

The antecedents and outcomes of corporate volunteering: an employee- and organizational-level meta-analysis

Corporate
volunteering
meta-analysis

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Abstract

Purpose – The authors argue that many core findings are not as established as often assumed in the study of corporate volunteering programs, and they assess this possibility by reporting a meta-analysis of both organizational and employee participation that includes relations with antecedents and outcomes at both organizational and employee levels.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors perform a meta-analysis of 57 sources, including 30 peer-reviewed articles, 16 theses/dissertations, 8 unpublished manuscripts, 2 conference presentations and 1 book chapter.

Findings – Of the antecedents, organizational size only had a small relation with organizational participation, but the effect of corporate social responsibility orientation was very large on organizational participation. Demographic characteristics as well as personality traits had a small relation with employee participation, whereas the effect of volunteering attitudes was large on employee participation. Of the outcomes, organizational participation did not significantly relate to customer perceptions. Employee participation had nonsignificant or small relations with well-being, commitment, job satisfaction and positive behaviors; however, organizational participation also significantly related to all employee-level outcomes, and the effect was significantly stronger than employee participation for two of four outcomes.

Practical implications – Organizations can better understand the true influence of corporate volunteering programs, aiding their bottom line and employee well-being.

Originality/value – Several commonly assumed antecedents and outcomes do not relate to corporate volunteering participation, and future research should be redirected to more influential effects. The authors' discussion highlights theories that may be particularly beneficial for the study of corporate volunteering, including social identity theory and role expansion theory.

Keywords Role conflict, Corporate social responsibility, Employee well-being, Human resource management, Job satisfaction, Commitment

Paper type Research paper

Corporate volunteering programs refer to organizational initiatives to promote employee volunteering, and they include – but are not limited to – scheduled volunteering activities on company time, paid leave for employees to volunteer at external organizations, extra pay for volunteering in nonwork hours and special workplace recognition given to volunteers (Grant, 2012; Plewa *et al.*, 2015; Rodell *et al.*, 2016). Due to their growing popularity and importance, organizational researchers have developed a cohesive field of study on corporate volunteering programs that largely began in the 1990s and persists to today (Rodell and Lynch, 2016). As discussed by Rodell *et al.* (2016), these prior studies can be categorized as investigating the antecedents or outcomes of corporate volunteering programs at the organizational or employee level, resulting in a two-by-two field of study with four main



Emory Serviss was also a doctoral student at the University of South Alabama during the completion of this article.

domains. Regarding antecedents, researchers have most often sought to identify characteristics of the organizations and employees that are most likely to participate in such programs (e.g. organizational size, employee gender) (Basil *et al.*, 2011; Brammer and Millington, 2005). Regarding outcomes, researchers have most often sought to identify whether corporate volunteering programs improve customer perceptions as well as employee attitudes (e.g. commitment) and positive behaviors (e.g. organizational citizenship behaviors [OCBs]) (Houghton *et al.*, 2009; Mozes *et al.*, 2011). These findings can be considered the base of research for corporate volunteering programs, such that authors have identified a primary set of antecedent and outcome effects that are the core of the field.

The development of this research base has caused the study of corporate volunteering to reach an inflection point. Initial studies discovered findings that are now considered established, and authors develop increasingly complex models grounded on this established base of research. For instance, Grant (2012) and Rodell *et al.* (2016) [1] developed intricate models of corporate volunteering that intertwine supported and unsupported relations at both the organizational and individual level, such that the established core relations were used to develop new proposals. Subsequent researchers have begun to empirically test these newly proposed relations (Hu *et al.*, 2016; Skurak *et al.*, 2019), leading into a new era of corporate volunteering research. We argue, however, that many core findings are not as established as often assumed. Mixed results have been provided for many such findings (Haski-Leventhal *et al.*, 2019; Hu *et al.*, 2016), and no author has produced a quantitative synthesis of prior results to derive robust inferences regarding any established finding. Key relations in these models may not hold if these effects are not supported more broadly, drawing the validity of the entire models into question. Such concerns also cast doubts regarding the new era of corporate volunteering research based on these models.

To provide a specific example, many authors assert that employee participation in corporate volunteering results in greater job satisfaction, as these employees may be more fulfilled by their work experiences (Do Paco and Nave, 2013; Grant, 2012). While some authors have supported this proposal, others have found a very weak or even nonsignificant relation between employee participation and job satisfaction (Haski-Leventhal *et al.*, 2019; Mozes *et al.*, 2011). Employees may feel fulfilled from corporate volunteering, but they may also feel overloaded by their corporate volunteering roles and have conflicting perceptions regarding their work. Thus, even this commonly asserted relation is unclear in prior research.

Because of this concern, we perform a meta-analysis of “established” corporate volunteering relations, including antecedents and outcomes at both organizational and individual levels, to determine the validity of this research base. We apply Rodell *et al.*'s (2016) framework to operationalize corporate volunteering and identify relations to test. We analyze studies comparing organizations or employees that did or did not participate in corporate volunteering programs as well as studies analyzing the extent that organizations or employees participated in corporate volunteering programs (e.g. resources devoted, hours volunteered). The antecedents include organizational size, corporate social responsibility (CSR) orientation (organizational level), age, gender, education, tenure, prosocial traits and volunteering perceptions (employee level). The outcomes include customer perceptions (organizational level), well-being, commitment, job satisfaction and positive behaviors (employee level). For most antecedents and outcomes, we solely investigate their relations with participation at the same conceptual level, such as education with employee participation; however, we also assess the relation of organizational participation with employee-level outcomes, as authors have stressed the potential importance of this cross-level effect (Patwardhan, 2020; van Schie *et al.*, 2019). Together, our analyses jointly summarize the core of research on corporate volunteering.

