Extended abstract

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Title: Volunteering and social issues in Europe: regional and national economies

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Abstract:

This chapter analyses the necessary and sufficient causal conditions that explain participation in voluntary activities in European countries and Spanish regions. The conditions considered in the analysis refer to social problems such as poverty and income inequality. Such problems are included in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, while volunteerism is integrated by the United Nations as necessary to achieve these goals. The analysis is carried out using a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), in which three models are defined: one focuses on how poverty and inequality influence participation in volunteering while the other two focus how material deprivation influences volunteering. In the three models, conditions were selected based on a literature review and the deprivations easiest to associate with volunteering activities carried out through non-profit organizations.

The paper seeks to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: Are poverty and inequality necessary and sufficient conditions to explain greater participation in voluntary activities in European countries and regions?
RQ2: What material deprivations are necessary and sufficient conditions to explain greater participation in voluntary activities in European countries and regions?

1. Literature review

The first step in the study was a literature review that enabled us to obtain the social issues covered in previous studies related to our two topics of interest, as indicated in the previous paragraph. To do so, three searches were carried out in the Web of Science database with the following terms:

a) Search 1: poverty and income inequality
b) Search 2: poverty and volunteering
c) Search 3: income inequality and volunteering

Table 1 presents the number of papers obtained in each search. Three files, each with the results of one search, were imported to NVivo 12, the software used for their analysis. During a first reading of the abstracts, those papers not related to the aim of our study were excluded such as those that referred to volunteering for medical research. On the contrary, papers including factors or measures of poverty and inequality were selected for analysis. Therefore, the total number of papers used in the review was 107. Additional works were used to select the final variables, based in previous studies, for the empirical analysis.

Table 1. Papers used in the literature review

Search in Web of Science	Results obtained	Results after exclusion of nonrelated papers			
		Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Total
1. Poverty and income inequality	261	7	27	20	54
2. Poverty and volunteering	212	14	26	4	44
3. Income inequality and volunteering	55	6	1	2	9
Total	528	27	54	26	107

A content analysis was performed on the papers selected through NVivo to define the codes for organizing the literature by themes and variables for each of the three searches. The main conclusions of the analysis are detailed below.

From the analysis of the first search, that is, the search for *articles related to poverty and income inequality*, we found that the literature could be organized into three large groups. The first group consists of those works that relate both problems with variables of the general environment such as economic growth (Pontusson & Weisstanner, 2018; Rashad & Sharaf, 2018) and with policies carried out by governments (Cruz-Martinez, 2017). These papers analyse, for example, how fiscal and welfare state-related policies increase or reduce levels of poverty and inequality (Gao et al., 2018; Tekguc, 2019).

The second group of studies, which are the focus of our work here, measures poverty and inequality, as well as their different manifestations. These measures are based on household and individual data and are taken into account to measure living standards and the achievement of sustainable development goals. This group also includes works that analyse how specific characteristics of households and their immediate surroundings (social, family and neighbourhood) influence measures of poverty and inequality, as well as their different manifestations.

Some of these studies focus on both material and non-material deprivations. For example, some studies take up the relationship between household housing payments and rising levels of poverty and inequality by exploring how households must reduce their disposable income to meet such rising expenditures (Saunders, 2017). Some

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deprivation studies target specific population groups, such as children and adolescents (Chzhen et al., 2018). Other studies focus on household characteristics and how these characteristics influence the risk of poverty and rising inequality. For example, households constituted by a single adult with dependent children have a higher risk of poverty than those in which children live with both parents (Chzhen et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, some papers deal with the family, school and neighbourhood environment. Regarindg the family, we found studies that address the influence of parents' educational levels on children's risk of poverty by exploring intergenerational mobility (Li et al., 2018). These studies also note that gender differences may play a role in parents' educational levels (Ekbrand & Halleröd, 2018). Another factor cited as impacting the family and school environment is whether parents from low-income households become involved with and collaborate in their children's educations with their children's schools (McWayne et al., 2018). Meanwhile, studies analysing the influence of the neighbourhood environment address how residential segregation and poverty in certain areas increase the risk of evictions (Yavas, 2019).

