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What is This?
Self-Determination Theory as a Framework for Exploring the Impact of the Organizational Context on Volunteer Motivation: A Study of Romanian Volunteers

Simona Haivas¹, Joeri Hofmans², and Roland Pepermans²

Abstract
In the present study, we use the self-determination theory (SDT) as a framework to explore the mediating role of needs satisfaction (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) on the relationship between the volunteers’ motivation and two aspects of the organizational context (i.e., social network and autonomous vs. controlled work climate). Data from 349 Romanian volunteers provided general support for SDT and emphasized the effect of an autonomy-supportive climate initiated by the coordinator in volunteers’ autonomous motivation. The results showed that needs satisfaction acts as a partial mediator of the relationship between work climate and volunteers autonomous motivation. The social network size was positively related to needs satisfaction but has no direct impact on autonomous motivation. Practical implications and future research are discussed.

Keywords
volunteering, self-determination, needs satisfaction, motivation, social network

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Introduction

Because motivators that are used for paid work usually do not apply to volunteering, a number of studies have been undertaken to unravel why people decide to volunteer. These studies revealed that (a) people volunteer because of an altruism–egoism mixture of motives such as a desire to help others or to satisfy important personal, social, and psychological goals (e.g., Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Smith, 1994) and that (b) personal dispositions, such as empathy or prosocial personality, also play a key role (Davis et al., 1999; Penner, 2002). Probably the most comprehensive and popular approach concerning the drive to volunteer is the one proposed by Clary and Snyder (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1991; Liao-Troth, 2005; Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999). They identified six motives that would be pursued by performing volunteering activities: expressing important values, obtaining a better understanding, enhancing self-esteem, fitting into one’s social group, developing career skills and opportunities, and its protective effect.

In general, previous studies have predominantly conceptualized the drive to volunteer as a set of motives that serves different personal and social functions. In that sense, they assume that volunteers are motivated for fulfilling activities that respond to their personal motives. As a consequence, the organizational context plays a key role in volunteer motivation as it may or may not add to the fulfillment of these personal motives. However, the impact of organizational experiences on the volunteers’ motivation has, to our knowledge, largely been ignored. The present study will respond to this limitation by shedding light on the relationship between the motivation for the volunteering activities and two aspects of the organizational environment (i.e., social network, and autonomous vs. controlled work climate). To this end, we will rely on the self-determination theory (SDT), as this is one of the most important and encompassing motivation theories at present (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

SDT

SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002) is a meta-theory of human motivation which includes five minitheories and several motivation-related concepts. For this article, we will only refer to the following three components of the theory: social context (which we will refer throughout the article as organizational context), needs satisfaction, and motivation. In general, according to SDT, the social context has an impact on the satisfaction of the needs, and this in turn influences autonomous (or self-determined) motivation.

In particular, SDT states that all individuals have innate tendencies to grow and develop toward their full potential. To do so, SDT argues that the three basic psychological needs should be satisfied, that is, the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). People have their autonomy need satisfied when they experience ownership of their behavior and act with a sense of volition (Deci & Ryan, 2000), their competence need can be satisfied when they are able to successfully achieve desired outcomes, meet performance standards and manage different challenges.
(Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007), and their relatedness need gets satisfied when they feel connected with others and feel cared for by them (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007).

To experience needs satisfaction, the theory further states that support and “nutrients” from the social context are necessary (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this respect, SDT differentiates between two types of contexts. An autonomy supportive context refers to an environment in which persons with authority (such as managers, coordinators, or teachers) take the perspectives of others into account, offer relevant information and opportunities to choose, encourage initiative, provide optimal challenges and positive feedback, and facilitate a secure environment for social interactions. In contrast, a controlling supportive context refers to an environment in which people experience pressure to think, feel, or behave in specified ways (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Williams & Deci, 1996). In an organizational setting, autonomy support does not refer to job characteristics but to the interpersonal climate created between a supervisor or coordinator and the work team members (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

SDT assumes that social contexts facilitate two major types of motivation through satisfaction of the three basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this respect, a central distinction is made between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation refers to behavior that is performed because of personal choice and because the subject finds pleasure in it. Moreover, autonomous motivation can further be subdivided into three components that differ in terms of how internalized the behavioral motives are. From highly to less internalized, one distinguishes: intrinsic motivation (e.g., when helping in itself gives joy), integrated regulation (e.g., when being a volunteer is central to one’s identity), and identified regulation (e.g., when volunteering is considered to support an important personal cause).

