assess the influence of traditions and customs on volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Very strong.</li> <li>2. Moderate.</li> <li>3. Minor.</li> <li>4. No influence</li> <li>5. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
8. What aspects of traditions and customs can influence volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan?	An open-ended question.
9. What, in your opinion, is the most urgent problem faced by volunteers in Kyrgyzstan?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of funding and resources.</li> <li>2. Difficulties with the organisation of volunteer projects.</li> <li>3. Difficulties in cooperation with state and non-state organisations.</li> <li>4. The lack of a legal framework for volunteering.</li> <li>5. Lack of information support for volunteers.</li> <li>6. Lack of training and development of volunteer skills.</li> <li>7. Conflicts and misunderstandings among volunteers.</li> <li>8. Lack of recognition and encouragement of volunteers in society.</li> <li>9. Others (specify).</li> <li>10. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
11. If you have experience working in a volunteer organisation or cooperating with such organisations, what problem, in your opinion, is most relevant for volunteer organisations in Kyrgyzstan?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Financial difficulties and dependence on grants.</li> <li>2. Difficulties in finding and retaining volunteers.</li> <li>3. Lack of professional management and resources.</li> <li>4. Lack of modern technologies and information infrastructure.</li> <li>5. Difficulties in cooperation with government agencies and other non-governmental organisations.</li> <li>6. Insufficient coordination between volunteer organisations.</li> <li>7. Uncertainty in determining priorities and goals.</li> <li>8. Inefficient communication within the organisation.</li> <li>9. Others (specify).</li> <li>10. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
11. What specific problems of Kyrgyzstan are currently being solved by volunteers?	An open-ended question.
12. How do you see the future of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Very optimistic.</li> <li>2. Optimistic.</li> <li>3. Neutral.</li> <li>4. Pessimistic.</li> <li>5. Very pessimistic.</li> <li>6. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
13. What, in your opinion, can be promising vectors for the development of volunteerism in Kyrgyzstan?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase of state support and recognition of volunteers.</li> <li>2. Development of educational programmes and training for volunteers.</li> <li>3. Encouragement of young people to participate in volunteer activities.</li> <li>4. Improvement of funding and resources for volunteer organisations.</li> <li>5. Creation of platforms for coordination and exchange of information between volunteers and organizations.</li> <li>6. Development of international cooperation and exchange of volunteering experience.</li> <li>7. Others (specify).</li> <li>8. It is difficult to answer.</li> </ol>
14. What fantasies and images do you have about volunteering in Kyrgyzstan in the future?	An open-ended question.

**Source:** compiled by the authors

The processing of the obtained results assumed qualitative and quantitative analysis. Closed questions with predetermined answer options were processed quantitatively, involving the calculation of statistical indicators such as percentages and correlations. Answers to open-ended questions required high-quality processing. Coding and content analysis were used to identify themes and images of respondents' statements.

## Results

### Modern socio-cultural features of Kyrgyzstan

Before documenting the cultural-philosophical and religious paradigms of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan, it is necessary to analytically outline the sociocultural background of the

country. The general contemporary state of the sociocultural background and the trends influencing it should be analysed.

Modern Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan, is a former Soviet space where unique processes of transformation are taking place. This uniqueness is influenced by various factors shaping contemporary transformation processes (Urmanbetova *et al.*, 2021). The culture of Central Asian peoples is characterised by the influence of the traditions of the indigenous ethnic group, Islamic religion, residual phenomena of the Soviet era, and processes of globalisation (Sadykova *et al.*, 2022). These are four fundamental forces that have a significant impact on the sociocultural background not only of Kyrgyzstan but also of other countries in Central Asia. In

recent years, Kyrgyzstan has witnessed an increase in the popularity of conservative discourses that do not adhere to liberal views. Non-liberal social activists actively interact with the Kyrgyz-speaking population and promote traditional values, combining them with religious teachings. This evident trend can be interpreted as a manifestation of growing re-traditionalization and anti-Western orientation, which have become an integral part of the Soviet worldview and ideological system (Abdoubatova, 2023). Throughout Central Asia, there is a tendency toward strengthening authoritarian regimes, leading to a decreased interest in creating political and legal structures typically considered foundational for pluralism (Montgomery, 2021).

