STILL POST-SOVIET? WHAT IS LEFT OVER FROM SOVIET ATTITUDES TO FORM MODERN ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOLUNTEERING?

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of historical imprints on attitudes towards volunteering among Lithuanians. Using imprinting theory, we explored how the historically evolved Soviet imprints have influenced modern attitudes toward formal volunteering. Quantitative data analysis (N=358) revealed that some Soviet imprints might have decayed, while some were strong enough to survive until modern times to affect attitudes towards formal volunteering. This study examined three Soviet attitudinal imprints: negative attitudes towards non-governmental organisations, external power primacy, and the authoritarian outlook. The results showed that while some imprints might have decayed, some have survived until today. Our findings underscore the enduring impact of Soviet imprints, and suggest that addressing these historical influences is crucial for enhancing volunteering among citizens of post-Soviet regions.

KEY WORDS: Soviet imprints, volunteering, Lithuania, post-Soviet.

Anotacija

Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas istorinių įspaudų poveikis Lietuvos gyventojų požiūriui į savanorystę. Remdamiesi įspaudų teorija, tyrėme, kaip istoriškai susiformavę sovietiniai įspaudai paveikė šiuolaikinį požiūrį į organizacinę savanorystę. Kiekybinė tyrimo duomenų analizė (N=358) atskleidė, kad kai kurie įspaudai galėjo išnykti, kiti gi buvo tokie stiprūs, kad išliko iki šių laikų ir paveikė požiūrį į formalią savanorystę. Šiame tyrime nagrinėti trys sovietmečiui būdingų nuostatų imprintingai: neigiamas požiūris į nevyriausybines organizacijas, išorinės galios viršenybė ir autoritarinė pasaulėžiūra. Rezultatai atskleidė, kad nors vieni įspaudai galėjo sunykti, kai kurie išliko iki šių dienų. Mūsų išvados pabrėžia išliekantį sovietinių nuostatų poveikį ir leidžia manyti, kad siekiant stiprinti posovietinių regionų piliečių savanorišką veiklą ypač svarbu į šiuos istorinius poveikius atsižvelgti. PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sovietmečio įspaudai, savanorystė, Lietuva, posovietinis kontekstas. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.15181/tbb.v93i2.2680

Introduction

World economies face many challenges associated with poverty, injustice and other forms of people's suffering. In such a context, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are defined as 'organisations concerned with the promotion of so-

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cial, political or economic change' (Lewis et al., 2020, 7) that provide additional resources and promote development (Lewis & Kanji, 2009) through their basic resource: volunteering. Volunteering is a 'long-term, planned, prosocial behavior that benefits strangers and occurs within an organisational setting' (Penner, 2002, 448). Volunteering may also be noticed in businesses, especially those that cultivate their identity as sustainable (Haugh & Talwar, 2010), but, as a phenomenon, it is mainly seen in NGOs as representatives of democracy (Kamerāde et al., 2016). Even though volunteer work has rarely been acknowledged in financial and economic returns, it has been recognised worldwide as a unique, inexhaustible resource (Enjolras et al., 2018), as well as an invaluable input into the development of regions, states and communities (Mook et al., 2007). For younger generations, volunteering may provide a meaningful activity and pay off financially later in life (Shantz et al., 2019). As society ages and more people in developed societies live alone, most European countries acknowledge the need for active ageing in Europe, in which volunteering is one of the main parts of healthy ageing (Principi et al., 2014). Volunteer work may help people avoid social exclusion and find meaning in life at older ages (Chen, 2013).

Despite the positive economic input and physical and psychological effects associated with formal volunteering, which is particularly crucial at older ages (Anderson et al., 2014), there is still a lack of citizen initiative and volunteering resources compared to Western Europe (Enjolras, 2021; Enjolras et al., 2018). Volunteering is usually socially unrecognised in post-Soviet countries (Silló, 2016). Regions like the post-Soviet region often rely on the lowest levels of volunteering, especially at older ages (Principi et al., 2014). Even if scholars name the Soviet heritage as the primary source for organisational issues noticed in early NGOs (Regulska, 1999; Toepler & Salamon, 2003; Žiliukaitė et al., 2006), the exact origins of such attitudes are not recognised in the literature.

