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Learning and Development Opportunities as a Tool for the Retention of Volunteers: A motivational perspective

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The growing reliance on volunteers in Australia has heightened the need for nonprofit organizations to retain these valuable resources. However the current literature on volunteer retention is limited. One potential way volunteers can be retained is by providing learning and development opportunities (LDOs). This study investigates the relationship between volunteer perceptions of LDOs, their motivations for volunteering, and retention. Analyses revealed significant main effects for LDOs and volunteer motivations on retention and several interactive effects demonstrating that LDOs can have differential effects on retention depending on the reasons for volunteering.

Keywords: volunteer retention, learning and development opportunities, volunteer motives, Volunteer Functions Inventory, nonprofit organizations

Introduction

Human Resource (HR) professionals have traditionally focused on the management and development of paid employees. However, the growing need for a volunteer workforce in many organizations, whether they are nonprofit, public or private sector (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011), makes it critical to effectively attract, manage, develop and ultimately retain these unique and valuable resources. For those tasked with the issue of attracting and retaining talent in general, a better understanding of how to best achieve these outcomes with a volunteer workforce will only continue to grow in importance.

Volunteers are important as they contribute to organizations by filling supplementary roles, enabling paid staff to concentrate on central tasks (Handy & Srinivasan, 2004; Holmes, 2009). Volunteers also act as community ambassadors for the organization which subsequently contributes to recruitment of other volunteers and generation of financial donations for the organization (Handy and Srinivasan, 2004; Holmes, 2009). Recent data reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that in 2006 there were 5.2

million volunteers in Australia, contributing a total of 713 million hours to the community (ABS, 2007). While this is a 3% increase from the 32% of the population who volunteered in 2000, the average number of hours spent volunteering declined by sixteen hours between 2000 and 2006 (ABS, 2007). Given the increasing importance of volunteers, it is vital for HR professionals to develop strategies to ensure the total volunteer hours of service is maintained or increased.

Empirical literature on volunteer retention is limited, with many nonprofit organizations relying on “how to” guides for information on the retention of their volunteer workforce (for example, see Harr, 1996; Rufer, 2010). Furthermore, the assumption that HR practices for paid staff can be directly transferred and applied to a volunteer workforce has been questioned (Laczo & Hanisch, 1999). For example, while there is support for offering learning and development opportunities (LDOs) as a tool to retain paid employees (Choo & Bowley, 2007; Paul & Anantharaman, 2003), these findings have not been tested specifically on a volunteer population. Consequently, one aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between volunteers’ perceived level of LDOs and levels of retention.

When assessing LDOs as a retention tool for volunteers, it is important to recognize that volunteers donate their time for different reasons (Clary et al., 1992). Moreover, it is possible that certain motives may be more heavily linked to one’s desire for and expectation of LDOs. However, there has been limited empirical research examining this relationship. Therefore, the current study also aims to explore this gap by investigating the relationship between different functional motives for volunteering and retention, and the extent that these motives for volunteering moderate the relationship between perceived LDOs and retention.

Volunteers & Retention

A volunteer is defined as an individual who “donates his or her time, skills or services to an agency or organization without obligation, and without receiving direct financial compensation for his or her work” (Laczo & Hanisch, 1999, p. 456). In many nonprofit organizations, volunteers are often relied upon to provide the majority of the labor due to limited financial resources (Ryan, Kaplan, & Grese, 2001). It is therefore essential these volunteers are retained to minimize the time and costs associated with the recruitment, selection, orientation and training of new volunteers (Clary, Synder, & Ridge, 1992; Ryan, et al., 2001). Furthermore, turnover of volunteers or infrequent volunteer participation must be minimized as it can negatively affect the short-term productivity, performance and service quality of an organization (Hausknecht, Trevor, & Howard, 2009).

The measurement of retention has been the subject of numerous studies. For example, Da’vila and Chaco’n (2007) conducted a study to investigate the factors that influence sustained volunteerism (or retention), finding that there is a positive relationship between organizational commitment, intentions to stay and sustained volunteerism. Miller, Powell and Seltzer (1990) and Greenslade and White (2005) also found that length of service can be predicted by the strength of intention to remain in the organization. Based on this literature, organizational commitment and intentions to stay are used as indicators of retention in the current study.

There are limited studies that investigate retention in the volunteer context. While authors have highlighted differences between paid employees and volunteers in terms of motives, satisfaction, rewards and HR practices employed for both groups (e.g., Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008; Laczo & Hanisch, 1999), levers for retention of paid employees such as remuneration, bonuses, and job security cannot be applied in a volunteer context. A small number of researchers have identified a number of factors influencing whether volunteers

remain with or leave an organization. Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye and Darcy (2006) found HRM planning and orientation practices were significantly associated with fewer problems retaining volunteers who hold formal positions. Furthermore, training and support were the most important HRM practices for the retention of volunteer board or committee members.

