



The Implications of Organisational Contexts on Unpaid Workers' Loyalty: The Interactive role of Perceived Organisational and Supervisor Support

Queen Emwenkeke Usadolo¹ 

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Abstract

This paper examines the process through which perceived organisational support (POS) affects volunteers' affective commitment (AC) by investigating the mediating role of leader-member exchange (LMX) in the relationship between POS and AC of volunteers in five non-for-profit organisations in Queensland, Australia. Data collected from 213 participants with a cross-sectional survey questionnaire were analysed to validate the hypotheses. The result reveals that POS has a significant direct effect on volunteers' AC, as well as indirect significant effect through LMX. The results of the study provide new knowledge about the importance of a supportive workplace relationship between immediate supervisors and volunteers in enhancing volunteers' positive organisational experiences that would lead into higher loyalty and involvement.

Keywords Volunteers · Perceived Organisational Support · Leader Member Exchange · Reciprocity · Loyalty · AC · NPOs

Introduction

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) are still adjusting to the new normal of work post pandemic. The uncertainty brought by COVID-19 pandemic due to lockdown and travel restrictions has ravaged the world economy. As a result, all sectors of organisations including NPOs had to adjust and adapt as quickly as possible to a new way of working in order to curb the profound impact of the pandemic on their ability to meet clients demands. Management of human capital remains the most affected as

✉ Queen Emwenkeke Usadolo
queen.usadolo@nwu.ac.za

¹ School of Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management, North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, Gauteng, South Africa

the traditional way of working was disrupted. In the case of NPOs, among the human capital affected is their unpaid workers often refer to as volunteers. Volunteers are a valuable asset to NPOs because the success of their service delivery to clients at a reduced cost depends partly on these individuals who decided to work for free.

Majority of NPOs that provide humanitarian services to less privileged people in the society with limited resources cannot achieve their goals without the free services of unpaid workforce. Australia community NPOs are among such NPOs that have benefited from these humanitarian services of volunteers in delivery of sensitive needs such as community safety and security for abused individuals, housing for homeless people, aged care, and mental illness support especially during the pandemic (Biddle et al., 2022; Volunteering Australia, 2022). However, majority of these organisation do not always have the required number of engaged and committed volunteers needed to meet clients' demand. Therefore, it is more important than ever to understand how to manage this essential workforce. NPO managers need insights into the best practices that will help them increase the commitment and retention of their valuable human resource capital (volunteers).

Volunteers' commitment to their organisations is very important. But their tenure has been identified to be very volatile because their contributions are not contingent on any formal reward system. The fluidity of their services means they can easily stop volunteering at any time. In addition, the lack of volunteers has also been exacerbated by lack of person job-fit, health issues associated with aging, and youths' engagement in multiple jobs and the effect of the recent occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Australian Council of Social Service [ACOSS], 2020; Volunteering Australia, 2022). Hence, the need for a study that focuses on understanding factors that enhance positive volunteers' attitude such as commitment which is also a predictor of long tenure is very relevant. Scholars such as McCormick and Donohue (2019) have also emphasised the need for more studies that seek to explain the determinant of volunteers' commitment.

AC is one of the major variables that have been identified by researchers and practitioners that influences individuals' emotional dedication, organisational citizenship behaviour and long-term service (McCormick & Donohue, 2019; Vecina et al., 2012) and that the establishment of a quality workplace supports is the key generator of AC and extra role behaviour of paid employees (Andriyanti & Supartha, 2021). The norm of reciprocity is commonly used to explain the underlining principle of the benefits of AC with antecedents such as workplace supports— captured as POS and leader-member exchange (LMX). High level of trust, loyalty, engagement, emotional attachment, and reduced turnover behaviour have been found to develop based on the quality of supports provided by the organisation and supervisors for paid employees (see Brunetto et al., 2018; Knapp et al., 2017). However, given that majority of these findings are within the context of public and private sectors, there is a need for more study to explore the influence of the variables (POS and LMX) on volunteers' AC in NPOs who are different from paid employees.

