

Charity Work of Local Community: Results of the Sociological Research in the Russian Region*



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Abstract. In recent years, the participation of citizens in the solution of social problems and society's self-organization has become an important research agenda. Public practices are perceived as a crucial resource for socio-economic development at the state and local levels. The purpose of this paper is to identify the development level and features of motivation for participation/non-participation in charitable activities from the standpoint of the Russian region's local community. We present an approach to the essence and components of charity based on a critical analysis of academic literature. Through a mass public opinion survey in the Vologda Oblast, 2019; N=1900), we revealed the level of local community's involvement in certain charity forms (helping behavior, monetary donations, volunteerism as part of public organizations' activities). A low level of population's participation in formal charitable practices, related to work of voluntary associations, and high informal charitable activity in various forms of helping behavior draw some attention. Using a factor analysis of latent variables, the authors determined that social norms and religious values are among the main factors that encourage a local community to engage in charity work. In addition, we revealed that the formed idea about the predominance of other entities' social responsibility (primarily – the state) and suspicious attitude to a charity system become serious obstacles to the inclusion of a local community in charitable activities. The study on the current state of charitable activity in Russia's local communities can provide an empirical basis and theoretical impetus for basic research in this area and for practical work aimed at studying specific types of activities to increase population's involvement in local charity.

Key words: charity, local community, territorial development, social capital, helping behavior, monetary donations, volunteerism.

Introduction

Involvement of population in the solution of socially important issues is an important state and local resource promoting socio-economic development. Through social self-organization, social groups become more willing, ready, and capable to change living conditions.

A major way of population's participation in public life is charity, which can be carried out through voluntary associations (mostly NPOs – nonprofit organizations) and informal (situational) forms. Charity includes many proactive manifestations of efficient altruism, which contribute, among other things, to development of education, science and culture; preservation of traditions; rooting of social innovations; harmonization of social life [1]. Thus, the essence of charity is not only to help those in need, but also to promote socio-economic development, to improve the quality of life, to strengthen moral foundations,

and solidarity in society. As P. Singer rightly noted, charity can be one of the most important forms of moral behavior in the modern world [2].

The importance of charitable practices increases during global crisis periods. The success of national governments in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic will largely depend on citizens' charitable participation in solving social problems and society's cohesion. Studies of the largest international charitable foundation "CAF" shows that the demand for charitable purposes is higher than ever due to the coronavirus pandemic: from people affected by it and from the devastating consequences to economic and social life¹.

¹ *A COVID-19 Philanthropy Stimulus Package: Unlocking Further Fiving in the UK to Support Civil Society at a Time of Crisis.* CAF, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/caf-campaigns/a-champion-for-charities/policy-briefings-and-consultations-library/covid-19-philanthropy-stimulus-package> (accessed: February 6, 2020).

However, charity development levels significantly differ in cross-country comparison. Sociological data of the CAF World Giving Index project shows an indicator of the countries with the highest and lowest involvement in charity in out of 143 countries for 2009–2019 (Fig. 1).

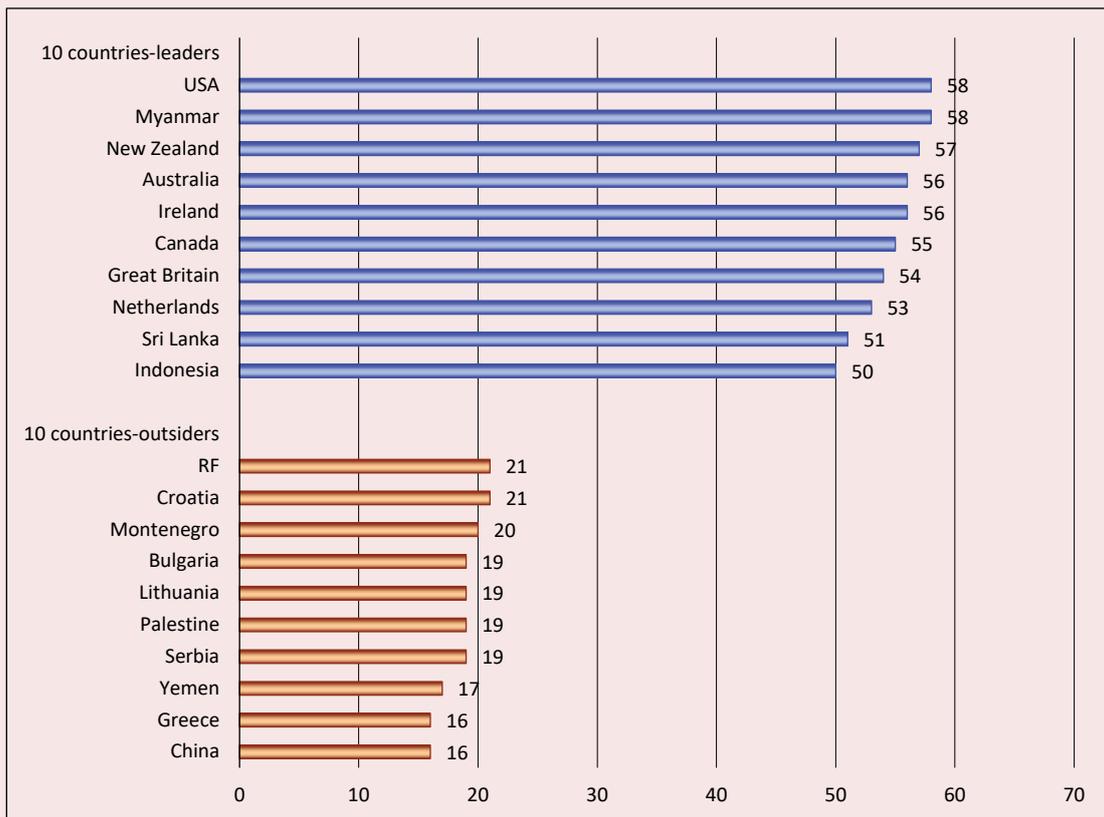
Figure 1 shows that Russia lags behind in the cross-country comparison. According to the CAF World Giving Index rating for 2009–2019, it is among ten outsider countries in terms of the charity development level. This fact determined a research interest in the study of charitable activities in Russia.

