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Model of Stress Resistance Formation in Volunteers through Participation in the "Sochi 2014" Project

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Abstract

Background/Objective: The article analyses the results of an empirical study of personal and emotional characteristics of modern volunteers. **Methods:** The authors reveal the key factors of stress resistance in volunteers, defining their psychological portrait. Great attention is paid to the best practices of volunteer centers which organize psychological support and to the methods of providing psychological and social assistance. It should be noted that the elaboration of special programs for resource optimization and its effective use is an important task of the volunteer society. **Findings:** The study presents a model of formation of volunteers' stress resistance, practical recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of the process of selecting candidates for volunteer practice and intended realization of complex preventive interventions to maintain mental well-being of volunteers. The identified indicators can describe the behavioral patterns of a volunteer, predict his or her reaction to negativity and simulate a conflict situation. Special attention is given to the timely recognition of stress consequences among volunteers and taking the necessary measures to overcome stress. **Application/Improvements:** The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that its conclusions and recommendations can be used in the course of professional psychological screening, psycho-pedagogical training support and in the analysis of volunteers' activities.

Keywords: Eco-Design, Environmental Consciousness, Educational Potential, Metropolis, Urban Environment

1. Introduction

Voluntary practice, especially during such events as Olympic Games, involves the formation of a sense of increased responsibility among volunteers because they are perceived as the face of the large-scale sporting event in the world, they are the first contact point for the spectators of competitions and the guests of the Olympics host country. This responsibility requires a special process of candidate selection for volunteer practice and involves the implementation of a set of preventive measures to maintain psychological well-being of volunteers.

Volunteers' important qualities are responsibility, sociability, diligence, respect for others, tolerance, stress, emotional stability and regulation, self-actualization. Having high levels of such qualities, a volunteer will be able to cope with his or her tasks. It is these personal qualities aimed at the formation of volunteer activities, which have specific features and differ from other types of professional activity[1–4].

This was the basis for a study entitled "Special aspects of neuro-psychical stability of volunteer candidates in Sochi-2014 Olympic Games (as exemplified by the Volunteer Center of RSSU)" that was carried out in January-March 2012-2013, the total number of sampling amounted to 340 people. Identified specific features can be the basis for the development of training programs and psychological support of volunteers of RSSU to participate in major sports competitions[5,6].

Neuro-psychical stability is understood as a complex of inherent and acquired personal qualities, mobilization resources and reserved psycho-physiological potential of the organism, which ensures optimal functioning of the individual in the adverse conditions of professional

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environment. This phenomenon manifests itself in unusual situations or activity conditions which are unusual for an individual, i.e. in difficult life situations.

Neuro-psychical stability is an extremely broad notion. It combines explicit and hidden signs of emotional, strong-willed and intelligent regulation[7]. Neuro-psychic resistance is also referred to as the adaptive capacity of the individual to work in adverse conditions of professional environment.

There is no unambiguous understanding of stress resistance as a scope of psychological science and therefore, there is no single definition[8–12]. Being an integral part of stress resistance, the emotional component unites all these concepts. We also believe that there is no clear distinction between the concepts of "stress" and "neuro-psychical stability".

Nowadays there are different trends in the study of volunteers involved in organizing and conducting sports mega-events[13–17]. Thus, there are a number of foreign studies of the Olympic Games volunteers in Athens 2004 conducted[18] which deal with, among other things, the requirements that the volunteers should meet first of all. Among a range of qualities (activity, knowledge of foreign languages, leadership) a special attention was paid to volunteers' stress resistance. Foreign authors recognize that neuro-psychical stability is very important for volunteers, because they face unusual situations in their work that can be characterized as a difficult life situation. Specific features of a volunteer's emotional response to the situation are also very important for their individuality. Such qualities as stress resistance, anxiety, self-control, aggression and tolerance affect a volunteer's emotional response. These qualities are decisive for volunteer activity[19–23].