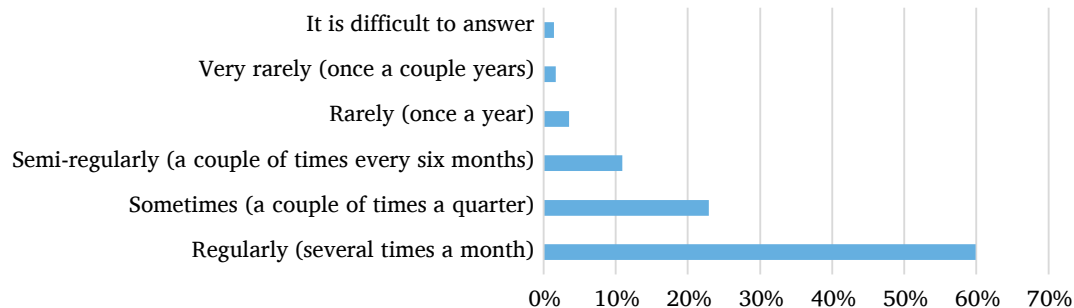
One characteristic feature of traditional influence on Kyrgyz society is the transmission of specific cultural codes using verbal means. The values and culture of the Kyrgyz people are transmitted and preserved from generation to generation through verbal expressions and images (Marazykov *et al.*, 2022). An example of such verbal tradition in Kyrgyzstan is the word “Uyat,” widely used in the country. It is often uttered regarding children to curb inappropriate behaviour. This is an essential element of interpersonal relationships that structure everyday life, causing discomfort in conversation and establishing boundaries of decency. “Uyat” is often translated as “shame”. This practice of shame in Kyrgyzstan contributes to maintaining social control (McBrien, 2021). Kyrgyzstan is also experiencing the process of Islamisation, and this process is not yet complete. People continue to educate themselves and engage in discussions, while the practical implementation of Islamic teachings remains at an early stage. Discussions about how-to live-in accordance with Islamic

beliefs have intensified due to the growing interest in Islam and a lack of prior knowledge about the religion (Tulebaeva, 2022).

The general situation in Kyrgyzstan reflects the social and spiritual crisis. The social crisis in the collective consciousness emphasises the critical nature of the situation and creates a sense of overcoming barriers hindering society’s progress. On the other hand, the spiritual crisis indicates the breakdown of the cultural foundations of society, which has encountered a development deadlock. Part of society seeks to return to its roots and fundamental values, while simultaneously attempting to find ways of adaptation in the conditions of globalisation to restore the integrity of its existence (Akmataliev *et al.*, 2023). Thus, the modern sociocultural background in Kyrgyzstan is portrayed as a “field of struggle and interaction” between traditional and religious cultural postulates and values rooted in processes of globalisation and post-Soviet transformation.

#### Motivational structure of volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan and the influence of cultural factors

To further specify the issues related to volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan, a survey involving actual volunteers was conducted. The primary focus was on identifying the cultural and philosophical motives of volunteer activities. In other words, an attempt was made to find the worldview determinants that define the value and motivational components of volunteer work. The study primarily concentrated on cultural postulates related to the sociocultural background in Kyrgyzstan. The primary question was related to the intensity of volunteer activity of the respondents to understand the level of their involvement in this activity (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Distribution of respondents’ answers to the question: “How regularly do you participate in volunteer activities?”  
Source: compiled by the authors

More than half of the respondents are regularly engaged in volunteer activities. This indicates that the object of the study is very closely related to this field. Therefore, there is an opportunity to get clearer and deeper data on volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan, using the responses of its active participants.

The first important issue directly related to the axiological component of volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan was the measurement of thematic interest in volunteer activity. The interviewed volunteers were asked a question concerning their personal interests in volunteering: respondents chose which events or organisations of volunteer activity they were most interested in. Almost one-third of respondents are interested in educational programmes – 29.9%. Primarily, these projects support the upbringing of children and help the school infrastructure. This is the dominant interest among respondents. In second place among the interests is the organisation of cultural events and events. It can be

festivals, exhibitions, and concerts. This area of interest was chosen by 22.5% of respondents. Approximately one-tenth of respondents chose humanitarian interests: assistance to the needy (fighting poverty), medical care (support for the sick), and family support (child support, work with orphans, family programmes) – 10.6%, 12.3% and 10.2%, respectively. Such interests as environmental projects – 7% and social rehabilitation (assistance to drug addicts and prisoners) – 3.3% did not pass the ten per cent barrier. Thus, the priority of volunteers in Kyrgyzstan is educational and cultural projects. At the same time, social projects are of secondary value.

