

Factors impacting volunteers' organizational commitment in a Puerto Rican non-profit organization: a psychological contract perspective

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■ ABSTRACT

There is an interest from scholars and practitioners in understanding how non-profit organizations (NPOs) can design and implement practices to enhance desirable volunteer attitudes and behaviors (Alfes et al., 2017). One important attitude is volunteers' organizational commitment (OC). This research aims to identify factors that diminish volunteers' OC and suggest effective ways to deal with them, which lead to NPOs performance improvement. This is achieved through a single case study in a Puerto Rican non-profit organization, which consists of in-depth interviews and self-administered questionnaires on psychological contract violation. Five categories of factors that negatively affect volunteers' OC were identified and analyzed: organizational structure, communication, recognition, strategic planning, and conflict management. General actions were provided to help NPOs deal with similar issues.

Keywords: psychological contract violation, conflict management, organizational structure, strategic planning, recognition

Factores que afectan el compromiso organizacional de voluntarios en una organización sin fines de lucro en Puerto Rico: una perspectiva de contrato psicológico

■ RESUMEN

Existe un interés por parte de académicos y profesionales en comprender cómo las organizaciones sin fines de lucro (OSFL) pueden diseñar e implementar prácticas para mejorar los comportamientos deseables en los voluntarios (Alfes

et al., 2017). Una cualidad en los voluntarios es el compromiso organizacional (CO). Esta investigación tiene como objetivo identificar los factores que disminuyen el CO de los voluntarios y sugiere formas efectivas de lidiar con ellos, lo que lleva a la mejora del desempeño de las OSFL. Esto se logra a través de un estudio de caso en una organización sin fines de lucro puertorriqueña, que consiste en entrevistas a profundidad y cuestionarios autoadministrados sobre la violación del contrato psicológico. Se identificaron y analizaron cinco categorías de factores que inciden negativamente en el CO de los voluntarios: estructura organizacional, comunicación, reconocimiento, planificación estratégica y manejo de conflictos. Por último, se proporcionaron acciones generales para ayudar a las OSFL a lidiar con problemas similares.

Palabras clave: violación del contrato psicológico, manejo de conflictos, estructura organizacional, planificación estratégica, reconocimiento

Introduction

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) represent a significant societal actor—along with the Government and for-profit organizations—in the development of the socio-economic scenario due to the contribution they provide to alleviate social problems (Zollo et al., 2019). Since Human Resource Management (HRM) plays an increasingly significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of NPOs (Ridder et al., 2012; Tsai & Lin, 2014), there is an interest from scholars and practitioners in understanding how non-profit organizations can design and implement human resources (HR) practices to enhance desirable volunteer attitudes and behaviors (Alfes et al., 2017). Finding ways to ensure positive workplace outcomes, such as employee commitment and performance, is especially critical for the overall functioning of non-profit organizations (Brimhall, 2018). Due to the demand required by diverse stakeholders to improve performance, it is necessary to understand how to raise NPO volunteer employees' commitment toward the organization and understand the factors that may undermine that commitment from the perspective of psychological contract theory.

This work aims to identify factors that diminish volunteers' OC and suggest general effective ways to deal with them, which lead to NPOs performance improvement. This article is organized in four parts. First, it shares the theoretical framework with the literature review of the psychological contract, organizational commitment, and volunteers; second, it presents the data and methods. Third, the finding of the case study is presented, followed by the general suggested actions for NPOs. Finally, future research and concluding remarks are included.

Theoretical Framework: Psychological Contract and Organizational Commitment

Individuals are increasingly turning to work to find meaningfulness in their lives (Kim et al., 2018). This trend deserves a further understanding of the psychological aspects of contractual labor relations. Psychological contract theory (PCT) is a conceptual perspective applied to explain employees' workplace attitudes and behavior (Quiñones-González, 2016). According to Kappelides et al. (2019), PCT focuses on the social exchange relationship between volunteers and organizations and has demonstrated the potential to better understand the factors influencing volunteer connections to their organization. McDermott et al. (2013) stated that the content of psychological contracts impacts many employment outcomes, in conjunction with the degree to which they are fulfilled, including organizational commitment (OC) (Quiñones-González, 2016; Zhao et al., 2007). Psychological contract theory has only recently been applied to the study of volunteers (Kappelides et al., 2019; Stirling et al., 2011). There is a scarcity of research dealing with factors that cause perceived psychological contract breach or violation on NPOs volunteer employees, affecting their OC. Only a handful of papers with related yet not identical variables have been identified in the literature (i.e., Tsai & Lin, 2014). The main concern of literature regarding PC is given to employees' reactions to different organizational changes. Hence, further understanding of the factors

that undermine NPOs volunteers' commitment to the organization is needed. Accordingly, this study found five main categories of factors that diminish volunteers' OC: organizational structure, communication, recognition, strategic planning, and conflict management, which are supported by literature and application of psychological contract theory.

Rousseau (1989) defined a psychological contract as "an individual belief, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization" (p. 9). This belief arises from the perception that a promise has been made, such as employment or career opportunities, and consideration offered in exchange for it, such as accepting a position or previous other job offers (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Psychological contracts exist on an individual level (idiosyncratic), are based solely upon an employee's perceptions (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), and begin to form very early in the employee-employer relationship (Baker, 1985; Kappelides et al., 2019).

The application of psychological contract theory to volunteers and NPOs is feasible and even necessary since, as explained by Vantiborgh et al., "while volunteers do not expect financial gains and volunteer organizations lack the incentives available to for-profit organizations, volunteers do expect certain inducements in return for their effort, implying an exchange relationship between both parties" (2011, p. 642). A contract breach (PCB) is the perception of a discrepancy between what was promised and what was experienced, while a contract violation (PCV) is the intense affective experience that frequently follows that perception and describes the affective and emotional experience of disappointment, frustration, anger, and resentment that could result from the employee's perception of contract breach and the perceived reasons for that breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Employees perceive a violation of psychological contract when the organization changes to adapt to environmental challenges or due to internal factors. When employees perceive that their PC has been altered, they may experience a breach or a violation of that contract. This occurs in paid and non-paid employees.

I introduce a construct that might represent a better fit for describing volunteers' PC. PC is viewed either as transactional or relational (Rousseau, 1989, 1995). Transactional terms are exemplified by a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, focusing on short-term monetizable exchanges. Relational contracts focus on open-ended relationships involving considerable investments by both employees (company-specific skills, long-term career development) and employers (extensive training), with a long-term, highly subjective, and dynamic nature of the relationship between both parties. Based on observation and experience working with and studying volunteer service, there are elements of the transactional contract since their service contract establishes the participants' length of service and wage.