More recently, Hidalgo and Moreno (2009) examined the influence that organizational socialization has on volunteer retention. They found organizational support; social networking within the organization; positive job characteristics such as non-repetitive tasks; jobs that are gratifying, have clear objectives and benefit others; and training all contribute positively to volunteers' intentions to continue volunteering in that organization. Finally, Skoglund (2006) found that to reduce turnover, organizations must ensure volunteers feel valued and provide them with social support. Furthermore, volunteers identified ongoing training and professional development as an area influencing their decision to remain with the organization. Consequently, LDOs should be considered further as a potential retention catalyst.

Learning & Development Opportunities

Learning and development opportunities (LDOs) are defined as the “degree to which employees feel that they can learn continuously and perform tasks that contribute toward developing their potential” (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2009, p. 335). LDOs are found to have positive effects on employee motivation, morale and empowerment (Dvir, Eden, Avolio & Shamir, 2002), the organization's reputation, employee turnover, engagement, commitment and productivity (Al-Emadi & Marquardt, 2007; Paul & Anantharaman, 2003) and organizational commitment and employee stress levels (Wilson, Dejoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, & McGrath, 2004). Moreover, researchers have demonstrated the positive influence of LDOs on retaining paid employees (Choo & Bowley, 2007; Paul &

Anantharaman, 2003) and on organizational commitment (Herrbach, Mignonac, Vanderberghe, & Negrini, 2009), often been offered as alternatives to employee resignation (Steel, 2002).

LDOs are often associated with only paid employees. However, it is critical to recognize the importance of LDOs for volunteers (Dresang, 2009) in all areas including generic skills such as problem-solving, job-related skills and skills that act as an incentive to pursue formal qualifications (Hartenian, 2007). In fact, Taylor and McGraw (2006, p. 245) identified that often organizations are “not selecting, but rather accepting people” as volunteers, positing the idea that these individuals need more specific training to gain the skills in the area for which they were recruited.

One way to encourage volunteers to continue volunteering could be to offer value-added benefits such as LDOs. A benefit like this balances the volunteer’s needs and wants with the value of their contribution. Benson, Finegold and Mohrman (2004) however highlighted the need for future studies to investigate the effects LDOs have on a volunteer’s decision to stay with or leave an organization, and therefore this study investigates if LDOs can be used as a retention tool for volunteers.

Based on the limited literature that suggests a positive relationship between volunteers’ perceived LDOs and retention outcomes, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 1: Volunteers who perceive higher levels of LDOs will report higher levels of organizational commitment and intentions to stay.

However, published research to-date does not explore the relationships between LDOs and volunteer retention exhaustively, and in particular does not consider that the motives of volunteers may vary. Therefore, this research also considers the extent to which different volunteer motives impact upon the relationship between LDOs and retention.

Volunteer Motives

The impact of providing LDOs for volunteers is most likely more than a simple and direct relationship. It is widely believed that different individuals have different expectations and motivations, just as different volunteers will have different expectations and motivations with respect to LDOs. Person-environment fit theories and literature support this notion, promoting the matching principle whereby favourable outcomes result from matching of the work environment to individual's desires and expectations (e.g., Benson, Finegold, & Mohrman, 2004).

From another perspective, Locke's (1976) Discrepancy Theory, also labelled as range-of-affect theory, proposes that more favourable outcomes (such as satisfaction) are determined by (1) the perceived discrepancy between the amount of a particular job characteristic (in this case LDOs) that an individual feels they receive and the amount they want to receive (Georgellis & Lange, 2007); and (2) the degree of personal importance that employees associate with different job characteristics (McFarlin & Rice, 1992). In the context of this study, the second element provides an emotional response that assists in converting a volunteer's cognitive comparison between the perceived amount of LDOs and desired amount, into an evaluative judgment of their satisfaction with the job element (McFarlin & Rice, 1992).

Recognizing that reasons for volunteering differ, Clary et al. (1998) developed the Volunteers Functions Inventory (VFI) scale to measure volunteer motives, which has been widely tested and accepted (for example, see Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Houle, Sagarin, & Kaplan, 2005). In their model, Clary et al. (1998) proposed six motivational needs served by volunteering, including; values, understanding, career, social, protective and enhancement: (1) *Values*: to express humanitarian concerns for the welfare of others and contributions to society. Allison et al., (2002) found that 84% of volunteers in their study

volunteered mainly for value-related reasons. (2) *Understanding*: to acquire new knowledge and to learn, understand, practice and apply skills and abilities. (3) *Career*: to further develop their career believing it will increase job opportunities and develop their career. (4) *Social*: to spend time with friends or to engage in an activity viewed favorably by important others, a motive that is particularly strong in elderly volunteer populations (Yoshioka, et al., 2007). (5) *Protective*: to reduce the negative feelings of guilt due to being more fortunate than others and to address one's own personal problems. (6) *Enhancement*: to obtain satisfaction, enhance self-esteem, self-confidence and personal development. It is proposed that what motivates an individual to become a volunteer may impact on the level of satisfaction they will gain from LDOs in the workplace, which may subsequently impact on their retention.

Traditionally the identification of volunteer motives has been used primarily to assist the recruitment rather than the retention of volunteers. This presents the opportunity for the current study to contribute to the volunteer motive literature by investigating whether strong volunteer motives, regardless of which motives, influence the level of volunteer retention.