However, the influence of the national context on volunteering behaviours has garnered increasing attention among scholars (Liu & Jia, 2022; Luria et al., 2015), suggesting that historically inherited institutional characteristics are pivotal in shaping an individual's capacity to engage in volunteer activities throughout the European nations (Enjolras, 2021). Researchers analysing volunteering in the post-Soviet environment acknowledge that the Soviet past caused the erosion of the moral essence of volunteerism, through mandatory involvement in collectivist movements and compulsory unpaid work, both masquerading as voluntary contributions to society (Khvorostianov & Remennick, 2018). In post-Soviet countries, voluntary services usually depended on individuals who did not experience the Soviet system (Raišienė & Vilkė, 2014).

Many Soviet imprints have been noticed in the effect of the early development of NGOs (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). Specific Soviet imprints, such as an authoritarian outlook, have significantly influenced the development of post-Soviet non-governmental organisations (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). However, whether these specific imprints affect modern NGOs and their potential resources, volunteering, is still unknown. This study intends to fill this gap by answering the question of how Soviet imprints affect modern attitudes toward formal volunteering in Lithuania, a post-Soviet country, and provides a deeper analysis of Soviet remnants, broadening the discourse of post-Soviet NGO research (Khvorostianov & Remennick, 2018; Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024; Pranaitytė, 2022; Silló, 2016). With this research, we also broadened the research on imprinting theory (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013) in the post-Soviet environment (Albu et al., 2021; Banalieva et al., 2017; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006), and specifically in the NGO sector, which is scarce.

1. Theoretical framework

Imprinting theory. When trying to understand how the Soviet past influenced the involvement and development of democratic NGOs in post-Soviet countries, there is a need to relate past activities with the changed environment and upsurge in new institutions: NGOs. Studies suggest that when incorporating history in theory phenomena in research (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014), we should use the imprinting theory (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). This theory is described 'as a timesensitive (i.e., occurs at sensitive stages of life) learning process (i.e., a stamping process whereby the focal entity reflects elements of its environment) that initiates a development trajectory (i.e., produces persistent outcomes)' (Mathias et al., 2015, 2). From the early 19th century until 1965, it was applied only in biological research (behavioural imprinting) (Bateson, 2011), but similar tendencies were also observed in organisations (Johnson, 2007; Kimberly, 1979; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Stinchcombe, 1965), their building blocks (Baron et al., 1999), collectives, such as industries (Marquis, 2003; McEvily et al., 2012; Raynard et al., 2013) or communities (Marquis, 2003), and individuals (Banalieva et al., 2017; Dokko et al., 2009; Ellis et al., 2017; Higgins, 2005; McEvily et al., 2012; Tilcsik, 2014).

Imprinting theory suggests that certain attitudes and behaviours adopted in a particular environment during a specific period may persist for a long time in an organisational setting (Stinchcombe, 1965) and in individuals (Higgins, 2005). Regimes leave traces and remain in people's attitudes and behaviours even after 40 years (Xu et al., 2021). Several imprinting studies focus on ideological imprints and their persistence through different generations (Xu et al., 2021), but evidence

from post-Soviet countries is scarce, and is concentrated on the abilities of business organisations to adapt to changes (Albu et al., 2021; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006) and new organisational behaviour (Banalieva et al., 2017), thus paying no attention to NGOs. The recent qualitative study involving NGO founders, members and experts elucidated five main groups of influence left over from the Soviet period: the authoritarian regime, the stability and security guaranteed by the government, hidden social problems, the absence of donation culture, and the absence of the NGO as a legal, organisational form (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). For this study, we operationalise those imprinters into several attitudinal norms that might affect modern NGOs.

For this study, we propose that modern Lithuanian ageing society should have more imprints stemming from the Soviet past, and that age would determine the imprint's strength: with age, Lithuanian people should hold stronger attitudes from Soviet times, and younger people should have weaker Soviet imprints. Therefore, *age* would serve as an independent variable, representing the strength of the Soviet imprint.

Age and attitudes towards volunteering. One of the main factors influencing the early formation of NGOs in Lithuania has been the 'absence of donation culture', both in terms of financial contributions and voluntary engagement (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). Since volunteering in formal organisations is considered one of the primary renewable resources worldwide for different kinds of NGOs (Enjolras et al., 2018; Gray et al., 2012), we suggest including *attitudes towards formal volunteering* as the outcome variable (dependent variable) to see whether Soviet attitudinal imprints still influence the 'donation culture' in modern Lithuania.