On the other hand, identifying with the organization's cause, mission, and vision is fertile soil for developing a relational contract. Many volunteer motivations fit the relational contract concept because they are linked to social identity and emotions such as group belonging and doing something worthwhile (Stirling et al., 2011). A new perspective to study this convergence of volunteers' contract nature is introduced here as transcendental contract. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, this construct deserves further research and understanding.

Bang et al. (2013) stated that committed and enthusiastic volunteers are valuable to non-profit organizations, but perceived breach of their psychological contract decreases the organizational commitment (OC). OC refers to a psychological link between an employee and the organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). OC comprises three factors: the desire to remain an employee, the willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and the acceptance of the organization's values (Allen & Meyer, 1990), and is tied to the concept of psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). Meyer and Allen (1997) further stated that OC reflects three broad themes: an affective orientation to the organization (affective commitment), a recognition of costs associated with leaving the organization (continuance commitment),

and a moral obligation to remain with the organization (normative commitment). Each is influenced by different factors, including PCB and PCV. The recent literature on psychological contract has attempted to apply the theoretical framework to non-profit organizations and volunteer employees (Stirling et al., 2011; Tsai & Lin, 2014; Vantilborgh, 2015; Vantilborgh et al., 2011). Other researchers combine some variables with organizational commitment (i.e., McDermott et al., 2013, mention opportunity, information, support, resources, and empowerment). Others share new perspectives of how to address the concept of psychological contract in a way that best fits the work and nature of volunteers (i.e., Nichols, 2013). This knowledge brings NPOs a better understanding of the relevance of maintaining high levels of OC among their workforce, either paid or volunteer.

Volunteers and Organizational Commitment: the Case of “Rescue, Inc.”

Volunteers are an enormous resource for non-profit organizations operating in different fields, such as health, education, community services, churches, and sports (Almas et al., 2020). This study refers to volunteers funded by federal agencies as stipend-paid volunteers or stipend volunteers.

The analyzed NPO, identified hereafter as Rescue, Inc., provides services to children, youth, and families of surrounding municipalities, specifically, youth at risk, prisoners’ families, and prevention aids, such as tutoring. Its mission is “to encourage, develop, and create quality of life for convicts, ex-convicts, addicts and their families, relatives, and the community in general.” One of its main objectives is to facilitate their productive integration into their family and community through socialization skills development, coordination of vocational training or academic preparation, and job placement.

AmeriCorps, a Corporation for National and Community Service program, focuses on addressing communities’ educational, environmental, public safety, and disaster relief needs, among

other services (Brennan & Upshaw, 2012). Rescue, Inc. holds a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, qualifies for USA federal funds, and is sponsored by AmeriCorps. This tax-exempt status impacts NPOs in two contrasting ways. First, they make federal funds accessible for qualified organizations, and second, their strict requirements may constrain the freedom of service providers linked to organizations' missions. The cost of being granted federal funds is the limitation of volunteers' time and talents and their availability to fulfill urgent community needs as they arise. This represents a dilemma for NPOs' service impact.

Rescue, Inc. lacks specialized personnel to implement good HR practices and to perform administrative works, direct service, volunteer's management, and compliance with local, state, and federal law requirements. It needs a strategic vision and resources to overcome its financial hardship. Those challenges represent a learning opportunity for the organization's leaders to improve its efficiency and performance.

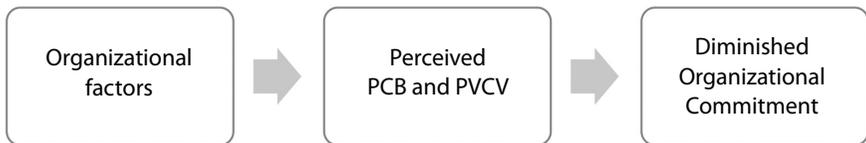
Data and Methods

A mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative data collection was utilized. A single case study design was selected to analyze the factors that affect volunteers' organizational commitment in an NPO in western Puerto Rico, which faced challenges in administering the services and managing the volunteers. Relevant documents were also read to understand the organizational structure and operational policies. With some demographic questions, the self-administered questionnaire measured volunteers' OC and their perception of psychological contract breach (PCB) and violation (PCV). After IRB approval, in-depth interviews with narrative questions were conducted with six participants of Rescue, Inc. after IRB approval. The sample was small, as the total amount of administrative employees and direct-service volunteers in the NPO is very small. Sample selection in a qualitative study looks for a better approximation and understanding of a specific reality, not on causal and generalizable explanations since it is based on

intentional, not probabilistic criteria. Participants were chosen by availability, and the organization provided their email addresses. The researcher contacted them personally. After consenting to participate, they were provided with the interviews' contact information and locations address. Each received the informed consent form and the questionnaire, which included socio-demographic questions. In-person interviews were conducted in April 2016. Each interview lasted forty-five minutes to one and a half hours, in a private setting outside the workplace and after working hours. This method helped gather insight into factors that cause perceived PCB or PCV and diminish OC. Figure 1 summarizes the connection between organizational factors, perceived PCB and PCV, and their impact on OC, according to the analyzed responses of participants.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of Factors Impacting Volunteers' OC at Rescue, Inc.



Source: Elaborated by the autor.

SPSS 20 software was used for the basic descriptive analysis and bivariable analysis to examine the correlation between OC, PCB, and PCV. Instruments were previously authorized by their authors: PCB, Robinson and Morrison's (2000) 5-item instrument; PCV, Robinson and Morrison's (2000) 4-item instrument; and OC, Meyer et al. (1993) 18-item scale (revised version). All used a 7-point Likert scale. NVivo 12 software was used for the comprehensive qualitative analysis of the collected data. It allowed finding, recognizing, and categorizing common topics and recurring patterns more effectively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Answers were cross-validated by analyzing organization factors, recent events, and internal documents about its mission,

vision, services, and stakeholders. No statistical generalization was drawn based on such a small sample.

Participants represented board members, top management, and stipend volunteers. Four were female. Ages ranged from 21 years old to 61 years old or older. Three respondents have a bachelor's degree, and the others have at least an associate's degree. All stipend volunteers were working in the organization between one and two-year appointments.

Table 1 depicts the means of the variables that facilitate understanding organizational commitment and psychological contract theory applied to this case study.