Finally, the third group consists of papers that study the influence of poverty and inequality on other variables such as insecurity and subjective well-being. Among these papers are those that examine how both social problems influence crime rates (Kujala et al., 2019) and those that study the influence of inequality on satisfaction with life and happiness (Tran et al., 2018). Regarding the relationship between inequality and subjective well-being, the studies show opposite results: while Katic and Ingram (2018) find that subjective well-being is higher in countries with high rates of income inequality, Evans et al. (2019) find no relationship between the factors.

The literature reviews for searches two and three focused on *papers* that took up the role of *volunteering* in reducing poverty and inequality. This analysis split the literature into two groups: the first covers papers focused on volunteering activities associated with social problems and the second covers papers centred on volunteers and their motivations for participating in such activities. This chapter focuses on the first group of papers.

The first group of papers relates the concrete problems with which families struggle to the volunteering activities oriented to respond to them. For example, we might consider activities related to food banks, which address food insecurity (Rombach et al., 2018; Forde & Solomon-Moore, 2019), and the difficulties involved in reaching all people in a country who need the bank (Simmet et al., 2018). Meanwhile, some of these studies also focus on specific population groups, with children the most frequent focus. Among these works, some analyse volunteering based on health and nutrition, especially in less developed countries (Roesler et al., 2018). Other studies address the benefits of supporting community projects through volunteering in ways that ensure that high quality education and care begin in childhood (Aubert et al., 2017). Meanwhile, some studies focus on legal aid for children (Felix et al., 2017). Considering another population group, Rakhimova (2018) shows the importance of volunteering to support aging individuals with low incomes in American cities in ways that foster their resilience, as this population group faces financial insecurity and inequality. Here, it is helpful to note that social resilience is a common theme in works that take up the objectives that volunteer activities seek to accomplish.

The second working group focuses on individuals who carry out volunteer activities and the theories related to their participation. The literature cites students (Wakeford and Orams, 2019), employees (Rodell et al., 2017), the unemployed (Kamerade and Bennett, 2018) and the retired (Cho et al., 2018) as volunteers. Some theories also refer to the economic opportunities that the social networks and human capital generated by volunteering can yield for low-income volunteers (Benenson, 2017). One advantage that low-income volunteers enjoy is that they can use their cultural capital to more easily reach the people their volunteering targets (Ceresola, 2018).

Moreover, the literature shows a relationship between social needs and volunteerism and notes its intensity in NGOs. But a question remains: where are *volunteer activities located*? That is, are they located where social problems are most dire? The literature deals with this topic when it advises that NGOs be located close to the people they serve (Dipendra, 2018). For example, Simmet et al. (2018) find that food banks in Germany

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are more prominent in cities with high populations. Although they do not relate the banks' locations to poverty and inequality, they do observe that, in East Germany, where food insecurity is greater, there is lower volunteer participation, even though it is key to the functioning of these banks. Along these lines, geographic studies carried out in the United States also show a relationship between population size and the number of NGOs (van Puyvelde & Brown, 2016). Localization based on needs is often explained using the theory of government failure, which argues that localization is important because the government is not meeting the needs of certain citizens (van Puyvelde & Brown, 2016; Lu, 2017). Meanwhile, Dipendra (2018) indicates that localization can be based on the ease of obtaining financial and volunteer resources in particular locations. For example, van Puyvelde and Brown (2016), in their Texas study, show that the number of nonprofit organizations is higher in counties with higher federal aid spending (as articulated by interdependence theory). However, Stadelmann-Steffen (2011) find that participation in social volunteering is higher in countries with low welfare spending and lower in those with high welfare spending.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data and variables

The data used for the European countries were obtained from Eurostat, while the data for the Spanish regions were obtained from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). The data used was from the year 2017, except for the data for volunteer activities, for which the latest available data is from 2015.

