# Management of corporate volunteers and the effects of volunteering on the well-being and engagement of employees: A Review and Framework for Future Research

Muhammad Zeeshan Khan

Department of Management Science, Fast National University

Karachi, Pakistan

Email: Zeeshan.khan@nu.edu.pk

## Abstract

Employee volunteering is a topic of growing importance in workplaces around the globe. Similarly, growing research on this phenomenon has seen a significant increase over the past decade, most significantly in different manufacturing and service oriented firms. Nevertheless, the increased visibility of this notion, not much is written on this burning question and the direction for future research is also unclear. In addition, research is currently based on a variety of different definitions but nothing is said about the practices and the propositions which managers should acclimatize to foster enhanced volunteering initiatives within the organization. In order to advance management research on employee volunteering, this literature hinges upon on four contributions: (1) clarifying the theoretical background on corporate volunteering, (2) best practices which managers should adapt to foster corporate volunteering, (3) effects of volunteering on the well-being and engagement of employees, and (4) providing a future research agenda for the role of volunteering and its motives.

**Keywords:** Corporate volunteering, Well-being, Engagement, Involvement

## 1. Introduction

The notion of employee involvement with corporate volunteering is often marginalized nowadays. However, it has now become somewhat of a 'must have' some years ago when the idea of the 'triple bottom line' (concern of people, planet and profits) came into vogue. The idea extended the supposition from the one that had companies' prime responsibilities as share holder earnings, to one that included the well-being and engagement of employees and society at large. Corporate reporting began to include volunteer programs as a measurable item and, not surprisingly, created its own controversies.

Some people argued that corporate volunteering activities were funded by company profits that should rightly go to shareholders. Others (cynically) suggested that this was just a way for firms to earn 'brownie points' and look good in the eyes of society. Whatever the opinion, if some segment of the community is benefitting, why quibble?

Corporate volunteering has actually evolved from plain old donations/philanthropy to one where a business case determines the direction of the activity and the nature of the company's association. This may go beyond the monetary contributions to include volunteer work by employees or some other level of involvement that is deemed suitable. As a matter of fact, multinational corporations today encounter couple of challenges. First they significantly focused on cost cutting, restructuring, outsourcing, and industry consolidation mergers to gain profits. Second, many companies face increased stakeholder anticipations towards a superior role in concentrating social, economic, and environmental issues (Mirvis & Googins, 2006; Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Employee disengagement can prevent any business from reaching success. Corporate volunteering programs bestow opportunities to engage employees, advance staff skills, build teams and strengthen company's reputation within local community. Companies employ different programs strategically according to their business objectives. Four key principles lay the base of sensible volunteering programs – internal encouragement, staff preference and involvement, risk management and consequential relationships encouraged with not for profit partners (http://www.corporatevolunteers.org.au, 2015).

Thus, a major research challenge here is to identify or explore some more contemporary propositions/factors that encourage employee engagement in corporate volunteering efforts and to discourse some new developments to this notion. Seen in this light, this piece of literature aims firstly to gain further understanding of corporate volunteering activities within the organization, secondly to investigate the factors that can enhance employee involvement in corporate volunteering, and thirdly to examine its consequences on the well-being and engagement of employees.

## 2. Theoretical Background

Corporate volunteering landscape has grown fast in the last decades. In fact, corporate volunteering programs offers terrific potential for strategic human resource management and leadership paradigms, such as stimulating employee motivation, commitment, engagement, cohesion, teamwork, professional development, social identity, as well as reputational gains

with regard to investors, clients, and future employees (Booth, Park, & Glomb, 2009; Deloitte, 2011; Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009; Peterson, 2004). Yet, as Grant underlined (2012, p. 610). "Corporate volunteering has taken organizations by storm, but organizational scholars have only begun to take notice". At the same time, other publications suggested a number of human resource benefits integrating with corporate volunteering propositions. Moreover, substantial progress has been made to address these shortcomings in the literature.