Considering the importance of charity as a diverse resource for social development, it is

extremely important to explore its state in Russian civil society. The analysis of issues at the level of local communities, where there are dense horizontal and vertical social ties, is of particular interest. Researchers note the globalization of civil society’s sphere. Local communities remain strengthened and of great importance despite global transnationalization trends [3].

There are various interpretations of the “local community” concept. It usually implies a locality, as well as real social groups with a special quality of relationships. It “feels more direct than society” and includes various types of local organizations and initiatives’ activities [4].

Figure 1. Countries with the highest and lowest average charity levels for 2009–2019 (aggregate indicator for such practices as helping a stranger, monetary donations, and volunteering in public organizations), %*



* CAF World Giving Index is based on a simple averaging of responses to three questions about participation in practices. They were asked in each country. Estimates are presented in percentage on the basis of which countries have been assigned an appropriate rank. Then, average scores for 10 years were calculated.

Source: *Ten Years of Giving Trends*. CAF World Giving Index. October 2019.

Clearly, many community initiatives go beyond its geographical boundaries, which develops communities of interest. Nevertheless, in our opinion, a local community consists of people living and working in a certain place, which makes this group more willing to participate in activities focused on the socio-economic development of a particular territory [5, p. 93].

The purpose of our research is to identify the level, motivation, and obstacles to the involvement of a local community in various charity forms. For this purpose, we selected an entity of the Northwestern Federal District of the Russian Federation – the Vologda Oblast. Statistics show that the region lags behind the all-Russian development level according to most analyzed socio-economic indicators². The region's low levels of socio-economic development indicate the importance of using various development resources, such as the charitable activities of the local communities.

The link between charity and socio-economic development

The presented research contributes to the academic debate linking civic participation to solve socially significant problems and promote socio-economic development in their local communities [6; 7; 8; 9]. The literature shows that the involvement of population in charity helps to achieve a balance between elite and mass behavior, since communities focus their attention and resources on solving social problems [8; 10; 11].

However, the link between charity and socio-economic development is not always direct. There is enough evidence in the literature that charitable activities can contribute to socio-economic development, but it can also provoke development of dependent relationships between donors and beneficiaries, preventing investment in a long-term

productive activity [12; 13]. In this regard, some scholars argue that charity becomes socially useful only when its purpose is to provide emergency assistance during economic crises – not achieve long-term development goals [13].

Charity is often interpreted as a form of “impure altruism”. A benefactor acts not just as a donor working for the benefit of other people, but also as a person who finds moral satisfaction or beneficial public recognition in altruistic activities [14]. In other words, a desire to engage in charity is understood by the authors as a form of social capital. People invest time and resources in their local social relations to improve their social status (for example, obtaining public recognition through any collective or individual actions). Thus, participation in charitable activities is a way for members of society to gain social recognition by voluntarily using their human or financial resources for the common good [15; 16].

Within the social capital concept, it is crucial to address the study of attitudes, such as social trust and norms that motivate charitable practice [7; 8; 17; 18]. The literature shows that socio-psychological foundations in society – trust, willingness to help each other, public approval, faith in justice, need for care, loyalty in a group, respect for authorities – influence the level of potential and real participation in charitable activities [19].

Availability of social capital can lead to a high level of social trust when formal and informal charitable organizations in society achieve their stated goals [6; 10]. On the contrary, achievement of stated goals by charitable communities means that they have a positive experience of working together, while showing their participants that they can take risks by investing their resources, regarding other members of a community, since these social investments are likely to bring returns in the future [20; 21]. The motivation to participate in charity, according to the researchers, should positively correlate with the level of trust [7].