In contrast to autonomous motivation stands controlled motivation, which refers to doing something to receive a reward or to avoid punishment or feelings of guilt. Controlled motivation can be subdivided into two components that differ in terms of how internalized the behavioral motives are. Introjected regulation refers to a low form of internalization when behaviors are performed to avoid guilt and shame or to obtain ego enhancements and feelings of worth (e.g., engaging in volunteering to escape the feeling of guilt caused by being more fortunate than others), whereas external regulation refers to no internalized behaviors as they are mainly driven by external rewards or to avoid punishment (e.g., a youngster who volunteers to meet school requirements).

Previous research has shown that autonomy supportive contexts encourage autonomous motivation and discourage controlled motivation (e.g., Black & Deci, 2000; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leoner, 1994; Williams & Deci, 1996). In particular, SDT predicts that autonomy supportive contexts positively affect the degree to which an individual satisfies his need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. This in turn will result in more autonomous forms of motivation because it facilitates the internalization of the behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Regarding the link between the three needs and the internalization of the behavior, SDT does not consider the three needs as equally important. More specifically, satisfaction of the relatedness need alone can
only lead to behaviors that are partially internalized such as behaviors not truly accepted as according to one’s own will (introjected regulation), or behaviors that the person identifies with because they are important to reach other personal goals (identified regulation). As such, relatedness in itself is not enough to ensure a full internalization. For the person to really experience behaviors as an integral part of who one is (integrated regulation), it is mandatory that the person freely engages in what is to be done (i.e., satisfaction of the autonomy need) and feels competent in the interaction with the environment (i.e., satisfaction of the competence need; Deci & Ryan, 2002). Indeed, as Deci and Ryan (2002) argue, experiences of autonomy and competence are essential for intrinsic motivation (the most autonomous form of motivation). Although intrinsic motivation can in certain circumstances be stimulated by the satisfaction of the relatedness need (Ryan & LaGuardia, 2000), relatedness is less central to intrinsic motivation. A striking example of the foregoing is that people can engage in intrinsically motivating behaviors that do not require any social interaction (e.g., playing computer games). In sum, one can expect that satisfaction of the relatedness need is important for partial internalization, whereas satisfaction of the competence and autonomy need is required for intrinsic motivation and full internalization (as in integration).

**The Effect of the Organizational Context on Needs Satisfaction and Motivation**

In this study, we use SDT as a framework to explore how the motivation for volunteering activities is influenced by the organizational context. More specifically, we will focus on the impact of social network size and work context (autonomous vs. controlled).

A social network perspective focuses on the importance of interpersonal relationships for organizational behavior. It has been shown that a strong “intra-organizational social network characterized by good relations and a sense of obligation toward other staff” (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007, p. 205) makes employees stay in an organization (Mossholder, Settoon, & Henagan, 2005; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Moreover, in nonprofit organizations, social networks may provide valuable information to help explain people’s attitudes and behavior. Previous studies have acknowledged that an extensive social network associated with the volunteers’ activities or with the organization positively influences the decision to become a volunteer (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Martinez & McMullin, 2004; Paik & Navarre-Jackson, 2011; Wilson, 2000). Furthermore, it has been shown that involvement in volunteering leads to an increase in the social network related to volunteering (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Despite the fact that research on the role of social networks in nonvolunteering contexts is growing (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007), studies on the link between social network and volunteers’ behaviors and attitudes remain lacking (exceptions are studies by Grube & Piliavin, 2000 and Stryker & Serpe, 1994). This is somehow surprising given the lack of financial rewards in volunteering work. Indeed, from a social exchange point of
view (Wilson, 2000; Vantilborgh et al., 2012) social connections during volunteering might compensate for the lack of financial rewards by providing an alternative return on investment for the volunteer. Furthermore, many volunteering situations concern caregiving, which may create emotional burdens (Parker, 2002), and hence require “replenishment in the form of relational and emotional support from coworkers and other employees” (Mossholder et al., 2005, p. 608). The present study will make an initial attempt to study the role of social networks by investigating the impact of their size on volunteers’ motivation via satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. We will specifically focus on the relatedness need, given that the influence of the social network on this need may follow several routes. On one hand, increased social ties may generate solidarity among the volunteers, which increases the feeling of belonging. On the other hand, involvement in volunteering activities could be triggered by the desire to adhere to certain group’s norms, which leads to obtaining social approval from that group and an increased sense of belonging (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998).