Table 2 shows the output and causal conditions used in the analysis. The output is formal volunteer activities, that is, those activities carried out through an organization, with the volunteer contributing his or her time on a regular basis (United Nations Volunteers, 2018). Meanwhile, causal conditions correspond to those indicators used by the United Nations and Eurostat to monitor the objectives of poverty and inequality. The selection was made on the basis of the above literature review and a review of data from official sources.

Table 2. Variables used in the analysis

Output		
Variable name	*Concept*	*Value*
Formal voluntary activities	Volunteering through non-profits	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0
Causal conditions		
PRIPASS	People at risk of income poverty after social transfers (SDG1)	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0
SMDP	Severely materially deprived people	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0
PLHVLWI	People living in households with very low work intensity	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0
ISB40P	Income share of the bottom 40% of the population	Below the median: 1 Above the median: 0
UNMEC	Self-reported unmet need for medical examination and care	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0
Housing	Three indicators: - Population living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation or with rot in window frames or floors by poverty status - Population without a bath, shower, or indoor flushing toilet in the household by poverty status - Overcrowding rate by poverty status	First, for each indicator: Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0 Then: At least two with a value above the median: 1 Otherwise: 0
Food	Difficulties in buying certain foods, in the case of families with single parents and dependent children	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0
HWarm	Difficulties in keeping the house at an adequate temperature, in the case of families with single parents and dependent children	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0
Arrears	Difficulties in facing mortgage payments, rent, receipts, etc., in the case of families with single parents and dependent children	Above the median: 1 Below the median: 0

2.2. Data analysis

As we state above, we analysed the data using a QCA, which allowed us to obtain the necessary and sufficient conditions that explain the presence of formal volunteer activities above the median in some countries or regions. A condition is necessary if when the output is automatically present the condition is also present and a condition is sufficient if when it appears the presence of the output is automatically given. The software used for the analysis was fsQCA (Ragin & Davey, 2016) and a crisp analysis was carried out, as the values of the variables are 1 and 0 in all cases.

To answer the two research questions, three models were defined. Model 1 seeks to answer the first research question (RQ1), that is, to use as conditions the three that the

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United Nations uses to measure poverty (risk of poverty, severe deprivation and low employment in households) and another condition for inequality. Models 2 and 3 focus on answering the second research question (RQ2), and thus conditions relating to deprivation are used. While Model 3 also focuses on deprivation, it focuses more specifically on households with single parents with dependent children, which suffer greater difficulties according to Eurostat (2018).

Model 1: European countries

Formal voluntary activities = f(PRIPASS, SMDP, PLHVLWI, ISB40P)

Model 2: European countries and Spanish regions

Formal voluntary activities = f(SMDP, UNMEC, Housing)

Model 3: Spanish regions

Formal voluntary activities = f(Food, HWarm, Arrears)

3. Results

3.1. Results for Model 1

While this model explained the necessary and sufficient conditions for European countries, it exhibited a very low solution coverage for Spanish regions. Therefore, the first research question can be answered only for the comparison of European countries. Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of necessary conditions, for which all possible options have been analysed in order to rule out inconsistencies. More specifically, the table shows that none of the four conditions are necessary to explain a level of volunteering above the median.
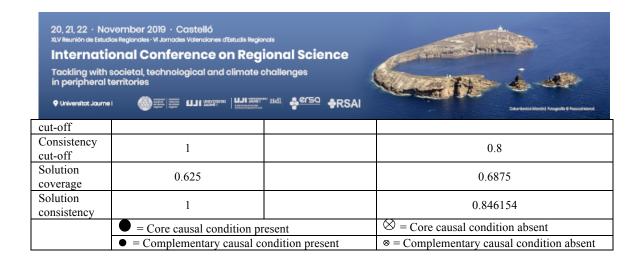
Table 3. Analysis of necessary conditions