Therefore it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 2: Volunteers with a stronger motive for volunteering (i.e. values, understanding, social, career development, protection or enhancement) regardless of which motive, will report higher levels of organizational commitment and intentions to stay.

It is also proposed that particular volunteer motives may be more associated to one's desire for LDOs than others. One aspect of motivation research that is relevant to the present research is the notion of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that an individual gains from a particular activity. Intrinsic motivation involves freely choosing to engage in an activity because "the task is enjoyable or satisfying in itself", whereas extrinsic motivation refers to "doing something because it leads to a separate outcome" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55).

Finkelstein (2009) investigated dispositional factors that contribute to volunteering and divided the six motivations identified by Clary et al. (1998) into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. He found that the career volunteer motive was extrinsic with the remainder of the motives classified as intrinsic motivations. Finkelstein (2009) proposes this is because career goals are external, requiring an outcome outside the activities of volunteering in order to be satisfied, whereas the other five motives can be fulfilled with the volunteer work itself. Another study showed that volunteers' motivation was characterised as predominantly intrinsic with the participants tending to focus on the enjoyment that they experienced through volunteering, particularly the social aspects (Allen & Shaw, 2009). Specifically, it is expected that volunteers motivated by career reasons will place a higher value on LDOs than other motives and thus exhibit more favorable retention-related attitudes if their expectations for LDOs are met. The following hypotheses are subsequently proposed:

Hypothesis 3a: Higher levels of perceived LDOs will be related to higher levels of organizational commitment and intentions to stay for individuals who are motivated to volunteer for career development.

Hypothesis 3b: Higher levels of perceived LDOs will not be related to higher levels of organizational commitment and intentions to stay for individuals who are motivated to volunteer for values, social, enhancement, understanding and protection reasons.

In summary, the current study examines the relationship between perceived LDOs and volunteer retention outcomes. Moreover, it investigates the potential moderating effect of different volunteer motives on this relationship. Specific hypotheses have been developed throughout the review of current literature and are graphically displayed in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Method

Participants

Overall, 2000 volunteers from the five nonprofit organizations were invited to take part in the study, with 628 useable survey responses received (response rate = 31.4%). Organizations conducted activities in youth, disability, animal welfare, and community service sectors. The majority of the sample was female (73.6%) with ages ranging from 18 to 86 ($M = 56.90$, $SD = 14.11$). Mean organization tenure was 5.66 years ($SD = 5.74$) and the majority of respondents indicated that they volunteered on a frequent and regular basis (79.8%) with 20.2% volunteering on an episodic basis. Respondents volunteered a mean of 8.11 hours per week ($SD = 8.54$) and reported their highest education level as a trade qualification or below (51.4%), with 22.9% indicating that they had an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. Participants volunteered predominantly in administrative or line worker roles (92%).

Procedure

One month prior to distribution, volunteers were informed that a survey was taking place and the researcher visited and spoke directly to supervisors and volunteers. Volunteers received their questionnaire via an email link. Responses from all five organizations were combined to assess individual level hypotheses proposed in this study.

Measures

Learning and development opportunities. The focal independent variable (IV) of this study was LDOs. Perceptions of LDOs were measured using a three-item measure adopted from Noe and Wilk (1993) and Bartlett (2001b). For example the item “I am given the training and support I need to do my job effectively” was rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Motives for volunteering. Six functional motivations for volunteering were measured using the 30-item scale (five items for each motive) developed by Clary et al., (1998). All items we measured from 1 (*not at all important/accurate*) to 7 (*extremely important/accurate*). Participants were given the leading statement “I am a volunteer because” and asked to indicate the level of importance they placed upon various reasons for volunteering. Example items are displayed in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment were measured using three items originally from Allen and Meyer (1990) identified by Eisinga, Teelken, and Doorewaard (2010) as being applicable across cultures, and specifically outside of North America where the affective organizational commitment scale was developed. Items included “I feel a strong sense of belonging to the organization”, with responses rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Intentions to stay. Volunteer intentions to stay in the organization were assessed using a three-item scale adapted from Fried, Tieg, Naughton and Ashforth (1996). Items included “do you seriously intend to apply for a volunteer position in a different organization in the near future?” and were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (*definitely not*) to 5 (*definitely yes*).

Control Variables

This study controlled for the possible effects of other variables on the outcome of the research. Control variables in this study included gender, age and negative affectivity in order to minimize the influence of these factors on focal variables in the study (Veal, 2005).

Gender and age. Gender was measured and controlled for based on research demonstrating gender differences in perceptions of training participation (Georgellis & Lange, 2007) and retention outcomes such as organizational commitment (Porter, 2001). Research has also found that a volunteer's age can influence what motivates them to volunteer (e.g., Bowen, Andersen & Urban, 2000). As such, age was measured and entered as a control variable in this study.

Negative affectivity. Negative affectivity has been described as a personality disposition that can inflate relationships between variables, particularly those that reflect perceptions of job conditions (Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000; Spector, 2006) which has the potential to impact intentions to stay and organizational commitment. Agho, Price, and Mueller's (1992) scale was used to assess negative affectivity using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). An example item includes 'I am too sensitive for my own good'.

