

## Motives, commitment and volunteering experience among Spanish university students

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**Título:** Motivaciones, compromiso y experiencia voluntaria en estudiantes universitarios españoles.

**Resumen:** La población universitaria es una de las que mayoritariamente participa en el fenómeno del voluntariado. Mediante el diseño de la presente investigación se pretende explorar las variables que explican por qué una persona decide hacerse voluntaria. En este estudio, en el que participaron 168 personas, se analizó la influencia de diferentes motivaciones en la intención de llevar a cabo labores de voluntariado, el compromiso que los participantes estarían dispuestos a afrontar y la experiencia anterior de voluntariado. Los resultados ponen de manifiesto la relevancia de diferentes motivaciones como el interés humanitario de ayudar a otros para ejercer una adecuada labor de voluntariado. A su vez, los participantes otorgan menos importancia a las motivaciones basadas en el incremento de la autoestima que les proporciona el ser voluntarios. Por otra parte, los resultados enfatizan la importancia de la experiencia anterior en actividades de voluntariado para garantizar un mayor compromiso con una entidad sin ánimo de lucro.

**Palabras clave:** Voluntariado; motivaciones; compromiso; conducta prosocial.

**Abstract:** University students are one of the social groups that are most involved in volunteering. This study was designed to explore some variables that facilitate why a person decides to become a volunteer. The study involved 168 participants and analyzed the influence of different motives on volunteering, the commitment the participants would be ready to take on, and previous experience as a volunteer. The results show the importance of different motives as the humanitarian interest in helping others in performing adequate volunteering work. Also according to the participants, esteem enhancement motives were the least important ones. Moreover, the findings emphasize the weight of previous experience in volunteering activities in ensuring a greater commitment to an organization.

**Key words:** Volunteering; motives; commitment; prosocial behavior.

### Introduction

In Spain there are more than a million volunteers, that is, people who decide to devote part of their time to carrying out activities in non-profit institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Volunteering is an important mean of citizen participation and mobilization. In the field of social sciences, volunteering has been related to altruistic or prosocial behavior; such behavior has been the subject of a great deal of theoretical and empirical research in Social Psychology for about thirty years (Piliavin & Charng, 1990). In this approach, one of the aims of research has been to identify the behavioral variables that explain why people become volunteers, what drives them to volunteering and keeps them active in spite of the inherent difficulties of their task (Medina, 1999). University students are one of the social groups that cooperate most often with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in volunteering activities. Yet, although the number of volunteers is increasing and the activity is very positively valued by society, the dropout rate of university students from volunteering after a year also seems to be quite high. Among other aspects, the motives of students who commit their time to different organizations have been shown to be an important factor that explains some differences between people who decide to become volunteers and people who do not; they also explain differences between volunteers who remain so for the long-

est time and those who drop out shortly after beginning (Omoto & Snyder, 1995; 2002).

As mentioned above, one of the psychosocial concepts that have been dealt with the most regarding volunteering is helping behavior or prosocial behavior. Helping behavior can be defined as any action that leads to providing some benefit to someone else or increasing his or her welfare (Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995). Altruism is shown in actions that benefit others but also imply an unselfish motivation in the person who carries out the action (Macaulay & Berkowitz, 1970; Moya, 1999). According to Batson (1991), altruism is a motivational state whose ultimate goal is to increase the welfare of another individual or individuals. Now that the concept has been defined, we might ask 'What are the reasons why we may help others?' Helping has benefits, which can be material – a monetary reward, for example – or psychological and social – social recognition, self-satisfaction, blame avoidance or positive feelings associated to seeing a person stop suffering (Schroeder et al., 1995). As regards helping behavior, volunteering is a positive social phenomenon that refers to a specific type of helping behavior: it is planned, extends over time, benefits strangers in principle and takes place in the context of non-profit organizations (Chacón, 1985; Clary & Snyder, 1991; Chacón, Vecina, & Dávila, 2007; Dávila, 2002). Different theoretical approaches have been proposed to explain the reasons why helping behavior appears or remains.