Corporate volunteering activities can provide the stimulus for positive employee reciprocation such as increased commitment and increased organizational citizenship behavior, when employees infer this support as a signal that the company values them and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhodes, 2001; Jones, 2010). Similarly, corporate volunteering could generate a "Pro-social sense making process" (Grant et al., 2008; Pajo & Lee, 2011) facilitating employees to see themselves and their company in more prosocial philanthropic state and thereby resulting in a stronger social bond with the company.

Company support for employee volunteering (CSEV) serve as a valuable resource for charities, nonprofit and voluntary organizations (hereafter jointly referred to as NVOs) (D. Basil et al., 2011). Motivation provides a basis for attracting and keeping a diverse volunteer workforce. Scholars have theorized a range of factors, including wanting to help society, personal growth and social privilege, that may help explain why people volunteer (Sokolowski, 1996; Clary et al, 1996; Morrow-Howell & Mui, 1989). Companies, however, have their own structures and agendas that may influence the nature and extent of support they provide (D. Basil, et al., 2011). The executive and professional level, the expertise offered to community groups can prove invaluable. Companies can do a great deal formally or informally to promote employee volunteering, ranging from providing time release for volunteer activity to simply posting a list of volunteer opportunities in the community. As cited in D. Basil et al (2011) companies can benefit from their support of employee volunteering in several ways. CSEV can enhance public image (Basil et al., 2008), relations with consumers, and relations with the surrounding community (Cone/Roper, 1999; Maignan et al., 1999). Such volunteering can also enhance employee morale, productivity, skills, retention, and recruitment (e.g. Basil et al., 2008; Davidson, 1994; Finney, 1997; Geroy et al., 2000; Peterson, 2004; Points of Light Foundation and Allstate Foundation, 1999). Finally, return on assets and investment positively correlate with company community involvement (Dowell et al., 2000; Margolis and Walsh, 2001; Waddock and Graves, 1997). This activity is increasingly acknowledged as providing benefit to the employee, their community and their company (Stallings 1998; Sagawa & Segal 2001). Volunteering should help the organization to make concrete contributions to its community and to its clients and supports the idea that volunteers must receive something they value from their paid employment (Bradley, 2014).

## 3. Management Propositions

### 3.1. Millennials Engagement and Cause Work Relationship

When employees are considering applying for a job, their first consideration is what the company actually sells, distributes, and manufacture. But beyond compensation and rewards,

what is important to them is the organizational culture, top management commitment, diversity in HR standards and practices, and the office ambience. According to the research by (Forbes, 2016) that a company's cause engagement and culture begin at the executive level. It's not enough to offer a volunteer program and give lip service to causes. How direct managers and executive leadership personally engage in causes affects the attitudes of employees. Organizations should create a uniform cause experience and culture throughout the company, starting with executive leadership and working down the ranks to direct managers. In addition, what the research reveals that employees especially Millennials who want to stay within their jobs strongly believe in the company's mission statement and its purpose. They want to volunteer together and feel connected and engaged through a shared passion for their company's cause work must be integrated into its core mission. Infact, Millennials are increasingly engaging with causes and tend to believe that a company that cares about its causes will care about treating them well, too. However, Millennials' engagement towards their job is not always high. This is due to number of barriers, including not always understanding the available volunteer and giving opportunities and not being encouraged to get involved or not seeing how their participation matters (http://www.forbes.com, 2016).

*3.2. Rethinking Older Workers' Talent Pool*

Businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies are striving to embed this idea of using older workers stereotypes and some are already starting it. The "Blue Bring Back" program of Blue Cross/Blue Shield of America lets managers request hiring retired former employees for assignments. Simultaneously, career coaches and encore coaches encouraging boomers to search for meaning and well-being at this stage of life. This research would strive to embed among the society that people over 50 are an assets not a liability and they could have a helping hand in the corporate volunteering activities and boost engagement among the firms' employees. As a matter of fact, management personnel are forced to realize that with a threatening labor shortage, they won't be able to ignore dynamic, capable, and talent older workers (http://www.forbes.com, 2016).