According to Prysmakova and Lallatin (2023), the need for more studies is to help to fill the void in the literature as well as provide better understanding of the interactive effects of both elements in the context of NPOs and volunteer management because volunteers' needs, aspirations and motivations differ from those of private

and public paid employees. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill this void by investigating the influence of POS on volunteers' AC to recommend possible solutions that suits NPOs. In addition, this study will extend the literature by examining the mediating role of LMX since the supervisor acts as the agent of the organisation.

By examining the impact of the support provided by the organisation and supervisor on volunteers' AC, this article will contribute to the existing literature by elucidating the importance and possible effects of social interactions in the NPOs which will help to generalise the impact of these variables across different work sectors. In addition, this study provides further insight by examining the indirect impact of POS on volunteers' AC through LMX. This type of analysis will provide further explanation about the contributions of the distinctive role of supervisor's social relationship, especially as they relate to both their perception of the organisation's intentions and their corresponding behaviour. On a practical level, this study contributes to evidence-based practices on how best to secure and increase volunteer commitment.

Affective Commitment

AC is the term used to describe the psychological manner an individual becomes emotionally attached or how an individual identifies with the value of an organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Mercurio (2015, p.5) further describes it as the "enduring, demonstrably indispensable, and central characteristics of organisational commitment". AC has received more attention from researchers than the other two components (normative and continuance commitment) of organisational commitment because of the intrinsically self-motivated feelings that leads individual to align their core values with the organisation. It also has a strong effect on several positive workplace attitudes and behaviours. There is numerous empirical evidence of the positive effects of the affective form of organisation commitment in several studies. Some of these findings are high performance, jobs satisfaction, loyalty, retention, and less absenteeism (Prysmakova & Lallatin, 2023; Usadolo, 2016; Grund & Titz, 2022). Having volunteers with affective attachment will be of benefits to NPOs that are already finding it difficult to render useful services to clients due to limited financial capital and human resources. Hence, it is essential for NPO management to have a clearer and deeper understanding of the antecedents of AC.

Understanding both the sociological and psychological variables of AC is of importance to NPOs managers due to the fluidity of volunteering service. The quest to understand these factors may explain the recent rise of scholars' interest in this field as NPOs managers need individuals who will be dedicated to their volunteering roles to reduce the advert effect of high turnover. Apart from this, other consequences such as low performance, dissatisfaction, stress, withdrawal and turnover intention have been found to correlate with non-commitment (Gaudet & Tremblay, 2017; Garg & Dhar, (2014). In this regard, volunteers who are emotionally attached to their organisation's goals and objectives will be of huge benefit especially in this post-pandemic era for them to meet the demands of their clients and reduce unwanted expenses. Therefore, those responsible for managing volunteers need to understand which management strategies to employ to foster volunteers' emotional attachment to their work activities and organisation. As indicated above, some of the antecedents

of AC is positive workplace experience which results from positive interactions and relationship. Several studies have empirically found that the existence of a positive organisation-employee interactions or supervisor-subordinate interactions influences the affective form of organisational commitment. For example, Usadolo et al. (2022), and Brunetto, et al. (2018) found a significant relationship between POS and AC. While LMX was directly linked to volunteers' AC in Kim et al. (2017); Casimir et al. (2014) studies. Although these studies' findings have revealed relevant information which contributes to both theory and practical applications, information about the mechanism of interaction is scarce. As such, this study seeks to explore both the direct and indirect predictors of this desirable positive behaviour.