Learning Theories (Bandura, 1977) have explained that the fact that people help others depends on their personal learning history. Helping behavior is more likely if the individual has previously received reinforcement for doing so

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and less likely if the individual has been punished for providing help. Just as other types of behavior, helping behavior can also be learned by modeling, that is, by observing someone else performing helping behavior (Batson, 1998). According to the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), once individuals have internalized the reinforcements that maintain the helping behavior because they consider it is beneficial and desirable for them, they no longer need external reinforcements to continue performing it. From another perspective, the Just World Theory (Lerner, 1980) suggests that some people tend to believe that social inequalities are relatively fair and people get what they deserve or deserve what they get. From this point of view, we might consider that people deserve the help we are ready to provide depending on how much control we believe they have on the causes of their problem. Help will then decrease if we consider that people somehow deserve the disadvantaged situation they are in, since it is a result of their behavior – which they have control over. On the contrary, the need to help will increase if we believe the problem is a consequence of misfortune (Lerner, 1977). This is in line with studies that had showed the association between volunteering and ideological variables, e.g. religiosity (Borgonovi, 2008; Kulik, 2007; Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006; Shimizu & Liu, 2000). Berger (2006) suggested that the people identified as a member of one religious group may increase the number of personal invitations to volunteer, increasing one's knowledge about where and how to volunteer, and thereby facilitating the volunteering decision.

Other studies have focused on analyzing the relation that exists between sociodemographic variables and volunteer participation (Hayghe, 1991; Hodgkinson, Weitzman, Noga, & Gorski, 1992; Palici & Korn, 1989; Pancer & Pratt, 1999). More specifically, gender has been related to participation in volunteering. According to the findings, being a female is one of the predictor variables of volunteering (Hodgkinson et al., 1992). Another finding is that a great deal of the people who volunteer are young university students with a medium-high socio-educational level (Palisi & Korn, 1989; Pancer & Pratt, 1999) whose studies or jobs are related to helping other people (nursing, psychology, medicine,...) (Cortés, Hernán, & López, 1998; Fletcher & Major, 2004; Medina, 1999).

Researchers have also explored the possible role played by some variables such as social support and their relation with volunteering. Different studies have found that the fact of belonging to broad social networks, being a member of many organizations, and having previous volunteering experience increase the chances of becoming a volunteer (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood, & Craft, 1995; Wilson & Musik, 1997).

Finally, numerous studies have focused on exploring motivational variables and their involvement in volunteering behavior (Chacón & Vecina, 1999; Clary & Snyder, 1991; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Henderson, 1981; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). We can state that the behavior of human

beings generally responds to their motives. In other words, motives are a cause of behavior. A motive can be defined as the internal process that drives the individual. This drive is related in turn to an internal or external event (Palmero, 2005). According to most studies about this subject, the motives of volunteers include a combination of altruism or other-oriented motives – concern for the welfare of others – and purely intrinsic or self-oriented motives – concern for one's own benefit – (Barz, 2001; Batson, Ahmad, & Tsang, 2002; Baumann, Cialdini, & Kenrick, 1981; Black & Kovacs, 1996; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Winniford, Carpenter, & Stanley, 1995).

Clary and Snyder (1991, 1999) proposed a theory that reflects the relation between the main motives of individuals and their participation in volunteering activities quite well. According to them, people may become volunteers because of very different motives. These motives fulfill different objectives along the same lines as what has traditionally been postulated for personal attitudes and opinions (Katz, 1960). According to this theory, people may show apparently similar behavior for very different reasons, since it is used to satisfy several functions at the same time or at different moments in time (Dávila, 2002). The Functional Theory applied to volunteering behavior is based on the idea that there is no single factor that leads to becoming a volunteer and that some factors are more important than others depending on certain personal characteristics. Some of the motivations highlighted in this model are listed below (Chacón et al., 2007; Clary & Snyder, 1991, 1999; López-Cábanas & Chacón, 1997; Omoto & Snyder, 1999):

- The expression of values of the individual. Interest in becoming a volunteer is based on humanitarian values of helping others or on religious values.
- The adaptive or social adjustment function. Volunteering is a mean to adapt to a reference group. Therefore, individuals become volunteers to obtain the support of their friends or family.
- The knowledge function. In this case there is motivation to acquire experience and knowledge or skills, and so on.
- The ego-defensive function. Individuals may become volunteers to protect themselves from their fears and anxieties, personal insecurities or feelings of guilt, among others.