Regarding the actual work context, a consistent body of research found that autonomy supportive contexts have a positive impact across a range of different domains (e.g., education, health care, sport, work). For example, autonomy supportive contexts as initiated by the supervisor have been found to promote autonomous motivation and subsequently work engagement, trust in the organization, work satisfaction, intention to stay, and organizational change (Black & Deci, 2000; Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Deci et al., 1994; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gagné, Koestner, & Zuckerman, 2000; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001; Williams & Deci, 1996). Moreover, in some studies (Baard et al., 2004; Deci et al., 2001) the link between an autonomy supportive work context and outcomes such as job performance, psychological adjustment, work engagement, self-esteem, and the like appears to be mediated by needs satisfaction, calculated as a composite score of all three needs.

**Limitations of Previous Research**

Previous studies on the link between organizational context variables and autonomous motivation are subject to three major limitations. First, although SDT predicts that autonomy supportive contexts provide the necessary “nutriments” to satisfy the needs—and as such facilitate autonomous motivation—these relationships have never been studied simultaneously. Second, in most studies, no distinction is made between the satisfaction of the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Yet SDT focuses on the three different need satisfactions and, as we suggested earlier, even differentiates between their roles. Third, most studies have been performed in a non-volunteering context with Western (U.S., Canadian, or Western European) populations. In the current study, we will tackle these three limitations by (a) studying the sequential effects of autonomy supportive contexts and size of the social network on needs satisfaction, and subsequently on autonomous and controlled motivation; (b) distinguishing between the three psychological needs; and (c) relying on an Eastern European volunteers sample.
Hypotheses

The central purpose of the present research is to explore the impact of social network and work climate on needs satisfaction and subsequently on volunteers’ motivation. Based on previous research that we discussed above, several hypotheses can be formulated:

1. Hypothesis 1a: An autonomy supportive climate relates positively to volunteers’ autonomous motivation.
2. Hypothesis 1b: An autonomy supportive climate relates negatively to volunteers’ controlled motivation.
3. Hypothesis 2: The effect of the climate on the motivation for volunteering activities is mediated by satisfaction of the three basic needs.
4. Hypothesis 3: The size of the volunteers’ social network relates positively to satisfaction of the relatedness need, which in turn has a positive impact on autonomous motivation.
5. Hypothesis 4: Satisfaction of the volunteers’ autonomy and competence need has a stronger impact on autonomous motivation, compared with satisfaction of the relatedness need.

Method

Participants

Participants were 349 Romanian volunteers from 10 different nongovernmental organizations. The respondents age varied between 18 and 58 years, with a mean age of 22.9 years ($SD = 4.8$), and 61.3% were female and 38.7% were male. With respect to professional status, 28.7% had additional paid jobs and 71.3% were students. Concerning the level of education, 0.3% of the participants completed primary school, 47% completed secondary education, 44% acquired a professional school or bachelor’s degree, and 8.7% obtained a master’s or PhD degree. This sample was representative of Romanian volunteers in several aspects: the majority of volunteers in Romania are female (two-thirds female, one-third male); they are mostly young, that is, within an age range of 19 to 25 years, and they are highly educated, with more than half currently enrolled in an educational program (Country Report Romania, 2009; Rigman, 2009).

Procedure

To obtain a representative volunteers sample, we recruited from 10 different nongovernmental organizations operating in the social and the educational domain. Generally speaking, the volunteers from the social domain (61.3% of the respondents) participate in activities such as information campaigns for preventing human traffic, drug
consumption, and sexual diseases or are involved in first-aid courses or provide counseling, social reintegration training and free-time activities for HIV+ children, and so forth. Volunteers from the educational domain (38.7% of the respondents) participate typically in activities such as organizing educational competitions or workshops, and job fairs for students.

The questionnaires were distributed personally at the end of regular meetings in the respective organizations when volunteers are briefed about new and ongoing volunteering projects. This was accompanied by a short verbal clarification of the study, where special emphasis was put on confidentiality, anonymity of responses, and nonmandatory participation. Our procedure resulted in a response rate close to 100% (a small number of questionnaires could not be used due to incompleteness).