POS as a Driver of AC

As indicated previously, POS refers to an individual's perception of an organisation's intentions towards them, specifically in terms of how the organisation demonstrates that it cares and values its employees' contributions. AC has been identified as a reciprocal commodity when such belief is high. In other words, when organisations are seen to be providing relevant resources to meet socio-emotional needs that are not met financially, it results in the development of a relationship between the organisation and employee which consists of positive exchanges that benefits parties involved. The pioneering scholars of POS (Eisenberger et al., 2014) posits that employees are motivated to reciprocate with increased productivity and commitment if they believe that the organisation treats them well, respects them and values their contributions. Hence, according to social exchange theory (SET), the obligatory feeling of employees to reciprocate is determined by the perceived treatment and support received from the organisation (Knapp et al., 2017; Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of POS on positive behaviour such as AC is because POS serves as a relational contract which employees believe improves their well-being (Knapp et al., 2017) because emotional support, affiliation, esteem, self-enhancement, and approval are met (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) through internal structures provided by the organisation. These psychological needs are best fulfilled through the relationship and perceived support employees feel they have with the organisation. Hence, POS is usually perceived as a motivational currency organisation uses to show its appreciation to volunteers.

The fact that the perception of POS motivates people to be emotionally attached and increase their willingness to do more to help organisations to achieve its goal makes it a relevant factor to explore in the context of NPOs that are operating with limited finance and manpower. Moreover, it costs the organisation less to provide supports (recognition, respect, fair treatment, and job enrichment) that meet social-emotion and psychological needs especially for volunteers who are there to satisfy these needs and their services outweighs the costs. According to Eisenberger et al. (1990), the provision of optional aids by the organisation is usually viewed as an expression of appreciation of employees' effort which has been associated with an increase in volunteers' feelings of being valued and cared for by their organisation (Usadolo, 2016). The important effects of high-quality POS have been documented by several empirical studies of paid employees in both private, public sectors and NPOs.

For example, POS has been associated with motivation (Bui et al., 2016) organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) happiness (Akgunduz et al., 2023), engagement (Eisenberger et al., 2016), and turnover intention (AlHashmi et al., 2019). Despite this in-depth knowledge of the effects of POS, there is need to examine it in the context of volunteering due to the changing work environment and organisations managing volunteers have specific challenges that require specific solutions. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1 (*H1*): POS will be positively related to volunteers' AC.

LMX as a Mediator of POS and AC

To provide a better understanding of the effect of POS on AC, the process needs to be examined because the mechanism by which POS influence AC will reveal more useful information for management. Practically, the effectiveness of POS involves series of exchanges of which employee-supervisor' relationship is one of them.

The term leader-member exchange (LMX) represents a two-way supervisor-subordinate relationship (Brunetto et al., 2017; Han et al., 2018) and numerous studies have affirmed the positive benefits that emanate from such relationship because of the underlining norm of reciprocity. For example, S. Usadolo et al., (2022); Dechawatanapaisal (2018); Garg and Dhar (2014) studies found that high-quality LMX influence employees' AC and performance. While other studies have confirmed its impact on innovative and creative behaviours (Atitumpong & Badir, 2018; Joo et al., 2014). As volunteers are managed by supervisors in their respective organisations, LMX theory is an important factor to examine in the context of volunteering because it will help to determine whether volunteers' interpersonal relationship with their supervisors result in an obligatory behaviour of doing more to help the organisations to achieve its goals. Despite the fact that studies have unequivocally shown the positive association between LMX and different positive behaviour, there is still a gap in the available literature as much needs to be known about the effectiveness of LMX in the context of volunteers.

Beside more study is needed to determine the role of LMX on the effect of POS on AC because they are interdependent as social exchange elements (Casimir et al., 2014; Cinar & Kocak, 2020); equally due to the contradicting results in literature regarding the direction of influence (that is, which one influences the other). For example, Kurtessis, et al. (2017) find that LMX influences POS while Masterson et al. (2000), and Wayne et al. (2002) find a positive path from POS to LMX but not the other way round— LMX to POS. In addition, Jing-Zhou et al. (2010) found a non-significant relationship between POS, LMX and AC. These inconsistencies show the importance of context and the need for more studies to aid clarification. Hence, this study seeks to explore the interactive effects of the elements in the context of NPOs to ascertain the statement of Wayne et al. (2002) that the direction of influence depends on the type of organisation.