Volunteering is a crucial resource for NGOs worldwide (Enjolras et al., 2018). However, in Lithuania, engagement in NGOs through volunteering has developed more slowly compared to the rapid rise in the number of NGOs (Žiliukaitė, 2018). While in West European countries older people are open to volunteering (Devaney et al., 2015), engagement in volunteering among older individuals who may still hold on to Soviet-era attitudes has remained low (Pranaitytė, 2022).

In Europe, people are keen to volunteer less with age, which is mainly related to health issues (Principi et al., 2016). However, the literature emphasises the role of historical and cultural contexts. Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) argue that older generations who grew up in a collectivist, state-controlled environment are less likely to view volunteering as a positive and meaningful activity than younger generations raised in a more individualistic and market-oriented society. This difference is particularly pronounced in Lithuania, where older individuals may associate voluntary work with the compulsory labour practices of the Soviet era, as is the case

for many individuals who have experienced the Soviet regime (Khvorostianov & Remennick, 2018), or even those who have already acquired the essential societal norms through 'secondhand imprinting' (Wang et al., 2019). Thus, we hypothesise that age in Lithuania is negatively related to attitudes toward formal volunteering.

H1: Age is negatively related to attitudes towards formal volunteering.

Age, attitudes towards non-governmental organisations and volunteering. One of the Soviet imprinters that may lead to the aforementioned 'absence of donation culture' is 'the absence of NGOs under the Soviet regime'. Various imprints show that the image of newly created organisations (NGOs) was poor because neither ordinary people nor governmental institutions trusted NGOs (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). In Soviet times, all resources (including people's work) were state-owned and used where needed, even calling it 'voluntary' work. Also, all organisations had to serve the Communist Party's interests, and participation in other voluntarily organised units was illegal (Grybkauskas et al., 2011; Ramonaitė, 2015). Such a regime deeply affected attitudes towards post-Soviet NGOs (Toepler & Salamon, 2003). Scholars provide evidence that even after 20 years in a post-Soviet setting, trust in NGOs remains low, and the younger generation is not that much more eager to join voluntary organisations despite feeling more trusting than the older generation (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014). Researchers believe that the Soviet cultural experience created repercussions in modern post-Soviet society, especially for older ages, so people are still more reluctant to engage in voluntary activities in NGOs (Khvorostianov & Remennick, 2018; Pranaitytė, 2022).

H2a: Age is negatively related to the attitude towards NGOs.

The relationship between positive attitudes towards NGOs and formal volunteering is evident. However, the relationship is bilateral: positive attitudes towards NGOs might increase attitudes towards volunteering, and vice versa (Bowman, 2004). In this study, we focus on how attitudes towards charitable organisations affect attitudes towards volunteering, as we believe that attitudes towards NGOs reveal a more passive approach.

H2b: Attitudes towards NGOs are positively related to attitudes towards formal volunteering.

Overall, the image of NGOs for older potential volunteers is vital (Devaney et al., 2015). Thus, we hypothesise that attitudes towards NGOs mediate the relationship between age and attitudes toward formal volunteering. Specifically, ageing in a post-Soviet setting increases the likelihood of negative attitudes toward NGOs, and negatively impacts the attitudes towards formal volunteering.

H2c: Attitudes towards NGOs mediate the relationships between age and attitudes towards formal volunteering.

Age, external power primacy and volunteering. Scholars noted that the 'stability and security guaranteed by the government', together with the 'hidden social problems' in early democratic society, created the attitude that people themselves were helpless in building society, and so they intended to rely more on the government (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). In general, Soviet times can be associated with a significant reduction in personal responsibility for one's life and the community's well-being (Laumenskaitė, 2015). Studies comparing early post-Soviet cohorts with more democratic ones in united Germany suggest differences in bottom-up personal initiative. Those stemming from the post-Soviet environment make less use of personal initiative (Frese et al., 1996). Other scholars also compared East Germans with West Germans, and noticed that people from East Germany believed less in individual initiative (Alesina & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2007). The older the East Germans were, the more they relied on external sources (government social initiatives), which was the opposite case in West Germany (Alesina & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2007).