Table 1

Means of Analyzed Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Organizational commitment	6	5.42	0.67
Psychological contract breach	5	2.49	1.39
Psychological contract violation	6	1.25	0.32

Respondents' OC is high in all three components, implying that they agree or strongly agree with the questionnaire's premises. The highest value is on the affective commitment, with a mean of 6.17, followed by normative commitment, with a mean of 5.47. The type of temporary appointment, which is associated with a transactional psychological contract and factors such as problems in communication, ill-management of conflict, and centralized power, might explain a slightly less commitment in the continuance component (mean = 4.59).

As shown in Table 2, there are low levels of perceived psychological contract breach (PCB) and perceived psychological contract violation (PCV); PCB is slightly higher than PCV. Using Spearman for statistical dependences between two variables, there are negative correlation coefficients between perceived PCB (-0.800) or PCV (-0.638) and OC. No statistical generalization

was drawn from such a small sample, but the results are similar to other research that demonstrate this inverse correlation (i.e., Conway et al., 2011; Quiñones-González, 2016; Quratulain et al., 2018; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Rodwell et al., 2015).

Table 2

Spearman Correlation Coefficients Between Variables of the Quantitative Measurement Instrument

	Psychological Contract Breach	Psychological Contract Violation
Organizational Commitment	-0.800	-0.638

Note. Significant levels: **p-value* < 0.05, two-tailed. ***p-value* < 0.01, two-tailed. N.S. = No statistical significance.

The statistical analysis of Table 3 shows a direct relationship (rho = .894) between PCB and PCV, which is a significant correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed.) and is consistent with other research. However, these quantitative results are not statistically generalizable. In-depth interviews led to a distinct interpretation of the reality experienced by the respondents, which reveals other factors that diminish their OC.

Table 3

Positive Correlation Between PCB and PCV

		PCB Mean	PCV Mean
Spearman's rho	PCB Mean	1.000	.894*
	Correlation Coefficient		.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	5	5
	PCV Mean	.894*	1.000
	Correlation Coefficient	.041	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	5	6

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

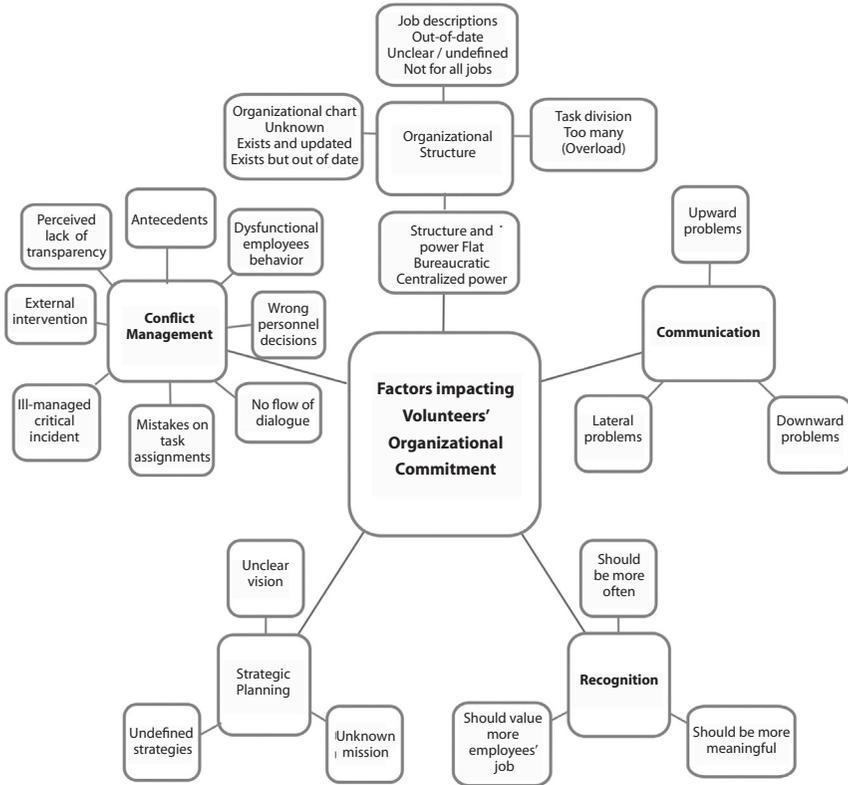
Findings

Rescue, Inc. has a noble mission and has positively impacted many members of the communities they serve. On the bright side of the organization, as perceived by the interviewees, they provide a pleasant and comfortable working place; “It’s a healthy environment... People paid attention to whatever need one could have/ we could have” (Interview 1); “The trust granted in me is very meaningful” (Interview 4). Everyone treats others with respect and fellowship. Some describe as “a very friendly environment, just like a family” (Interview 2). Shared values are core elements for this NPO. Schein defines values as “individual’s own assumptions about what is right or wrong, what will work or not work” (2004, p. 28). Helmig et al. (2015) cited a variety of management research concerning the relevance of values as a prerequisite for the survival of organizations. As a faith-based organization, Rescue, Inc. puts its values into action when interacting with every person, and they are a strong invisible essence of the organization. People feel welcome and glad to be part of them. In general, employees feel identified with the organizational mission and are aware of their contribution to society through their varied services. Their answers reveal a well-accepted, positive, and friendly organizational climate, a much-appreciated factor that stimulates volunteers’ organizational commitment.

NVivo 12 was used to codify, classify, and organize the data to find the common words that describe the organization and the relevant issues according to respondents. Figure 2 presents the results of a word frequency query. It displays the relevance assigned to the organization, commitment, volunteers, service, resources, situations, supervision, community, and environment, among other words.

Figure 3

Diagram of Found Organizational Factors Impacting Volunteers' OC



Source: Elaborated by the author (2021).

Empirical research focuses on each of the five categories of organizational factors which are identified in this study, as well as in the context of NPOs associated to OC. They are summarized in Table 4 with a brief concept description, and research found on each category in the non-profit context, also related to OC.