For a better clarification of the association of supervisor-subordinate relationship with workplace outcomes, LMX has always been categorised into two forms— high-

quality or low-quality relationship. The one categorised as high-quality relationship, also known as the in-group is characterised by social interaction, information sharing, appreciation, individual attention, trust, mutual respect and emotional support, (Brunetto et al., 2017). While low-quality relationship or out-group is characterised by poor communication, low trust (Usadolo & Usadolo, 2019). These two distinct forms of connection whether low- or high have consequences because based on SET and the norm of reciprocity, the resources shared, and the behaviour of a supervisor do not only determine the quality of the relationship but also the reciprocal behaviour of employees whether positive or negative. The resources shared in high-quality LMX are elements that boost ones' confidence, self-esteem motivation, and well-being because of the importance of the resources involved. Hence, the felt obligation to reciprocate by recipients. Therefore, it is assumed that for anyone to be emotionally attached to an organisation, they must be happy and satisfied with the support and resources they are getting from their supervisor.

Moreover, it has been established in organisational behaviour studies that supervisors' ability to create an atmosphere that inspires and motivate subordinates serve as an incentive not only to commitment but to other positive behaviours. For example, employees who have high connections with their supervisor have been found to reciprocate with AC (Kim et al., 2017), high job performance (Martin et al., 2016), long tenure (Usadolo et al., 2020). While turnover intention (Usadolo et al., 2022), stress (Kim et al., 2017), absenteeism (Kurtessis et al., 2017) have been found to be associated to low-quality relationship because of lack of available resource and support from their supervisor.

In a more decentralised organisations such as NPOs, hierarchical status is very minimal. Although volunteers' dealings are mainly with their immediate supervisors and not with upper managements, one would expect that high quality LMX because supervisors are regarded as the agent of the organisation. The quality of LMX should be very important in the context of NPO because an immediate supervisor has a strong influence on volunteers' experience in the organisation (Usadolo, 2016). They are in charge of allocating, instructing, overseeing the daily activities and ensuring that the volunteers feel valued and respected. Hence, volunteers' perception of support from the organisation will mostly be seen through the way a supervisor interprets and applies policies procedures to support, encourages, and motivates them. Thus, studies have affirmed that pleasant experiences are due to high-quality relationship with the supervisor (Steffensen et al., 2019; Casimir et al., 2014) and not low-quality relationship. Therefore, volunteers' positive experience and perceived support from the organisation is through the high-quality relationship between them and their supervisor.

Furthermore, POS can lead to the development of high-quality LMX as supervisors are also employees of the organisation or a volunteer in the case of NPOs. According to Eisenberger et al. (2014), supervisors who are getting the necessary support and believe the organisation is always ready to reward extra efforts will be more involved in their subordinates' welfare and have confidence to initiate a relationship. In such a relationship, a supervisor will be able to determine and provide the necessary supports to subordinates when needed or during a stressful situation because of increased socio-interpersonal connection between them. These supports

could be advice, training, role clarity, individual feedback, and other personal developmental supports (Biddle et al., 2022; Henderson & Sowa, 2018) that satisfy psychological and socio-emotional needs. In line with what Eisenberger et al. (2014) termed a reciprocal 'relational chain', volunteers would reciprocate with AC as they may regard these supports as the organisation's way of caring for their well-being. This is true because they feel the organisation has paved the way for the supervisor to be able to provide supportive resources. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: LMX will mediate the effect of POS on affective commitment.

The model below (Fig. 1) is used to illustrate the proposed interactions between the variables being studied.

Methods

Procedures

Meetings were held with supervisors of different NPOs in Queensland, Australia to explain the purpose of the study and to seek permission to collect data from their volunteers. Five out of the community NPOs approached agreed to participate in the research and arrangements were made to meet with their volunteers. During subsequent meetings with volunteers, the researcher explained to them the usefulness of the survey, anonymity, confidentiality, and their rights to withdraw anytime. Thereafter, questionnaires were given to them to fill in and returned to the researcher. Data was collected after the meetings and participants were also given the option to post the completed questionnaires with pre-paid self-addressed envelopes provided. The pre-paid envelopes were given to participants who could not complete the questionnaires to make it easy for them to return the survey and still retain their anonymity. In addition, some volunteer coordinators also helped in given out questionnaires to those who were not able to attend any of the meetings.