Results

Preliminary Data Analyses

Several investigations were conducted to inspect the data prior to analyses to address the hypotheses. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS was conducted on the Clary et al.'s (1998) VFI items to ensure the factor structure was retained in the sample. The analysis revealed a good fit of the data to the model (CMIN/DF = 1.81, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .07, sRMR = .05) (Hair et al., 2010).

Descriptive data, inter-correlations, and Cronbach (1951) alpha coefficients for the aggregated focal variables are displayed in Table 2. As can be seen the Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient for all scales exceeded the recommended value of .70, ranging from .73 to .94. These results demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency with the items proving to be

reliable at measuring their related constructs. The correlations among all variables in this study were in the expected direction. Several significant correlations were found between the focal variables and both age and negative affectivity. Additionally, one-way ANOVA tests revealed that levels of perceived LDOs, understanding and enhancement volunteer motives differed as a function of gender. As such age, gender, and negative affectivity were retained as covariates in all regression analyses.

Insert Table 2 about here

Due to the responses being collected from five organizations, the extent to which the amount of variance in each of the focal variables was due to differences between organizations was examined. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC(1)) was used to examine this possibility using the Bartko (1976) formula. A minimum value of at least .10 is generally required for aggregation of a variable to the group level (Bliese, 2000). In only two cases did the ICC(1) slightly exceed .10 (i.e. protective and value motives). Given that the effect of the group is not likely to influence the results, it was considered appropriate to inspect the data at the individual level of analysis and not control for organizational membership.

Harman's single-factor test was employed to assess for common method variance (CMV) given the single-method research design (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). An exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation was conducted using all single items associated with the focal variables of this study. The unrotated factor solution revealed 11 separate factors with the first factor only accounting for 22% of total variance. As such, common method variance was not considered a threat in the

present study.

Hierarchical Multiple Moderated Regression Analysis

Moderated hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Control variables (age, gender and negative affectivity) were entered on Step 1, the mean-centered LDO variable was entered on Step 2, the six mean-centered volunteer motivation variables (career, understanding, social, protective, enhancement and value motives) were entered on Step 3, and the interaction terms (LDOs x volunteer motives) were entered on Step 4. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

The covariates accounted for significant explained variance on intentions to stay (*Adj. R*² = .06, *F*(3, 493) = 11.37, *p* < .001). At the univariate level, negative affectivity and age explained significant variance in intentions to stay ($\beta = -.19, p < .001$, and $\beta = .11, p < .05$, respectively). Conversely, the covariates as a set did not significantly explain variance on organizational commitment (*Adj. R*² = -.00, *F*(3, 493) = .83, *ns*).

Main effects

To test Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 the main effects were examined and are displayed in Table 3. Results revealed (after partialling out the effects of the covariates) that entry of LDOs on Step 2 accounted for a significant increment in variance on organizational commitment (*R*²*Ch.* = .09, *F*(1, 492) = 47.78, *p* < .001) and intentions to stay (*R*²*Ch.* = .05, *F*(1, 492) = 26.68, *p* < .001). More specifically, the results revealed that LDOs were significantly and positively related to higher organizational commitment ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) and intentions to stay ($\beta = .23, p < .001$).

To test Hypothesis 2 all volunteer motives were entered on Step 3 after partialling out the effects of the control variables on Step 1 and the main effect of LDOs on Step 2. As per Table 3, volunteer motives explained an additional 18% on organizational commitment ($R^2Ch. = .18, F(6, 486) = 20.55, p < .001$) and 3% of variance on intentions to stay ($R^2Ch. = .03, F(6, 486) = 2.43, p < .05$). Positive relationships were found between understanding, enhancement and value motives and organizational commitment ($\beta = .19, p < .05$; $\beta = .11, p < .05$; and $\beta = .24, p < .001$, respectively). Further, a significant negative relationship was found between career motives and intentions to stay ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$) and a positive relationship between enhancement motives and intentions to stay ($\beta = .17, p < .05$).

Interactive effects

Hypotheses 3a and 3b were tested by entering all six interaction terms as a set on Step 4 in each regression. Entry of the interaction terms accounted for significant variance in organizational commitment ($R^2Ch. = .02, F(6, 480) = 2.13, p < .05$), but not intentions to stay ($R^2Ch. = .01, F(6, 480) = 1.36, ns$). Overall, three significant interactions were revealed and plotted according to the procedures of Jaccard, Turrisi and Wan (1990). Simple slopes analyses were conducted to further explore the interactions.

Inspection of Table 3 reveals that Hypothesis 3a was not supported as there were no significant interactions relating to the career motive. Similarly Hypothesis 3b was not support as the results revealed three significant interaction. First, the interaction of LDOs and understanding motive was a significant predictor of a volunteer's organizational commitment ($\beta = .13, p < .05$). Figure 2 shows that organizational commitment increased for volunteers with high understanding motives as their perceived level of LDOs increased ($B = .22, t(485) = 3.61, p < .001$). Conversely, organizational commitment of volunteers with low

understanding motives remained stable as their perceptions of LDOs increased ($B = .01$, $t(485) = 0.11$, *ns*).