2. Method

A study was conducted, which involved five methods:

- Method of diagnosing the type of emotional response to the impact of environmental stimuli by V. V. Boyko;
- Evaluation questionnaire of neuro-psychical stability "Forecast-2» by Y.V. Rybnikov;[24]
- Methods of measuring the level of anxiety by J. Taylor;
- Methods of "Personal aggressiveness and proneness to conflict" (by E. P. Ilyin, P. A. Kovalyov);
- Survey of psychological resistance to stress[24,25].

To determine the characteristics of neuro-psychical stability, it was decided to compare the results of volunteers and candidates, who were not shortlisted at the interview stage.

The following conclusions were made based on the research findings (Table 1).

Table 1. The differences between groups of volunteers and students-psychologists by Mann-Whitney

Indicator	Significance
Anxiety	0.02
Negative euphoric reaction	0.052
Negative refractory reaction	0.029
Negative dysphoric reaction	1.000
Ambivalent euphoric reaction	0.082
ambivalent refractory reaction	0.049
ambivalent disphoric reaction	1.000
Positive euphoric reaction	0.113
Positive refractory reaction	0.113
Positive disphoric reaction	0.633
Sincerity	0.042
Neuro-psychical stability	0.001
Poor neuro-psychical stability	0.125
Satisfactory neuro-psychical stability	0.107
Good neuro-psychical stability	0.019
High neuro-psychical stability	0.348
Affectability	0.016
Assertiveness	0.342
Petulance	0.017
Intransigence	0.237
Ultimatism	0.114
Vengefulness	0.210
Intolerance	0.913
Suspicion	0.737
Positive aggression	0.834
Negative aggression	0.828
General proneness to conflict	0.027
General psychical stability	0.001
Resistance to negative social evaluation	0.007
Resistance to negative self-evaluation	0.323
Resistance to uncertainty	0.028
Resistance to time shortage	0.018
Resistance to information overload	0.020
Resistance to physical overwork	0.178
Resistance to monotony	0.903
Resistance to isolation	0.782
Resistance to particular threat situations	0.003
Resistance to everyday stressors	0.008
Resistance to unexpected stressor	0.031
Resistance to duration and frequency of stressor	0.052
Lie	0.001

Using the criterion of distinction by Mann-Whitney for calculation, we pointed out that there are differences between two groups in the level of anxiety, in the manifestation of negative and ambivalent refractory reactions, according to the truthfulness scale, in the level of neuro-psychical stability, according to the scale of affectability, petulance, general proneness to conflict, general psychical stability, resistance to negative social evaluation, uncertainty, time shortage, information overload, a peculiar threat situations, daily stressors, unexpected stressor, lies[26].

Significant differences between groups of respondents are presented in Table 2.

Selected to participate in the project, of a group of volunteers demonstrates low indicators on the scale of the "overall proneness to conflict". When selecting strategy of conduct, all groups of examinees choose the strategy of "adaptation" as the most preferable one. It gives an opportunity to resolve complex problems, suspended in time, allows learning from one's own mistakes, preserving peace and good relationship, mutual trust, taking into account the interests of other people, sometimes at the expense of one's own needs and requirements. Along with the strategy of "adaptation", volunteers choose the strategy of "compromise", as one of the most constructive, which allows them to solve problems on mutually

Table 2. Significant differences between the groups of volunteers and students-psychologists by Mann-Whitney