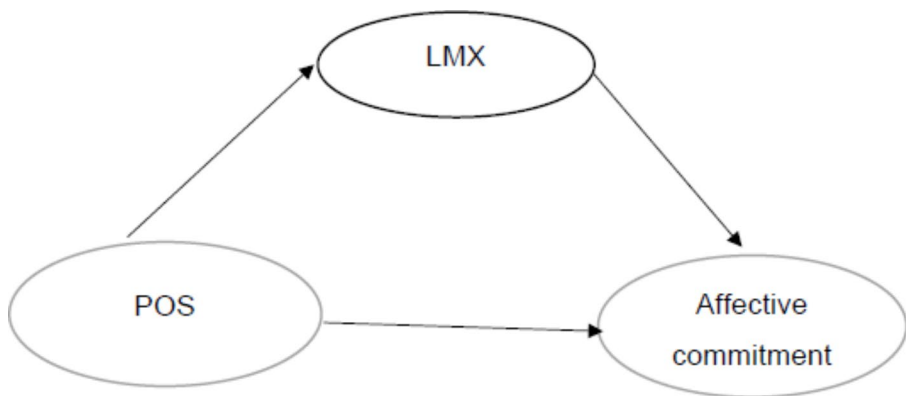


Fig. 1 Proposed mediation model

After the data collection, all the data collected were analysed with SPSS Package 23. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequency distributions, and percentages were used to analyse the demographic data.

Measures

Eisenberger et al. (1990) unidimensional scale was used to measure POS. The unidimensional scale is the shorter version that comprises of eight questions and an example of the questions is, “The organisation cares about my general satisfaction at work”. LMX was measured with the seven-item questions developed by Graen and Uhl-Bein (1995) and an example of the questions is, “I have a good working relationship with my supervisor”. Allen and Meyer’s (1990) six items scale were used to measure AC and an example of the questions is, “I enjoy discussing my organisation with outside people”. All questions are measured using a six-point Likert-type scale in which responses range from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). While single-item questions were used to measure the demographic variables such as gender, age, number of hours and years of volunteering.

Data Analysis

A total number of 218 data was collected but only 213 were analysed because 5 of them were incomplete. SPSS software was used to analyse the data. To determine the validity of the measurement instruments employed, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. All factor loaded above the acceptable recommended cut of point of 0.50 (Burton & Maserolle, 2011), and three latent variables with eigenvalues higher than one were extracted. The first factor accounted for 21% of the variance, while the cumulative variance explained by all three factors was 62%. In addition, Bartlett’s sphericity yielded a significant result (chi-square value of 2751.058, $p < .000$), and Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was at an acceptable value of 0.932, greater than the minimum threshold value of 0.6 recommended by Hair et al. (2010) and Kline (2011). Multicollinearity and common method bias were also assessed, and all correlation coefficients were below the acceptable value of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2021). Furthermore, Harmon’s single factor test was not violated, because one factor does not account for 60–70% of the total variance (Fuller et al., 2016). Lastly, the reliability of the scales used in the study was confirmed, as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded the recommended thresholds of $AVE > 0.5$ and $CR > 0.7$ (Hair et al., 2017). The Cronbach’s Alpha (α) coefficients of the scales fell within the acceptable range of 0.65 or higher, as recommended by Furr (2017).

To test the research hypotheses, the SPSS PROCESS Macro Model, which integrates bootstrapping techniques to examine both direct and indirect effects was used (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). The indirect effect is accepted if the lower bound and upper bound estimated parameters do not include a zero. The results of hypotheses testing are explained below.

Results

The demographic analysis shows that females (140=65.7%) and people from age 43 and above were more. Most of the participants have been volunteering in the organisation for three to five years, and three to four hours per week.