One of the studies of Omoto and Snyder (1995) supports this theoretical model and identifies five motives in volunteers working with AIDS patients. These motives are distinguished from one another by their self-oriented (centered on oneself) or other-oriented (centered on others) nature, and are the following:

- A) Other-oriented motives include those called “Values” and “Community Concern” by Omoto and Snyder (1995):
  - Values refers to the humanitarian interest in helping others.

- Community Concern reflects the will to help a specific group.
- B) Self-oriented motives include “Knowledge”, “Personal Development” and “Esteem Enhancement”:
  - Knowledge refers to interest in learning about the disease or problem of the group one is helping.
  - Personal Development is related to the need to learn about oneself.
  - Esteem Enhancement is a motive based on the need to feel good about oneself.

Chacón and Vecina (1999) replicated the study and obtained a very similar factor structure to that shown by Omoto and Snyder (1995) in a Spanish sample of 130 volunteers who also worked with AIDS patients.

The present study is aimed at exploring what kind of variables may play a role in volunteering among university students in a Spanish sample. The main contribution to the current study is to study the influence of demographic, motivational, ideological, and other factors (as social support and previous experience) together on volunteering in a Spanish sample. First, we wish to find out what type of motive is most important in volunteering. Second, we intend to study the relation between sociodemographic and ideological variables and each type of motive. Finally, we plan to analyze whether variables such as previous volunteering experience, and social support – knowing other people who volunteer – can be used to differentiate the commitment volunteers have with a given organization.

## Method

### Participants

The sample included 168 university students who registered as volunteers at CICODE (the Center for Development Cooperation Initiatives of the University of Granada) at the beginning of the academic year. The mean age was 21.57 years ( $SD = 2.52$ ). The sample was formed by 20.2% males and 79.8% females.

### Instruments

A questionnaire including the following measures was developed:

- Sociodemographic information about the volunteers (age, gender, religion, etc.).
- Previous volunteering experience and time devoted (whether the individual has ever volunteered and for how long, in months).
- Social support of the volunteer (whether the volunteer knows anybody with a close relationship involved in volunteering). For this question, a dichotomic response scale was used (yes/not).
- Questions related to the time the volunteers would be ready to devote to volunteering tasks. In the results, these

data are called General Commitment (time in months) and Specific Commitment (time in hours per week).

- Lipkus’ Just World Scale (1991). This scale was validated by the author by comparing it to Rubin and Peplau’s Just World Scale (1975) and obtained satisfactory psychometric properties. The scale includes statements about beliefs that tend to consider that the world is a just place where people get what they deserve. It has a 6-point Likert-type response format where 1 means that the individual “totally disagrees” with the statement and 6 means that the individual “totally agrees” with it. In our sample, the internal consistency of the measure was acceptable ( $alpha = .70$ ), although it was lower than that obtained by Lipkus (1991), which was .82 in an American sample of 147 males and 177 females.
- Scale of motives that the volunteers considered necessary for their task. The scale is based on the Aids Volunteer Motivation Questionnaire (AVMQ) designed by Omoto and Snyder (1995) and later validated and adapted to a Spanish sample by Chacón and Vecina (1999). The latter obtained a high reliability index ( $alpha = .90$ ) in a sample of 130 Spanish AIDS volunteers. The scale included 25 items that assess different motives such as Esteem Enhancement, Personal Development, Values, and Community Concern. Some items were adapted in order to make them more general for all the communities volunteers could work with. This scale included a 7-point Likert-type response format, where 1 meant that the motive was “not important at all” for the volunteering activity, and 7 showed it was “extremely important”. We obtained a satisfactory Cronbach’s  $alpha$  (.91).

### Procedure

Researchers contacted with the Centre for Development Cooperation Initiatives of the University of Granada (CICODE) to contact with university students who had intention to be volunteers. Data collection took place at the beginning of the academic year, during an introductory workshop for university volunteers organized by the CICODE. Data were collected by two trained researchers comprehensively in the sampling requirements and in the administration of the instruments used in the study. Participants were informed of the aims of the research and also that their responses would be anonymous and total confidentiality was guaranteed in the treatment of the data. Participants agreed to answer a battery of self-administered questionnaires individually and voluntarily at the request of the researchers. The data were collected in a big auditorium where all participants answer the questionnaire individually but with the rest of participants.