*3.3 The Vulnerability Requirement by Managers*

our most important human affairs- marriage, child rearing, education, volunteerism, leadership-do best when there is occasional loss of control and an increase in personal vulnerability. As an organizational psychologist, what my personal experience is that managers shouldn't fail to act, to use his authority. But people ought to know that they are dealing with the genuine person, not someone who is managing them. Sometimes it happens that employees could not display their whole self within the organization and couldn't exhibit their volunteering initiatives and can't give their voice in terms of corporate social responsibility issues just because of their controlled managers. Managers should think that people with whom they work want them to exhibit consistency, assertiveness, and self-control and they do. But occasionally, they want just the opposite. They want a moment when managers are genuinely ours without façade or pretense, when they are truly revealed as human beings (Farson, 2004).

*3.4 Using Right Tools*

Volunteer programs success wouldn't be possible without appropriate tools and equipments. Many companies provide a variety of support in terms of direct and indirect support for employee volunteerism and allow employees to use company resources such as photocopiers, fax machines, printers and so forth to support their volunteer endeavors (Basil et al., 2008).

*3.5 Offer Incentives*

Employees won't jump to participate in a volunteer program if they don't see that management really cares. It's important for leadership to join their staff in volunteering to prove they are personally invested in the cause. According to Back et al. (2011) that rewards, maintenance, and miscellaneous services are the most significant determinants to enhance corporate volunteering initiatives and seem to be great tools to motivate participation.

*3.6 Using the Right Technology*

Companies prioritize employee engagement as a way to attract and retain employees, and 84 percent of the companies surveyed view volunteer opportunities as an important way to engage employees.

The report, "Depiction 2015: The New Corporate DNA – Where Employee Engagement and Social Impact Converge," represents the developing desires of employees today. Employee volunteer and giving projects are an advantage that workers – especially Millennials – request in their organizations, and there is a scope of elements that employees search for in these projects.

"Given the changing workforce in both age and global expansion," said one corporate respondent, "there is a need to revise our programming. It is imperative that we realize what our employees need in a giving project. Our present giving effort is effective yet it is NOT reverberating with millennial workers who wish to perform quicker and in an unexpected way."

It is apparently exhibited that how in one area where small companies outperform the large companies in terms of technological innovations towards championing causes that are meaningful to the employees, community, and the company. As a matter of fact, there is significant engagement for employees towards the causes which employees are passionate about. In addition, companies can use technology in terms of skill based volunteering, automatic payroll donations, offering myriad incentives for participation. Modern technology is indispensable for facilitating these needs with ease (http://www.forbes.com, 2016).

**4. Pro Bono Volunteering**

Pro bono is an immense and increasing business today. It is anticipated at $15 billion that is drawing contribution from global corporate leaders. Effective pro-bono initiatives cater employees' interests, community needs and company programs. Furthermore, skills-based volunteering programs reward incredible benefits. Employees get job skill development, leadership training and internal networking along with worthy community service experience

(http://www.forbes.com/, 2013).

Fact with (http://www.forbes.com/, 2013) True Impact, skills-based volunteers are 142% more probable to describe job-related skills-gains than traditional volunteers, 47% more likely to report higher satisfaction from volunteering versus traditional volunteers, and 82% more likely to report that volunteerism generated new employees for their company compared to traditional volunteers. Moreover, pro bono and volunteering of talents and skills be capable of 500% more valuable for nonprofits.

Taproot Foundation is a leading player in the pro bono movement since 2001. Taproot partnerships with companies to develop and scale corporate pro bono programs, it works to engage the nation's millions of business professionals to input their time as well as skills to serve nation's nonprofit community. As Taproot founder Aaron Hurst sees it, "The movement is fundamentally to have professionals recognize the honor and privilege to be able to work in their field, realizing that many can't afford their services and changing what it means to be a professional to include doing good work, pro-bono work, which is the literal translation" (http://www.forbes.com/, 2013).