H3a: Age is positively related to external power primacy.

People who do not feel in power tend to be more pessimistic about helping others (Zboja et al., 2020). When people assume they are in charge of their lives, especially at older ages, they tend to take part in variety of activities that sustain their lives more (Menec & Chipperfield, 1997). Perceived control also signals the perceived control of resources, activating volunteering (Son & Wilson, 2017).

H3b: External power primacy negatively relates to the attitudes towards formal volunteering.

Research suggests that after the Soviet regime, people tended to rely on similar attitudes as in Soviet times, such as giving primacy to external powers instead of self-agency. This might affect attitudes toward volunteering, characterised by a bottom-up initiative approach. We hypothesise that external power primacy mediates the relationship between age and attitudes towards formal volunteering. Specifically, ageing in a post-Soviet setting increases the likelihood of external power primacy, and negatively impacts attitudes towards formal volunteering.

H3c: External power primacy mediates the relationship between age and attitude towards formal volunteering.

Age, authoritarian outlook and volunteering. One of the most influential imprinters on NGO development was the authoritarian outlook (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). As mentioned in the qualitative study, an authoritarian regime left the most significant portion of negative imprints that hindered early NGOs in Lithuania. If left in society, a preference for hierarchy, instructions and a top-down approach might hinder people from being positive about the activities of NGOs (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024).

People are stable in their attitudes or become more rigid with age (Peterson et al., 2020), but may change their attitudes to be more tolerant even in their 60s (Danigelis et al., 2007). If, according to imprinting theory, people keep the same attitudes, then this would mean that with age, Lithuanian people would still hold authoritarian attitudes as a top-down approach.

H4a: Age positively relates to the authoritarian outlook.

Scholars know that liberal democracy is positively related to formal volunteering (Parboteeah et al., 2004), and that the country's former political authoritarianism is seen to be an inhibiting factor for NGO activities (Hsu et al., 2017). More conservative approaches fire the mechanism of attitudinal prejudice towards unknown people, such as asylum seekers (Mancini et al., 2020), that NGOs usually serve. Such prejudices reflect an unwillingness to join NGO activities (Mancini et al., 2020).

H4b: Authoritarian outlook negatively relates to the attitudes towards formal volunteering.

In this study, we argue that the Soviet past strengthened the authoritarian outlook as an imprint that might continue to affect modern times, so an authoritarian outlook mediates the relationship between age and attitudes toward formal volunteering. Specifically, ageing in a post-Soviet setting increases the likelihood of an authoritarian outlook, and, subsequently, negatively impacts attitudes towards formal volunteering (Fig. 9).

H4c: Authoritarian outlook mediates the relationship between age and attitudes towards formal volunteering.

2. Method and research organization

To test the proposed hypotheses, we conducted an online survey in Lithuania in the Lithuanian language to reach members of Lithuanian society. We shared a link through a convenient sample in social media and through snowballing the personal contacts used primarily to reach the older generation. First, we shared a link through a personal Facebook page and asked friends and acquaintances to share the survey link. As older people use social media less, we asked our friends' parents to call or message several people who were over 50, as it is common to use this threshold of years in management research (Finsel et al., 2023). We searched especially for older people who lived in rural areas in Lithuania. We asked our familiar agents to ask them whether they could answer the online questionnaire. If they got a positive answer, we also asked them to send the questionnaire link through the appropriate communication tools (e-mail, communication apps: Viber, WhatsApp, etc).

The online survey was open for 30 days in March and April 2024. Completing the questionnaire took respondents approximately eight minutes, and definitions of volunteering activities and NGOs were provided at the beginning of the survey. In total, 421 responses were received. The data was cleaned to ensure a minimum threshold of completion, because the age item was necessary to proceed with the data analysis. A minimum completion rate of 78% of the questions was established as the threshold for use. Only a few questionnaires had less than 78% of questions answered, and only five came close to the threshold: four respondents answered 84% of the questions, and one answered exactly 78%.