**Measures**

The questionnaire included four measurement scales (Motivation at Work Scale—Revised [MAWS-R], Basic Need Satisfaction at Work Scale, Work Climate Questionnaire [WCQ], and Social Network). In addition, demographic questions concerning age, gender, level of education, and professional status were included in the questionnaire. The four measurement scales were translated from English into Romanian by a professional translator. An English back-translation was done by an additional translator, and this back-translation was compared with the original version of the scales. Remaining and additional ambiguities were solved by a team of four psychologists competent in both English and Romanian. An overview of these four scales can be found in Appendix A.

**MAWS-R.** Motivation for volunteering work was measured using the MAWS-R (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). In this scale, participants are asked to rate the reasons for engaging in volunteer work according to the different forms of autonomous and controlled motivation, on a scale from 1 (*not at all because of this reason*) to 7 (*exactly because of this reason*): external regulation (four items, e.g., “Because others put pressure on me”), introjected regulation (four items, e.g., “Because it makes me feel proud of myself”), identified regulation (four items, e.g., “Because what I do in this job has a lot of personal meaning to me”), integrated regulation (four items, e.g., “Because I am made for this type of work”), and intrinsic motivation (four items, e.g., “Because I enjoy this work very much”). Consistent with SDT and previous studies (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens, Dewitte, DeWitte, & Deci, 2004), we used the distinction between controlled motivation, composed of the items that measure external and introjected regulation (α = .68), and autonomous motivation, composed of items that measure identified and integrated regulation and intrinsic motivation (α = 0.89) for our subsequent analyses.

**Basic Need Satisfaction at Work Scale.** We adapted the need satisfaction scale developed by Deci and Ryan (2000) to the volunteer context, by substituting the words “work” and “job” respectively with “work as volunteer” or “volunteering activities.” In total, 20 items were finally used to assess autonomy satisfaction (six items, e.g.,
Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of All Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy need</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence need</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.649**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness need</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>.728**</td>
<td>.621**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous motivation</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.387**</td>
<td>.359**</td>
<td>.315**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled motivation</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.352**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work climate</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.523**</td>
<td>.390**</td>
<td>.563**</td>
<td>.373**</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.241**</td>
<td>.202**</td>
<td>.362**</td>
<td>.176**</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.157**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

“I am free to express my ideas and opinions when I work as a volunteer,” α = .72), relatedness satisfaction (eight items, e.g. “I really like the people I am volunteering with,” α = .74), and competence satisfaction (six items, e.g., “I don’t feel very competent at my volunteering activities, reversed coded,” α = .62). All items had to be answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). One item from the original autonomy satisfaction subscale was deleted because of its negative influence on Cronbach’s α (item–total correlation = .02; “When I am volunteering, I have to do what I am told”).

**WCQ.** Perceived autonomy support by one’s supervisor was measured with the WCQ. The WCQ is a 15-item scale that assesses the degree to which the respondent experiences his or her supervisor as autonomy supportive (Baard, 2002). We adapted the questionnaire to the volunteer context by substituting the words “manager” or “superior” with “volunteer’s coordinator” (e.g., “My coordinator encouraged me to ask questions” or “I feel able to share my feelings with my coordinator”). All items had to be answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Cronbach’s α of the 15-item scale was .92.

**Social Network.** The size of the social network was measured using the 5-item scale as proposed by Grube and Piliavin (2000) in one of the rare studies on this topic. An example item is, “Of the people you know through your volunteering work, how many are close friends?” Because of high skewness of these scores, responses were recoded by replacing the scores that exceed 9 with a score of 9 and subsequently, transforming the scores by adding 1 and taking the natural logarithm. This procedure comes down to a normalization of the scores and is completely in line with the recommendations of the authors (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). The higher the score, the larger one’s social network. Cronbach’s α of the 5-item scale was .73.

**Results**

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the variables (except for social network, which goes from 0 to 9, all scales are in the 1 to 7 range) as well as
the interrelations between them. It can be observed that volunteers are on average relatively high in autonomous motivation and low in controlled motivation. Also, the volunteers reported a relatively high level of satisfaction of the three basic needs and of perceived autonomy support from their coordinator. The work climate indicator correlates with the satisfaction of all three needs and also with the size of the volunteers’ social network.