The pro bono progress is a win-win for everyone involved. As companies try to engage employees in their corporate philanthropy, they are accessing the skills and resources which are the essence of the company. Businesses are quite concerned about developing employee engagement programs which indicate employees' preferences and this benefits employee (http://www.forbes.com/, 2013).

Unremitting competition requires that women play a novel role in the market. Working women probably would have dreamed of producing an impact in the society, beyond their responsibility of an employee or executive. Women are the nation's most widespread volunteers above 28 percent are engaged in volunteering while ration in men is 22 percent lesser than women. One of the reason is women naturally value that their responsibilities, furthermore, "Women are hard-wired to be engaged in their communities" and as the majority of volunteers are hired by volunteers and so women have a propensity to ask and invite their female networks to engage in their projects (The glass Hammer).

*4.1. Women Participation in Corporate Volunteering*

One of the facts is that various women who volunteer their time work part-time or even some not at all. In contrast, time can be a foremost concern for professional or working women, who may possess less flexibility in their schedules. Definitely, making the world a better place is imperative; furthermore it is also vital for professional advance. Participation in corporate volunteering will help them in numerous ways (including but not limited to) foster their basic experience, grant exquisite opportunities to learn new skills. It further permit them to increase relationships outside their standard circle in other words broaden their network (Davis, 2016).

Moreover by working with new and diverse set of people and challenges their perspective widens, subsequently that can pull them out of their comfort zone, allow them to confront new problems in novel ways. Corporate volunteering can sharpen their leadership skills and

they without difficulty can work outside the organization chart. Besides, they can hunt for new opportunities for development and involvement (Davis, 2016).

## 5. Effects of Corporate Volunteering on Employees

### 5.1. Corporate Volunteering and Job Burnout

Burnout is a sort of mental anxiety. Work related burnout or employment burnout is described by fatigue, absence of excitement and inspiration, sentiments of incapability, furthermore may have the measurement of dissatisfaction or skepticism, and therefore diminished adequacy inside the working environment (Ruotsalainen, 2014). Word related burnout is regularly and especially found inside human administration callings. Callings with abnormal amounts of burnout incorporate social laborers, attendants, educators, legal counselors, engineers, doctors, client administration delegates, and cops. However, (Demerouti, 2000) demonstrated that burnout is available in a wide range of occupations, and not simply inside human administrations (Senior, 2006).

Word related burnout frequently grows gradually and may not be perceived until it has ended up serious. Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter distinguished six danger elements for burnout: befuddle in workload, crisscross in control, absence of suitable recompenses, loss of a feeling of positive association with others in the working environment, saw absence of reasonableness, and strife between qualities (Senior, 2006).

(Marsh, 2016) characterized the absolute opposite of burnout as engagement. Engagement is described by vitality, inclusion and viability, the contrary energies of depletion, criticism and inefficacy. Bakker in Burnout and Work Engagement: The JD–R Approach makes the same contention as Leiter (Bianchi, Schonfeld, & Laurent, 2014). Corporate volunteering activities enhance engagement at work through experiences that concentrate on the individual's need for meaning and accomplishment (http://www.volunteering.com.au, 2014).

### 5.2. Increased Self Esteem

Self esteem is one of the advantages which individuals get after engaging themselves in corporate volunteering programs. Theory and research on suggests that positive self-concept consists on various factors (Judge, Bono, Erez, Locke, & Thoresen, 2002). For example, Steele (1988) proposes that a positive self-concept include self-esteem (i.e., people's needs to perceive themselves as capable and good), a sense of distinctiveness (i.e., people's desires to maintain self- impressions of being coherent, unitary, and stable), and a substance of control (i.e., people wanting to see themselves as competent of free choice, and as capable of controlling crucial results).

### 5.3. Social Identity Substance

Social identity theory would also be indispensable which suggests that individuals reinforce their self-esteem and enhance their self-image by recognizing with groups and organizations known for social responsibility (Ashforth &Mael, 1989; Pratt, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Social identity theory exhibits why a company's volunteering programs can affect both consumer and employee attitudes towards the company (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Maignan

& Ferrell, 2001; Maignan et al., 1999). Furthermore, socially responsible companies are more likely to have positive public reputation (Fomburn & Shanley, 1990).