Significant indicators	Respondents	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Anxiety	Not shortlisted candidates	30	40.12	1203.50
	Volunteers	34	25.78	876.50
Negative refractory reaction	Not shortlisted candidates	30	37.00	1110.00
	Volunteers	34	28.53	970.00
Ambivalent euphoric reaction	Not shortlisted candidates	30	29.33	880.00
	Volunteers	34	35.29	1200,00
Sincerity	Not shortlisted candidates	30	27.53	826.00
	Volunteers	34	36.88	1254.00
Neuro-psychical stability	Not shortlisted candidates	30	24.67	740.00
	Volunteers	34	39.41	1340.00
Good neuro-psychical stability	Students-psychologists	30	27.83	835.00
	Volunteers	34	36.62	1245.00
Affectability	Not shortlisted candidates	30	38.38	1151.50
	Volunteers	34	27.31	928.50
Petulance	Not shortlisted candidates	30	38.33	1150.00
	Volunteers	34	27.35	930.00
General proneness to conflict	Not shortlisted candidates	30	37.97	1139.00
	Volunteers	34	27.68	941.00
General psychical stability	Students-psychologists	30	24.22	726.50
	Volunteers	34	39.81	1353.50
Resistance to negative social evaluation	Not shortlisted candidates	30	25.85	775.50
	Volunteers	34	38.37	1304.50
Resistance to uncertainty	Not shortlisted candidates	30	27.12	813.50
	Volunteers	34	37.25	1266.50
Resistance to time shortage	Not shortlisted candidates	30	26.70	801.00
	Volunteers	34	37.62	1279.00
Resistance to information overload	Not shortlisted candidates	30	26.78	803.50
	Volunteers	34	37.54	1276.50
Resistance to everyday stressors	Not shortlisted candidates	30	25.93	778.00
	Volunteers	34	38.29	1302.00
Resistance to unexpected stressor	Not shortlisted candidates	30	27.18	815.50
	Volunteers	34	37.19	1264.50
Lie	Not shortlisted candidates	30	24.43	733.00
	Volunteers	34	39.62	1347.00

beneficial terms, demonstrating flexibility, dynamism, while maintaining meaningful relationships with people.

Comparison of respondents' indexes revealed among shortlisted volunteers the intensity of shifts in the direction of increasing the level of "total psychical stability" and "neuro-psychical stability", "resistance to daily stress". Such results are expected and understandable. In their work volunteers face many stressful situations and if they did not have a high level of general psychical stability, they would not be able to maintain the work efficiency and show good results. Volunteers show a sense of duty, perseverance in achieving objectives and business focus. In addition, volunteers' activity initially involves the desire to benefit the society, so the main motive of activity is not the search for approval and praise, but the desire to help others.

Such criteria of indicator of neuro-psychical stability of volunteer's individual as "resistance to uncertainty" and "resistance to the time shortage", turned out to be "above average" for shortlisted candidates, which points to the frequent occurrence of these components among respondents we surveyed. Volunteers often have to act independently on the basis of the current situation, which can vary indefinitely; they must always be ready, make management decisions and express the necessary flexibility and energy to perform a lot of work for short periods of time. Volunteers are characterized by self-confidence, calmness, high emotional stability, good self-control and self-discipline. The specificity of volunteers' activity lies in the possibility of occurrence of unpredictable, unexpected events that violate the process of planning or implementation.

Volunteers leave candidates for volunteers far behind according to the criterion of "resistance to information overload". Specificity of volunteer activity involves working with large amounts of information, which needs to be processed within a short period of time and an appropriate decision must be made. Volunteers make their own decisions, strive for their realization and take responsibility.

3. Results

As a result of processing data using the results of Mann-Whitney distinction criterion the following results were obtained: In a group of test volunteers the indicators of ambivalent euphoric reaction, sincerity, neuro-psychical stability, general psychical stability are much higher; stability in situations of negative social evaluation, uncertainty, time shortage, information overload, specific threat situations, when exposed to everyday stressors and unexpected stressors are also higher. Volunteers also have higher indicators according to lie criterion. In the group of candidates who were shortlisted, such indicators as anxiety, the negative refractory reaction, petulance and general proneness to conflict are higher.

While processing the data using the Pearson correlation coefficient, it was found that the most significant relationship exists between such indicators as anxiety and general conflict, neuro-psychical stability and negative euphoric reaction, the overall psychical stability and neuro-psychical stability, poor neuro-psychical stability and total proneness to conflict, as well as sincerity and neuro-psychical stability. Feedback is shown between indicators of anxiety and general psychical stability, neuro-psychological stability and general proneness to conflict, general psychical stability and affectability, poor neuro-psychological stability and resistance to everyday stressors and others.