## Results

### Descriptive analysis

- *Sociodemographic information*: The participants in the initial questionnaire (168) were university students. The degrees

with highest proportion of participants were: Psychology (15.5%), Medicine (8.3%) and Pedagogy (6%). Six percent of participants did not have a paid job, 14.3% worked during the holidays, 8.3% had an occasional job, 6.5% worked by hours, and only 2.4% had a full-time job and 3% had a part-time job. As regards religion, 26.2% of the participants considered themselves as not religious and just the 0.6% saw themselves as extremely religious. The average score for this variable was 3.30 ( $SD = 2.04$ ) (response scores ranging from 1 to 9; the higher the score, the more religious the participant considered him/herself).

- *Previous volunteering experience:* 36.1% of the participants had previous experience in volunteering with an average time of 12.09 months and 62.7% of the participants had not previous volunteering experience.
- *Social support:* As for social support in volunteering activities, that is, whether they knew anybody in their close circle involved in volunteering, 60% of the participants stated that they knew an average of 5 people in their close circle involved in volunteering.
- *Commitment:* As for the level of commitment that the volunteers were ready to take, the mean general commitment of the participants was 12 months, and the mean specific commitment (hours per week) was 3.85 hours a week.
- *Just World Scale.* The average score for this variable was 2.64 ( $SD = .67$ ).
- *Motivations Scale:* To explore the internal structure of the Motivations Scale, we carried out a principal component analysis with varimax rotation of the 25 items in the scale. Before to run this analysis, it was calculated the measure of sampling adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test. The KMO index showed a score of 0.841, and the Bartlett's test revealed to be significant,  $\chi^2(300) = 1983.26$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , what it leads us to conclude the factorial analysis was pertinent to be run.

The general scale obtained a very high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The result dimensional structure included five factors, which explained the 62.02% of the variance. They included items that refer to different typologies of motives pointed out in earlier studies by Omoto and Snyder (1995, 1999), and Chacón and Vecina (1999).

As summarized in Table 1, the first factor referred to what it was called by Omoto and Snyder (1995) as Esteem Enhancement, which, as mentioned above, is aimed at improving one's personal welfare. Some of the items included were (I volunteer to) "feel needed by someone", "feel less lonely", and "make my life more stable. Results about this factor's reliability show a high  $\alpha$  (.88).

The second factor included items referred to the Knowledge and Community Concern factors from Omoto and Snyder's motivations typology. Although in the original scale these two factors were separated, in our sample were considered jointly because they refer to the aim of improving the

welfare and knowledge of a specific group of people. In the current study from now on this factor will be called Knowledge and Community Concern. Some items included in this factor were "concern for the interests of the group", "experiencing the emotions felt by the group" and "being able to learn more about the group". The reliability of this factor was also appropriate ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

The third factor involved Personal Development motives, that is, those related to learning about oneself. A few examples of the items with high loadings on this factor were (I volunteer to...): "achieve a change in myself", "discover my own skills", and "learn to know my own strengths and weaknesses". Again, internal consistency was high ( $\alpha = .84$ ). The fourth factor referred to Values motives, whose ultimate goal is to help others and improve their welfare. This factor was formed by items (I volunteer to...) as: "be able to give affection to others", "enjoy helping other people", and "be humanitarian and help others". In this case, moderate reliability was obtained ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

The fifth factor was formed by just two items, one related to the Knowledge factor, and the other with Values motives in the original scale. The correlation between these two items was relatively low ( $r = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ), therefore this factor was removed for the following analyses.

#### Importance of the different motives from the volunteers' point of view

To study what type of motive was considered most and least important in volunteering by the participants, we carried out some t test for independent samples. Results showed that Values motives obtained the highest scores ( $M = 5.96$ ), followed by Personal Development motives ( $M = 4.88$ ), Knowledge and Community Concern ( $M = 4.83$ ), and finally Esteem Enhancement motives, considered the least important ( $M = 3.70$ ). There were significant differences between all the factors apart from the factors called Knowledge and Community Concern and Personal Development that were considered by participants as equally important.

The statistics for the comparisons between the motives which showed being significant were the following: Values and Personal Development motives,  $t(166) = -11.18$ ;  $p = .000$ ; Value and Community Concern motives,  $t(166) = -13.36$ ;  $p = .000$ ; Values and Esteem Enhancement motives,  $t(166) = -20.38$ ;  $p = .000$ ; Esteem Enhancement and Personal Development,  $t(166) = -12.88$ ;  $p = .000$ ; and Esteem Enhancement and Community Concern motives  $t(166) = -11.57$ ;  $p = .000$ ; We used the Bonferroni correction to carry out multiple comparisons, and the level of significance of all the comparisons did not exceed the value  $p = .05$ .