Via these efforts, we provide many implications for research and practice in the current article. First, many authors have discussed employee volunteering more broadly, which includes volunteering outside of company initiatives. The current article is among the few to

provide a focused review of corporate volunteering programs, and we provide further depth to discussions regarding the nature of these programs. Second, by investigating the base of research on corporate volunteering, we identify which relations are and are not sound for future theory development, enabling future authors to create more accurate theories of corporate volunteering. Third, by assessing the relation of both organizational and employee participation in corporate volunteering with employee-level outcomes, we identify which effect is stronger. It may be enough for organizations to endorse corporate volunteering for employees to benefit, which is an emerging question in the study of corporate volunteering (Patwardhan, 2020; van Schie *et al.*, 2019). Such a discovery would likewise provide practical benefits for organizations, as managers could simply ensure that corporate volunteering opportunities are available for their employees to benefit. Fourth, we summarize current literature on corporate volunteering, whereas our discussion proposes novel directions for future research. We assert that our meta-analytic results define the base of corporate volunteering research, but future research should move beyond the dominant questions in the current literature. Therefore, our meta-analysis provides both inferences regarding prior research and many directions for future investigation.

Literature review

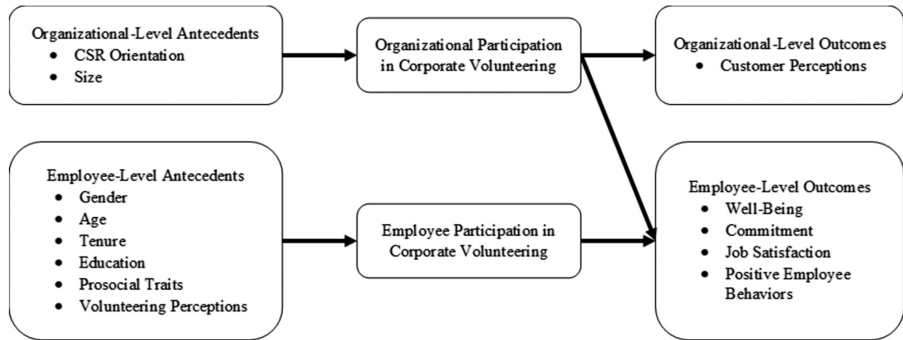
No one theory is applied to explain all relations of corporate volunteering programs, as no one theory can properly detail all antecedent and outcome relations at both the employee and organizational level. Instead, authors have applied a range of theories drawn from multiple disciplines, and holistic frameworks have been developed to integrate these theories (Dreesbach-Bundy and Scheck, 2017; Grant, 2012; Rodell *et al.*, 2016). For this reason, we do not utilize a single theory to develop our hypotheses in the current article, but we instead utilize the framework provided by Rodell *et al.* (2016). In doing so, we intermittently invoke its incorporated theories as well as relevant theories not explicitly referenced by the framework, thereby providing insights into both the broad framework and specific theories.

Further, we make one alteration when applying this framework. Rodell *et al.*'s framework includes employee volunteering as its central variable, and organizational participation is an antecedent of employee volunteering. In the current article, we consider both organizational and employee participation in corporate volunteering to be our central variables, wherein organizational participation refers to companies' dedication of resources to corporate volunteering programs, and employee participation refers to individuals' allocation of time to corporate volunteering programs. By considering both variables to be central, we assess antecedents and outcomes of both rather than employee participation alone. We recognize, however, that organizational participation in corporate volunteering influences employee participation, and therefore we propose the following hypothesis:

- H1.* Organizational participation in corporate volunteering positively relates to employee participation in corporate volunteering.

Below, we hypothesize the antecedents and outcomes of organizational and employee participation in corporate volunteering. Although we broadly apply the term "participation in corporate volunteering," we use it to refer to organizational participation in corporate volunteering when studying organizational-level antecedents and outcomes, and we use it to refer to employee participation in corporate volunteering when studying employee-level antecedents and outcomes – unless otherwise noted in the case of employee outcomes. Figure 1 presents a summary of all hypotheses, including both the organizational and employee level.

Figure 1.
Research model



Antecedents

Organizational-level antecedents. The most studied organizational-level antecedents include CSR orientation and organizational size (Basil *et al.*, 2011; Brammer and Millington, 2005). CSR orientation refers to the proclivity of an organization to ensure ethical business practices and provide benefits to their surrounding community (Tang and Tang, 2012). CSR orientation can be characterized by expenditures on CSR initiatives and/or the extent that organizations integrate CSR into their values – whether explicitly stated (e.g. mission statements, corporate reports) or tacitly implied (e.g. employee perceptions) (Sheel and Vohra, 2016). With the growing popularity of corporate volunteering programs, organizations with strong CSR orientations are increasingly donating their employees’ time and skills to philanthropic initiatives. While this shift is often believed to be selfless, organizations with CSR orientations may implement corporate volunteering programs because such initiatives are highly visible to the community, and these organizations can reinforce their public CSR orientation and positive image (Sheel and Vohra, 2016). CSR orientation is therefore expected to positively relate to corporate volunteering participation.

Organizations may be unable to allocate such resources, however, if they do not have the resources to spare. As core competency theory suggests (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990), companies obtain a competitive advantage by developing their “fundamental bas[es] for the value added by the firm” (Barnabei, 2019, para 1), also known as their core competencies. Organizations must invest in their core competencies to maintain their competitive advantage, and they cannot safely allocate resources to other organizational functions unless their competitive advantage is safe from competitors. Smaller companies may only have personnel to perform essential functions and maintain their core competencies, and they may be unable to allocate resources to CSR activities; larger organizations may be more likely to have additional personnel who can devote hours to such initiatives while still maintaining their core competencies (Basil *et al.*, 2011). Larger organizations may also be more expected to engage in CSR initiatives, as their greater revenue suggests that they are more obligated to give back to their communities. In these cases, corporate volunteering programs may be created to prevent negative perceptions (Basil *et al.*, 2011). Thus, organizational size is predicted to relate to corporate volunteering participation.