² *Regions of Russia. Socio-Economic Indicators. 2020: Stat. Coll. Rosstat. Moscow, 2020. 1242 p.*

The academic literature also discusses how religious and secular norms affect the motivation for charitable activities. The fact that individuals firmly adhere to a religious faith, which usually corresponds to conservative political views, explains their more frequent participation in charitable organizations or making charitable donations [22; 23; 24; 25]. On the other hand, people with secular tendencies, who usually adhere to progressive political views, also tend to act pro-socially, as they are motivated to help or solve structural social problems, such as poverty or inequality [26].

The scholars show that socio-demographic and economic conditions also affect the motivation for charity. There is evidence of a positive correlation between the level of education, financial resources, life in a city and participation in charitable activities [22; 27; 28]. Moreover, charitable activity tends to increase in countries where there is no reliable state-funded social protection system [29]. In many countries, charity among local communities makes up for the lack or absence of a welfare state. However, there is insufficient evidence that socio-demographic conditions have a greater explanatory power for understanding attitudes to charity than, for example, social norms.

The problems of Russian charity are also explored in the academic literature. Scientists have conducted a comprehensive study of the history and current trends of Russian charity in comparison with other countries [30]. The literature on charity in Russia has also explored other topics, such as charity subject and the Internet [31], charity among elderly people [32], impact of trust on charity levels [33], and attitudes of a regional community toward charitable organizations [34].

Despite a significant number of works studying charity at the local community level, the literature analyzes only specific aspects regarding charity, which does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the link between charity

participation and socio-economic development. In addition, empirical data on the study of charity is limited. On the one hand, there are many available statistical materials on various aspects of charitable activities. On the other hand, the literature uses varying data collection, and, as a result, the findings are often incomparable.

Sources and methods

The lead author's sociological survey conducted by the Vologda Research Center of RAS in May–June 2019 on a representative sample of the adult population (over 18 years old) in the Vologda Oblast (N = 1900; hereinafter – the survey of VolRC RAS)³ constitutes the source of data. We used a three-stage territorial stratified sampling: the first stage – selection of the administrative districts of the Oblast according to the socio-economic development level (a technique of grouping areas was developed under the guidance of Professor T. V. Uskova); the second stage – selection of polling stations; the third stage – selection of households using the routing method. The selection of a respondent in a household was carried out using gender and age quotas (a connected quota). The sampling error does not exceed 3%. The survey was conducted according to a formalized questionnaire at the respondents' places of residence. Technical processing of the information was performed through the SPSS program version 25.

To achieve our goal, we used general scientific research methods – discourse analysis, comparison, synthesis, generalization, and induction/deduction – and special methods of working with mass sociological data – construction and analysis of linear (one-dimensional) and paired (two-dimensional) frequency distributions and tables, one-factor analysis of variance, and factor analysis.

³ The survey's sociological tools were developed by the authors' team of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research grant no. 19-011-00724 (head – Yu.V. Ukhanova).

Research results

According to the Russian legislation, charity is a voluntary activity of citizens and legal entities to selflessly transfer property, including money, to citizens or legal entities, to perform work for free, or to provide other support⁴. According to the Concept for Promoting Charity in the Russian Federation up until 2025, charity plays a crucial role in the country's development⁵.

General state support is aimed at activating the potential of charity as a resource that contributes to the formation and dissemination of innovative practices of social activities. The promotion of charity by the state allows supplementing budget sources for solving social problems with extra-budgetary funds and attract the labor resources of volunteers to the social sphere⁶.

In studying charity, a main issue is the essence of this social phenomenon. Charitable activities of local community are diverse: they can include voluntary donations of financial and material resources, free use of people's abilities, time, and energy in an individual or collective form. Based on the methodology of the CAF World Giving Index international project, we analyze charitable activities in three main areas: individual assistance to those in need (situational unorganized helping behavior), monetary donations, and formal volunteering in the framework of public organizations' activities.

⁴ On charitable activities and volunteering: Federal Law, dated August 11, 1995 (amended on December 18, 2018). Available at: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_7495/ (accessed: July 1, 2020).

⁵ Concept for promoting charity in the Russian Federation up until 2025: Decree of the RF Government no. 2705-p, dated November 15, 2019. Available at: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/72943544/> (accessed: July 1, 2020).

⁶ Benevolenskii V.B., Ivanov V.A., Ivanova N.V., et al. Volunteerism and charity in Russia and national development challenges: report for the XX April International Academic Conference On Economic and Social Development, Moscow, April 9–12, 2019. Ed. by I.V. Mersyanova. Moscow: HSE Publishing House, 2019. 120 p.