Table 4

Summary of Categories of Factors Impacting Volunteers' OC

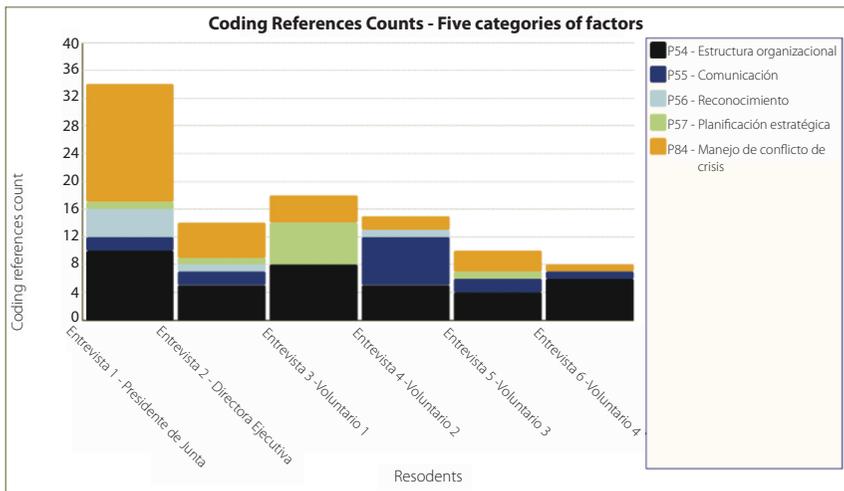
Analyzed category	Category description	Research on each category in NPOs	Research on each category and OC
Organizational Structure	Formal arrangement that links the various parts of an organization to one another and establishes the decision-making hierarchy (Schermerhorn, 2012).	Klüver, 2012; Wong, 2012, in Muñoz-Marquez, 2016	Peng et al., 2020
Communication	The transference and the understanding of meaning (Robbins & Judge, 2011).	Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005, in Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008, in Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013	Mac & Shirley, 2015; McAllum, 2018
Recognition	Personal attention expressing interest, approval, and appreciation for a job well done (Robbins, 2003).	Gerstein et al., 2004; Hurst et al., 2017; Walk et al., 2019	Brudney, 2016; Miller-Stevens & Ward, 2019
Strategic Planning	The process of helping an organization maintains an effective alignment with its environment (Ebert & Griffin, 2015). The formulation, implementation, and evaluations of cross-functional decisions that enable achieve organizational objectives (David, 2013).	Hu et al., 2014; León et al. 2020; Miller, 2018	Averin, 2020 Cronley & Kim, 2014; Sana & Tarcza, 2016
Conflict Management	The use of resolution and stimulation techniques to achieve the desired level of conflict (Robbins, 2003).	Rimes et al., 2017	Gallicano, 2013; Rohrlack, 2019

Source: Elaborated by the author (updated 2021).

Participants' responses reveal five categories of factors that diminish organizational commitment in Rescue, Inc. Figures 4 and 5 show the factors emphasized by the six responders. Figure 4 presents the coding references counts of the five categories.

Figure 4

Coding References Counts of Five Categories of Factors That Diminish Volunteers' OC

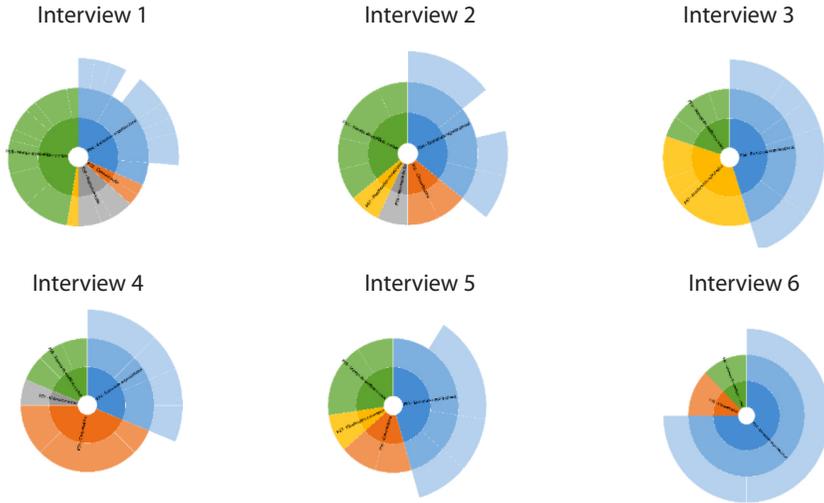


Source: Elaborated by the author based of NVivo 12 software (2021).

Figure 5 is a color-coded pie chart that shows the individual emphasis given to each category of factors. Interestingly, all respondents shared more comments on the issue of organizational structure, revealing a significant factor that diminishes their commitment toward the organization, followed by the way the organization manages conflict. Five out of six emphasized communication problems as a factor that reduces their commitment. Four mentioned the strategic planning, which includes their knowledge or lack of knowledge of the organization's mission, vision, and strategies. Recognition was mentioned by three of the six respondents.

Figure 5

Pie Chart of Five Categories of Factors Affecting OC by Respondent



Note. Blue = Organizational structure; Green = Conflict management; Orange = Communication; Yellow = Strategic planning; Grey = Recognition. Source: Elaborated by the author based of NVivo 12 software (2021).

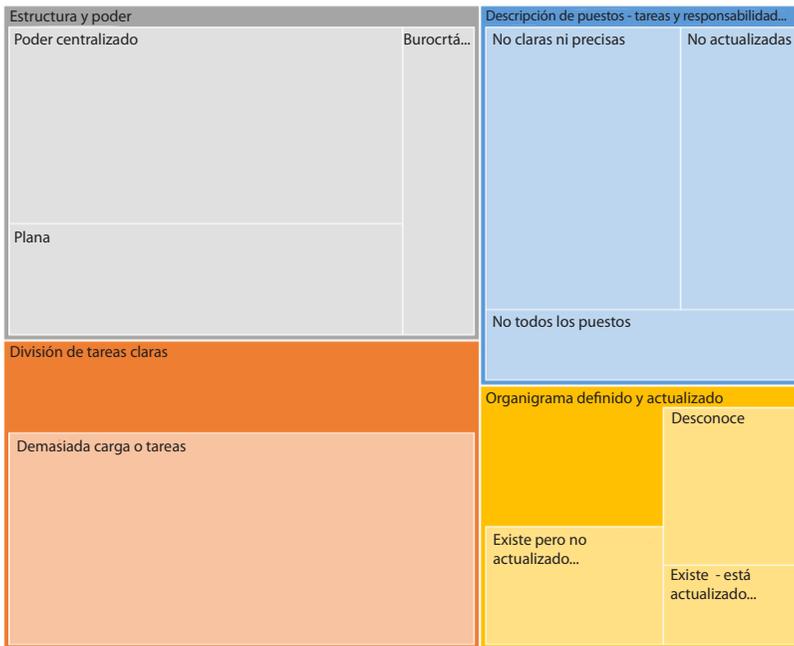
Organizational Structure

The organizational structure is an important issue among respondents. Organizational structure refers to a formal arrangement that links the various parts of an organization to one another (Schermerhorn, 2012) and establishes the decision-making hierarchy. The visual image in Figure 6 shows the subcategories of organizational structure and its relevance for the respondents, based on the sizes of the squares. Those links are depicted in an organizational chart that encompasses division of work (specialization), supervisory relationships, span of control, communication channels, and managerial levels. The relevance of organizational structure has been an object of study in the NPO sector (Muñoz-Marquez, 2016; Peng et al., 2020). As proposed by Peng et al. (2020), centralized decision-making authority at higher levels of an organization can thwart the efforts of a top-level transformational leader to instill a sense of work impact in employees. It