Respondents were asked what specific factors inspire them to volunteer. Almost half of the respondents indicated a social motive for their volunteer activity – 43.9%. The social motive refers to altruism as one of the important components of the worldview system of volunteers. It was essentially a desire to improve society and contribute to it.

Personal interests were in second place among motivational factors – 15.3%. Respondents who chose this option were attracted by the satisfaction of their personal interests and hobbies. In 12.4% of respondents, the choice of volunteer activity was influenced by religious attitudes. For them, faith and the values associated with it are the motivational basis of volunteer activity. Only 7.8% of respondents stated that they were driven by traditional values, namely, the protection and promotion of the cultural traditions and customs of the Kyrgyz people. Factors of professional development and emotional satisfaction did not pass the ten percent barrier, at 7% and 8.1%, respectively.

For a clearer assessment of the influence of traditional values and religious beliefs on volunteering, respondents were asked about the motives that determine their choice of volunteer activities. It was noted that internal personal convictions, unrelated to cultural or religious content, are the primary factor for respondents, standing at 57%. Only 15.9% of respondents indicated that their religious beliefs and obligations could influence the choice of volunteer activities. Traditions and customs of Kyrgyzstan have even less influence on volunteers – 8.8%. Thus, there is no basis to claim that religious beliefs and traditional values significantly impact volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan. The insignificant role of religious attitudes is confirmed by another question. Respondents were asked about the role of religion and religious organisations in volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan. Almost half of the respondents believe that religion has a minimal impact on volunteer activity – 46.8%. Approximately one-third think that religion has a strong or moderate influence – 28.2%. One-fifth of respondents indicated that religion has no influence – 21.5%.

An open-ended question was also asked, which concerns specific aspects of religion that can influence volunteer activities. It should be indicated beforehand that only a third of the respondents answered this question. Through categorical classification of responses, specific thematic lines were identified and ranked by popularity. Firstly, respondents indicated that religious attitudes could inspire volunteering. They indicated moral values that correlate with volunteer activity – compassion, kindness, social justice. The second most represented thematic category was related to charity. In Islam, the principle of “Sadaqah” encourages people to charity. The third most represented thematic category is the principles of education and cognition. Respondents indicated that religion emphasises the importance of education, which can encourage volunteering in educational projects.

As for the influence of the traditional values of the Kyrgyz people on volunteer activities, approximately half of the respondents believe that there is no influence – 47.2%. Approximately a quarter of respondents indicate that there is only a minimal impact – 26.4%. Only less than one-fifth of respondents indicated that traditions and customs have a strong or moderate influence – 15.8%. Thus, the influence of traditions and customs is even lower than the religious influence on volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan. For a more complete understanding of the real impact of traditional values on volunteering in Kyrgyzstan, an open question was asked in which respondents could offer their unique answers. The analysis of the responses showed that, according to the volunteers, there are three thematic aspects that can be associated with volunteer activity. Firstly, the idea of preserving cultural heritage. Respondents believe that volunteer

activities can be aimed at preserving and promoting cultural traditions and national heritage. Secondly, festive events. Various traditional holidays and events can become a breeding ground for various volunteer practices. Third, support for local communities. Here, respondents pointed to the indigenous traditions of mutual assistance and solidarity in Kyrgyz society, which can contribute to volunteer activity.

Thus, it is evident that traditional values and religious attitudes do not significantly affect volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan. Factors that have a rational basis come to the fore, which indicates the predominance of a rather modern vision of volunteer activity and a greater emphasis on modernity. However, it is important to note that traditional and religious aspects can still play a role in volunteering, especially in local communities and for certain groups of people. However, at the moment, rational and modern factors, such as financial support and professional development, seem to be more of a priority for most respondents. This may indicate that volunteering in Kyrgyzstan is becoming a more professionalised and organised type of activity, which may contribute to its more effective impact on social changes and the development of society.