H2. (a) CSR orientation and (b) organizational size positively relate to organizational participation in corporate volunteering programs.

Employee-level antecedents. Among the most persuasive beliefs in the study of corporate volunteering is the idea that certain employees are more likely to participate than others (Haski-Leventhal *et al.*, 2019; Hu *et al.*, 2016). Authors regularly propose that certain employees are naturally predisposed to value volunteering, and any volunteering programs

will attract their participation while failing to engage others. Thereby, authors have identified many individual differences that relate to corporate volunteering participation, which include demographic characteristics and personality traits.

Justifications regarding the effects of most demographic characteristics can be separated into two categories – one including gender alone and the other including age, tenure and education. Regarding gender, authors have applied gender-role theories to assert that women are more often expected to be caring and nurturing toward others compared to men (Crites *et al.*, 2015; Taniguchi, 2006). Women are not always benefitted when they fulfill these roles, but they are often penalized when they do not. For instance, female employees often risk being labeled as “bossy” or worse when they are not overtly relationship-oriented. When corporate volunteering opportunities arise, therefore, women may be more expected to participate in such opportunities, as they face greater negative ramifications for not participating. Others have proposed that women are socialized throughout their lives to be more caring toward others, and they may value corporate volunteering more so than men due to socialization differences (Crites *et al.*, 2015; Taniguchi, 2006). Because of these theoretical proposals, we hypothesize that women are more likely to participate in corporate volunteering programs than men.

The other established individual differences (age, tenure, education) are each believed to relate to participation in corporate volunteering due to their association with power and autonomy. Older, more experienced and more educated employees typically have more organizational power, and those with greater organizational power tend to have more decision-making autonomy over their work tasks (Fagenson, 1992; Lee and Wilbur, 1985). When corporate volunteering opportunities are available, they may be more likely to have the power and autonomy to participate in such opportunities. Employees with less power and decision-making autonomy may be unable to choose to participate in such programs even when opportunities are available, which would include younger, less experienced and less educated employees (Fagenson, 1992; Lee and Wilbur, 1985). We predict that each of these demographic characteristics significantly relates to participation in corporate volunteering programs.

Lastly, many traits have been studied alongside corporate volunteering participation, including prosocial orientations, ethical orientations and empathy (Houghton *et al.*, 2009; Hu *et al.*, 2016). Each of these can be considered prosocial traits, as they reflect the tendency to treat others fairly and behave altruistically, and those who are more predisposed to care about benefitting others are more likely to volunteer to benefit others. Thus, we propose that these traits, collectively labeled prosocial traits, relate to participation in corporate volunteering.

H3. Employee (a) gender, (b) age, (c) tenure, (d) education and (e) prosocial traits relate to employee participation in corporate volunteering programs.

As noted by Rodell *et al.* (2016), research on motives and perceptions as predictors of participation typically applies a functionalist approach, wherein participation in corporate volunteering is believed to satisfy self- (e.g. positive affect, self-esteem) or other-oriented motives (e.g. benefitting social groups). While not enough research has investigated the effect of specific motives to meta-analyze, ample studies have tested whether positive perceptions toward volunteering relate to participation in corporate volunteering – whether these perceptions are due to self- or other-oriented motives. The association of perceptions and participation is supported by a wide array of behavioral theories, of which many propose that perceptions are a key determinant of intentions and subsequently behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Marta *et al.*, 2014). We suggest that positive volunteering perceptions positively relate to participation.

H4. Positive volunteering perceptions positively relate to employee participation in corporate volunteering programs.

Outcomes

Organizational-level outcomes. Research has supported that not only employees have positive perceptions of corporate volunteering programs, but customers, community members and other stakeholders also have positive perceptions of these programs (Veleva *et al.*, 2012). Corporate volunteering programs are often perceived to be selfless endeavors, wherein companies and employees devote resources to better their community. In turn, companies that participate in such programs are believed to develop better customer perceptions, as customers, community members and others recognize and appreciate the actions of the company. Organizations have taken note of this public reaction function, as 94% of organizations with community engagement programs indicated that they utilize these programs to support marketing and PR initiatives (Points of Light, 2019). We propose that participation in corporate volunteering programs influences customer perceptions.

H5. Organizational participation in corporate volunteering programs positively relates to customer perceptions.

Employee-level outcomes. Need satisfaction theories are often invoked to understand employee-level outcomes of employee volunteering programs (Millette and Gagné, 2008). These theories suggest that individuals have specific needs that they strive to satisfy (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2009). Many such theories include a need for achievement and/or need for belonging (Deci and Ryan, 2000), and authors have suggested that employees can satisfy these needs by participating in corporate volunteering. Corporate volunteering programs often provide actionable tasks completed in group settings. By working on group activities, employees interact with others and are often able to complete a task from start to finish. While these employees may only engage with a certain component of broader projects at work, corporate volunteering programs often provide a high sense of task identity (Millette and Gagné, 2008). These typical features of corporate volunteering programs allow employees to satisfy their needs, which is known to improve well-being.

Further, employees recognize the sources of their need satisfaction, and they can identify when their improved personal states are due to corporate volunteering participation (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2007). If employees recognize that their need satisfaction is actively improved due to their organization, prior research has supported that they are more likely to have greater job satisfaction and commitment (Meyer and Maltin, 2010). Even yet, employees may develop feelings that they need to “pay it back” to the organization (Settoon *et al.*, 1996); because the organization is treating them well, they may feel that they need to treat the organization well. For this reason, employees are expected to engage in positive employee behaviors, such as OCBs and improved performance, when participating in corporate volunteering (Hu *et al.*, 2016).