will also hinder the efforts of a top-level transformational leader to foster employees' affective commitment. The organizational structure category conveys the following subcategories, according to answers and confirmed by NVivo 12: job descriptions (which were unclear, unprecise, and out-of-date); task division (which was unclear or not adequately defined); structure and power (which was the most relevant issue in this category due to the centralized power in decision making); and organizational chart (which was either unknown or out-of-date).

Figure 6

Hierarchical Chart of Codes' Distribution of Organizational Structure Subcategories



Source: Elaborated by the author based of NVivo 12 software (2021).

When asked how they describe the organizational structure, responses were consistent with the official documents, which describe the organizational chart as flat, with a few hierarchical lev-

els. Concerning the decision-making, all respondents indicated that the organization is bureaucratic, with centralized decision-making power. As studies reveal (i.e., Studer & Von Schnurbein, 2013), bureaucracy negatively influences commitment and affects volunteers' intention to remain. On this aspect, responses include: "It is not working properly and, basically, all the decision-making is centralized on one person" (Interview 3); "It is flat. The power is centralized in one or two persons... it is bureaucratic" (Interview 6); "I understand that the power is centralized" (Interview 4); and "I must admit that it is somewhat bureaucratic, in terms of centralization of power" (Interview 1).

Community-based organizations and other NPOs operate in alliances with their internal and external stakeholders to respond and serve assertively. Centralized power and bureaucratic structures hinder their effectiveness. A significant cause of discomfort was that the decision-making power is centralized in one person, who is already overloaded with too many tasks, roles, and responsibilities.

Control narrative questions were asked to connect participants' responses. All except the newcomers are aware about the existence of the organizational chart, and almost all agreed that it needs to be revised and updated. Respondents received a job description when hired and have some understanding of their duties. Regarding the employee manual, responses were unclear and inconsistent, which signaled that the organization does not have a complete employee manual. Stipend volunteers consider that their 'employee manual' is the standards and tasks specified in the agency grant documents. Internal documents reveal a broader set of responsibilities for those positions with written descriptions. After analyzing official documents and top management responses, the organization seems not to have a complete employee manual.

Despite the vivid debate between the advocates and retractors of the design and implementation of organizational structure in NPOs, it is a necessary tool in organizations. Considering the basic definition of organization as groups of two or more people

who share common goals and meet at regular times (Vandaveer & Menefee, 2010), NPOs also have group norms and some degree of structure to help them function and reach their goals; not only on public policy and advocacy (Muñoz-Marquez, 2016), but also in the pursue of their service provision. As discussed, some organizational structures and decision-making styles diminish employees' OC. NPOs need some degree of structure to help them serve their communities agilely.

Communication

Communication is the transference and the understanding of meaning (Robbins & Judge, 2011). This process of sending and receiving messages is inherent to all living organisms. Formal communication within organizations includes communication with superiors (upward), subordinates (downward), peers (lateral), and with clients, suppliers, government representatives, community members, and other external stakeholders. This study focused on internal communication. Research on how communication strategies affect volunteers (Studer & Schnurbein, 2013) provide evidence that they enable volunteers to be optimally matched with the organization. Moreover, as Mac & Shirley (2015) stated, customer orientation and internal communication are the key explanations of how commitment can be achieved.

The three subcategories associated with the factor communication are problems with upward communication, downward communication, and lateral communication. The organization's most remarkable issue is downward communication since the centralization in decision-making causes performance problems.

Upward communication is filtered and presented in a highly concise way that it misses crucial details that the Board or others in the top management should know. This lack of detail may cause uninformed decision-making, accompanied by undesirable consequences. Additionally, the work overload of people in authority "makes difficult for employees to access them when looking for help or clarification of instructions, and that causes frustration and demotivation" (Interview 5). Downward communication is

described as unclear by some of the respondents. Communication gaps cause unclear orders that employees misunderstand. As expressed by one participant: “Young recruited volunteers need clearer, more specific, and formal directives. We all need more precise instructions in terms of the expectations, and an explanation of why they perhaps ask us to do things apparently beyond our job description... but I understand it will contribute to the desired outcomes of the project” (Interview 4). Another issue mentioned by a respondent is how top manager sometimes approaches employees “it must be the way that they talk to us. The director is a little bit hectic and sometimes tactless. We already have a lot of work and if we perceive such treatment, and if they talk to us like that, it lowers our morale” (Interview 5).

Regarding lateral communication, respondents did not show many issues with coworkers, apart from the ‘critical incident’ explained in the conflict management section. Since this study focused on organizational factors that impact volunteers’ commitment, it did not address issues related to external communication. As stated, communication barriers are another source of discouragement and reduction of organizational commitment.

Recognition

Whether intrinsic or extrinsic, compensation is inherent in volunteerism (Gerstein et al., 2004). Recognition is a well-known extrinsic compensation and a powerful way to motivate people. Robbins (2003) defines employee recognition programs as personal attention expressing interest, approval, and appreciation for a well-done job. Monetary incentive is not motivating for stipend volunteers’ OC due to their low pay. They expect other factors such as recognition for their contribution.