Insert Figure 2 about here

Second, the interaction of LDOs and enhancement motive was a significant predictor of a volunteer's organizational commitment ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .05$). Figure 3 shows that, as expected, organizational commitment remained stable for volunteers with high enhancement motives as their perceived level of LDOs increased ($B = .01$, $t(485) = 0.23$, *ns*). On the other hand, organizational commitment increased for volunteers with low enhancement motives as their perceived LDOs increased ($B = .21$, $t(485) = 3.80$, $p < .001$).

Last, the interaction of LDOs and social motive neared significance in the prediction of volunteer intentions to stay with their organization ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .08$). Figure 4 shows that intentions to stay of volunteers with high social motives did not significantly change as their perceived level of LDOs increased ($B = .12$, $t(485) = 1.92$, *ns*). Conversely, intentions to stay increased for volunteers with low social motives as their perceived level of LDOs increased ($B = .28$, $t(485) = 4.39$, $p < .001$).

Insert Figures 3 and 4 about here

Overall, mixed support was received for hypotheses. Supporting Hypothesis 1, significant positive effects were revealed for LDOs and intentions to stay and organizational commitment. Similarly, supporting Hypothesis 2, significant main effects were identified between volunteer motives and retention outcomes. Failing to support Hypothesis 3a, the interaction of career motives with LDOs was not significant. Lastly, Hypothesis 3b was

partially supported as interactions relating to protection and values were not significant. However, significant interactions were found for understanding, enhancement and social volunteers motives which were not expected. The hypotheses and outcomes of this study are summarized in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Discussion

Learning and Development Opportunities and Volunteer Retention

Table 4 shows significant and favorable main effects of perceived LDOs on organizational commitment and intentions to stay (Hypothesis 1). Consistent with the paid employee literature, the perception of higher levels of LDOs was linked to higher levels of organizational commitment (Ng, Butts, Vandenberg, DeJoy, & Wilson, 2006; Paul & Anantharaman, 2003), and intentions to stay with their organization (Chew & Chan, 2008).

These results suggest the provision of LDOs demonstrates to a volunteer that the organization has an interest in and commitment to the growth of the volunteers individually and to the volunteer workforce overall (Paul & Anantharaman, 2003). Consequently, volunteers' commitment and intentions to stay with an organization may be a reflection of a perceived commitment the organization displays toward the individual.

Motives & Retention Outcomes

Hypothesis 2 was supported, as higher levels of volunteer motivations (as a set) were significantly related to greater organizational commitment and intentions to stay; results which are in line with previous research (Chew & Chan, 2008; Ryan, et al., 2001).

However, inspection of the motivations separately reveals some interesting trends. First, individuals motivated to volunteer to build their self-esteem (enhancement motive) were most likely to be retained, with higher organizational commitment and intentions to stay. This is an important finding for organizations that recruit volunteers, as assessing this motivation at recruitment may lead to the development of a more stable and long term volunteer workforce. This result also provides advice as to the language used in communications and the types of development programs that can be offered by organization.

Second, those volunteering for career-based motivations reported significantly lower levels of intentions to stay. This could be due to the fact that those volunteering for career purposes are likely doing so to gain skills, with the intention of moving to paid positions once those skills are gained. There is a warning signal here for volunteer coordinators who need to recognize the probable short term relationship with volunteers motivated in this way and the potential training cost to the organization that may not represent a long-term investment.

Third, the results revealed that social motives did not predict volunteer retention. This would suggest that while the social aspect of work and volunteering may still be considered important, other motivations are more important in volunteer retention in our sample when taking LDOs into account.

Learning and Development Opportunities and Volunteer Motives

The current study also assessed the moderating effect that high levels of volunteer motives have on perceived LDOs available to volunteers and their level of retention outcomes (H3). It was found that volunteers with different motives do not value LDOs in the same way and that this, in turn, has implications for volunteer retention. More specifically, the results of this study suggest that volunteers have different needs and therefore have different expectations in terms of value-adding activities.

Unexpectedly, career motives (the only extrinsic motivation) failed to interact with LDOs to predict either organizational commitment or intentions to stay. This outcome is not in line with the theoretical proposition that a career motivation is congruent with extrinsic motivation and that these volunteers would thus be attracted by continued learning opportunities. However, it is possible that the LDOs offered within the sample were limited (or the skills had been mastered) thereby not offering enhancement of current skills. In this instance, it then is feasible that an extrinsic motivation will lead these employees away from the organisation or make retention more difficult.

It was expected that volunteers with understanding, protective, values, enhancement and social motives (i.e., intrinsic motives) would not be affected by LDOs in terms of more favorable organizational commitment and intentions to stay with their organization. However, several significant interactions were revealed. For enhancement and social motives, the hypothesis was still partially support. Indeed, volunteers with high levels of enhancement and social motives did not report significantly higher levels of retention outcomes as LDOs increased. However, those with low motives were much more committed or intended to stay when higher levels of LDOs were perceived. Interestingly, those with high enhancement motives reported higher levels of commitment compared to low enhancement motives. Together, these results imply that higher LDOs will ensure all high or low enhancement volunteers will be more committed. These results go some way to supporting the notion that LDOs are not a key driver of retention for those motivated for intrinsic reasons.