Due to these associations, we propose that corporate volunteering programs relate to greater well-being, commitment, job satisfaction and positive employee behaviors. We also stress why we chose these four outcomes. First, these outcomes are seen in need satisfaction theories and Rodell *et al.*'s (2016) framework, which are often utilized to understand employee outcomes of corporate volunteering participation. By testing these outcomes, we can assess the validity of these theories and framework for understanding corporate volunteering at the employee level. Second, these four outcomes have powerful influences on employee and organizational success. By identifying whether participation in corporate volunteering relates to these outcomes, we can provide significant practical implications that managers can utilize to improve organizational bottom lines and employees' well-being. Thus, by studying these four outcomes, we can provide relevant and important insights into corporate volunteering programs.

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- H6. Participating in corporate volunteering programs positively relates to (a) well-being, (b) commitment, (c) job satisfaction and (d) positive employee behaviors.

The study of corporate volunteering programs and employee-level outcomes is unique. Organizational-level antecedents and outcomes are typically only associated with organizational participation, whereas employee-level antecedents are typically only associated with employee participation; however, researchers often assess the relation of employee-level outcomes with both organizational and employee participation. This cross-level effect may be explained by social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Over time, employees identify with their organization and view it as a source of pride and self-esteem. They often perceive themselves as contributing to the ongoing functioning of the organization and each of its activities, even if they are not directly associated with these activities. For these reasons, employees may receive a sense of pride and self-esteem from corporate volunteering programs whether they actively participate or not, as they identify with the organization and view their employee role as contributing to these activities. Therefore, we assess whether organizational participation in corporate volunteering programs influences employee-level outcomes.

- H7. Organizational participation in employee volunteering programs positively relates to the employee-level outcomes of (a) well-being, (b) commitment, (c) job satisfaction and (d) positive employee behaviors.

Method

To test our hypotheses, we perform a meta-analysis following the guides and suggestions of prior authors (Borenstein *et al.*, 2011; Cheung, 2015; Cooper *et al.*, 2019; Hunter and Schmidt, 2004; Jak, 2015). We most closely adhered to the preferred reporting for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) standards (Moher *et al.*, 2015). Analyses reported in the primary text use a Hedges and Olkin (2014) approach calculating meta-analytic estimates.

Identifying sources

We utilized multiple approaches to identify published and unpublished sources. Searches were conducted in May 2020 using the Google Scholar and EBSCO databases. EBSCO includes multiple other databases (e.g. Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete and PsycInfo). We used the keywords of “Corporate,” “Corporate-Sponsored,” “Company,” “Company-Sponsored” and “Employee” followed by “Volunteer*” (with quotations surrounding word pairs). Emails were sent to relevant authors for unpublished data or results, including all corresponding authors within the final source list (described below).

Inclusion criteria

Our meta-analytic database initially included 3,675 sources, which contained articles, dissertations, theses, unpublished data, conference presentations and book chapters. To identify relevant quantitative studies from this initial list, the authors reviewed the sources in multiple phases. For each phase, the authors coded a set of articles together (Phase 1 = 50, Phase 2 = 10) until their interrater agreement reached the desired cutoff (Cohen’s $\kappa = 0.80$). In the first phase, the authors coded whether the source reported quantitative results regarding participation in corporate volunteering programs. This reduced our initial list of 3,675 sources to a shortened list of 156 sources. In the second phase, the authors coded whether the source reported an effect size representing a relation described by the hypotheses above. Most articles did not report quantitative results that could be included in our meta-analysis, such as reporting multivariate analyses alone. In these instances, we contacted the

corresponding author for their original data and/or correlation matrix of variables. Most authors could not assist, which further reduced our list of 156 sources to a final list of 57 sources. These 57 sources included 30 peer-reviewed articles, 16 theses/dissertations, 8 unpublished manuscripts (e.g. white papers, papers in progress), 2 conference presentations and 1 book chapter. A full list of the sources and descriptions of their sampled organization(s) are provided in [Supplemental Material A](#).

Analyses

Results were calculated using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis V3 and R 3.5.1. We first calculated estimates of publication bias, which are provided in [Supplemental Material B and C](#). Then, we applied eight statistics to identify outlier effects ([Supplemental Material C](#)), and we considered outlier effects to have a studentized detected residual value of 4 or above. No included study exceeded our outlier cutoff, and no studies were removed from our analyses.

Next, we calculated our primary meta-analytic effects using a random effects model. We report all results as correlations. Correlations were the most common effect size in the original sources, but we also included effect sizes reported as other statistics, such as *t*-statistics and Chi-square statistics, in our meta-analyses. We did not perform any statistical corrections for artifacts. The measurement of corporate volunteering participation is often achieved via a single item, for which internal consistency cannot be calculated, and most other variables in the current meta-analysis are likewise measured via approaches that prevent the calculation of internal consistency (e.g. organizational size, gender, age, tenure). For this reason, it was largely impossible to correct for unreliability via the internal consistency of measures.

Multiple effect sizes for the same relation in a single study were averaged together when conducting analyses. Some authors have argued, however, that averaging effect sizes may produce biased effects ([Cheung, 2015; Jak, 2015](#)). To address this concern, we also conducted a three-level meta-analysis. This approach identifies sources of dependence within and across studies (e.g. multiple effects from same source) to reduce biases associated with the nonindependence of observations ([Cheung, 2015; Jak, 2015](#)). Our three-level results are presented in [Supplemental Material C](#), as our primary text reports the traditional meta-analytic approach. These supplementary analyses serve as sensitivity analyses, which is the replication of meta-analytic results using alternative approaches. If the results are replicated using alternative approaches, then they are less likely to have arisen due to analytical decisions ([Borenstein et al., 2011; Cooper et al., 2019](#)). The three-level meta-analytic results replicated our findings via the traditional approach, supporting the robustness of our results. Researchers can refer to our primary data in [Supplemental Material D](#) to perform sensitivity analyses of their own.