#### **Modern challenges and problems of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan**

Respondents were also asked a series of questions related to the contemporary challenges facing volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan. The first question addressed the most pressing issues volunteers encounter in Kyrgyzstan. The lack of funding and resources was mentioned as the primary issue, at 29.9%. Approximately one-fifth of respondents indicated that the main problem is the difficulty in organising volunteer projects – 22.5%. Slightly more than one-tenth of respondents identified the main problem as the challenge of collaborating with government and non-government organisations, at 12.7%. Issues that did not surpass the ten per cent threshold included a lack of training and development of volunteer skills (8.8%), the absence of a legal framework for volunteer activities (7.4%), a lack of information support for volunteers (5.3%), conflicts and misunderstandings among volunteers (3.9%), and a lack of recognition and encouragement of volunteers in society (3.2%). In addition, respondents were asked about the problems faced by volunteer organisations. In the first place, respondents indicated financial difficulties and dependence on grants – 26.4%. In second place is the lack of professional management and resources. This option was chosen by 18.3% of respondents. In third place is the lack of modern technologies and information infrastructure – 16.9%. Only 11.3% of respondents identified the main problem as the difficulties in collaboration with government structures and other non-governmental organisations. Challenges that did not reach the ten per cent threshold included uncertainty in defining priorities and goals (7%), ineffective communication within the organisation (6.3%), insufficient coordination between volunteer organisations (3.9%), and difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers (2.8%). Both for individual volunteers and volunteer organisations, financial issues are the top priority in the contemporary stage.

An open-ended question was also posed regarding the challenges of Kyrgyzstan's society that volunteers address at the present stage. Categorical analysis of open-ended questions identified seven thematic categories. According

to respondents, the most priority task of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan is social assistance. It involves helping socially vulnerable segments of the population: the poor, homeless, elderly, and other vulnerable groups. In the second place is education and support for youth. This primarily involves activities aimed at providing educational programmes and consultations. Healthcare and medical care are in third place. Respondents indicated participation in medical programmes. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Less popular challenges for volunteering included the development of local communities, combating discrimination (e.g., gender-based), cultural projects, and environmental initiatives.

It should be noted that legal regulation of the volunteer sphere in the Kyrgyz Republic began with the adoption of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 77 “On Volunteer Activity” (2023). This law regulates various aspects of volunteering, including the prohibition of its use to support political parties, religious organisations, commercial promotion of goods and services, and commercial intermediation. The law also prohibits the creation of volunteer organisations similar to paramilitary groups. This law is part of the national policy on volunteering in Kyrgyzstan. It reflects the desire to develop and regulate the volunteer movement in the country. However, some organisations, such as Amnesty International (2023), have expressed concerns about other legislative changes that could have a negative impact on the work of non-governmental organisations and civil society in general.

#### Future prospects of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan

As the final task of the study was achieved, respondents were presented with a set of questions regarding the future of volunteer activities in Kyrgyzstan. Primarily, a question was posed concerning the respondents’ perception of the future of volunteerism in Kyrgyzstan using the “optimism-pessimism” dichotomy. More than half of the respondents are optimistic about the future of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan – 56.4%. Approximately one-fourth is neutral (26.8%). Only 12.7% of the volunteers who passed the survey are pessimistic about the future of volunteering in their country. To further specify this question for those who are optimistic about the future of volunteerism in Kyrgyzstan, a follow-up question was asked. It was associated with specific vectors of volunteering development in Kyrgyzstan. Almost a third of respondents assume that funding for volunteer organisations will improve in the future – 29.6%. Approximately one-fifth believe there will be an increase in state support and recognition of volunteers – 19.4%. Forecasts for other vectors were less significant: the creation of platforms for coordination and information exchange among volunteers and organisations (18.3%); the development of international cooperation and the exchange of volunteering experiences (13.7%); encouraging youth to participate in volunteer activities (7%); and the development of educational programs and training for volunteers (5.3%).

For a more individualised understanding of perceptions of the future of volunteer activities, respondents were asked an open-ended question that considered their fantasies and visions of the future of this activity in Kyrgyzstan. Based on the responses, five thematic categories were identified. The most common is the image of a developed and powerful volunteer infrastructure. In second place, respondents saw the future of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan with global cooperation. This indicates that the concepts correspond to the

globalisation logic of development. In third place, respondents have images associated with innovative technologies in volunteering. Less significant visions of the future include the increased diversity of volunteer activities and strong involvement of youth in this type of activity.

Thus, respondents see the future of volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan optimistically. The vectors of development, according to respondents, are associated with an increase in funding and establishing relations with the state apparatus. In general, respondents expect the strengthening of volunteer infrastructure and global cooperation. Global cooperation and the strengthening of volunteer infrastructure can contribute to the effective organisation of volunteer activities, including the expansion of the sphere of influence and the involvement of more people in volunteer projects. These factors can contribute to the improvement of society and the solution of various social problems in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, respondents consider the future of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan promising and positive, based on optimism and confidence in the possibility of volunteering to make a significant contribution to the development of society.