Model 1. European countries					
Outcome variable: Formal voluntary activities					
Conditions tested	*Consistency*	*Coverage*	*Conditions tested*	*Consistency*	*Coverage*
PRIPASS	0.562500	0.428571	~PRIPASS	0.437500	0.636364
SMDP	0.250000	0.222222	~SMDP	0.750000	0.857143
PLHVLWI	0.625000	0.555556	~ PLHVLWI	0.375000	0.428571
ISB40P	0.312500	0.312500	~ISB40P	0.687500	0.687500
Outcome variable: ~Formal voluntary activities					
PRIPASS	0.750000	0.571429	~PRIPASS	0.250000	0.363636
SMDP	0.875000	0.777778	~SMDP	0.125000	0.142857
PLHVLWI	0.500000	0.444444	~ PLHVLWI	0.500000	0.571429
ISB40P	0.687500	0.687500	~ISB40P	0.312500	0.312500

Table 4 includes the analysis of sufficient conditions, for which solutions are obtained when the output is present (participation in volunteering above the European median) and when it is absent. Above-median volunteering solutions indicate that needs in these countries are mainly present at the household level in households with low levels of employment and in income inequalities. However, in the absence of volunteerism above the median, the main needs are severe material deprivation and income inequality. Therefore, given the problems detected for both outputs, it can be confirmed, in answering RQ2, that severe material deprivations do not explain volunteering location. It seems that this condition marks an important difference between the results for the presence and absence of the output.

Table 4. Analysis of sufficient conditions

Conditions	Output: *Formal voluntary activities*		Output: ~*Formal voluntary activities*
	Solutions Model 1 (European countries)		Solutions Model 1 (European countries)
	S1	S2	S3
PRIPASS		●	●
SMDP		⊗	●
PLHVLWI	●		
ISB40P	⊗	●	●
Cases	Belgium (1,1), Denmark (1,1), Finland (1,1), Germany (1,1), Netherlands (1,1), Norway (1,1), Sweden (1,1)	Estonia (1,1), Luxembourg (1,1), United Kingdom (1,1)	Bulgaria (1,1), Croatia (1,1), Cyprus (1,1), Greece (1,1), Ireland (1,0), Italy (1,1), Latvia (1,1), Lithuania (1,0), North Macedonia (1,1), Portugal (1,1), Romania (1,1), Serbia (1,1), Spain (1,1)
Consistency	1	1	0.846154
Raw coverage	0.4375	0.1875	0.6875
Unique coverage	0.4375	0.1875	0.6875
Frequency	1		1

cut-off			
Consistency cut-off	1		0.8
Solution coverage	0.625		0.6875
Solution consistency	1		0.846154
	● = Core causal condition present		⊗ = Core causal condition absent
	● = Complementary causal condition present		⊗ = Complementary causal condition absent

3.2. Results for Model 2, European countries

This model aims to explain the level of volunteering based on material deprivation and unmet needs. When analysing European countries, no necessary conditions are found to explain a level of volunteering above the median. The consistency values in Table 5 are all less than 0.9.

Table 5. Analysis of necessary conditions

Model 2. European countries					
Outcome variable: Formal voluntary activities					
Conditions tested	*Consistency*	*Coverage*	*Conditions tested*	*Consistency*	*Coverage*
SMDP	0.250000	0.222222	~SMDP	0.750000	0.857143
UNMEC	0.437500	0.368421	~UNMEC	0.562500	0.692308
Housing	0.250000	0.235294	~Housing	0.750000	0.800000
Outcome variable: ~Formal voluntary activities					
SMDP	0.875000	0.777778	~SMDP	0.125000	0.142857
UNMEC	0.750000	0.631579	~UNMEC	0.250000	0.307692
Housing	0.812500	0.764706	~Housing	0.187500	0.200000

When sufficient conditions are analysed for the presence of the output (countries with participation in volunteering above the median), two solutions are obtained, but only one shows a social need, specifically, the unmet need for medical care. On the contrary, when the conditions for the absence of the output are analysed (participation in volunteering is not above the median), the two solutions show more deprivations. Therefore, in answering question RQ2 and considering differences between countries, it is clear that the location does not respond to severe material deprivations. On the contrary, where these deprivations are greater, there is no participation in volunteering above the median.