Lastly, we performed random-effects, dummy-coded meta-regressions to provide a statistical significance test for whether organizational or employee participation in corporate volunteering had a stronger influence on employee-level outcomes, which allowed us to probe [Hypothesis 7](#). The dummy variable represented whether participation was measured at the organizational or employee level, indicating whether the difference in organizational or employee participation is statistically significant in predicting employee-level outcomes. For each dummy-coded analysis, organizational participation in corporate volunteering was coded as 0, whereas employee participation in corporate volunteering was coded as 1.

Results

Publication bias results are provided in [Supplemental Material C](#), which suggest that publication biases are not a concern in our analyses. To interpret all analyses, we applied recent effect size suggestions for the field of management. These suggestions were provided by [Bosco et al. \(2015\)](#) after performing a meta-analysis of almost 150,000 effects, which enabled the authors to provide empirically based benchmarks for effect size strength. We

considered effect sizes below 0.10 to be very small, 0.10–0.20 to be small, 0.20–0.30 to be moderate, 0.30–0.40 to be large and above 0.40 to be very large. Hypothesis 1 proposed that organizational and employee participation in corporate volunteering would be positively related. We observed a positive, moderate and significant correlation between organizational and employee participation in corporate volunteering ($\bar{r} = 0.24$, 95% C.I.[0.10, 0.38], $k = 10$, $n = 5,510$), supporting Hypothesis 1.

Antecedents

Table 1 includes findings regarding antecedents of corporate volunteering participation. We investigated the relation of two antecedents, CSR orientation (Hypothesis 2a) and organizational size (Hypothesis 2b), with organizational participation in corporate volunteering. CSR orientation had a very large, positive and significant relation with organizational participation ($\bar{r} = 0.50$, 95% C.I.[0.33, 0.64], $k = 9$, $n = 1,515$), supporting Hypothesis 2a; whereas organizational size had a small, positive and marginally significant relation with organizational participation ($\bar{r} = 0.14$, 95% C.I.[–0.03, 0.30], $k = 14$, $n = 8,690$), partially supporting Hypothesis 2b.

Next, we investigated the relation of employee gender (Hypothesis 3a), age (Hypothesis 3b), tenure (Hypothesis 3c), education (Hypothesis 3d), prosocial traits (Hypothesis 3e) and volunteering perceptions (Hypothesis 4) with employee participation in corporate volunteering. Gender ($\bar{r} = 0.05$, 95% C.I.[–0.02, 0.12], $k = 18$, $n = 4,960$), age ($\bar{r} = 0.06$, 95% C.I.[–0.03, 0.14], $k = 16$, $n = 4,512$), tenure ($\bar{r} = 0.08$, 95% C.I.[–0.02, 0.17], $k = 12$, $n = 1,935$) and education ($\bar{r} = 0.08$, 95% C.I.[0.02, 0.15], $k = 9$, $n = 3,694$) each had very small and positive relations with employee participation. The effect of education was statistically significant, while the effect of gender, age and tenure was not statistically significant. These results support Hypotheses 3d but not Hypotheses 3a, 3b and 3c. Prosocial traits had a small, positive and significant relation with employee participation ($\bar{r} = 0.16$, 95% C.I.[0.04, 0.28], $k = 5$, $n = 1,232$), supporting Hypothesis 3e. Volunteering perceptions had a large, positive and significant relation with employee participation ($\bar{r} = 0.30$, 95% C.I.[0.13, 0.46], $k = 8$, $n = 3,628$), supporting Hypothesis 4.

Variable	# of sources	<i>k</i>	<i>n</i>	\bar{r}	95% CI	<i>z</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Both</i>							
(1) Organizational and employee participation	7	10	5,510	0.24	0.10, 0.38	3.30	<0.01
<i>Organization</i>							
(2) Size	13	14	8,690	0.14	–0.03, 0.30	1.63	0.10
(3) CSR	9	9	1,515	0.50	0.33, 0.64	5.10	<0.01
<i>Employee</i>							
(4) Age	13	16	4,512	0.06	–0.03, 0.14	1.32	0.19
(5) Gender	15	18	4,960	0.05	–0.02, 0.12	1.47	0.14
(6) Education	7	9	3,694	0.08	0.02, 0.15	2.36	0.02
(7) Tenure	7	12	1,935	0.08	–0.02, 0.17	1.59	0.11
(8) Prosocial traits	5	5	1,232	0.16	0.04, 0.28	2.69	0.01
(9) Volunteering Perceptions	7	8	3,628	0.30	0.13, 0.46	3.28	<0.01

Note(s): # of Sources = Number of Sources, *k* = Number of Samples, *n* = Total Sample Size, \bar{r} = Sample-Size Weighted Average Correlation, 95% CI = 95 Percent Confidence Interval of Sample-Size Weighted Average Correlation

Table 1.
Meta-analytic results
for corporate
volunteering
antecedents

Outcomes

Table 2 includes all findings regarding outcomes of participation. We investigated one outcome of organizational participation in corporate volunteering, customer perceptions (Hypothesis 5). Organizational participation had a small, positive and nonsignificant relation with customer perceptions ($\bar{r} = 0.02$, 95% C.I.[-0.03, 0.06], $k = 6$, $n = 1,042$), failing to support Hypothesis 5. Four outcomes of employee participation in corporate volunteering were investigated: well-being (Hypothesis 6a), commitment (Hypothesis 6b), job satisfaction (Hypothesis 6c) and positive employee behaviors (Hypothesis 6d). Commitment ($\bar{r} = 0.19$, 95% C.I.[0.12, 0.26], $k = 16$, $n = 8,337$) and positive employee behaviors ($\bar{r} = 0.12$, 95% C.I.[0.05, 0.19], $k = 3$, $n = 3,896$) both had small, positive and significant relations with employee participation. Employee participation had a very small, positive and nonsignificant relation with job satisfaction ($\bar{r} = 0.06$, 95% C.I.[-0.02, 0.15], $k = 10$, $n = 5,244$), and although the effect was moderate in size, the relation of employee participation with well-being was positive and nonsignificant ($\bar{r} = 0.22$, 95% C.I.[-0.12, 0.51], $k = 4$, $n = 739$). These results support Hypotheses 6b and 6d, but they fail to support Hypotheses 6a and 6c.