The results clearly support the acceptance of H1 as the impact of POS on the AC was statistically significant ($\beta=0.493$, $t=7.303$, $p<.000$). Furthermore, the indirect effect of POX on AC in the presence of LMX was also significant ($\beta=0.214$, $p<.000$) and the lower LLCI (0.123) (LLCI) and upper ULCI (0.327) bounds did not contain a zero value. However, the inclusion of LMX in the model did not completely result in an insignificant effect of POS, but only reduces the effect size of POS on AC, which clearly indicates a partial mediation. The summary of the mediation analyses (total, direct and indirect effects) and the values of the lower (LLCI) and upper (ULCI) bounds are shown in Table 1.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of POS on volunteers' AC as well as the inner process of the impact by including LMX in the relationship model. In essence, such analysis is to determine whether supervisor-subordinate relationship has any effect in volunteers' organisational relationship which in turn predicts their psychological attachment. Since studies have shown that positive experiences in the workplace lead to more emotional commitment and that supervisors are seen as the organisation's agent. Thus, the interpersonal relationship between immediate supervisors and subordinates will play a significant role on how subordinates view being cared for and valued by the organisation. Hence, the interactive role of LMX in the relationship between POS and AC was examined in this study.

The result of this study reinforces previous studies (Prysmakova & Lattatin, 2023), that POS has a direct impact on AC. The findings support the acceptance of H1, and this indicates that volunteers' commitment will increase if they believe they are being supported, cared for, and valued by the organisation. Therefore, a supportive work environment increases the feeling of psychological ties with an organisation.

Furthermore, the indirect effect of POS on AC was also examined through the inclusion of LMX in the model. The result does not only lend support to other studies' findings that interpersonal relationship between supervisors and subordinates affects their emotional attachment to the organisation (see Usadolo et al., 2022; Dechawatanapaisa, 2018) but also shows the role of LMX. By testing the mediating effect of LMX, this study reveals more insightful knowledge as well as contributes

Table 1 Mediation analysis summary

Relationship Conclusion	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	LLCI (95%)	ULCI (95%)	t - Statis- tics
POS → LMX	.707	.493	.214	.123	.327	7.303
Commitment	(.000)***		(.000)***		Partial mediation	

to literature by responding to the call from previous scholars who have called for more research that focus on the mechanisms causing the interaction between POS and LMX (Ahmadi et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2014) with other workplace outcomes such as AC.

The result from the analysis of H2 indicates a partial mediation as there was a reduction in the effect size of POS on AC when LMX was included in the model. In other words, a partial support for H2 because the impact of POS on AC was not completely accounted for by volunteers' interpersonal connection with supervisor. The inclusion of LMX in the model, further reveals the significance of interpersonal relationship (LMX) in volunteers' view about the organisation's commitment to them. That is, the supervisor's attitude and behaviour do not only affect their reciprocal action towards the supervisor only but also the organisation because the supervisors are seen as the organisation's representative. Based on the result of this study, volunteers' perception that the organisation care and values their contribution increases through how supervisors execute policies, procedures, provides necessary resources, supports and strategies that strengthen a high-quality interpersonal relationship. The result is in line with Temporão (2020) findings that LMX was a significant mediator in the effects of POS on turnover intention. Thus, this study contributes to existing body of literature by providing more information of volunteers' psychological attachment and perception of care and supports through the development of interpersonal relationship between supervisors and volunteers.

The results show that supporting volunteers in the form of personal growth opportunities such as improving their knowledge and skill, increases their perceptions of organisational support. In other words, volunteers who are not only provided with the opportunity to use their existing skills but also have the chance to learn and acquire new knowledge and skills that enhance their self-esteem will consider their activities rewarding. This is because they are receiving important personal benefits from the organisation through the supervisors. These supports serve as important rewards because they fulfil volunteers' functional motives including autonomy, opportunity for career development, understanding and self-enhancement. As a result, they will feel obligated to reciprocate with not only continuing to volunteer but increasing their willingness to help the organisation achieve its goals.