#### Comparative analysis of cultural and legal aspects of volunteering in different geographical regions (USA, China, Europe, Central Asia)

A striking example of the contrasting cultural foundations of volunteerism can be seen by comparing the United States and China. The USA has a long history of volunteering, which plays an important role in society. Many Americans are actively involved in charitable and volunteer organisations. There are a huge number of volunteer organisations working in various fields, from helping those in need to environmental protection. Individualism and private initiative in volunteering are often welcomed in the USA. Therewith, there is a growing interest in volunteering in China, and young people are actively involved in many projects. The Chinese government also actively encourages and supports volunteering, especially in the field of social services. In China, there are some cultural features that influence volunteering, such as the emphasis on family values and communal initiatives (Chen *et al.*, 2022). Thus, volunteer activity in these countries is strongly influenced by fundamental cultural and social paradigms such as individualism (USA) and communitarianism (China). In addition, there is a long history of charity and philanthropy in the United States, and this has an impact on the culture of volunteering. It is generally believed that Western societies are more materialistic compared to other cultures. The results of empirical research show that materialism can coexist with charity. However, it has also been observed that Americans are among the most generous nations, donating their time, money, and efforts to charitable causes (Mathur, 2013).

In the United States, volunteer activity is primarily regulated by labour and employment laws. Volunteers are not considered employees under the Fair Labour Standards Act (FLSA) and are therefore not entitled to minimum wage or overtime pay. However, they must be providing services for a non-profit organization or government agency, and their work should not displace paid employees. Additionally, volunteers are generally not covered by workers’ compensation laws. The legal framework for volunteerism in the US is largely based on the principle of voluntariness and is aimed at protecting the rights of volunteers and the organizations

they serve (Mead, 2019). In turn, in China has a legal regulation for volunteer activity called the Regulation of Volunteer Service (2017). The regulation aims to protect the lawful rights and interests of volunteers, volunteer service organizations, and the recipients of volunteer services, encourage and regulate volunteer services, develop the field of volunteer services, cultivate and practice the core socialist values, and promote the improvement of society and civilization. The regulation also applies to volunteer service activities and activities related to volunteer services carried out within the mainland territory of the People's Republic of China.

Volunteering in Europe is often associated with the promotion of social justice, human rights, liberality, and pluralism. According to the findings of a European study, it was established that macrostructural indicators of civil liberties and the level of social trust are positively correlated with the level of volunteer activity. These results indicate that in countries with higher civil liberties and a level of social trust, the probability of citizens' involvement in volunteer activities is higher. Equality and social trust play an important role in this regard, providing a basis for the development of volunteerism in Europe. The study also highlights that historically inherited institutional features can influence individual volunteering abilities (Enjolras, 2021). The cultural diversity of European countries should also be considered. In the course of a study by A. Gil-Lacruz *et al.* (2017), in European countries where people have a positive attitude toward their friendly contacts, citizens are more likely to participate in social activities, education, and leisure actively. However, in these countries, they are less likely to participate in activities related to social justice, compared to those countries where friendship is less important.

The legal regulation of volunteer activity in Europe varies from country to country. Some European countries have launched legislative reform initiatives to create an environment that fosters volunteering. For example, the Act LXXXVIII "On Public Interest Volunteer Activities" (2005) in Hungary regulates volunteering for non-profit entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Similarly, the Framework Law 266/91 "On Volunteering" (1991) in Italy prescribes the principles and criteria that regulate the relationship between public agencies and volunteer organizations. In Spain, there is a Law 45/2015 "On Volunteer" (2015) that regulates state competences and offers companies, universities, or public administrations the possibility of becoming a target audience for volunteers. The European legal framework on cross-border volunteering also addresses the regulation of volunteering activities, including the definitions of volunteering, volunteerism, and volunteer service.

There is a tradition of solidarity within communities in Central Asian countries. Often volunteering can be associated with the support of families and neighbours. An important aspect of traditional Central Asian culture is the "Toy" – a traditional gathering where people gather for joint activities, such as building houses or helping those in need. Unlike Europe and the USA, there is no clear division between public and private spheres in traditional Central Asian culture: birth, death, and marriage are community affairs, not family affairs (Giffen *et al.*, 2005). This traditional culture of solidarity and community also contributes to the development of sustainable communities where people are ready to help each other in difficult moments. This may include support in the event of natural disasters, assistance to families during a

disaster, and joint efforts in education and health. Such traditions and values can serve as a basis for the development of volunteerism and civic engagement, and they can be important resources for solving social problems and strengthening society in Central Asia.