Our hypotheses were tested in the framework of path analysis using the product-of-coefficients approach proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). As significance tests of the indirect effects by means of the product-of-coefficients approach do strongly rely on multivariate normality, the significance of all effects in the model was tested using nonparametric bootstrapping (see Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In this particular study, 10,000 bootstrap samples were drawn to generate bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals thereby exceeding the suggested 5,000 samples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The significant parameter estimates of this mediation model, together with an indication of their significance based on the bootstrap procedure, are shown in Figure 1. For an overview of all parameter estimates (both the significant and nonsignificant ones), the reader is referred to Appendix B.

First, we observe that work climate, as indicated by the perceived autonomy support from the coordinator, has a positive direct relationship with the volunteers’ autonomous motivation, which is in line with Hypothesis 1. However, Hypothesis 1 is only
partially supported because of the positive effect of work climate on controlled motivation as well.

Second, autonomy supportive work climate relates positively to satisfaction of the three basic needs. In turn, satisfaction of the autonomy and competence needs positively influences autonomous motivation. Thus, regarding work climate, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported by the data. In particular, autonomy supportive work climate not only has a direct impact on controlled and autonomous motivation but also has an indirect impact on autonomous motivation through the satisfaction of the autonomy and competence needs and an indirect impact on controlled motivation through the satisfaction of the autonomy need (as indicated in Appendix C). Moreover, the nonsignificant indirect effect of the autonomy supportive work climate on autonomous motivation through the satisfaction of the relatedness need (see Appendix C) provides support for Hypothesis 4.

Third, the size of one’s social network relates to the satisfaction of all three basic needs, with the largest effect being the relationship with relatedness need satisfaction. However, Hypothesis 3 was not supported by the results as there appears to be no effect on autonomous motivation. In particular, the indirect effects of social network on autonomous motivation through all three needs are nonsignificant (see Appendix D), whereas only the direct effect from social network on controlled motivation is significant (0.37, \( p < .05 \)).

**Discussion**

The aim of this study is to enlarge the perspective on volunteers’ motivation by taking the organizational context into account. In particular, we study the role of autonomy supportive work climate and social network on autonomous and controlled motivation within the framework of the SDT.

Regarding the volunteering work climate, we tested the hypothesis that having an autonomy supportive volunteering climate has an impact on the autonomous motivation to perform volunteering activities. To understand the mechanisms underlying this effect, we tested for the mediation effect of satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs. In contrast to earlier research, which often studied the effects of a global need satisfaction without differentiating between the three needs (Deci et al., 2001; Gagné, 2003; Van den Broeck et al., 2008), we measured the three needs separately and analyzed their unique contributions. A first observation in this respect is that the needs satisfactions are highly correlated. As such, the shared part of the three needs appears to be the major determinant in determining motivation for volunteering activities. Note that in previous research, this was often used as an argument to justify the practice of combining satisfaction of the three needs into one global measure (e.g., Deci et al., 2001; Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008). However, at the same time, our results reveal that the three needs have small, yet significant, unique contributions as well. Therefore, we believe that our results underscore the
importance of distinguishing between the three needs because, by not doing this, information about their unique contributions is lost.

When we then analyze the unique contributions of the three needs, we observe that the degree of autonomy supportiveness within the volunteering organization relates to the satisfaction of the autonomy and competence needs, which in turn relates to the degree of autonomous motivation of the volunteer. Furthermore, satisfaction of the autonomy need is found to be negatively related to the controlled motivation for performing volunteering activities. Both findings are in line with previous studies (e.g., Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Lynch, Plant, & Ryan, 2005; Williams & Deci, 1996) and provide general support for SDT in the sense that the degree to which people are able to incorporate the external demands and regulations into their self is a function of the degree to which the basic needs are satisfied through the work climate (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, a similar effect was not found for relatedness need satisfaction. This was affected by an autonomy supportive climate but had no relationship with autonomous motivation. One explanation could relate to the specifics of the volunteering context, where no financial compensation exists, where the job structure implies fewer constraints, and where performance evaluation is infrequent or does not exist (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009; Pearce, 1993). In fact, our data suggest that volunteering is first perceived as a place to experience freedom of choice and to feel competent in one’s (volunteering) work environment, whereas connecting to others is secondary. Moreover, this result is in line with the SDT assumption that satisfaction of the relatedness need is less central to the internalization of regulations (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Regarding the relationship between an autonomy supportive volunteering climate and controlled motivation, the results reveal a positive effect. This unexpected effect could yet be explained by the fact that introjected regulation (i.e., the most internalized form of controlled motivation) is positively correlated to the three components of autonomous motivation, whereas external regulation is not. These findings are similar to the study of Millette and Gagné (2008). As such, our results therefore suggest that introjected regulation may be closer to autonomous than to controlled motivation (Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Senécal, 2007).