Table 6. Analysis of sufficient conditions

| Conditions | Model 2. European countries | | | |
| | Output: *Formal voluntary activities* | | Output: *~Formal voluntary activities* | |
	S1	S2	S3	S4
SMDP	⊗		●	●
UNMEC		●	⊗	
Housing		⊗		●
Cases	Austria (1,1), Czechia (1,0), Denmark (1,1), Estonia (1,1), Finland (1,1), France (1,1), Germany (1,1), Luxembourg (1,1), Malta (1,0), Netherlands (1,1), Norway (1,1), Sweden (1,1), Switzerland (1,1), United Kingdom (1,1)	Belgium (1,1), Finland (1,1), Ireland (1,1), United Kingdom (1,1)	Hungary (1,1), Spain (1,1)	Bulgaria (1,1), Croatia (1,1), Cyprus (1,1), Greece (1,1), Hungary (1,1), Italy (1,1), Latvia (1,1), Lithuania (1,0), North Macedonia (1,1), Poland (1,1), Portugal (1,1), Romania (1,1), Serbia (1,1), Slovakia (1,1), Slovenia (1,0)
Consistency	0.857143	1	1	0.866667
Raw coverage	0.75	0.25	0.125	0.8125
Unique coverage	0.625	0.125	0.0625	0.75
Frequency cut-off	1		1	
Consistency cut-off	0.8		0.857143	
Solution coverage	0.875		0.875	
Solution consistency	0.875		0.875	
	● = Core causal condition present		⊗ = Core causal condition absent	
	● = Complementary causal condition present		⊗ = Complementary causal condition absent	

3.3. Results for Models 2 and 3, Spanish regions

Model 3 includes the specific deprivations of SMDP for families constituted by single parents and dependent children. Table 7 shows the analysis of necessary conditions for the two models in the Spanish regions. Notably, the table reveals that are no necessary conditions in the two models because the consistency values are below 0.9.

Table 7. Analysis of necessary conditions

Model 2. Spanish regions					
Outcome variable: Formal voluntary activities					
Conditions tested	*Consistency*	*Coverage*	*Conditions tested*	*Consistency*	*Coverage*
SMDP	0.833333	0.769231	~SMDP	0.166667	0.333333
UNMEC	0.666667	0.727273	~UNMEC	0.333333	0.500000
Housing	0.500000	0.857143	~Housing	0.500000	0.500000
Outcome variable: ~Formal voluntary activities					
SMDP	0.428571	0.230769	~SMDP	0.571429	0.666667
UNMEC	0.428571	0.272727	~UNMEC	0.571429	0.500000
Housing	0.142857	0.142857	~Housing	0.857143	0.500000

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Model 3. Spanish regions					
Outcome variable: Formal voluntary activities					
Conditions tested	*Consistency*	*Coverage*	*Conditions tested*	*Consistency*	*Coverage*
Food	0.583333	0.700000	~Food	0.416667	0.555556
HWarm	0.416667	0.625000	~HWarm	0.583333	0.636364
Arrears	0.666667	0.888889	~Arrears	0.333333	0.400000
Outcome variable: ~Formal voluntary activities					
Food	0.428571	0.300000	~Food	0.571429	0.444444
HWarm	0.428571	0.375000	~HWarm	0.571429	0.363636
Arrears	0.142857	0.111111	~Arrears	0.857143	0.600000