However, one interaction did show that volunteers characterized by understanding motives - an intrinsic motivation according to Finkelstein (2009) - were more committed as LDOs increased. This result is not in line with the notion that intrinsically motivated volunteers would not be influenced by LDOs as a retention tool. One possible explanation for this result lies in the classification of understanding as an intrinsic motivation. Indeed, it

could be argued that seeking greater understanding could have extrinsic overtones as it relates not only to gaining new perspective, but also learning new things through direct, hands-on experience.

Limitations, Contributions and Conclusion

Overall, it is important to note several limitations with respect to the present study. First, the findings of this study rely on self-reported cross-sectional data, rather than longitudinal data. As such the causal relationship between LDOs and retention cannot be determined. Additionally, the self-reported data was based on subjective attitudes and perceptions held by the volunteers. Future research could incorporate objective measures such as HR records on the actual LDOs available to the volunteers and duration of the volunteers' service, along with supervisor reports to assess the retention of volunteers and LDOs. Nevertheless, this study is important for advancing our knowledge in regard to providing LDOs to retain volunteers and identifies the influence volunteer motives may have on this relationship. This paper has added to the retention and HRM literature by finding support for the use of LDOs as a retention tool for volunteers and by identifying organizational commitment and intentions to stay as benefits of offering LDOs. Literature in the volunteer motivations domain has also been enhanced by the finding that stronger volunteer motives are related to retention outcomes and that different volunteers' motives influence the effectiveness of using LDOs to retain them.

The study also has implications for practice, not only for nonprofit organizations as a whole but also for L&D practitioners and volunteer coordinators. This study has highlighted the importance of establishing a positive perception of access to LDOs within nonprofit organizations. Specifically, it is recognized that in order to increase a volunteer's organizational commitment and intentions to stay volunteering with the organization, HRM

practitioners need to ensure that the LDOs are clearly articulated and promoted to volunteers. It also highlights the importance of awareness of individuals' different reasons for volunteering. For the nonprofit organizations in this study, values, understanding and enhancement are the three most important motives for volunteers. Thus, in all aspects of the volunteer experience, including the initial induction and volunteer activities, it is essential that these motives in particular are fulfilled. This study also posits that organizations need to offer LDOs tailored to meet the motives of its volunteer workforce.

In conclusion, a volunteer workforce is vital for the effective operation of services for nonprofit organizations, but is also important for any organization utilizing volunteer labor. Therefore the retention of this workforce has become a prime focus. However, literature on the retention of volunteers is quite sparse, thus the need for identification of further retention techniques was evident. For nonprofit organizations as a whole, this research has provided a valuable contribution to further expand their efforts to retain volunteers. In particular, this study has provided support for the use of LDOs as a retention tool. This research will therefore enable all organizations drawing on volunteer labor to effectively tailor their L&D initiatives to individual motives and to improve the retention of this valuable workforce.

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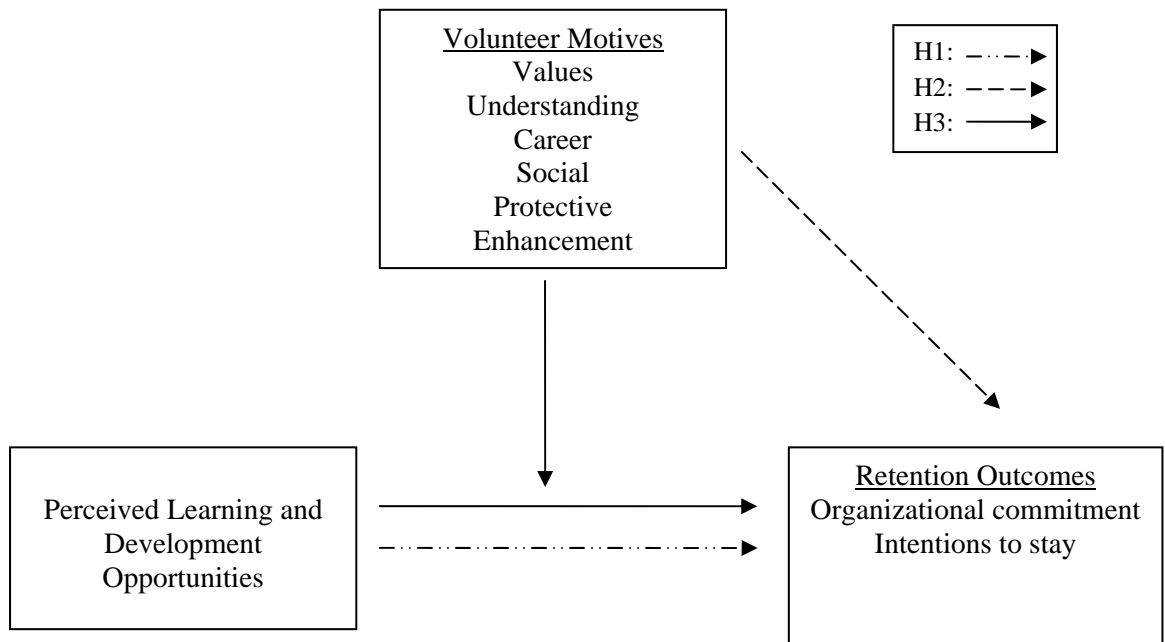


Figure 1. Graphical representation of hypotheses.