A Volunteer Management Capacity Study (cited in Eisner et al. 2009) presents the five main reasons volunteers are not returning. These are not matching volunteers’ skills with assignments, failing to recognize volunteers’ contributions, not measuring the value of volunteers, failing to train and invest in volunteers and staff, and failing to provide strong leadership. Eisner et al. (2009)

stated that non-profits need to recognize volunteers through an organizational culture that values them and through specific appreciation ceremonies and events. The latter, encouraged by the funding agency, is a practice of the organization, but the organizational culture that should value volunteers needs to be strengthened. Some related answers given by respondents are:

1. Not matching volunteers' skills with assignments: "One factor that affects my commitment is that when the organization assigns tasks to me that are not aligned with my original job description, or beyond my knowledge... or to do a task that is not consistent with my profession or, to my understanding, is not the type of world I should do" (Interview 3).
2. Failing to recognize volunteers' contributions, specifically through the organizational culture: "We have the AmeriCorps week... I thought it was a special week for people that have worked there, but it wasn't, or maybe the special events they gave were not a recognition. Instead, it was more work. That may discourage people rather than motivating them" (Interview 4). "What I've heard is that who used to work here didn't feel appreciated. They left hurt; they were not considered for other job openings... Their professional knowledge and preparation was undervalued" (Interview 1).
3. Failing to provide strong leadership: "I would like a person that is firmer, that challenges me and tells me 'you can do this'" (Interview 5). "I think that the supervision should improve, there should be more people on supervising positions" (Interview 1).

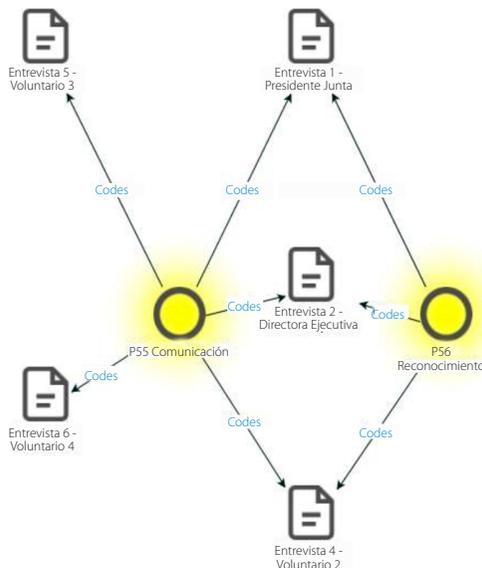
The issue of inadequate recognition was interpreted as a factor that diminishes their OC. Responses imply that recognition should be more meaningful and frequent for volunteers. Stipend volunteers' effort and work should be more appreciated and valued. There is a desire to have more expectations to remain with

the organization if future, more stable job openings, are available. Volunteers are willing to contribute more with their academic background, experience, and talents, if they are allowed to do so. While an unexpected change of task assignments beyond those specified when volunteers were hired is a factor that reduces their OC and adversely affects their psychological contract.

Recognition in Rescue, Inc. has some opportunities for improvement. Additionally, lack of effective communication was linked to recognition issues, and it diminishes volunteers' commitment, as shown in Figure 7. This relationship was generated by NVivo software and showed the connection of communication and recognition issues as a negative factor, according to the responses of four out of six participants. Most comments in their answers were related to the effect of ineffective communication and lack of appropriate and more frequent recognition.

Figure 7

Respondents' Comparison of Importance of Communication and Recognition



Source: Elaborated by the author based of NVivo 12 software (2021).

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the process of helping an organization maintain an effective alignment with its environment (Ebert & Griffin, 2015). It deals with formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives (David, 2013). Every organization has a vision or what it wants to become. Similarly, every organization has a mission or its reason for existence. In the context of the analyzed NPO, since its very beginning, as shown in its statutes and certification of incorporation, Rescue, Inc. has a clear mission statement. However, respondents offered their incomplete version of it. All agreed that they feel identified with it. Some paraphrased it or mentioned the services offered by either the organization or the project they are working on; others talked about their target service population or the served geographical area. Three subcategories of the factor Strategic Planning were found in the comments: undefined strategies, unclear vision, and unknown mission.

As David (2013) summarized, an organization's mission statement is an enduring statement of purpose that distinguishes one business from the others and identifies the scope of operations. Given the relevance of a clear mission statement, it is interesting that the assessed NPO has not consistently encouraged their staff to learn it by heart and to internalize its meaning.

Strategies are the courses of action to achieve organizational goals. A strategic vision provides an idea of where the organization wants to be in the future. According to respondents, the organization lacks a sense of direction for the future. Comments include: "The personnel are doing the tasks they have to do ... there are things that are more strategic that we need to do, but we are not accomplishing them" (Interview 1). And "sometimes I feel that they are improvising, week by week. I think they should establish a long-term work plan. They give the impression of doing the bare minimum of the requirements for the federal agencies" (Interview 3).

Uncertainty and frustration were expressed in the interviews, caused by the lack of strategic planning, both for the organi-

zation and for the participants in a personal level, as they approach the end of their temporary appointment. Those issues and the economic and human resources shortage affect volunteers' OC.

Conflict Management

Conflict management is an essential competence every person should cultivate. It encompasses the use of resolution and stimulation techniques to achieve the desired level of conflict (Robbins, 2003). If handled properly, conflict is not always bad and can sometimes lead to more creativity and better ideas (Vandever & Meneffe, 2010). An unpleasant event marked Rescue, Inc. A couple of months before the interviews took place and will be referred to as the "critical incident." All participants mentioned the incident, and all showed concern, worry, and a perception that many things went wrong in the whole process. The incident damaged the organizational climate and provoked discouragement in other coworkers through a misleading and ill-intentioned grapevine. Due to the confidentiality agreement, the details are not revealed, but participants' reactions are shared in general terms. The critical incident is twofold: first, the organization's actions are unwelcomed by the volunteers, and second, employees' misconduct that damages the organization.

Nearly all respondents agreed that the situation was mishandled, and the lack of clear and more open communication aggravated the consequences. Regarding how they would have managed the conflict, responses varied, depending on whether they referred to the organization's actions as unwelcome by the volunteers or employees' misconduct. Response referred to the former include:

The use of honest and open individual dialogue with the persons involved ... the establishment of clear line of trust between supervisors and employees. In that way, employees (volunteers) would feel more comfortable to express their

opinion or unwillingness to follow any directive that they consider to be out of their responsibility, without being perceived as insubordinate. (Interview 1)