To analyse the survey results, we conducted a mediation analysis using Process macro (Model 4) in SPSS 28 4.3 version. We tested the indirect effect of age (IV) on attitudes towards formal volunteering (DV) through proposed Soviet imprints (M). Path a (IV to M) and Path b (M to DV) coefficients were calculated, along with Path c' (direct effect) and Path c (total effect). We employed bootstrapping (5000) to determine the confidence intervals for the indirect effects.

Participants. A total of 358 participants from Lithuanian society were included in the following analysis. The average age of our sample was 46 (SD=12.926), and the median was 44. The youngest participant was 18, and the oldest was 82. A total of 72.9% were women, 72.9% had a university degree, 4.8% reported bad or very bad health, 41.9% reported having normal health, 35.5% considered good health, and 17.9% reported great health.

The study includes several constructs to be measured: age as an independent variable, attitude towards formal volunteering as the dependent variable, attitude towards charitable organisations, external locus of control, and authoritarian outlook.

Measures

In this study, age was an independent variable measured by the individual's birth year as a continuous variable ranging between 18 and 82.

Attitude towards formal volunteering was measured using a ten-item scale created for older adults to capture their beliefs about volunteering and its value to society (Dana et al., 2021). Higher scores indicate a positive attitude towards volunteering. A sample item is 'Volunteering can greatly enhance the community's resources.' All items were rated on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 (absolutely not) to 6 (absolutely yes). For this study, the instrument was translated into Lithuanian, revised by two experts in the social sciences, and back-translated into English using the AI translation program Deepl. The items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .887$).

Attitude towards NGOs was measured using a five-item attitude scale towards charitable organisations created to understand how likely people would use

charitable organisations as agents to help others (Webb et al., 2000). Higher scores indicate a positive attitude. A sample item is 'My image of charitable organisations is positive.' All items were rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One item was reversed. For this study, the instrument was translated into Lithuanian, revised by two experts in the social sciences, and back-translated into English using the AI translation program Deepl. The items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .844$).

External power primacy was measured using a three-item scale of powerful others of the external locus of control scale, adapted from the original scale (Levenson, 1974) to capture the attitudes of older people (Shewchuk et al., 1990). Higher scores indicate a higher locus of external control. A sample item is 'I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.' All items were rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree). The translation of the items into Lithuanian was taken from Balaisis (2004). The items formed a marginally acceptable scale (α = .671) as a limited number of items compose the scale (Vaske et al., 2017).

The authoritarian outlook was measured using a subscale called 'The Requirement of the Iron Fist', which was adapted for Lithuania (Mažeikienė & Šulcaitė, 2010) from the authoritarianism scale (Altemeyer, 1981). Higher scores indicate a more authoritarian outlook. All items were rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (absolutely yes) to 6 (absolutely not). The items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .891$).

Control variables. *Health* was perceived as one of the critical variables in determining volunteering, especially among older people (Komp et al., 2012). It was measured from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) (Van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). *Church attendance* measures ranged from 1 (never) to 6 (every day) (Van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). Education and religion are essential social norms in forming attitudes towards volunteering (Son & Wilson, 2012). *Education* was measured using six categories. *NGO Awareness* (mentioned in Study I as a problem in the early days of NGOs) was measured using a self-developed scale of five items with Yes or No answers: 'I can name some examples of NGO/charities,' 'I understand and distinguish which organisations are governmental and which are NGO/charities,' 'I can name at least a few differences between governmental and NGOs/charities,' 'I have acquaintances who work for an NGO/charity,' 'I have acquaintances who volunteer at an NGO/charity.' Higher scores indicate greater knowledge about NGOs. We used the Kuder-Richardson formula 20 (KR-20) to test the scale's reliability with dichotomous data. The given items formed a reliable scale (α = .810).

3. Analysis of research results

Descriptive statistics

SPSS Statistics 28 was used to analyse the results of Study 2. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are reported in Table 11. From descriptive statistics, we revealed that, with age, people were less likely to express a positive attitude towards formal volunteering (r = -.15, p < .01), and the effect size was between small and typical in comparison with the size guidelines in individual differences research (Gignac & Szodorai, 2016). With age, people were also more likely to have an external power primacy (r = .17, p < .01), expressed a more authoritarian outlook (r = .25, p < .01), reported a worse state of health (r = .46, p < .01), were less educated (r = .17, p < .01), and attended church more (r = .28, p < .01). People who were more positive about NGOs (r = .54, p < .01), healthier (r = .20, p < .01), more educated (r = .15, p < .01), and more aware of NGOs (r = .26, p < .01), were more likely to have a positive attitude towards formal volunteering. However, external power primacy (r = -.15, p < .01) and authoritarian outlook (r = -.21, p < .01) related negatively to attitudes towards formal volunteering. Church attendance did not correlate with attitudes towards formal volunteering.