Helping behavior

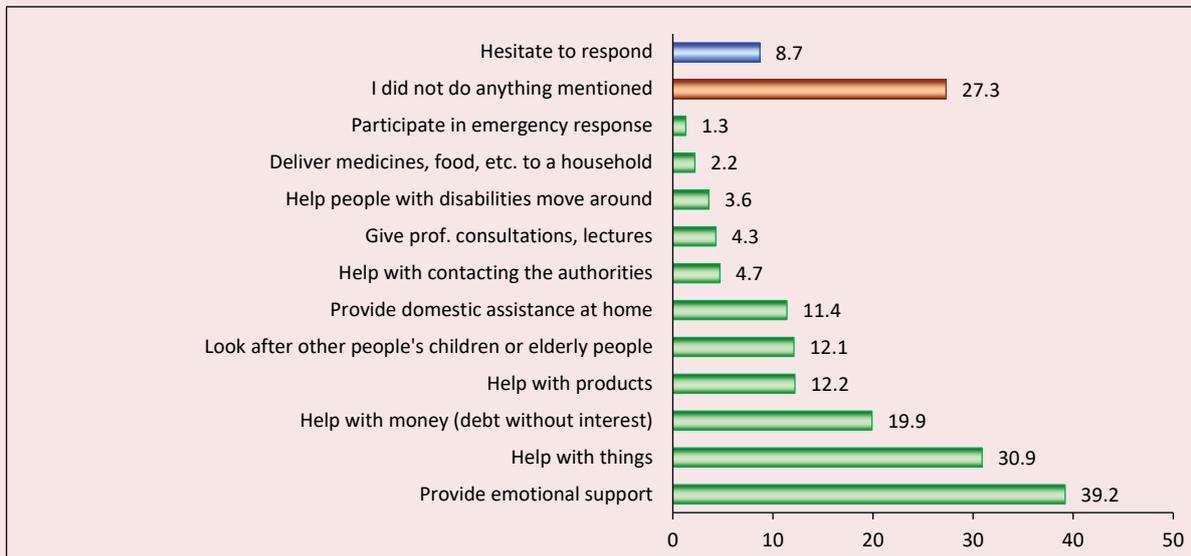
According to our original survey data conducted in the Vologda Oblast in 2019, most local community members are somehow involved in various forms of helping behavior: only 27% of respondents did not help those in need, and another 9% hesitated to respond (*Fig. 2*). The most common practices (in relation to non-family members, relatives, and close friends) are emotional support (39%), help with things (31%), and money assistance (in the form of a non-interest debt – 20%).

In general, the level of the local population's involvement in practices related to moral and material assistance to those in need is noteworthy, such as helping people financially and providing psychological support was between roughly 20 and 40%. These charity levels exceed, for example, the level of involvement in intellectual practices, which are the free provision of professional services, transfer of knowledge and skills, including contacts with authorities (4–5%), or participation in the elimination of consequences of natural disasters and emergency situations (1%).

Monetary donations

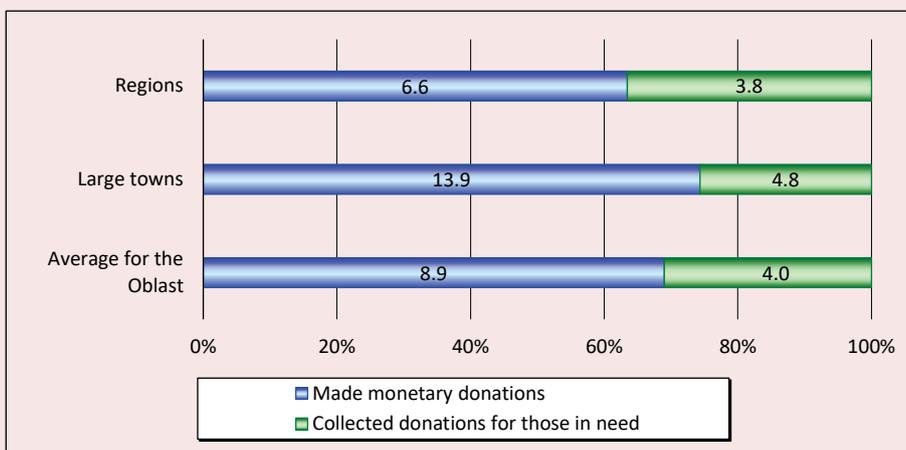
In 2019, only 9% of the region's surveyed residents gave money to people in need (free of charge), while monetary donations are more often made by people living in large towns than in districts (14 vs. 7%; *Fig. 3*). In addition, a small part of the local community, which organizes the collection of donations (4%), is noteworthy. In general, as data show, monetary charity has not become common among the local community.

Figure 2. Participation of the local community in various practices of helping behavior, the Vologda Oblast, 2019 (share of positive responses for each judgment), %



Source: VoIRC RAS sociological survey, 2019.