We lastly tested whether organizational participation influences the employee-level outcomes of well-being (Hypothesis 7a), commitment (Hypothesis 7b), job satisfaction (Hypothesis 7c) and positive employee behaviors (Hypothesis 7d). Organizational participation had a significant relation with each employee-level outcome: well-being ($\bar{r} = 0.24$, 95% C.I.[0.11, 0.36], $k = 3$, $n = 584$), job satisfaction ($\bar{r} = 0.31$, 95% C.I.[0.24, 0.37], $k = 7$, $n = 759$), commitment ($\bar{r} = 0.29$, 95% C.I.[0.14, 0.43], $k = 11$, $n = 1,380$) and behaviors ($\bar{r} = 0.16$, 95% C.I.[0.13, 0.19], $k = 4$, $n = 4,242$). These results support Hypotheses 7a, 7b, 7c and 7d. To probe this effect, we assessed whether the relations of organizational participation with employee-level outcomes were stronger than the relations of employee participation, wherein the type of participation was the sole dummy-coded predictor in the meta-regression. The dummy variable was significant for job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.30$, S.E. = 0.12, 95% C.I.[-0.53, -0.06]) and employee behaviors ($\beta = -0.15$, S.E. = 0.08, 95% C.I.[-0.31, -0.00]) but not well-being ($\beta = -0.03$, S.E. = 0.22, 95% C.I.[-0.46, 0.39]) or commitment ($\beta = -0.07$, S.E. = 0.09, 95% C.I.[-0.24, 0.09]). For the two significant effects, corporate participation had a stronger influence than employee participation. The nonsignificant effect on commitment

Variable	# of sources	k	n	\bar{r}	95% CI	z -value	p -value
<i>Organization</i>							
(1) Customer perceptions	6	6	1,042	0.02	-0.03, 0.06	0.77	0.44
<i>Employee</i>							
(2) Well-being	7	7	1,323	0.23	0.05, 0.40	2.47	0.01
(2a) Organizational participation	3	3	584	0.24	0.11, 0.36	3.53	<0.01
(2b) Employee participation	4	4	739	0.22	-0.12, 0.51	1.29	0.20
(3) Job satisfaction	9	12	5,462	0.16	0.08, 0.24	3.92	<0.01
(3a) Organizational participation	4	7	759	0.31	0.24, 0.37	8.690	<0.01
(3b) Employee participation	7	10	5,244	0.07	-0.01, 0.15	1.71	0.09
(4) Commitment	17	21	8,804	0.23	0.16, 0.30	6.36	<0.01
(4a) Organizational participation	7	11	1,380	0.29	0.14, 0.43	3.76	<0.01
(4b) Employee participation	12	16	8,337	0.19	0.12, 0.25	5.58	<0.01
(5) Behaviors	6	6	4,480	0.15	0.10, 0.21	5.79	<0.01
(5a) Organizational participation	4	4	4,242	0.16	0.13, 0.19	10.71	<0.01
(5b) Employee Participation	3	3	3,896	0.12	0.05, 0.19	3.38	<0.01

Table 2.

Meta-analytic results for corporate volunteering outcomes

Note(s): # of Sources = Number of Sources, k = Number of Samples, n = Total Sample Size, \bar{r} = Sample-Size Weighted Average Correlation, 95% CI = 95 Percent Confidence Interval of Sample-Size Weighted Average Correlation

showed the same trend, such that corporate participation had a stronger effect than employee participation. Therefore, organizational participation influences employee-level outcomes, often at a stronger extent than employee participation.

Discussion

Our goal in the current article was to assess the validity of established relations in the study of corporate volunteering using a framework created by [Rodell et al. \(2016\)](#). Our results supported a moderate relation between organizational and employee participation in corporate volunteering program, suggesting that employees devote more time to corporate volunteering as organizations devote more resources. We also identified several significant antecedent effects of both organizational and employee participation. Organizations with a greater CSR orientation were more likely to participate in corporate volunteering, and this was the strongest effect observed in the current meta-analysis. The effect of organizational size was also marginally significant, suggesting that larger organizations may be more likely to participate because they have the resources to spare. Regarding antecedents of employee participation, the results demonstrated a variation in strength. All demographic characteristics had a very small effect; prosocial traits had a small effect; and volunteering perceptions had a large effect. These results support that many established antecedents actually have small or nonsignificant effects, although some do produce noteworthy influences on participation in corporate volunteering.

We also tested many outcomes of corporate volunteering participation. Organizational participation did not significantly relate to the sole organizational-level outcome, customer perceptions. Employee participation had nonsignificant or small relations with the employee-level outcomes of well-being, commitment, job satisfaction and positive employee behaviors. Organizational participation, however, significantly related to all employee-level outcomes. Organizational participation had a significantly larger effect on job satisfaction and positive employee behaviors than employee participation, and the results trended in this direction for commitment. Thus, even some supported relations in the current meta-analysis were surprising.

While the current meta-analysis supported certain aspects of [Rodell et al.'s \(2016\)](#) framework, many relations were also not supported. Notably, multiple antecedents of employee participation were not supported, and the outcomes of both organizational and employee participation provided unexpected results – regarding both supported and unsupported relations. The unsupported relations of employee participation on employee outcomes contradict prevailing assumptions in research, whereas the supported and stronger relations of organizational participation of employee outcomes likewise contradict prevailing assumptions. From these results, our primary assertion in the current article was reinforced: many established relations in the study of corporate volunteering are not as established as commonly assumed.