Contributions to the Literature

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge of organisational behaviour and human resource management especially in the volunteering context. Overall, the study has revealed both direct and indirect impact of POS on AC through LMX which is an area that has not been explored in detailed in volunteering literature compared to that of paid employees. By investigating the interactive effects of these variables, this study has provided more insightful information of ways to increase volunteers' loyalty to their organisations.

In line with previous studies the findings of this study confirm that supportive work environment enhances positive behaviour. The direct influence of POS on AC is consistent with Malinen and Harju (2017), who found that POS had a significant positive effect on organisation commitment. However, the present study does not

only affirm previous research but also extends our knowledge by proposing and testing a model that includes a mediator. In addition, by investigating the indirect effect of POS through LMX, the findings of this study have helped to fill gaps that scholars have identified in the literature. For example, the proposal for more studies to focus on connecting mechanisms of volunteer management for better understanding (Jenkinson et al., 2013). While Sweet et al. (2015) and Wayne et al. (2002) posit that the interactive nature of management effects needs to be explored further as the direction of one on another may be due to the context or structure of the organisation. The result of this study has helped to improve our knowledge not just only about the impact of organisational factors but also clarify the path, that is, from POS to LMX which will make a fundamental difference to understanding how to increase volunteers' loyalty in NPOs.

Furthermore, the use of volunteers as participants in this study has helped to fill the gap and contributes to the existing literature regarding the call to examine the mechanisms of management effects in order to reveal important determinants (Jenkinson et al., 2013) in volunteer context. It has been made clear in the literature that volunteers' needs satisfaction and experience in their organisation affect their attitude and behaviour such as commitment which is a precursor of intention to remain. Several factors have been identified in the literature that affect volunteers' decision to remain but there is limited explanation of reasons behind high turnover rate of volunteers (Haidvas et al., 2013) which is because of lack of AC. By exploring factors that contribute to volunteers' commitment, this study contributes to the existing field of knowledge because it is the lack of AC that leads to high turnover rate. The reciprocal pathway examined in this study is very relevant as it illustrates how management support can serve not only as a means by which organisations reward volunteers' contributions but also an indicator of organisations' willingness to provide aid and resources that enhance a positive volunteering experience and increase volunteers' integration through interpersonal relationship. Hence, the present study has addressed the void in the literature by providing more useful information of management and supervisor supports on one of volunteers' positive behaviours.

Practical Implications of the Study

On a practical level, it is important that NPO managements understand the dynamics of POS and LMX as this will enable them to design policies, intervention programmes, and strategies to improve positive volunteer behaviour that will benefit the organisation.

This study identifies various practical methods that NPO management can implement to enhance their practices and promote volunteers' emotional attachment to the organisation. The results support previous research on how management practices can improve the overall work environment through management support or supervisor-subordinate exchange relationships (Cho et al., 2020; Henderson & Sowa, 2018). This research also emphasises the importance of social exchange relationships, such as the employee-organisation and supervisor-subordinate relationships, for positive behaviour within an organisation. These relationships can be fostered practically by providing a supportive environment that includes resources such as a comprehensive

orientation and induction process, mentorship program, clear job description, training, learning, and developmental opportunities. These resources can improve task completion and reinforce volunteers' perception that the organisation values their contributions and cares about them.

The study's findings also suggest that a supportive work environment plays a crucial role in creating positive workplace experiences that result in desirable outcomes. This is evident from the significant impact of both POS and the mediator (LMX) on AC. These factors determine whether volunteers find their roles and daily involvement in an organisation enjoyable. To support volunteers effectively, organisations must provide resources that support the volunteer as an individual, rather than just job resources that help them complete their tasks. Unlike paid employees who receive monthly payment and other rewards, volunteers need more than just task support to feel appreciated, valued, and cared for. Factors such as fair procedures, good communication processes, recognition, participation in decisions-making process (especially those that concerns them) and valued tasks enhance volunteers' perception of support. This aligns with what Alfes and colleagues called "emotion-oriented support" (Alfes et al., 2016, p. 600), which Malinen and Harju (2017) also confirmed in their findings that volunteers who received both supports were more engaged, resulting in felt commitment. In such an environment, volunteers can express themselves freely and find their involvement in the organisation enjoyable (Schaufeli, 2013) because such an environment enhances their psychological safety. Consequently, they will be intrinsically motivated not just to continue but also ensures the organisation achieves its goals because they are doing what they enjoy.