The legal regulation of volunteer activity in Central Asia has been a topic of increasing importance. In Kazakhstan, for example, the country adopted a law on volunteer activity in 2016, enshrining legal regulation related to the sphere of volunteering (Mıhr, 2023). However, the development of robust, independent civil societies and NGOs in Central Asia has faced challenges, with concerns about new regulations that could further restrict and criminalize their activities. Despite these challenges, there have been initiatives to promote and recognize volunteerism in Central Asia, such as the distribution of volunteer awards and the convening of the first Central Asian Volunteers Forum in Kazakhstan (Satubaldina, 2022).

Thus, having considered the various cultural foundations of volunteerism in four geographical regions, it can be noted that the culture of volunteerism in Central Asia is approaching China in terms of communitarianism. However, given globalisation, elements of American and European models of volunteerism are increasingly being integrated in Central Asian countries: individualism, pluralism, and social justice.

## Discussion

The results of the study show that volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan is undergoing development. Nevertheless, the survey results can be interpreted as positive, regarding the predominance of positive factors over negative ones. They show that volunteering in Kyrgyzstan is becoming a more modern and organised type of activity. This means that volunteering becomes a more effective tool for solving social problems and developing society. Motivational factors of volunteering show the predominance of rationality, while optimism prevails in prognostic images. Such trends point to the high potential of volunteering in Kyrgyzstan and the need to compare the features of volunteer motivation and experience in the framework of empirical data from other regions of the world.

K. Petrovic *et al.* (2021) analysed a large volume of data from a sociological survey in Australia involving 8163 people. The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between religiosity and participation in volunteer activities. Preliminary data confirmed that attending religious services has a more significant impact on motivation for volunteering than subjective religiosity. The results partially confirmed this hypothesis. More frequent and active attendance at religious services correlated with an increased likelihood of participating in volunteer activities. On the other hand, more pronounced subjective religiosity was associated with more time spent on volunteer work. Researchers concluded that religious practices can increase the likelihood of participating in volunteer activities, but it remains unlikely if there are no subjective religious beliefs. These results have a number of similar aspects to the following study. Within its framework, a low religious component was recorded against the background of other factors (social or personal). The main distinguishing feature of the Australian study is the attempt to analyse the religious aspect in more depth through the search for correlations between practices in combination with internal beliefs and the measured intensity of volunteer activity. The author's work focused on the

general architectonics of motivational factors of volunteering, where religion was only one element among many others.

Chinese researchers M. Guo *et al.* (2021) focused on the analysis of the relationship between Confucian values of charity and participation in volunteer activities. 473 Chinese students who filled out questionnaires were interviewed to assess Confucian values of charity, such as family, unity, and harmony. The results showed a positive relationship between Confucian values and participation in volunteer activities. However, no significant relationship was found between family life and volunteering. Moreover, the multigroup analysis showed that this correlation remained the same for students of both sexes in colleges. These results point to the important role of Confucian values of charity in stimulating volunteer activity among Chinese students, emphasising the influence of cultural factors on public participation and voluntary activity. The Chinese study had deeper and more concrete results in terms of the influence of a particular religious denomination on volunteer activity. In the author's research, within the framework of an open-ended question, there was also an emphasis on Islam, namely the "Sadaqah" principle, which is a structural component of this religious denomination. It was mentioned by the respondents themselves. Yet the main difference was the focus primarily on generalised religious motives without specifying Islam, which indicates a less in-depth analysis of the religious influence on volunteer behaviour. This comparison highlights the limitation of the author's work, which considered the religious component too generically.

German researchers N. Moczek *et al.* (2021) focused on the motivation and personal characteristics of volunteers participating in the Insects of Saxony project. 116 volunteers took part in the sociological survey, most of whom were men, had higher education, were over 50 years old, and had been volunteering in biodiversity conservation projects for a long time. The volunteers showed prosocial (altruistic) and selfish motives for participating in the project, but they considered prosocial motives more important for their activity. The participants evaluated communication and feedback with the organisation as the most important aspects of volunteer activity. Participants also reported that their knowledge increased while participating in the project. While they were satisfied with the project as a whole, they were less satisfied with their own contribution. Nevertheless, most participants expressed a desire to continue their volunteer activities. These results highlight the importance of altruistic motives and attention to communication and feedback from volunteers for a successful volunteer programme in the field of biodiversity conservation. This German study confirms the results of the author's research, where altruism occupies a dominant place in the motivational structure of volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan, and personal motives (selfish), such as professional career, emotional satisfaction occupies a secondary position. Yet it is necessary to indicate the main methodological difference. If in the author's study the sample was built according to the snowball method with the participation of volunteers from different projects, in this study, there was a small sample of volunteers from one specific project.