Variables M SD 2 3 4 5 6 8 1. Age 46.63 12.93 2. Attitude towards formal 4.96 .63 -.15 volunteering 3. Attitude towards NGOs 3.72 .54 -.09 .54 -.15 |-.17 |-2.66 .98 .17 4. External power primacy Authoritarian outlook 2.56 .95 .25 |-.21 |-.25 | .48 6. Health 3.66 .83 -.46 .20 | .10 | -.20 | -.21 | --.29 -.32 7. Education 5.46 .98 -.17 .15 .24 .22 8. Church attendance 2.66 1.17 .28 .07 .09 .05 .15 |-.06|.08 9. NGO awareness .35 -.09 .26 .35 -.23 |-.21 .12 | .24 .66

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of study variables

Note. N = 353–358 (pairwise). Age in years, attitude towards formal volunteering = mean of total attitude towards formal volunteering, attitude towards NGOs = mean of total attitude towards NGOs, external power primacy = mean of total external power primacy, authoritarian outlook = mean of total authoritarian outlook, NGO awareness = mean of total NGO awareness. Correlations greater than or equal |.12| are significant at p < 0.05

Hypothesis testing

From the correlation analysis, we notice that with age, people are more likely to have more negative attitudes towards formal volunteering (r = -.15, p < 0.01). We can confirm our H1 hypothesis that in Lithuania people with age are more negative about volunteering. Further, we will check whether these attitudes are related

to Soviet imprints. We put Soviet imprints as separate mediators, and checked whether they mediated the relationship between age and attitudes towards formal volunteering through the indirect effect.

This study was interested in understanding the indirect effects of Soviet imprints. The indirect effects are better analysed using PROCESS macro SPSS mediation analysis (Hayes, 2009). We used PROCESS macro 4.3 version. It uses ordinary least squares path analysis to find mediations. We used mediation analysis (Model 4) to determine the indirect effects. If the covariates would relate to the age and attitudes towards formal volunteering, we put them as additional mediators to better understand their effect on the relationship between age and attitudes towards volunteering as compared to the single mediation effect (Coutts & Hayes, 2023). If the covariates did not relate to age or attitudes towards volunteering, we would include them as covariates.

To test the H2 hypothesis, we performed mediation analysis with the attitudes towards formal NGOs as the main mediator and two covariates (health and education) as additional mediators because, according to the correlation analysis, those covariates were related to age and attitudes towards NGOs. We also added awareness about NGOs as a covariate. The analysis could not support the relationship between age and attitudes towards NGOs (H2a) (B = -.003, t = -1.21). However, path b was significant, as it supported hypothesis H2b that attitudes towards NGOs had a significant positive impact on attitudes towards formal volunteering (B = .58, t = 10.52) (see Table 2).

		Attitude towards NGOs (M)				Attitude towards forma volunteering (Y)		
Antecedent		В	SE	t		В	SE	t
Age (X)	Path a	003	.002	-1.21	Path c'	002	.002	80
Attitude towards NGOs (M)		-	_	-	Path b	.58	.06	10.52

Table 2. H2a and H2b hypothesis testing report

Hypothesis H2c stated that attitudes towards NGOs mediate the relationship between age and attitude towards formal volunteering. The results of simple mediation analysis with covariates failed to confirm H2c, showing that the indirect effect through the attitude towards NGOs was insignificant (-0.002, 95% CI = -0.004, 0.001) as the confidence interval included zero (see Table 3). However, we may notice that the total effect was significant (-.004, 95% CI=-.008,-.001), but health was the only significant path (-.003, 95% CI=-.005,-.001), explaining the relationship between age and attitudes toward NGOs in this model.