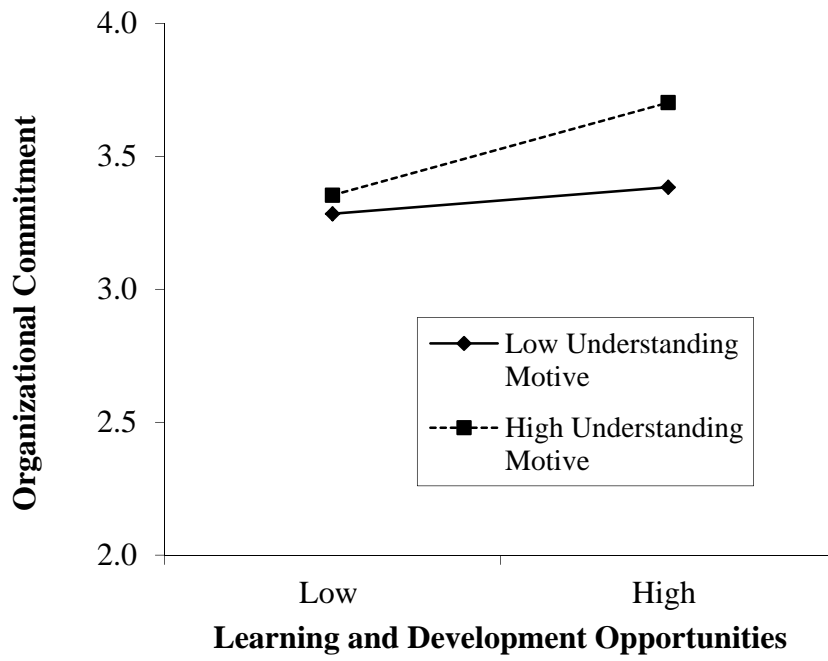


Figure 2. Two-way interaction of LDOs and understanding motive on organizational commitment.

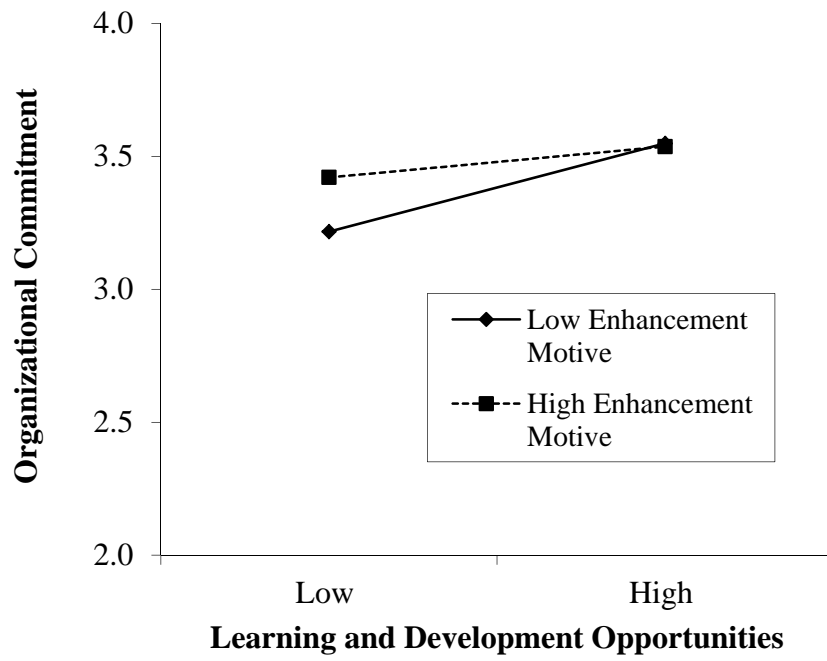


Figure 3. Two-way interaction of LDOs and enhancement motive on organizational commitment.