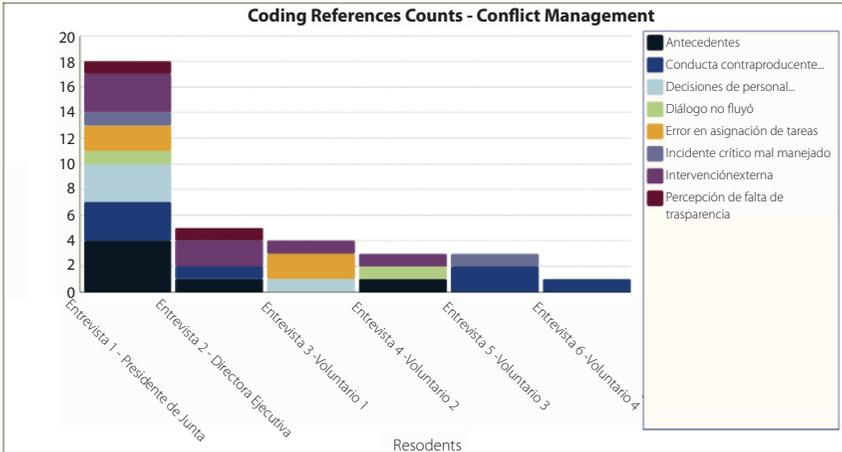
Another participant stated: "The situation was managed wrong, administratively, and it brought consequences. I would have used clearer communication, explained specific tasks deadlines, considering other factors before assigning tasks and special working days" (Interview 3). A third participant said: "I would have listened to the complaints of volunteers and taken time to explain the reasons why they were asked to do tasks out of their job description" (Interview 4).

Responses referred to employees' misconduct include: "The way the situation was managed was negative and unexpected, but I understand that it was the right way to deal with it. I would have acted with more direct supervision" (Interview 5); "Trust toward those employees was broken ... I think the organization acted in a right way. I would have handled the situation in the same way" (Interview 6). Most of the respondents emphasized the organization's actions over employees' misconduct as the leading cause of the damaged organizational climate they experienced, loaded with tension and discomfort. As noticed, inadequate conflict management affects OC.

According to responses, there are eight subcategories of the factor conflict management that were identified, which affect volunteers' commitment toward the organization. They are critical incident antecedents, employees' misconduct, personnel decisions made by management, lack of dialogue, mistakes in assigning tasks, mishandled incident, external intervention, and perception of lack of transparency. They are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Coding Counts for the Eight Subcategories of the Factor Conflict Management



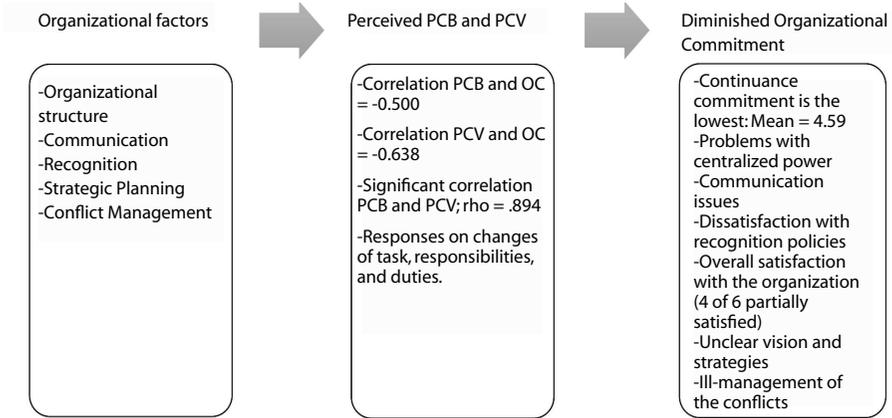
Source: Elaborated by the author based of NVivo 12 software (2021).

Analyzed data reinforced the conceptual model. Organizational factors that affect volunteer’s OC where identified; a negative correlation between PCB/PCV and OC were obtained; and continuance OC was the lowest. Responses on factors affecting participants’ OC include problems with centralized power, communication issues, dissatisfaction with recognition policies, unclear vision and strategies, ill-management of conflicts, and general dissatisfaction with the organization (4 of 6 were only partially satisfied). PCB and PCV have a positive correlation. Findings are consonant with empirical studies on the positive relation between these two variables. Based on the findings, general recommendations were provided.

As anticipated, some factors affect volunteers’ psychological contract as well as volunteers’ organizational commitment. Figure 9 confirmed the conceptual model.

Figure 9

Relation Between Organizational Factors, PCB, PCV and OC



Source: Elaborated by the author (2021).

General Suggested Actions for NPOs to Deal with Diminishing Volunteers' OC

Organizational commitment is an essential attitude of employees and volunteers of NPOs, which positively impacts the organization. According to recent research (Li & Xie, 2020), NPO employees' organizational commitment as a kind of commitment, obligation, and responsibility to the organization can promote them to safeguard the organizational rights and interests. The organizational commitment of volunteers is affected by several factors. According to the findings of this study, those factors are organizational structure, communication, recognition, strategic planning, and conflict management. Recommendations are shared to provide insight for a more effective NPOs administration and volunteers management.

Organizational Structure

Decentralization of decision-making power is an issue that requires immediate action by top management. In today's dynamic

and unstable world, a decentralized structure helps organizations to be more agile to adapt to the environment and stakeholders' demands. Small organizations usually have a flat structure and should have the decision-making power distributed to other people apart from top management, especially the supervisors of direct service programs. This practice allows a more agile organization, empowered to respond much better to the demands of the environment and their stakeholders.

The organizational chart should be clear, showing the authority channels, division of work, supervisory levels, and span of control, among other components. The alliance with external institutions and government agencies does not constitute an internal organizational relationship. The organization could illustrate those relationships differently than part of the organizational chart.

The structure should be chosen according to the organization's purpose and should effectively integrate all activities. If functions choose a departmentalization, it will provide an easier way to run the organization, especially if it is small. Otherwise, if the departmentalization is chosen by services provided (programs/projects), it will need more specialized managerial staff, which will duplicate efforts since it requires supervisors and support staff for each program. Their current financial situation makes such a structure unfeasible. Thus, it is not recommended a departmentalization by services.

An organizational analysis is recommended to evaluate which organizational structure is suitable for Rescue, Inc. A job analysis is also recommended to clarify job titles, duties, and responsibilities that comply with the sponsors' standards and the organization's needs. There should be uniformity in job titles in all official documents to avoid misunderstanding and confusion. It will allow updated and more precise job descriptions and job specifications.

Communication

Communication is a crucial element for organizational effectiveness. In every direction (upward, downward, and lateral), for-

mal communication should improve with intentional actions that promote trust and openness among all stakeholders. According to Almas et al. (2020), as part of the training, group meetings are helpful where leaders can play their role while introducing volunteers and explaining the organization's mission to them. Moreover, introductory and skills enhancement workshops are ideal for joining newly recruited and experienced volunteers to foster effective communication and teamwork.