Figure 3. Level of involvement of the local community in monetary donations, the Vologda Oblast, 2019, % of respondents



Source: VoIRC RAS sociological survey, 2019.

Volunteer activities in public organizations

A volunteer activity is an important area of the charity development. The Concept for the Development of Volunteerism in the Russian Federation until 2025 clarifies that this implies “pro bono performance of works and (or) provision of services in order to solve social problems...”⁷. L. Salomon, based on a set of criteria developed and described by the International Labor Organization (ILO), identifies five functional features that define volunteerism: 1) it benefits others; 2) it is not a casual activity and conducted for a significant period of time; 3) it is pro bono; 4) it is not intended to benefit family members or close relatives; 5) it is not a mandatory activity [35].

Volunteers can carry out their activities individually (according to the methodology used, this form of charity is referred to as helping behavior) or as part of non-profit organizations. At the same time, we believe that special attention should be paid to studying volunteerism in activities of public organizations, since such charitable activity has the most stable connections and requires a certain regularity and affiliation.

According to the survey of VolRC RAS, only 13% of the local community members of the Vologda Oblast participated in volunteer activities through non-profit organizations, and this figure is even lower (not exceeding 7%) for regular activities (at least twice)⁸. At the same time, 20% of the Vologda Oblast residents say that they may participate in the NPOs volunteerism in the future, which indicates the potential for its development through the formation of a culture of self-assistance and support in the local community.

A descriptive analysis of differences in the level of involvement of the local community in charitable practices, depending on the awareness and trust in NPOs, showed that people who know about NPOs and trust them participate in charity more often, compared to the average level (43 and 53% vs. 33% in the sample as a whole; *Tab. 1*). Therefore, even though that the region had low engagement in formal volunteering, associated with activities in any organizations, and high informal volunteer activity, non-profit organizations play a significant role in the development of local social solidarity.

Table 1. Interconnection between the level of public awareness about NPOs and trust in them, and the participation of the local community in charity, % of respondents

Level of awareness and trust in NPOs	Yes, I participate	No, I do not participate
Do you know about the activities of NPOs in your town (district)?		
Yes, I know it well; I heard something	43.3	56.7
No, I do not know	21.2	78.8
How much do you trust NPOs?		
I fully and mostly trust them	52.9	47.1
I fully and mostly do not trust them	27.1	72.9
Sample average	32.8	67.2
Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey, 2019.		

⁷ Concept for the development of volunteerism in the Russian Federation until 2025: Order of the RF Government no. 2950, dated December 27, 2018. Available at: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/e6LFLgABRP4MyQ8mW7HCICGR8esYBYgq.pdf> (accessed: March 9, 2020).

⁸ VolRC RAS sociological survey, 2019. Response to the question: “How many times in the last 12 months have you worked as an NPO volunteer?”.

Thus, our study showed that the local community of the Vologda Oblast is more involved in such forms of charity as helping behavior outside of institutional structures (64%); involvement in volunteer activities through non-profit organizations is less developed (13%), as well as practices of monetary charity (9%; Fig. 4).

In general, the obtained regional findings correlate with the national situation. According to the international research of the CAF World Giving Index, over the past 10 years, Russians have been more likely to help strangers (35%)⁹, less likely to be involved in volunteer work through NPOs (16%), and less likely to make monetary donations (12%) (Tab. 2). The global community, on average, is more involved in such practices as

helping strangers (48%), but, at the international level, monetary donations are more common than, for example, volunteerism in public organizations (26 vs. 20%).

Motivation and obstacles to charitable activities of the local community

The study of the current level of the local community’s charitable activity and motives for participation/non-participation in such activities is an important aspect of exploring charity.

A third of the region’s population (32%) says that solidarity is the main motive for participating in charity (“anyone can be in trouble”), another third of respondents (28%) seeks to gain public recognition through charity, and every fifth respondent (20%) mentions that it is a way of expanding

