

# Abstract

## **It's Lonely Trying to Save the World: On Prioritizing the Mental Health Epidemic for NGO Volunteers**

An abstract of the thesis by Maria Amparo Fiebelkorn

This thesis explores the mental health challenges faced by NGO volunteers working with refugee populations in Greece. Through in-depth interviews, it reveals issues like role ambiguity, emotional burden, and limited access to formal mental health resources. Seven key themes emerge, highlighting how empathy and a drive for personal growth can lead volunteers into stressful, all-consuming roles when structured support is lacking. Using Self-Determination and Conservation of Resources theories, the study suggests practical strategies—such as mental health initiatives, peer support networks, and structured transitions—to help volunteers manage burnout and stay resilient. These findings emphasize the need for NGOs to actively support volunteer well-being, ultimately strengthening both volunteer impact and the quality of services offered to refugee communities.