Second, we focused on the impact of the social network associated with volunteering, a concept which we operationalized as the number of friends and important others within the volunteering organization (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Our expectation that the size of the social network determines volunteers’ autonomous motivation through relatedness need satisfaction was not supported. This is due to the shared variance between the three needs and therefore supports the more distal role of relatedness need satisfaction in the elicitation of autonomous motivation. That is, relatedness need satisfaction has an effect on autonomous motivation that is shared with the other two needs, but it has no additional unique effect.

To conclude, we may say that our main contribution—also of practical relevance—is that our study shows that experiencing an autonomy supportive volunteering climate, as initiated by a coordinator, has a more positive impact on the autonomous
motivation for performing volunteering activities than having a large network of important others associated with the volunteering activities. This highlights the importance of looking for appropriate coordinating skills and possibly investing in the development of these skills with people who manage volunteers. What seems to be needed are coordinators with the ability to create a volunteering climate that provides a good rationale and offers choice, acknowledge the volunteers’ feelings toward the activities, offers positive feedback, and encourages personal initiative. Meanwhile, the role of friends or important others related to volunteering should not be underestimated, as it can lead to satisfaction of the basic needs and indirectly increase the volunteers’ well-being. An implication at another level is that, because our sample comes from a less studied non-Western population, these results support the case of basic psychological needs in terms of SDT-concepts (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Inevitably, our study is also subject to a number of limitations. First, because specific measures for SDT research on volunteers are almost nonexistent, we had to make small adaptations to the available instruments. These few adaptations may possibly have affected the psychometric properties of these instruments. However, in our opinion, this strategy was the best option as it tries to preserve the concept validity of the measures. Second, social network related to volunteering has been operationalized in terms of the size of the network. Taking other aspects of social networks into account in future studies, such as social trust, could complement the findings in the present research. Third, the volunteering population in Romania is fairly distinct as it mainly consists of young and educated people from urban areas and has been formed in the past two decades in a social climate less conductive to social participation, self-responsibility, and autonomy (Voicu & Voicu, 2003). This peculiarity may have influenced certain outcomes and may limit the generalizability of the findings. In particular, as compared with mature adults or older people, young people might be more interested in satisfying their autonomy need as their need for belonging and connecting with others might already be satisfied during other day-to-day youth activities. In addition, the collectivistic features of the Romanian culture might also allow volunteers to satisfy their relationship need by means of particularly strong connections with their families and other social groups. Therefore, a replication of the findings in other non-Western countries with a comparable social background would be interesting. Fourth, our research findings might suffer from shared method variance typically related to cross-sectional designs. For future research, it would be interesting to have the autonomy support rated by the coordinators themselves through self-evaluation. However, linking the coordinators to the actual volunteers, working in a variety of environments, is not an easy thing to accomplish. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the present study adds to the literature as it draws attention to the importance of the organizational context for volunteers’ motivation and provides support for SDT assumptions in a less studied population.
Appendix A

Scales Used in the Study

Motivation at Work Scale–Revised (MAWS-R)

I put effort in my volunteering activities . . .

   External regulation. Because others put pressure on me (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients . . .).
   Because others force me to it (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients . . .).
   Because others will appreciate me more (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients . . .).
   To avoid being criticized by others (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients . . .).

   Introjected regulation. Because it makes me feel proud of myself.
   Because it makes me feel good about myself.
   Because otherwise I will feel bad about myself.
   Because otherwise I will feel guilty.

   Identified regulation. Because what I do in this job has a lot of personal meaning to me.
   Because putting efforts in this job has personal significance to me.
   Because I personally consider it important to put efforts in this job.