**Relation between sociodemographic and ideological variables and the different types of motives**

To explore the relation between the main sociodemographic variables measured and the different motivational categories of interest we performed bivariate Pearson correlations between these two types of variables. The correlation matrix obtained is shown in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the different motives showed some relation with the sociodemographic and ideological variables studied. More specifically, sex correlated positively with all the motives apart from the personal development. This showed that the female participants considered more important than men the Values, the Knowledge and Community Concern, and the Esteem Enhancement motives to be volunteer.

**Table 1:** Results of the factor analysis obtained from the Volunteer Motivation Scale adapted from Omoto and Snyder (1995).

Items	F1 Esteem Enhancement	F2 Knowledge and Community Concern	F3 Personal Development	F4 Values	F5
“escape from sources of stress in my life”	0.81 <sup>1</sup>				
“feel needed by someone”	0.78				
“make my life more stable”	0.77				
“feel less lonely”	0.76				
“feel better about myself”	0.73				
“face my personal fears and anxiety...”	0.66				
“acquire experience in difficult situations”	0.58				
“concern for the interests of the group”		0.85			
“put myself in the situation of the group...”		0.80			
“experience the emotions of the group”		0.74			
“help the people of the group”		0.72			
“learn how the people of the group behave”		0.59			
“meet people who belong to the group”		0.59			
“consider myself very conscious...”		0.59			
“feel obliged to do something for the group”		0.41			
“achieve a change in myself”			0.81		
“discover my own skills”			0.77		
“meet people who are similar to me”			0.71		
“make new friends and meet new people”			0.68		
“learn to know my own strengths and weaknesses”			0.66		
“be able to give affection to others”				0.78	
“enjoy helping other people”				0.76	
“be humanitarian and help others”				0.65	
“because of my values, beliefs and principles”					0.82
“learn more about the group”					0.49
Total explained variance (%)	30.92	12.48	7.46	6.61	4.56
Cronbach’s <i>alpha</i>	0.88	0.85	0.84	0.70	0.26

Note.- 1. Items’ loadings for each factor.

**Table 2:** Correlations between the different sociodemographic and ideological values and the types of motives measured

	Esteem Enhancement	Community Concern	Personal Development	Values
Age	-.16*	-.03	-.02	-.08
Sex	.22**	.21**	.11	.22**
Religion	.16*	.14	.14	.25**
Just World	.16*	-.05	.25**	.21**

Note.- \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Related to the ideological variables, religion correlated with all types of motives. These correlations showed that the more religious the participants considered themselves; the more motivated for all the motives measures taken they were found to be. Respect to the Just World scale, the results revealed a correlation with Esteem Enhancement, Per-

sonal Development and Values motives. That is, participants who agreed the most with the belief that people get what they deserve in life were those that most often referred to humanitarian interest in helping others, and the need to improve their self-esteem to explain their participation in volunteering.

### Effect of previous experience and social support on Commitment to the organization

One of the main goals of this study was to determine whether previous experience in volunteering or knowing people who volunteer may play a role in the volunteer's commitment to the organization. To prove it, we performed two regression analyses in which the dependent variable was the score on the general and specific commitment, and the predictor variables taken were the average punctuation of previous volunteering experience, participation in social activities, and social support. Regarding the general commitment, the regression was significant ( $R^2 = .09$ ),  $F(2, 81) = 3.74$ ,  $p = .028$ ). As shown in Table 3, having previous volunteering experience appeared as a significant predictor of the

volunteer's general commitment to the organization. Participants who had previous volunteering experience showed a higher general commitment (time they were ready to devote to volunteer in months) than participants with no previous volunteering experience ( $M = 19.8$ ,  $SD = 20.74$  vs.  $M = 9.64$ ,  $SD = 5.07$ ). Social support does not seem to be a good predictor of the general commitment). Related to specific commitment (hours participants were ready to devote every week), the regression was marginally significant ( $R^2 = .05$ ),  $F(2, 99) = 3.39$ ,  $p = .097$ ). The best predictor was the social support (see Table 3); participants who knew people who volunteered were ready to devote more hours every week than those who did not know anybody involved in volunteering ( $M = 3.45$  vs.  $M = 4.55$  hours).