S. Compion *et al.* (2022) analysed the motives of residents of Ghana, South Africa, and Tanzania to participate in episodic volunteering and determined whether these motives are similar to long-term volunteering based on membership or have differences. A survey of 1,000 participants

was conducted in 2018. To analyse the data, logistic regression models were used to identify differences in motivations between beginners, casual, and permanent episodic volunteers. The survey results showed that age and student status affect the difference between novice volunteers and permanent volunteers. More importantly, novice volunteers are primarily motivated by social reasons, whereas regular volunteers are more focused on altruistic motives. This confirms that people can be motivated to volunteer for a variety of reasons that may coincide or complement each other, and these motives may vary depending on the stage of their lives. The study of African countries confirms the results of the author's research in terms of the fact that the motives for volunteering can have a different nature. This is confirmed by the fact that the answers to the question about the motives of volunteer activity had a greater statistical severity. Nevertheless, the social motive prevailed. The main difference of this study, conducted within the framework of African countries, is an attempt to conduct age differentiation of motivations. In other words, there a difference in motivation by age categories was recorded. It has been shown that with increasing age, altruistic motives begin to prevail more.

Dutch researchers A.F. Faletehan *et al.* (2021) addressed the concept of "calling to work" in the context of non-profit volunteering. This concept is commonly used to explain how people fulfil their vocation by doing meaningful work. Researchers suggest that it may be useful for understanding the motivation and retention of volunteers. The concept of "calling to work" in this context helps explain why people join non-profit organisations and stay there for a long time. The results lead to an important conclusion: volunteers can consciously choose to participate in meaningful activities and, thus, enjoy self-realisation and meaningfulness of life through volunteering. This approach helps to better understand the internal motivations of volunteers and explain why they leave their mark on non-profit organisations, which can be useful for developing strategies for retaining volunteers and increasing their level of satisfaction. This study examines the professional motives of volunteering in more detail. In the author's study, respondents were offered similar motives (professional career and emotional satisfaction), but they were little statistically represented since socio-altruistic motives prevailed. The main difference between the study of Dutch scientists is a deeper understanding of the personal motives of volunteering not related to cultural or religious values. The focus is on satisfaction from activity, which is rather psychological in nature.

M.S. Skinner *et al.* (2021) focused on the challenges faced by volunteers providing long-term care for the disabled. They analysed data from numerous sources to assess the degree of complexity of volunteering and informal care in this area. The results of the analysis showed that one of the common problems in cooperation between caregivers and volunteers is a lack of information and knowledge, and insufficient coordination of actions. These factors can create difficulties and cause difficulties in the organisation and provision of care, especially in the long term. This study highlights the importance of motivating volunteers and providing them with appropriate resources, training, and information to make volunteering more effective and sustainable, especially in the field of long-term care for the disabled. This study points to two important problems faced by volunteers – lack of awareness and lack of coordination in

activities. As part of the author's research, similar problems faced by volunteers in Kyrgyzstan were also recorded. Coordination problems were the second most popular among volunteers, after problems with funding. At the same time, it is important that the lack of awareness of volunteers did not have a strong statistical representation, which indicates a lower priority of this problem in the Kyrgyz space.

Thus, the research conducted over the past three years confirms that the motives of volunteering are complex and multifaceted. They may be related to religious, cultural, social and personal factors. In general, the following main motives of volunteer activity can be distinguished: altruism – the desire to help other people and make the world a better place; social ties – the need to communicate and interact with other people; personal development – the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge, develop as an individual. Depending on the cultural context, these motives may have different degrees of expression. In the author's study conducted in Kyrgyzstan, it was found that altruism is the most important motive for volunteering. This is because there is a strong tradition of mutual aid and charity in Kyrgyz culture. In addition to motives, the study also examines the problems faced by volunteers. The analysis of other studies mentioned: lack of coordination – there is often no coordination between volunteer organisations and official structures, which makes it difficult to work together; lack of awareness – volunteers often do not have complete information about the activities of volunteer organisations and how they can help. These studies expand the understanding of the motives and problems of volunteering. They show that volunteering is a complex and multifaceted activity that can have a positive impact on society.