Theoretical implications

While it was not surprising that organizations with a CSR orientation were more likely to develop corporate volunteering programs, it is noteworthy that such a large effect was observed. Many authors measured CSR orientations by assessing the extent that organizations engage in other prosocial endeavors, such as monetary donations, and the large effect indicates that corporate volunteering programs do not replace or prevent organizations from engaging in other CSR activities. Likewise, the marginally supported effect of organization size suggests that organizations indeed need resources to spare to develop such programs, possibly aligning with core competency theory (further discussed below; [Barnabei, 2019](#); [Pralhad and Hamel, 1990](#)).

A variation in strength was identified regarding the impact of antecedents on employee participation, ranging from demographic characteristics, to traits, to perceptions (weakest to strongest). While certain types of employees are often believed to participate in corporate volunteering programs (e.g. women, older, tenured, educated) (Taniguchi, 2006), demographic characteristics provide little benefit in understanding participation. Researchers should not abandon the notion that certain types of employees may be more likely to participate in corporate volunteering, but they should recognize that surface-level characteristics may play a small role.

While its effect was also small, prosocial traits significantly influence employee participation. Deep-level employee characteristics are more relevant predictors of participation than surface-level characteristics, but much less research has tested deep-level characteristics. This dearth of research along with the present results suggests that more research is needed on personality and employee participation, and future authors should assess the relation of personality frameworks with corporate volunteering participation. The strongest antecedent effect, though, was the influence of volunteering perceptions, and thereby the most relevant theoretical perspectives may be behavioral theories (Ajzen, 1991; Marta *et al.*, 2014). Among the most relevant of these theories is self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000), which was very recently applied to understand corporate volunteering (van Schie *et al.*, 2019). While employees are often believed to participate in corporate volunteering due to their intrinsic motivation, these programs can provide external benefits that produce extrinsic motivation. For instance, organizations can provide tangible rewards to those who volunteer (e.g. payment), but volunteers can also receive intangible external rewards, such as increases to their social esteem. Extrinsic motivation is not always detrimental. For example, extrinsic rewards can help fulfill basic needs and provide a sense of competence, which then facilitates the development of intrinsic motivation (Fang and Gerhart, 2012). While it is still important to understand any conflicting roles of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, researchers of corporate volunteering should apply self-determination theory to identify instances in which extrinsic and intrinsic motivation harmonize and result in improved personal and organizational outcomes.

We also showed that corporate volunteering programs have little – if any – effect on customer perceptions in the current meta-analysis. This finding may be more due to prevalent research designs rather than substantive effect, however. The study of customer perceptions was most commonly assessed via vignette studies, in which participants read descriptions of multiple organizations and provided assessments of company favorability. While these studies are beneficial, the descriptions of corporate volunteering may not be explicit enough to garner a response and more sophisticated research designs are needed.

Further, while recent research has proposed that organizational participation influences employee-level outcomes (Patwardhan, 2020; van Schie *et al.*, 2019), it was perhaps most surprising that corporate participation had stronger effects on employee-level outcomes than employee participation. This suggests that employees benefit from knowing their organization contributes to their community, but they do not necessarily need to participate in these programs to experience positive outcomes. This finding aligns with social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Over time, employees identify with their organization and view it as a source of pride and self-esteem. They often perceive themselves as contributing to the ongoing functioning of the organization and each of its activities, even if they are not directly associated with these activities. Because these employees identify with the organization and view their employee role as contributing to these activities, they may receive a sense of pride and self-esteem from corporate volunteering programs whether they actively participate or not.

Lastly, employees do appear to feel the need to “give back” to their organization after participating in corporate volunteering, as participation significantly related to greater

commitment and positive behaviors; however, they may not personally benefit from participation, as participation did not significantly relate to greater job satisfaction or well-being. These findings demand further research, and we suggest that role expansion theory (Barnett and Hyde, 2001) may be useful. Specifically, employees may feel greater obligations to their organizations after volunteering, but they may also have more role stress as their time is allocated between both work and volunteer duties. Although volunteering is known to improve well-being outside of corporate programs (Rodell *et al.*, 2016), these improvements may be counterbalanced by this increased role stress to produce an overall null effect. Furthermore, these results also stress the practical importance of our work. Organizations now have evidence that corporate volunteering programs can provide tangible benefits for the organization (e.g. behavioral improvements), even aside from prosocial and image motives. Therefore, organizations should not see corporate volunteering programs as detrimental to employee work, as they can be an important source that results in heightened positive employee behaviors.

Future research

Table 3 includes concise summaries of presently dominant research questions in the study of corporate volunteering, but it also includes research questions that encapsulate our directions for future research described below. Present research on the antecedents of organizational or employee participation in corporate volunteering is limited. Researchers often ask *which* organizations or employees are most likely to participate, and they study characteristics of the organization or individual differences of the employee. Most of these characteristics have a small influence on participation, apart from CSR orientation, and we call on future research to identify broader antecedents of organizational and employee participation.

We urge future researchers to investigate *what influences* organizations and employees to participate in corporate volunteering programs. Some research has already begun

	Antecedents		Outcomes	
	Current Dominant Research Question	Proposed Future Research Question	Current Dominant Research Question	Proposed Future Research Question
Organization	Which organizations create corporate volunteering programs?	What influences organizations to create corporate volunteering programs?	Do corporate volunteering programs improve customer perceptions?	To what extent do corporate volunteering programs improve firm performance?
Employee	Which employees participate in corporate volunteering programs?	What influences employees to participate in corporate volunteering programs?	Do corporate volunteering programs improve employee attitudes and positive behaviors?	To what extent do corporate volunteering programs improve employee KSAOs and core performance?
Customer	-	What influences customers to demand corporate volunteering programs?	Do corporate volunteering programs improve customer perceptions of the organization?	To what extent do corporate volunteering programs improve customer attraction and retention?
Community	-	What influences communities to demand corporate volunteering programs?	-	To what extent do communities benefit from corporate volunteering programs?
Other Stakeholders	-	What causes other stakeholders to demand corporate volunteering programs?	-	To what extent do corporate volunteering programs improve business-to-business relationships?