4. Discussion

On the basis of these indicators the author formed and adapted a model of volunteers' stress resistance on the basis of RSSU Volunteer Center. The model was presented by the full range of preventative measures, support and establishment of psychological well-being of volunteers and emotional stability, namely:

- Preparation of a schedule for volunteer activity. The final version of the schedule is coordinated with the volunteer opportunities and approved only after reaching the maximum comfortable mode for all participants. There are a number of conditions that need to be taken into account when drafting: the volunteer must be busy for no more than 8:00 daily, the schedule should contain a list of tasks and deadlines for achieving them (it is necessary for clear understanding of requirements, deadlines and results);
- Consolidation of duties into a single list with an explanation of the requirements for quality and terms of work performance. Compilation of job descriptions helps to organize functional information within each position on the part of organization and form certain expectations among the volunteers[23]. Defining the volunteers' role, elaboration of their

job responsibilities, communication issues and accountability also depend heavily on models of volunteers' activity arrangement used by the organization[27].

- Training and volunteer program learning aimed at accomplishing their immediate tasks or training courses. Volunteer training is primarily intended to provide answers to key questions - what are the objectives of their future activities? Whom will they be addressed? What will he particularly do? What problems and difficulties may arise? How long will the project last? Where a volunteer will work? Are there any specific features and what are they? It is important to get the answers to these questions before the work starts so that in future a volunteer will not experience the problem of divergence of reality with his or her own views on the possible response of recipients to his help. Because it often depends on the volunteer, their gender, age, ethnic composition of those who get assistance, their physical and psychological health, social status, their own ideas about what their role in society is and exactly what the assistance, which they are provided with, should look like.

Each coach selects those methods that allow volunteers to be active during the educational process, based on the realities of the outside world and have the opportunity for reflection. The main goal is not to transfer vast amounts of information but to form competences which is carried out through the participation of trainees in practical exercises. It is important to achieve a high level of awareness with regard to their own activities. Safety briefings are a compulsory prerequisite for conducting the training;

- Assignment of mentor/supervisor/team leader/ coordinator, the person who directs and controls the activities of volunteers. In most cases, the team leader and head of the volunteer group is a staff member who is in charge of the project or work cluster. Coordinator effectiveness will depend on how clearly the expectations are formulated to organization volunteers. The curator must have leadership qualities, including highly developed communication skills in order to build effective relationships within the group and open, honest and trusting relationships with each of its participants. For this purpose it is necessary to regulate the solution of disputable matters, to form a clear understanding of whom one may ask for help and what problem could be solved, what the substitution procedure is, etc. One of the key aspects of the interaction is the coordinator's attitude to the volunteers working on the project: it should be based on professional and personal respect, otherwise there is a risk that volunteers will leave the project, while the friendly ties help to retain participants and increase their motivation to cooperate in future;
- Organization of regular meeting/volunteer meetings regarding the results of work shifts, holding regular briefings. Such meetings can constructively criticize the working process, discuss optimization, increase efficiency, adjust the action plan and promote the most active and capable staff members;
- Using methods of stimulating volunteers' activity, particularly during working shifts;
- Change of volunteer functionality is a necessary tool, aimed at the diversity of the labor process. This allows you to save interest, change physical activity to mental, choose a zone with different levels of responsibility and the number of tasks that ultimately gives volunteers the opportunity to develop personal and professional competence;
- Development, implementation and use of formal and informal support for volunteers, as well as a system of mutual assistance.

Volunteers support provides: Consulting; providing a volunteer with the access to information used in the course of work tasks; solving organization related issues: Careful work with the schedule to avoid overloads, provision of necessary resources, workplace organization, reimbursement of expenses; providing excellent educational opportunities for development and excellence; support in establishing contacts and mutual assistance among volunteers.

5. Conclusions

Thus, the proposed measures will help volunteers to adapt to new situations, increase their stress resistance and enhance resilience, maintain their own emotional state, regardless of the nature and mode of work. The key principles of psychological support of volunteers include: empathy, participation, trust, active listening, feedback,

communication, teamwork. Timely volunteer support can enhance their self-esteem, help them to feel part of a community of people and experience the sensation of performing important business.

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