### Conclusions

The volunteers in Kyrgyzstan are clearly focused on supporting educational and cultural projects, which indicates their desire to contribute to the development and promotion of society in the field of education and culture. The orientation of volunteers to educational and cultural projects can play a key role in the formation of intellectual and cultural capital of society. This can contribute to improving the educational level of citizens and preserving cultural values.

The volunteer activity in the country is increasingly based on rational motives, such as the desire to contribute to the improvement of society. There is a tendency towards professionalization and standardisation of volunteer activities, which can contribute to a more effective impact of volunteerism on social change and the development of society.

The main challenge facing in Kyrgyzstan is the lack of funding and resources. This problem is caused by the fact that largely volunteer activity in the country depends on grants and donations. In the context of the current challenges that volunteers are facing in Kyrgyzstan, the most priority areas are social assistance, education and youth support, as well as health care, medical care and expansion of the legal and regulatory framework that would cover more issues related to volunteering. The areas that volunteers focus on in solving modern challenges reflect the key needs of Kyrgyz society.

Most of the survey participants are optimistic about the future of volunteer activity in Kyrgyzstan. According to the respondents, the key areas for the development of volunteerism will be to increase funding and strengthen relationships with government agencies. Furthermore, respondents emphasise the importance of strengthening volunteer infrastructure and developing global cooperation. In general, the opinion of the survey participants reflects the belief in the potential of volunteering as a tool for solving social problems and improving the quality of life in Kyrgyzstan.

The practical value of this study is focused on a wide range of potential actors who may be indirectly or directly related to volunteer activities. This study is a useful information resource for high-quality state policy in the field of volunteer activity. Further research should involve a detailed analysis of not only the temporal aspects of volunteering (cultural foundations, current problems and challenges, future prospects) but also spatial aspects: the difference between volunteer activities in the regions of Kyrgyzstan and the features of volunteering in urban/rural environments.

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### Conflict of interest

None.

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## Культурно-філософські та юридичні аспекти волонтерства в Киргизстані: сучасні виклики

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**Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження волонтерської діяльності в киргизькому суспільстві зумовлена гносеологічною потребою в комплексному осмисленні цієї сфери людської активності на сучасному етапі розвитку Киргизстану. Це відбувається з огляду на недостатню концептуалізацію цього питання в науковому просторі країни. У цьому дослідженні використано два основні теоретико-методологічні підходи: аксіологічний та праксеологічний. Для емпіричної частини дослідження було обрано метод опитування. Загальна кількість учасників дослідження склала 284 особи. Мета дослідження – проаналізувати мотивацію та особливості волонтерської діяльності в Киргизстані з огляду на історичні контексти, сучасні умови, законодавчу базу, та потенційні поля розвитку. Волонтери в Киргизстані активно підтримують освітні та культурні проекти, фокусуючись на розвитку суспільства в цих сферах. Соціальні проекти займають менш пріоритетну позицію. Основними мотивами для волонтерів є соціальна відповідальність та особисті інтереси, тоді як традиційні та релігійні чинники є менш значущими. Професіоналізація та стандартизація волонтерської діяльності стає все більш помітною, враховуючи раціональні мотиви. Основними викликами для волонтерів та волонтерських організацій в країні є брак фінансування та ресурсів, труднощі в організації проектів та обмежений доступ до професійної підготовки волонтерів. Пріоритетними сферами для волонтерської діяльності в сучасних умовах залишаються соціальна та юридична допомога, освіта, підтримка молоді, охорона здоров'я та медична допомога. Більшість респондентів висловили оптимізм щодо майбутнього волонтерської діяльності в Киргизстані. Вони впевнені, що вона буде продовжувати розвиватися і відігравати більш важливу роль у суспільстві. Покращення фінансування, посилення співпраці з державними органами, шляхом введення юридичної бази щодо діяльності волонтерів, розвиток даної інфраструктури та глобальна співпраця розглядаються як ключові фактори для ефективної організації волонтерської діяльності та вирішення соціальних та правових проблем у майбутньому. Дослідження містить цінну інформацію для державних інституцій, пов'язаних з волонтерською діяльністю, і буде корисним для розробки якісної державної політики у цій сфері

**Ключові слова:** релігійні погляди; традиційні цінності; раціональність; глобалізація; альтруїзм; права волонтерів