In addition, the mediator provides useful information that the supervisor-subordinate relationship plays an important role in volunteers' perception of the organisation's intentions towards them which confirms Wayne et al. (2002) findings that POS significantly impact LMX. The practical implication of this means that supervisors should have access to relevant resources, and leadership training, that will aid them to develop a reciprocal relationship with volunteers. Volunteers will be intrinsically motivated to be loyal to the organisation if supervisors provide them with social, emotional, and technical supports. This will benefit the organisation as having committed volunteers reduces organisations' expenditure on training and recruitment.

Furthermore, our findings highlight the practical significance of LMX in volunteer integration. A high-quality supervisor-volunteer relationships enable the provision of relevant information, resources, and support. This facilitates volunteers' connection to both the organisation and their peers, easing their adaption and assimilation. Also, because supervisors know the organisation better, they can facilitate a supportive work environment where volunteers can easily learn, grow, and improve their competencies with the help of the supervisor and others. In practice, a mentoring approach can be used to facilitates volunteers' development and integration into the organisation. As mentors, supervisors can understand volunteers' motives (personal development, learning, and self-enhancement) and provide them with tools, and opportunities for personal development, enhancing their social worth. Such tactics of early socialisation is one of the core antecedents of AC (Mercurio, 2015) and it requires supervisors to go beyond their formal role (Ali et al., 2020). This study has not only support previous research on improving volunteers' willingness to help achieve the organisa-

tion's goals but also provides practical evidence of how this can be accomplished through supervisor's influence on volunteers' attitude and behaviour.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable findings and contribution of this study, there are still some limitations. Firstly, the data collection process presents two possible limitations - common method bias and deduced causality. We recognise that the issue of common method bias cannot be ignored when a cross-sectional survey is used to collect data. To mitigate the influence of common method bias that may arise from self-reported data, this study used established measuring tools for data collection and subjected them to different statistical analyses, such as validity, reliability, and bootstrapping. Hence, the question of common method bias should be of less concern in this study because of the due processes followed.

As for the second concern, although we cannot establish causality since such is best determined with a longitudinal study where information is collected at different intervals, unlike a cross-sectional survey where data collection is one-off, the findings of this study still provide useful information in terms of showing the empirical paths of the interactive effects of the elements examined. In addition, all the hypotheses proposed in this study were based on already established theories (social exchange and reciprocity norm) in the literature, which still makes the results relevant and applicable. Future research can extend the results by using a longitudinal research design to test these elements.

Furthermore, caution is necessary when generalising these findings to other NPOs as participants of this study were from one category of NPOs in Australia. Although they were from different backgrounds, the structure and management of other NPOs, such as emergency services, may differ significantly. Therefore, to enhance the generalisability of the results and broaden our understanding of these variables' implications within the NPO sectors, future research investigating these same elements in different NPOs and across various countries is recommended.

Conclusion

This research highlights the importance of high-quality supervisor-volunteer relationships for volunteer integration and satisfaction. The study recommends NPOs should invest in resources and training programs for supervisors to effectively meet volunteer needs. Fulfilling these needs can increase volunteer willingness to contribute to organisational goals, leading to a more productive and satisfying experience for all. Furthermore, enhancing volunteers' social worth through strong LMX relationships is vital for motivation and commitment. Ultimately, prioritizing positive supervisor-volunteer interactions can create a more rewarding volunteering experience for both volunteers and the organisation.

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Declarations

Ethical Approval As for ethics, approval was granted for the study by Southern Cross University.

Informed of consent Participants were informed of their voluntary participation, right to withdraw at any time, and their data anonymity. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained through signed consent forms.

Conflict of Interest Author has no financial interests to disclose.

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