**Table 3:** Results of the linear regression analysis that predict previous experience and social support on general and specific commitment to the organization.

	Beta		T		Sig.	
	General	Specific	General	Specific	General	Specific
Previous volunteering experience	-.25	-.12	-2.30	-1.14	.024	.256
Social support (knowing volunteers)	-.13	.21	-1.25	2.08	.214	.040

In summary, length of previous participation in social activities was positively correlated to later commitment to an organization. The longer the participants had previously volunteered, the greater their specific commitment to the organization, that is, the greater their intention to devote more hours a week to it.

### Discussion

University students are one of the social groups that are most involved in behaviour helping and volunteering. The results of this study show a profile of university student volunteers with a mean age of 21-22 years and a greater presence of females than males (Hodgkinson et al., 1992), with a background of humanitarian issues, and studies related of helping others (Cortés et al., 1998; Fletcher & Major, 2004; Medina, 1999).

Knowing the reasons why people become volunteers, including their motives, is a key issue if we want to use the right mechanisms to attract them and especially get them to continue cooperating with the organizations. Thus, the present research tried to explain some variables implied in the intention to be volunteer and also explain the commitment in an organization.

Firstly, results of this study agree with those of earlier research and show the importance of motives in the enrollment of young university students in volunteering (Baumann et al., 1981; Chacón & Vecina, 1999; Clary & Snyder, 1991; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Henderson, 1981; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). As we analyzed with the data shown here, the possible sources of motives that make individuals get involved in volunteering or in community service can be grouped into the following: the need to help others and do

something useful for them; awareness of community needs (Hellman, Hoppes, & Ellison, 2006); to acquire new experiences and personal development; to fight for an ideal of justice or equality; or to feel good about oneself. It also seems interesting to take into account that among people who start volunteering when they are university students, one of the most important types of motives which motivate them in involving in volunteer experiences are those we called Values or humanitarian (Sherer, 2004; Soler & Bueno, 1997). According to the participants, esteem enhancement motives were the least important ones. However, studies carried out so far as well as the present study seem to prove that there are no "pure" motives that lead volunteers to commit themselves and maintain their commitment. Instead, there seems to be a combination of factors, among which Values, Community Concern and motives aimed at improving one's own welfare, that is, Personal Development and Esteem Enhancement motives stand out (Hwang, Grabb, & Curtis, 2005).

Secondly, because ideological factors such as beliefs in a just world or religious attitudes have often been associated to helping behavior (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006; Shimizu & Liu, 2000), we analyze the relationships between ideological variables and motivations that people had to be a volunteer. Results showed that considered oneself as a religious person, and beliefs in a just world were related to the participants' motives, to volunteer. Most of religious, in their principles, assume the requirements to be humanitarian and give affect and help to others (Borgonovi, 2008; Kulik, 2007; Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006; Shimizu & Liu, 2000). Related to the other ideological variable measured, the just world beliefs, it had a positive relation with esteem enhancement, personal development and values. According to Hafer and Bégué (2005)

people develop a general justice motive and to organizing their lives around principles of deservingness. Therefore, the need to help others could increase when people believe the injustice is a consequence of misfortune (Lerner, 1977; Lerner, Miller, & Holmes, 1976).

Finally, results of this study have also shown greater general commitment to volunteering in people who had previous volunteering experience. This finding is consistent with previous studies which have postulated that being a member of organizations and having previous experience as a volunteer increase the chances of becoming a volunteer (Jackson et al., 1995; Wilson & Musik, 1997) and showing greater commitment to the organization.

By way of conclusion, we can say that a key factor that facilitates the volunteers' continuance in organizations is the commitment they take on and their intention to stay in the

organization they commit themselves to (Dávila & Chacón, 2007; Greenslade & White, 2005; Hellman et al., 2006). In the volunteer selection process it would be interesting to take into account the importance of preferably selecting people who have already been involved in volunteering and therefore have some experience when they start to cooperate with a new organization. It is likely that these individuals are youth who already know what their commitment implies and have decided to volunteer again because they are really motivated. Therefore, this may be an appropriate way to guarantee a greater long-term commitment of volunteers. However other researches should explore some of the factors studied in the present study in non volunteer samples in order to identify the most important variable which affect the intention to commit with non profit institutions.

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