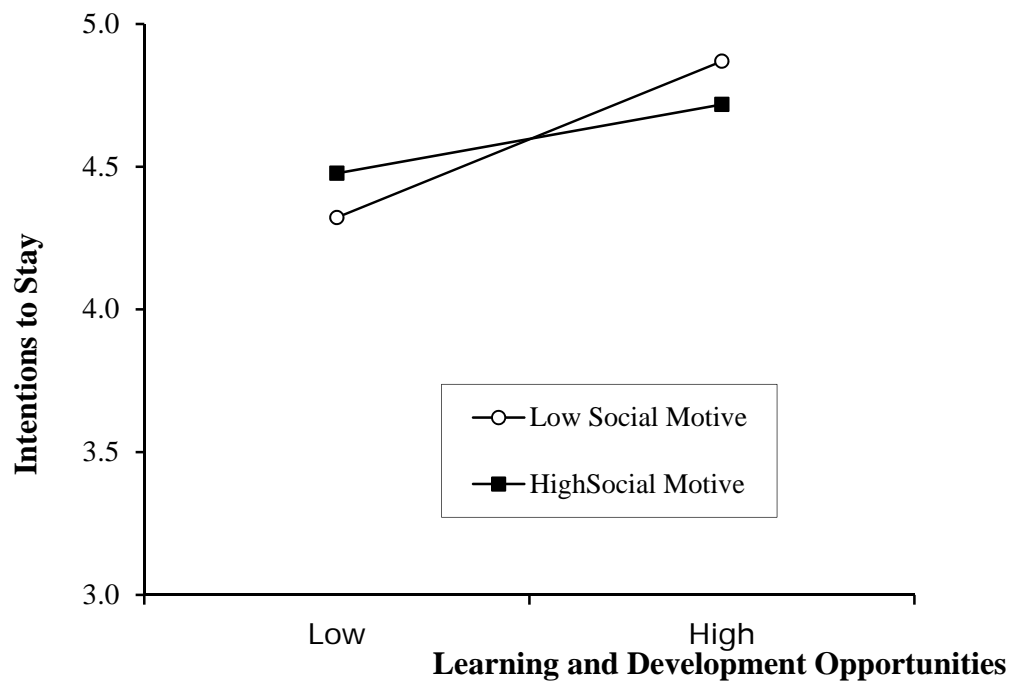


Figure 4. Two-way interaction of LDOs and social motive on intentions to stay.

Table 1
Example questionnaire items for volunteer motives

Volunteer motives	Example items “I am a volunteer because...”
Protection	It is a good escape from my own troubles.
Values	I feel compassion toward people in need.
Career	It can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.
Social	My friends are also volunteers.
Understanding	It lets me learn things through direct, hands-on experience.
Enhancement	It makes me feel important.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for focal variables

Variables	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 LDOs	3.63 (.98)	(.86)									
2 Protection	3.17 (1.80)	.20***	(.87)								
3 Values	5.48 (1.32)	.31***	.29***	(.85)							
4 Career	2.27 (1.72)	.20***	.32***	.18***	(.90)						
5 Social	3.19 (2.01)	.14**	.43***	.29***	.29***	(.88)					
6 Understanding	4.56 (1.75)	.38***	.42***	.51***	.43***	.45***	(.90)				
7 Enhancement	4.01 (1.83)	.26***	.56***	.33***	.42***	.51***	.66***	(.94)			
8 Intentions to stay	4.32 (0.92)	.21***	.03	.06	-.17***	-.01	.04	.07	(.89)		
9 Organizational commitment	3.43 (0.82)	.32***	.24***	.41***	.19***	.26***	.46***	.37***	.22***	(.77)	
10 Negative affectivity	2.35 (0.70)	-.11**	.26***	-.06	.18***	.09*	.06	.18***	-.20***	-.02	(.74)
11 Age	56.60 (14.53)	-.07	.03	-.00	-.44***	.00	-.13**	-.07	.16***	.05	-.15***

Note. Cronbach's (1951) alpha reliability coefficient appears in the diagonals. LDOs = Learning and Development Opportunities

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses on retention outcomes

Independent Variables	Organizational commitment β	Intentions to stay β
<i>Step 1 – Control variables</i>		
Gender	.04	.08
Age	.01	.11**
Negative affectivity	-.06	-.19***
Adj R ²	-.00	.06***
<i>Step 2 – Main effects</i>		
LDOs	.30***	.23***
R ² Change	.09***	.05***
<i>Step 3 – Main effects</i>		
Career	.03	-.14**
Understanding	.19**	-.05
Social	.05	-.05
Protective	-.02	.03
Enhancement	.11**	.17**
Values	.24***	-.02
R ² Change	.18***	.03**
<i>Step 4 – Interaction terms</i>		
LDOsX Career	.08	.06
LDOsX Understanding	.13**	.10
LDOsX Social	-.04	-.09*
LDOsX Protective	.05	-.03
LDOsX Enhancement	-.12**	-.07
LDOsX Values	-.01	-.05
R ² Change	.02**	.01

Note. LDOs = learning and development opportunities

* $p < .08$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Summary of hypotheses and findings

Hypotheses	Outcome	Details
1. <i>Volunteers who perceive higher levels of LDOs will report higher levels of organizational commitment and intentions to stay.</i>	Supported	Significant for organizational commitment and intentions to stay
2. <i>Volunteers with stronger motives for volunteering (i.e. values, understanding, social, career development, protection or enhancement) will report higher levels of organizational commitment and intentions to stay.</i>	Supported	Significant for organizational commitment and intentions to stay
3a. <i>Higher levels of perceived LDOs will be related to higher levels of organizational commitment intentions to stay for individuals who are motivated to volunteer for career development reasons.</i>	Not Supported	
3b. <i>Higher levels of perceived LDOs will not be related to higher levels of organizational commitment and intentions to stay for individuals who are motivated to volunteer for understanding, values, social, enhancement, and protection reasons.</i>	Partially Supported	Non-significant interactions for LDOs and values and protection motives on retention outcomes. Significant interactions for LDOs and social motives on intentions to stay; enhancement motives on organizational commitment; understanding motives on organizational commitment