Table 8 presents the analysis of the sufficient conditions for Models 2 and 3, applied to the Spanish regions. Regions with participation in voluntary activities above the median (e.g. Valencian Community) also show the problem of material deprivation in addition to housing and unmet medical needs. When, in addition, the material needs are broken down for the group of households made up of single parents with dependent children, the main problem is the difficulty in meeting mortgage payments, rents and receipts (electricity, gas, etc.). On the other hand, the four autonomous communities that appear in the solutions of the two models are the Canary Islands, the Valencian community, Murcia and Melilla. Given the financing problems of these communities, the solutions could reflect the reasoning for location cited by Dipendra (2018), in which NGOs are located where needs are not met by governments (van Puyvelde & Brown, 2016; Lu, 2017). Therefore, in answering RQ2 for Spanish regions, we find that it seems that the location of volunteering is related to the needs of people by location.

Table 8. Analysis of sufficient conditions

	Output: *Formal voluntary activities*		
	Model 2. Spanish regions		**Model 3. Spanish regions**
Conditions	S5	S6	S7
Model 2			
SMDP	●	●	
UNMEC	●		
Housing		●	
Model 3			
Food			
HWarm			
Arrears			●
Cases	Canary Islands (1,1), Castilla La Mancha (1,0), Catalonia (1,1), Valencian Community (1,1), Extremadura (1,1), Madrid (1,1), Murcia (1,1), Melilla (1,1)	Balearic Islands (1,1), Canary Islands (1,1), Castilla La Mancha (1,0), Valencian Community (1,1), Murcia (1,1), Ceuta (1,1), Melilla (1,1)	Andalucia (1,0), Balearic Islands (1,1), Canary Islands (1,1), Catalonia (1,1), Valencian Community (1,1), Extremadura (1,1), Murcia (1,1), Ceuta (1,1), Melilla (1,1)
Consistency	0.875	0.857143	0.888889
Raw	0.583333	0.5	0.666667

coverage			
Unique coverage	0.25	0.166667	0.666667
Frequency cut-off	2		1
Consistency cut-off	0.8		0.8
Solution coverage	0.75		0.666667
Solution consistency	0.9		0.888889
	● = Core causal condition present		⊗ = Core causal condition absent
	● = Complementary causal condition present		⊗ = Complementary causal condition absent

4. Conclusions

This paper analysed the necessary and sufficient conditions related to poverty and inequality that explain a greater participation in volunteering for European countries and Spanish regions. Based on a review of the literature and the data available in Eurostat and INE, three models are defined to answer the two research questions formulated. The analyses of the three models indicate that there are no necessary conditions that explain the location of volunteering activities.

With regard to the first research question, the results obtained indicate that sufficient conditions differ for countries with a presence and an absence of volunteering above the median. Sufficient conditions in the first countries (presence) are inequality and low-employment, while the other countries (absence) face problems of inequality and severe material deprivation. This result coincides with that of Goubin (2018), who finds that low levels of household employment are grouped under factors other than the risk of poverty and severe material deprivation. Therefore, we conclude that the location of volunteering activities responds to specific poverty measures and does not respond to severe material deprivation.

With regard to the second research question, the sufficient conditions in the solutions indicate more deprivations in countries with an absence of volunteering above the median. Therefore, the location of volunteering activities in certain European countries is not related to severe material deprivation.

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When Spanish regions and more deprivations are analysed, severe material deprivations, unmet medical needs and housing problems emerge as sufficient conditions. When specific severe material deprivations are analysed in households with single parents and dependent children, the sufficient condition becomes difficulties in meeting payments related to housing. Therefore, the location of volunteering activities in Spanish regions seems to respond to social needs.

Finally, while the models used worked well with more general variables in country-by-country analysis, they worked better in the regional analysis when more deprivations and specific households were used. However, availability of regional data for more disaggregated variables was limited.

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