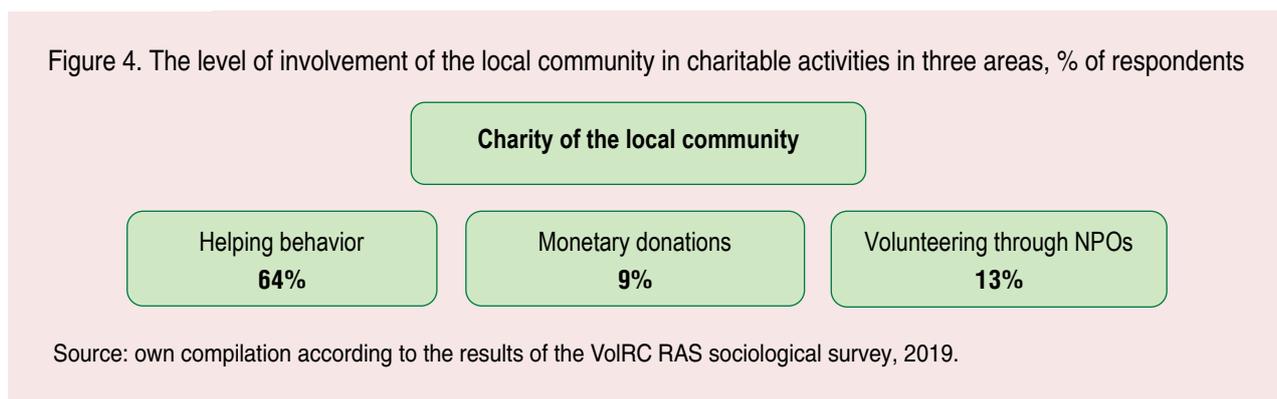


Table 2. Development of charity in the countries in three areas for 2009–2019 (average value for the period), % of respondents

Helping strangers		Monetary donations		Volunteerism in public organizations	
Country	%	Country	%	Country	%
Liberia	77	Myanmar	81	Sri Lanka	46
Sierra Leone	74	Great Britain	71	Turkmenistan	43
USA	72	Malta	71	Myanmar	43
Kenya	68	Thailand	71	Liberia	43
Zambia	67	Netherlands	71	USA	42
For reference: RF	35	For reference: RF	12	For reference: RF	16
Average for 143 countries	48	Average for 143 countries	26	Average for 143 countries	20

Source: *Ten Years of Giving Trends*. CAF World Giving Index, October 2019.

⁹ According to the survey methodology of VolRC RAS, we took into account not only assistance to strangers, but also to acquaintances, neighbors, etc. The reason is the fact that the sample covers, among other things, small towns where local communities are usually familiar with each other.

Table 3. Motives for participation/non-participation in charity based on self-assessments of the local community in the region, % of respondents for each judgment*

Motive for participation	%	Motive for non-participation	%
Trouble can happen to anyone	32	People should be helped by the state, not by benefactors	51
The desire to earn the approval of society (friends, acquaintances, relatives)	28	I do not believe that my help will really reach a recipient or will be used for its intended purpose	37
Opportunity to get connections, contacts	20	My family and I have a lot of problems of our own, there is no time to do charity work	20
I want to do something useful, to help people	15	I am not interested in it	12
Because me, my family, and friends once found themselves in a difficult situation	12	I am not sure about benefits of public activity	11
I have a lot of free time, I have nothing to do	5	It does not contribute to solving my own problems and problems of my family members	9
Get a financial reward	3	Such activities do not give me an opportunity for personal growth	9

* Distribution of respondents' answers to the questions: "Why do you participate in charitable activities?" and "Why do you not participate in charitable activities?".

Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey, 2019.

social ties (*Tab. 3*). The most important reason for not participating in charity, according to the population's self-assessments, is related to the belief that the state should help people, not philanthropists (51%). In addition, distrust in charity and charitable organizations also forms a barrier to involvement: 37% of respondents do not believe that their help will actually reach a recipient.

Researchers recognize the impact of charitable activities on a wide range of interested parties – volunteers, beneficiaries, communities, and society as a whole – and pay a lot of attention to the relationship between participation in charitable practices and individual areas of human life (social, cultural, psychological, economic) [36].

For in-depth understanding of the factors that affect motivation of community involvement in charity, the authors use the factor analysis to select latent variables (hereinafter – factors) of motivation with regards to charity. Latent variables or factors are non-directly measured constructs represented by two or more observable variables that correlate with each other ($p < 0,05$). Grouping of the observed features and their fixing into latent variables lead to the indicators' independence [37].

To identify factors that determine the local community's motivation to participate in charity, we conducted a latent-structural analysis using the factor analysis method¹⁰. As a result, latent variables (factors) of the local community's motivation for charitable activities were identified. Factor analysis was performed using correlating variables (using the "Pearson Correlation" method).

Based on the analysis of extensive scientific literature on charitable behavior, we selected a wide list of independent variables that reflect the respondents' values, beliefs, and socio-demographic characteristics. We used an indicator that characterizes experience of the local community's participation in charity as a dependent variable. It was recorded during the response to the question: "Over the past year, have you participated in any kind of charitable activity (helping behavior, monetary donations, voluntary, gratuitous work)?" An empirical approach, the number of variables was lowered, and three factors were identified that

¹⁰ Using the SPSS program, the data matrix was subjected to the Extraction Method factor analysis procedure: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. A number of factors was determined using the Kaiser criterion.