   Integrated regulation. Because I am made for this type of work.
   Because this work is a vocation to me.
   Because I actualize myself fully through this work.
   Because this work fits perfectly well with my life goals.

   Intrinsic motivation. Because I enjoy this work very much.
   Because the work I do is interesting.
   Because this job aligns with my interests.
   Because the work I do is a lot of fun.

Basic Need Satisfaction at Work Scale

When I am volunteering . . .

   I feel like I can make a lot of inputs to deciding how my volunteer job gets done.
   I really like the people I am volunteering with.
   I do not feel very competent when I work as a volunteer.
   People I am volunteering with tell me I am good at what I do.
   I feel pressured when I work as a volunteer.
   I get along with people I am volunteering with.
   I pretty much keep to myself when I work as a volunteer.

(continued)
Appendix A (continued)

I am free to express my ideas and opinions when I work as a volunteer.
I consider the people I volunteer with to be my friends.
I have been able to learn interesting new skills on my volunteering activities.
When I work as a volunteer, I have to do what I am told.
Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from my volunteering activities.
My feelings are taken into consideration when I do volunteering activities.
On my work as a volunteer I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am.
People I am volunteering with care about me.
There are not many people I am volunteering with that I am close to.
I feel like I can pretty much be myself when I work as a volunteer.
The people I am volunteering with do not seem to like me much.
When I am working as a volunteer, I often do not feel very capable.
There is not much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to go about my work as a volunteer.
People I am volunteering with are pretty friendly toward me.

Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ)

I feel that my coordinator provides me choices and options.
I feel understood by my coordinator.
I am able to be open with my manager at work.
My coordinator conveyed confidence in my ability to do well at my job.
I feel that my coordinator accepts me.
My coordinator made sure I really understood the goals of my job and what I need to do.
My coordinator encouraged me to ask questions.
I feel a lot of trust in my coordinator.
My coordinator answers my questions fully and carefully.
My coordinator listens to how I would like to do things.
My coordinator handles people’s emotions very well.
I feel that my coordinator cares about me as a person.
I don’t feel very good about the way my coordinator talks to me.
My coordinator tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.
I feel able to share my feelings with my coordinator.

Social Network

Of all the people you know through your volunteering work, how many are important to you, that is, you would really miss if you did not see them?
Think of those people that are important to you. About how many would you lose contact with if you stopped your volunteering work?

How many people do you know on a first-name basis through your volunteering work?

Of the people you know through your volunteering work, how many are close friends?

Of the people you know through your volunteering work, how many participate in other activities with you (e.g., work together, engage in recreation together, visit each others’ homes, etc.)?

Appendix B

Results of the Path Analysis

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<td>2. Competence need</td>
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</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01.

Appendix C

Specific Indirect Effects for Work Climate

- Work climate → Autonomy need → Autonomous motivation
  Indirect effect = .057, 95% CI [.003, .113]

- Work climate → Competence need → Autonomous motivation
  Indirect effect = .06, 95% CI [.018, .105]

- Work climate → Relatedness need → Autonomous motivation
  Indirect effect = -.019, 95% CI [-.077, .04]

- Work climate → Autonomy need → Controlled motivation
  Indirect effect = -.056, 95% CI [-.111, -.008]

- Work climate → Competence need → Controlled motivation
  Indirect effect = -.014, 95% CI [-.025, .052]

- Work climate → Relatedness need → Controlled motivation
  Indirect effect = -.027, 95% CI [-.072, .017]

- Social network → Autonomy need → Autonomous motivation
  Indirect effect = .009, 95% CI [.000, .020]
Appendix D
Specific Indirect Effects for Social Network

| Social network → Competence need → Autonomous motivation | Indirect effect = 0.009, 95% CI [-0.002, 0.020] |
| Social network → Relatedness need → Autonomous motivation | Indirect effect = -0.005, 95% CI [-0.020, 0.010] |
| Social network → Autonomy need → Controlled motivation | Indirect effect = -0.008, 95% CI [-0.019, 0.001] |
| Social network → Competence need → Controlled motivation | Indirect effect = -0.002, 95% CI [-0.004, 0.009] |
| Social network → Relatedness need → Controlled motivation | Indirect effect = -0.007, 95% CI [-0.019, 0.005] |

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