	Effect	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect of age on attitude towards volunteering	002	0.002	80	-0.007	0.003
	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Total effect	004	.002	008	001	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via attitude toward NGOs	002	.001	004	.001	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via health	003	.001	005	001	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via education	.0001	.0004	001	.001	

Note. N=358. Awareness about NGOs was added as a covariate. LLCI = lower-limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper-limit confidence interval. The number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap CI is 5000, and the confidence level for all confidence intervals is 95%.

To test the H3 hypothesis, we performed mediation analysis with the external power primacy as the main mediator and two covariates (health and education) as additional mediators because, according to the correlation analysis, those covariates were related to age and attitudes towards NGOs. We also added awareness about NGOs as a covariate. The mediation analysis did support the hypothesis that age has a significant positive effect on external power primacy (H3a) (B = .01, t = 3.02), but did not support hypothesis H3b. External power primacy had an insignificant negative effect on attitudes towards formal volunteering (H3b) (B = -.03, t = -.90) (see Table 4).

Table 4. H3a and H3b hypothesis testing report

		External power primacy (M)				Attitude towards for mal volunteering (Y		
Antecedent		В	SE	t		В	SE	t
Age (X)	Path a	.01	.004	3.02	Path c'	002	.003	90
External power primacy (M)		-	-	-	Path b	03	.03	90

In the analysis of H3c, the statistics showed an insignificant indirect effect of age on attitudes towards formal volunteering through external power primacy (-0.003, 95% CI = -0.001, 0.0004), as the confidence interval included zero (see

Table 15). However, we may notice that the total effect was significant (-.004, 95% CI = -0.007, -0.001), but health was the only significant path (-.003, 95% CI = -0.006, -0.0004), explaining the relationship between age and attitudes towards NGOs in this model. The hypothesis that external power primacy mediates the relationship between age and attitudes towards formal volunteering (H3c) could not be confirmed. As the total effect was significant, health was the only significant mediator to explain the relationship between age and attitudes towards volunteering (Table 5).

Table 5. H3c hypothesis testing

	Effect	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect of age on attitude towards volunteering	002	0.003	88	-0.008	0.003
	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Total effect	004	.001	007	001	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via external power primacy	0004	.001	001	.0004	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via health	003	.001	006	0004	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via education	0003	.001	001	.0004	

Note. N = 358. Awareness about NGOs was added as a covariate. LLCI = lower-limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper-limit confidence interval. The number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap CI is 5000, and the confidence level for all confidence intervals is 95%.

To test the H4 hypothesis, we performed mediation analysis with the authoritarian outlook as the main mediator and two covariates (health and education) as additional mediators because, according to the correlation analysis, those covariates were related to age and attitudes towards NGOs. We also added church attendance and awareness about NGOs as covariates possible to affect authoritarian outlook or attitudes towards formal volunteering. The mediation analysis supported the hypothesis that age had a significant positive effect on authoritarian outlook (H4a) (B = .01, t = 3.62) and that authoritarian outlook had a significant negative effect on attitudes towards formal volunteering (H4b) (B = .14, t = -3.84) (see Table 6).

		Authoritarian outlook (M)				Attitude towards formal volunteering (Y)			
Antecedent		В	SE	t		В	SE	t	
Age (X)	Path a	.01	.004	3.62	Path c'	004	.003	-1.20	
Authoritarian outlook (M)		-	-	-	Path b	09	.04	-2.42	

Table 6. H4a and H4b hypotheses testing report

The H4c hypothesis stated that an authoritarian outlook mediates the relationship between age and attitudes towards volunteering. The statistics showed a significant indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering through an authoritarian outlook (-0.003, 95% CI = -0.001, 0.0004), as the confidence interval did not include zero (see Table 17). We may notice that the total effect was significant (-.004, 95% CI = -0.007, -0.001). Moreover, health also had a significant path (-.003, 95% CI = -0.006, -0.0004), explaining the relationship between age and attitudes towards NGOs in this model. The hypothesis that authoritarian outlook mediates the relationship between age and attitudes towards formal volunteering (H4c) could be confirmed. As the total effect was significant, the authoritarian outlook was a significant mediator in explaining the relationship between age and attitudes towards volunteering (Table 7).