Table 4. Results of factor analysis of local community's charity

Factor (latent variable)	Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Social norms	Z11 – Religion	.796		
	Z12 – Public recognition	.730		
	Z13 – Career	.682		
	Z5 – Civic engagement	.520		
Socio-demographic characteristics	Z3 – Age		-.662	
	Z9 – Presence of children		.619	
	Z7 – Financial situation		-.501	
	Z8 – Marital status		.401	
Psychological attitudes	Z10 – Life satisfaction			.672
	Z14 – Self-sufficiency			.631
	Z6 – Social trust			.543
	Z15 – Trust in NPO			.400
In the analysis phase, only observations are used for which v2101 = 1 (“Yes, I participate in charity work”). Source: VolRC RAS sociological survey, 2019 (N = 1900).				

have a value greater than one and an explanatory power at a 65.7% level. While analyzing the factor structure, a load was considered significant at a 0.35 value on each factor scale.

The first identified factor (explaining 46.7% of total variance) combined variables that characterize life attitudes and values: importance of religion, public recognition, career in a person's life, as well as the level of civic engagement (*Tab. 4*). The maximum weight in this formation belongs to the religiosity indicator (“religion is important in my life”) with a 0.796 factor load value. Less significant was the indicator of civic engagement through self-assessment (0.52). Conventionally, we have designated this factor as social norms.

The second factor (7.4% variance) includes the provisions that indicate the socio-demographic characteristics of charity subjects: age, children, financial status, and marital status (married). The lowest value of the load in this factor is the indicators that characterize respondents' marital status (0.401). Two indicators negatively load the factor: age (-0.662) and financial status (-0.501).

A positive value of the third factor (10,8% variance) indicates the impact of psychological

attitudes on the motivation to participate in charitable practices, such as satisfaction with life (attitude “completely and mostly satisfied”, 0.672 load variable), self-sufficiency (attitude “I can do without the government support”, 0.631 load variable), social trust (attitude “most people can be trusted”, 0.543 load variable), trust in non-profit organizations (attitude “completely and mostly trust”, 0.4 variable load). It is designated as “psychological attitudes”. A positive value of the factor indicates the importance of subjective well-being and trust for charity involvement. The data obtained show that the first factor (social norms) has the greatest impact on the local community's involvement in charity, and the factor combining socio-demographic characteristics has the lowest impact.

Discussion

The academic literature links charitable activities to positive social, cultural, psychological, and economic consequences for local communities and society as a whole. We attempted to analyze the level of development, motivation, and obstacles to the local community's involvement in public life through charitable activities using the case-study

of the Russian region. However, before proceeding to the discussion of the results obtained, let us turn to the foreign experience of the charitable activity development.

The earlier analysis of international data revealed that the Netherlands occupies higher positions in comparison with other countries in terms of charitable activities. This caused a research interest in studying the Dutch experience of developing charitable practices. According to sociological data, from 2012 to 2016, nearly half of the country's residents engaged in volunteer activities at least once a year [38]. A high level of participation in charity has been observed in the Netherlands not only in recent years, but also in a long-term perspective: according to data of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics, this figure has always fluctuated between 42 and 45% since 1977 [38]. Due to the ageing of population in the Netherlands, the demand for health-related services actively increases, and volunteering in this area becomes increasingly more important [39].

In the Netherlands, people are motivated to engage in charity by altruism, sense of usefulness, desire to expand social networks, gain new skills, or sense of duty [40].

There are certain demographic groups that are more likely to do charity work than others. Most volunteers have higher education. There is an obvious difference between rural and urban residents: those who live in rural areas are more likely to engage in charity work.

In addition, the most important factor is the characteristics of the work activity (or its absence). Unemployed people, part-time workers, and those who are unable to work in "standard" circumstances due to other obligations or obstacles are more likely to engage in charity work than an average Dutch person [41; 42].

P. Dekker underlines that unemployed people in the Netherlands often find themselves on long

trajectories, where they are expected to volunteer to compensate for an unemployment allowance. This type of charitable activity is in the gray area between voluntary and involuntary. Often, an employee of the Insurance Agency (OST) encourages charitable activities for unemployed people, thereby contributing not only to the efficient usage of time, but also to their integration into society [43].

The case-study of the Netherlands is important for comparing conditions leading to a high level of participation in charity. In general, the Netherlands' experience shows that the existence of a strong and modern welfare state does not exclude participation in charity and vice versa (a common argument in the American literature). The study and comparison of successful charity development in different countries is a promising research area.

As previously mentioned, Russia lags behind other countries in terms of charity development. Descriptive statistics show that the Vologda Oblast is in a similar situation regarding the citizens' participation in charitable activities: helping behavior is the most common charity type – "small deeds" practices. The feature of such practices is that their time, effort, and finance costs are low; they are also situational, minimally organized and formalized, and they have quick results with tangible benefits. This trend is also global: the field of informal, self-organized, and decentralized initiatives, such as self-help groups, local community initiatives, as well as individual forms of helping behavior and support, is expanding [44].