When management shares information on potential or planned changes that might affect employees or their working conditions, it reduces the perceived psychological contract breach or violation because it is viewed as the organization cares for them (i.e., Quiñones-González, 2016).

Recognition

Recognition is positive reinforcement. When remuneration is limited, perceiving support from the organization in recognition, being valued, and feeling the organization cares about one's well-being becomes even more important (Stirling et al., 2011). Recognition should be awarded in more frequent intervals, meaningful, and in various forms. A combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation might be significant enough to encourage volunteers to be more involved with the organization.

An external consultant could assist with the implementation of recognition programs. Apart from the annual award ceremony, it is recommended to combine a gamma of recognition activities that promote greater motivation and organizational commitment. Examples include a sincere "thank you" or "thank you" note, a letter from the supervisor or the manager in appreciation for a well-done assignment, "volunteer of the month," and a combination of individual and group recognition according to the achieved goal.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning must be a tool to guide the organization to a brighter and more stable future. It is shown in a clear mission,

and vision understood and known by all internal stakeholders. The mission should be accessible and visible. As an inspiring practice, it is recommended that all employees memorize the mission statement. If it needs to be revised, a positive yet more time-consuming practice is to allow all stakeholders to brainstorm and participate in redefining the mission and vision. Employee involvement in organizational processes and decision-making promote engagement. It has proved to deliver positive outcomes, provide a sense of belonging, and foster stronger OC.

Every NPOs, Rescue, Inc. included, need an effective strategic plan and act accordingly. It should include an in-depth evaluation of internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. As a working tool, it should be periodically revised and updated to adapt to changes in the internal and external environments. A consultant can assist in formulating, implementing, and evaluating a strategic plan.

Conflict Management

Conflicts are natural in any kind of human interaction, including in the workplace. They could be related to interpersonal relationships, labor (employer-employee) relations, disciplinary actions, and even legal issues faced by organizations. The way to handle them is both an art and a science. Conflict management requires strong interpersonal skills and effective communication skills and should be done with assertiveness and cooperativeness. Those issues associated with interpersonal relationships and employer-employee relations can be lessened by developing and implementing clear procedures and employee manuals. Written statements of employees' behaviors that are encouraged as acceptable and specific disciplinary actions to be fairly applied to those who behave in unacceptable ways to detriment the organization's values and policies are a powerful tool to promote the desired organizational environment. Other skills are needed in some more delicate issues associated with conflict management, such as negotiation processes and third-party interventions. In external auditing or legal action, every step should be taken with transparency and openness.

Accountability toward every stakeholder is determinant for the survival of organizations. Organizational analysis and training needs assessment are recommended to establish and implement a pertinent and strategic Human Resources Training and Development Plan. Training on topics like effective organizational communication, conflict management, change management, interpersonal relationships, teamwork, managerial competencies, strategic planning, and emotional intelligence should be provided to the staff according to their needs. Furthermore, effective talent acquisition and management, individual and group performance appraisal, and implementation of meaningful recognition programs should be performed by HR specialists. Those are key factors to enhance organizational performance.

Future Research

This research enhances the understanding of volunteers' attitudes, specifically their commitment and the factors that negatively affect it. However, its qualitative results are by no means representative of a wider population. Those factors are worthy of being compared in future research or meta-analyses in other NPOs and their effects on OC and other variables, such as intention to leave, decentralized decision-making, participative leadership, effective downward communication, relevant recognition system, proactive conflict, and crisis management. That sort of study will provide insights to NPOs in pursuing better performance. Furthermore, this research might be replicated and applied to larger NPOs to compare the results and identify other factors that diminish volunteers' OC. It will help to predict volunteers' behavior based on the organizational factors affecting their commitment.

Researchers on PC have focused on the ends of a contractual continuum: transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1989, 1995). Transactional terms focus on short-term monetizable exchanges. Relational contracts focus on open-ended relationships involving considerable investments by both employees and employers, with

a long-term, highly subjective, and dynamic nature in the relationship between both parties (Rousseau, 1995). The unique hybrid nature of volunteers' psychological contract, which is neither fully transactional nor relational, identified in this study as transcendental contract, requires further exploration, conceptualization, and understanding. The notion of a transcendental nature of the psychological contract might explain volunteers' motivations and altruistic behavior due to the satisfaction and happiness generated in serving others. Since volunteering is one of the most important pro-social activities due to its ability to impact others' lives positively (Hayball et al, 2019; Meier & Stutzer, 2008), some studies suggest that people who are teaching or learning volunteering work should focus on a shift from self-centered values to pro-social values (i.e., Petrovskaya, 2019). This perspective can be addressed in new studies to further understand volunteers' transcendental psychological contract.

Similar studies could be done in different types of non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, larger NPOs, international NPOs, and with a combination of different factors that might affect volunteers, public servants, or culturally diverse volunteers' organizational commitment, and in larger organizations as well. This could provide a common ground of comparison that guides leaders to improve performance by providing better workplace conditions. The limitation of a small sample of this study can be addressed in future research by choosing larger NPOs with more volunteers, which might enhance the finding's implications on volunteers' management. Also, the larger size of NPO might include an HR specialist capable of effectively dealing with the issues presented in this study and might help increase volunteers' OC once the potential diminishing factors are identified. Based on this study, future research can focus on external factors that affect volunteers' OC, how to investigate them, and ways NPOs should be equipped to face them and reduce their impact.

Conclusion

This study shed light to NPOs of some organizational factors that diminish volunteers' commitment. Five categories of factors that negatively affect volunteers' OC were identified and analyzed: organizational structure, communication, recognition, strategic planning, and conflict management. General actions were delineated to help NPOs deal with similar challenges. This study provides analytic generalization to previously developed PC theory. Analytic generalization is distinct from statistical generalization. It does not draw inferences from data to a population; instead, it compares the results of a case study to a previously developed theory (Yin (1994)). It also contributes to the application of PCT in other organizational contexts and a distinct type of employees.

Understanding volunteers' psychological contract is an essential skill for every NPO manager. Being aware of the effects of perceived PC breach or violation on volunteers' OC will guide management to find ways to minimize them. Committed employees will serve with a positive attitude and better comprehension of organizational mission and vision, translating into improved organizational performance on services provision. The Third Sector is the power of people working for people in support of an empowered society. HRM possesses the knowledge and tools to help NPOs effectively lead their paid and volunteer workforce to higher job satisfaction and enhanced commitment. Those key factors contribute to the improvement of organizational performance.

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