## 6. Implications for Future Research

Corporate volunteering is now becoming a trend and being continuously acknowledged in entire world because of its positive consequences to community, employees and company. Many researchers in different countries have associated corporate volunteering with employee engagement and numerous other factors. It has been explored for the factors including (but not limited to) enhanced job satisfaction; augmented constructive word of mouth concerning the company; better retention rates; improved loyalty are  few more positive outcomes have explained. Moreover in 2006 according to Volunteering Australia, the reasons why people volunteered were found out to help others/community, personal satisfaction, personal/family involvement, to do something worthwhile, social contact, use skills/experience, to be active, religious beliefs and few others and by doing this they more satisfied, more emotionally and mentally stable, happier, healthier and get meaning and sense of self-worth and thus their chances are also increased to be recruited and engaged with their job remain committed with their company.

The ground why volunteers of diverse and different ethnic groups probably want different rewards from their volunteer opportunity is an area which can be researched in future. Several areas can be explored including the function of conflicting values in determining recruiting strategies and measures for volunteers; designing training to highlight particular values and using them as standardizing for the success of volunteer program. Furthermore, appropriate extrinsic rewards for volunteers and their effects on involvement can also be researched as well.

## 7. Conclusion

Corporate volunteering programs have significant impact on community, performance of employees and as well as on organizational business outcomes. Research would further highlight and emphasis on the outcomes of corporate volunteering activities including but not limited to opportunities to engage employees, advance staff skills, build teams and strengthen company's reputation within local community. Just a few hours of volunteering makes increases happiness   and sustained volunteering is associated with enhanced mental health, positive emotions and behaviors are linked with superior well-being, health, and prolonged existence, a sound association exists among the well-being, health, happiness and prolonged existence of employees who are emotionally kind plus volunteering is highly associated with better health and happiness.

Overall, employees get motivated and keep engaged with their jobs. Thus, in engagement people within the organization express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally attached during their job roles. (Luthans & Peterson, 2002) offered (Kahn's, 1990) work on personal engagement illustrated that to be emotionally engaged is a meaningful connection to others such as connection or relationships between peers, co-workers, employers and employees and to express empathy, which means feel what others feel. (Bhatnagar, 2007).

Corporate volunteering increases networking, employees' motivation and commitment, cohesion and teamwork, professional development, as well as reputational gains with regard to investors, clients and future employees and these factors definitely get translated into financial gains of the company (Booth, Park, & Glomb, 2009; Deloitte, 2011; Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009; Peterson, 2004). To put it in a nutshell, "corporate Volunteering is a win:win:win scenario. It's good for the community, good for the employees and good for the company" (Volunteering Victoria, 2014). Women's increased involvement is imperative; by working with new and diverse set of people and challenges their perspective widens, subsequently that can pull them out of their comfort zone, allow them to confront new problems in novel ways. Corporate volunteering can sharpen their leadership skills and they without difficulty can work outside the organization chart. Besides, they can hunt for new opportunities for development and involvement (Davis). Furthermore, the pro bono progress is a win-win for everyone involved. As companies try to engage employees in their corporate philanthropy, they are accessing the skills and resources which are the essence of the company (http://www.forbes.com/, 2013).

As cited in J. Brockner (2010) corporate volunteering programs stimulate a positive self concept because people can experience high self-esteem, specifically, they may see themselves as good, to the degree that they consider that their volunteer activity shines positively upon them (Grant, 2007). Moreover, their distinctiveness, self- perception (e.g., the desire to see themselves as coherent or unitary) may be validated by participating in volunteering activities that is coherent with how they describe themselves. Furthermore, they may feel control to the extent that they consider their volunteer activities are crafting a positive change in the world (Grant & Sonnentag, 2010).

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