Meanwhile, we should pay attention to a negative trend: despite the strengthening of the role of charity as a significant social phenomenon, there is a distrust among citizens to organized forms and types of charitable activities in Russian society; Russians have no associations with charity and volunteerism when it comes to specific gratuitous

assistance to a person in need without the participation of any organizations [45].

It was determined during the study that the main motives for participating in charity are linked not only to solidarity attitudes and desires to help, but also to a desire to gain public recognition and expand social ties. In this regard, charity is perceived as an encouraged phenomenon that brings people society's authority and respect. Regarding the public opinion of Russians, it seems relevant to discuss the prospect of forming an image of charity being not just a certain altruistic act, but a socially useful systemic activity aimed at achieving the common good¹¹.

The main reason for not participating in charity is related to the fact that respondents primarily see the state, not local communities, as the collective agent responsible for ensuring society's well-being (see tab. 3). In this regard, the post-Soviet Russian society is characterized by a paradoxical combination: distrust in the altruistic aspirations of other people and simultaneous expectation of the government altruism [30]. Consequently, the historical institutions of former Soviet Russia have a high degree of continuity.

Another major obstacle to the local community's involvement in charitable practices is the population's distrustful attitude toward charity and charitable organizations: they fear that their help will not reach a recipient (see tab. 3). Therefore, the fight against fraud is an acute problem for the image of the Russian charity. Recently, there have been increasing cases of calls to collect private donations backed by unscrupulous people¹². Of course, each similar case lowers trust in charitable organizations and generally discredits the very system of charity.

The in-depth analysis shows that the main factors, motivating the local population to

participate in charitable activities, are personal and social attitudes, such as respondents' religiosity, public recognition, career, life satisfaction, and self-sufficiency (see tab. 4). All coefficients for these factors are higher than 0.6. It shows their strong correlation with participation in charitable activities. The literature claims that there is a positive relationship between charity and increased satisfaction with life, personal achievements, social networks, and relationships, personal and career development [46]. P. Dekker and A. Brook state that the readiness of population for social activity increasingly depends on personal interests and needs, rather than on a sense of responsibility to society [47]. Individualistic views, as well as collective ones, can also stimulate prosocial behavior [48; 49], although they lead to a change of strictly formalized participation models to informal ones [50].

Religiosity and participation in religious organizations can be a significant source of social capital. This helps to explain why the factor of religion promotes involvement in charitable activities [51]. The literature claims that participation in religious organizations or communities increases life satisfaction, self-sufficiency, and efficiency, as religious communities create normal, often vertically organized, social networks [8; 52; 53]. It should be noted that social networks, created through participation in religious organizations, do motivate participants to engage in charitable activities, but at the expense of universal social trust. We encourage researchers to continue studying the relationship between religiosity and social trust in order to confirm or refute given interpretation.

It is revealed that financial situation as a motivational factor has a negative correlation to

¹¹ Non-institutional social activity of citizens: forms of implementation and possible support. Key findings of the comprehensive study (October 15, 2018). Zircon. Moscow, 2019.

¹² *Report on the State of Civil Society in the Russian Federation for 2019*. Moscow: Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 2019. Pp. 61–62.

engaging in charity work. This may be the result of personal and societal norms and values that transcend the socio-economic determinants of charity participation. However, it is theoretically possible that local communities must first achieve a certain degree of financial stability in order to have the emotional and financial resources to engage in charity [22; 27; 28]. Therefore, this alternative explanation would indicate an endogenous relationship between charity and the socio-economic development of local territories, which should be studied in the future.

Conclusion

Charity, as a practice of civic participation, is one of the most important resources for social development. Its essence is not only to help those in need, but also to promote innovative development, improve quality of life, strengthen moral foundations, promote solidarity, and social cohesion in society. Based on a comparison of the results of international sociological measurements, we revealed that, according to all presented charity practices, Russia is noticeably behind other countries. According to the CAF World Giving Index, Russia is among ten countries with the lowest level of charity development between 2009–2019. This caused a research interest in an in-depth study of Russian charity.

The analysis showed that the local community practices various forms of helping behavior more often than, for example, monetary donations. A low level of public participation in formal charitable practices, related to public organizations' activities, and a high level of informal charitable activity draw attention. At the same time, we revealed that non-profit organizations play a major role in the development of local social mutual assistance.

As a result of the factor analysis, we determined that the factor associated with life attitudes and values – importance of religion, public recognition, career in a person's life, etc. – has the greatest impact on the local community's involvement in charity. The main barriers to public participation in social activities are largely determined by two aspects: the belief that the government, not people, should be responsible for solving local social problems and sometimes distrustful attitudes to the existing system of charity and charitable organizations.

We believe that the theoretical comprehension and analysis of the extensive empirical basis of the local community's charitable activities can encourage fundamental research in this area and practical work aimed at studying specific activities with the aim of increasing the population's involvement in local charity.

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