Note(s): Cells with bolded outlines are research questions investigated in the current meta-analysis.
KSAOs = Knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics

Table 3.
Current and future
research questions for
antecedents and
outcomes of corporate
volunteering

investigating this topic at the employee level. For instance, [Hu et al. \(2016\)](#) assessed the influence of leader, coworker, family and friends on employee participation, supporting that these influences play a large role in deciding to participate; however, this stream of research has yet to become a dominant focus of antecedent effects, and few have investigated influences on organizational participation. We suggest that researchers should integrate signaling theory to understand organizational participation ([Plewa et al., 2015](#)). Organizations often participate in corporate volunteering to improve and maintain their organizational image, but this posturing is rarely integrated into theoretical models or frameworks. It is possible, if not likely, that a strong predictor of organizational participation is customer perceptions, and organizations may develop corporate volunteering programs to largely improve or maintain their organizational image. Likewise, a host of contextual variables have been shown to be strong predictors of employee behaviors that remain untested in the study of corporate volunteering, such as work pressures, job autonomy and team member relations. Social influence theories ([Rupp et al., 2011](#)) are apt at explaining the influence of such variables, which should play a role in future research.

Relatedly, the study of corporate volunteering antecedents has almost solely focused on organizations and employees although these programs involve multiple stakeholders. We urge future researchers to assess the impact of the customers, community and other stakeholders in encouraging organizational and employee participation – as the dynamics of these sources were not studied enough to include in the current meta-analysis. Particularly, some research has taken a customer-oriented perspective to identify when customers will expect organizations to engage in CSR activities (e.g. [Calabrese et al., 2016](#)), and we suggest that future researchers should perform similar studies on corporate volunteering. By doing so, researchers could identify instances in which organizations may be at risk by not creating such programs.

Regarding outcomes of corporate volunteering, researchers should investigate whether corporate volunteering programs improve customer perceptions by moving beyond lab study designs. Similarly, many authors have questioned whether corporate volunteering improves firm performance, but not enough studies have empirically investigated this question to include in the current meta-analysis. In studying organizational outcomes, researchers should place a greater focus on the customer, and we suggest that a fruitful avenue may be the application of marketing theory to understand customer reactions. Researchers could not only understand the dynamics of customer perceptions to corporate volunteering, but also the effect of corporate volunteering on customer attraction and retention. Likewise, authors should investigate other stakeholders, such as business-to-business relations. Perceptions of organizational ethics influence supply chain relationships ([Lindgreen et al., 2009](#)), which may be another beneficial outcome of organizational participation in corporate volunteering programs.

Similar sentiments can be expressed for employee outcomes. The relation of employee participation and employee-level outcomes was weaker than organizational participation and employee-level outcomes. While some authors have predicted that organizational participation would influence employee outcomes, no framework has suggested that it may have a larger influence. We suggest that future researchers should apply social identity theory ([Ashforth and Mael, 1989](#)) and role expansion theory ([Barnett and Hyde, 2001](#)) to further probe these effects. Regarding the former, employees may benefit from organizational participation in corporate volunteering because they view their companies as extensions of themselves, and those with greater identification may benefit more. Regarding the latter, employees may have difficulties balancing their employee and volunteer roles, and those with more supportive work arrangements may gain the most from corporate volunteering.

While corporate volunteering programs are intended to benefit the broader community, few research questions have been systematically investigated that involve community impact (Points of Light, 2019; Veleva *et al.*, 2012). It is largely unknown how communities react to such programs, and it is often assumed – rather than verified – that communities benefit. A clear future direction is the assessment of community impacts of corporate volunteering programs as well as features that improve community impact.

Lastly, some frequently studied relations should undergo more nuanced investigation. Several authors have assessed the relation of organizational size and participation in corporate volunteering, but these studies typically obtain samples that include either large organizations alone or organizations with a wide range of sizes (Supplemental Material A). Much fewer authors have performed focused studies on corporate volunteering for small organizations. Some have questioned whether small organizations are able to participate in corporate volunteering at all, whereas others have proposed that small organizations often participate for unique reasons, such as owner’s personal connections to volunteer opportunities (Kewakae, 2016). A focused investigation on small organizations could answer these currently unknown questions.

Likewise, prior research has argued that large organizations may be more likely to participate in corporate volunteering due to accessibility to resources (Basil *et al.*, 2011), but this is not the only plausible explanation for the relation of organizational size and participation in corporate volunteering. Large organizations may have more exposure to public perception risks, and they may feel greater pressures to participate in corporate volunteering to address these risks. Future researchers should assess mediators of the presently studied relations, including effects of organizational size, as these questions in the literature cannot be addressed until explanatory mechanisms are identified, such as organizational resources or public perception risks.

Future researchers should also apply robust methodologies when reassessing these relations. The dominant methodology for studying corporate volunteering programs is the cross-sectional, single-source survey (Supplemental Material A). Some authors have adopted archival designs (e.g. Knox, 2020), whereas very few have utilized multiwave and/or multisource designs (e.g. Rodell *et al.*, 2017). Such designs are necessary, however, to assess casual effects, which are central to most models of corporate volunteering. As the current meta-analysis showed that certain effects are not as established as commonly assumed, it is possible that even further relations will demonstrate similar uncertainty when studied via these necessary and more robust designs. Therefore, while the current meta-analysis provides insights into extant research on corporate volunteering, it likewise identifies many new avenues for future research.

Note

1. The model of Rodell *et al.* (2016) details employee volunteering more broadly, but it has been regularly applied to study corporate volunteering programs. For this reason, we also refer to it as a corporate volunteering model.

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Supplemental Materials

The Supplemental Materials are available at online for this article.

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