Table 7. H4c hypothesis testing report

	Effect	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect of age on attitude towards volunteering	-0.004	0.003	-1.20	-0.009	0.002
	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Total effect	004	.002	008	002	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via authoritarian outlook	001	.001	003	0001	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via health	003	.002	006	0002	
Indirect effect of age on attitude towards formal volunteering via education	0001	.001	001	.001	

Note. N = 353. Church attendance and awareness about NGOs were added as covariates. LLCI = lower-limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper-limit confidence interval. The number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap CI is 5000, and the confidence level for all confidence intervals is 95%.

Discussion and conclusions

In the quantitative study, we tried to answer the question how Soviet imprints affect modern attitudes towards formal volunteering. Hypotheses regarding the influence of Soviet imprints on attitudes towards formal volunteering in post-Soviet countries were derived from imprinting theory. We posited that attitudes founded in a specific environment at a particular time tended to persist despite subsequent environmental changes. Following this, we argued that the attitudes acquired in Soviet times persisted and hindered specific democratic institutions, NGOs and their primary resource, volunteering. The recent study on NGO imprints stemming from the Soviet past noted different imprints (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024), which we summarised in four main attitudinal points noticed in early NGOs: negative attitudes towards time donation or volunteering, negative image or attitudes towards NGOs, external power primacy, and authoritarian outlook. We tested the hypothesis that Soviet imprints would mediate the relationship between age and attitudes towards volunteering in modern times, whereas, with age, we would notice stronger imprints, which subsequently would affect attitudes towards volunteering.

Considering the Soviet imprints of attitudes towards NGOs, the results did not show the mediation effect, suggesting that in Lithuania, ageing people did not have more negative attitudes towards NGOs to affect volunteering. The results did not support the hypothesis that Lithuanian people would be more negative towards NGOs with age. Such findings contradict research related to the trust and attitude towards NGOs, where it was noted that the legacy of authoritarianism in post-Soviet societies led to a deep-seated distrust in NGOs (Pranaitytė, 2022; Regulska, 1999; Waniak-Michalak et al., 2020). This might also question the measurement instruments and their ability to catch the exact meaning of the Soviet imprint or might find the explanation in the imprints' transformative nature (Simsek et al., 2015) showing that Lithuanian society already does not hold this imprint.

The hypothesis that external power primacy as a Soviet imprint would mediate the relationship between age and attitudes towards volunteering failed to be confirmed. Moreover, testing the model with additional mediators (health, education, church attendance, and NGO awareness) showed that health was the most critical factor in the proposed relationship. The significant relationship between age and external power primacy (path a) hints that this still might be a viable imprint, but not with effect to volunteering in modern times. However, we could not confirm that external power primacy might affect attitudes towards volunteering in modern times. Such findings contradict the previous research in early post-communist countries, stating that people tended to rely more on government, with less self-

initiative (Alesina & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2007; Frese et al., 1996; Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024). This suggests either evidence of imprint decay (Simsek et al., 2015) or more robust methodological opportunities, such as developing an actual post-Soviet imprints scale, that could be suggested for further research.

The hypothesis that an authoritarian outlook mediates the relationship between age and attitudes towards volunteering was confirmed, suggesting the viability of the authoritarian outlook in modern Lithuanian society, which affected crucial NGO resources in the early development of NGOs in Lithuania (Petreikienė & Bučiūnienė, 2024), and modern NGOs too. With this research, we may add to scholars noting that ideological attitudes stem from a particular context (Zhao et al., 2020). Moreover, we identify several reasons as to why the authoritarian outlook as an imprint did not turn into a more liberal outlook. Older people have experienced many transitions, such as economic downturns (Butkuvienė, 2005), leaving them in survival mode with more rigid attitudes. Looking from another point of view, older cohorts with stronger Soviet imprints have witnessed how younger generations seemed to have lost their values and obligations when adopting the liberal rule, bringing many risks, such as a 'loss of norms' and an 'identity crisis' (Walker & Stephenson, 2010, 523).

By exploring the Soviet imprints that created their legacies in the early and modern context of NGOs, we broadened the research on imprinting theory (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013) in the post-Soviet environment (Albu et al., 2021; Banalieva et al., 2017; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006), and specifically in the NGO sector, which is scarce. By showing the long-lasting effect of attitudes from Soviet times, we contributed to the literature on ideological imprint persistence through decades despite the subsequent changes in the environment (Xu et al., 2021).

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