Enhancing volunteer engagement to achieve desirable outcomes:

What can non-profit employers do?

Abstract

Engagement is a positive psychological state that is linked with a range of beneficial individual and organizational outcomes. However, the factors associated with volunteer engagement have rarely been examined. Data from 1064 volunteers of a wildlife charity in the United Kingdom revealed that both task and emotion-oriented organizational support were positively related to volunteer engagement, and volunteer engagement was positively related to volunteer happiness and perceived social worth and negatively related to intent to leave the voluntary organization. Consistent with theory, engagement acted as a mediator between these factors. The implications for future research and the relevance of the findings for voluntary organizations are discussed.

Keywords

Volunteering; volunteer engagement; retention; happiness; social worth.

The academic literature on the management of volunteers has tended to focus on identifying organizational factors designed to increase volunteer participation, motivation, and retention (Studer & Schnurbein, 2013; Wilson, 2012). This is not surprising given that voluntary organizations face the conundrum that it is generally much easier for volunteers to quit their volunteer employer than it is for salaried workers to quit theirs, thus creating what has been termed the "important challenge" of retaining a voluntary workforce (Garner & Garner, 2011: 814). Research has also demonstrated that the implementation of certain institutional factors yields positive benefits for volunteers themselves (Tang, Choi, & Morrow-Howell, 2010; Tang, Morrow-Howell, & Hong, 2009), such as the acquisition and development of skills (Booth, Park, & Glomb, 2009) and increased health and wellbeing (e.g., Ayalon, 2008; Pillemer, Fuller-Rowell, Reid, & Wells, 2010). This may not only attract and retain volunteers, but may also have a positive impact on local communities (United Nations Volunteers, 2012).

While these studies have advanced our knowledge of some factors which can make a difference for volunteers and their voluntary organizations, little is known about the causal mechanism that might explain the relationship between organizational factors and positive outcomes for volunteers (Jenkinson et al., 2013; Lewig, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Dollard, & Metzer, 2007). A notable exception is a study by Lewig et al. (2007) which showed that burnout and connectedness mediated the relationship between job demands and job resources with health and determination to continue. In the present study, we extend this earlier research by proposing and testing a model that examines the effect of task and emotion-oriented organizational support on two other dimensions of volunteers' wellbeing – their sense of happiness and perceptions of social worth - in addition to their turnover intentions. More importantly, our study suggests an alternative mediator which explains the relationship

between organizational support, volunteer wellbeing and turnover intentions, namely the

extent to which volunteers are engaged with their volunteer work tasks.

Volunteer engagement, as used in the present study, is a relatively new concept in the

volunteering literature and is defined as a unique, positive, motivational construct; volunteers

who are engaged with their volunteer role are fulfilled, invested, and energized by their

volunteer tasks and feel able to express their true selves in the performance of their volunteer

work (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Shantz, Saksida, & Alfes, 2014). Volunteer

engagement therefore has a distinct meaning in that it describes the extent to which

volunteers psychologically, rather than physically, engage with their volunteer work and is

different from the engagement or participation of volunteers in voluntary work in a physical

sense.

We contribute to the literature in at least three ways. First, we focus on two facets of

volunteer wellbeing that have rarely been explored in previous volunteering research, namely

happiness and social worth. By focusing on these outcome variables we provide a broader

picture on the ways in which volunteers benefit from dedicating their time to volunteering

activities, and add to the collection of studies which have demonstrated that volunteering is

beneficial for volunteers' overall satisfaction and wellbeing (e.g., Jenkinson et al., 2013;

Lewig et al., 2007; Pillemer et al., 2010). Examining these outcomes, along with intent to

stop volunteering, is consistent with Huynh et al.'s (2012) argument that there is a close

association between individual level outcomes for volunteers such as improved wellbeing,

and important organizational outcomes, such as retention.

Second, we develop and test a theoretical model to show that organizational factors –

task and emotion-oriented support – are associated with enhanced volunteer wellbeing and

retention. Previous research has suggested that organizations can foster volunteering by

offering employees the opportunity to participate in volunteering activities (e.g., Booth et al.,

2009; Caligiuri, Mencin, & Jiang, 2013; Grant, 2012; Jones, 2010; Rodell, 2013). This is usually done as part of corporate volunteerism programs where employers sponsor release time and regular compensation to enable interested employees to donate their time to a specific cause. The present paper takes a more focused perspective by exploring organizational factors that can be implemented by voluntary organizations to encourage individuals to volunteer in their free time outside formal work commitments. Specifically, we examine factors that are within a voluntary organization's control that can positively enhance volunteer outcomes in particular (Gagné, 2003; Huynh et al., 2012; Studer & Schnurbein, 2013). In this, we respond to the call for research focusing on organizational factors that are associated with volunteer outcomes (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Craig-Lees, Harris, & Lau, 2008).

Third, we contribute to the volunteering literature by analyzing the mechanism through which task and emotion-oriented support influence the outcomes in our study. Specifically, we suggest that organizational factors induce a motivational process (Huynh et al., 2012; Lo Presti, 2013) for volunteers such that they become more engaged when those factors are present, which results in positive outcomes for their health and reduces their intent to leave the voluntary organization. We base our argumentation on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, a framework that has been used frequently in the paid employment sector. This enables us to shed new light on the question of whether theoretical explanations about the motivations of employees in the paid employment sector are comparable to those of voluntary workers. Hence the present paper contributes to research on the similarities between both sectors (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009).

Theory Development and Hypotheses

Theoretical Foundations

"Engagement" entered the lexicon of management research with Kahn's (1990) ethnographic study of architects and summer camp workers. Kahn defined engagement as the harnessing of a person's full self into their work roles, and emphasized the importance of employee experiences of meaningfulness, safety and availability in driving engagement. Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement suggests that engagement is a motivational concept. Individuals who are engaged allocate resources towards their role, and they intensely and persistently apply these resources to role performance. Moreover, this theory asserts that supportive organizational contexts yield high levels of engagement, which in turn, leads to positive outcomes since individuals work within settings where they feel safe to express their true self and connect with others. For example, Huynh et al. (2012) showed that job resources, such as a socially supportive work context led to higher levels of engagement amongst volunteers and Farmer and Fedor (1999) demonstrated that the extent to which volunteers believe that they receive support from their voluntary organization influences their attitudes and behaviors.

A second approach to understanding work engagement was proposed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). They argued that work engagement is a "positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption" (p. 295). This definition of engagement is the centrepiece of the JD-R model that posits that job characteristics fall into two general categories (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Job demands describe aspects of a job that require sustained effort and are related to physiological and/or psychological costs. In contrast, job resources refer to aspects of a job that may: (1) reduce job demands and their associated costs, (2) are functional to achieve work goals, and/or (3) stimulate personal growth and learning (Demerouti et al., 2001). The JD-R model specifies two processes through which job demands and job resources unfold; job demands induce a health impairment process, whereas

job resources evoke a motivational process. In the present study, we focus on the motivational process which is based on the premise that job resources lead to work engagement, which in turn, is related to a host of positive individual and organizational outcomes (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009).

What is common to each model of engagement is that organizations have a pivotal role to play in generating high levels of engagement, by providing employees with both economic and socio-emotional resources. Moreover, models of engagement agree that the consequences of engagement are beneficial to both individuals and their employing organization. For example, Shantz et al. (2013) found a link between engagement and three aspects of individual performance, and Poulsen et al. (2012) showed an association between engagement and subjective wellbeing.

Engagement is also an important concept in the context of volunteer work because volunteers freely give their time to a chosen cause, thereby increasing the capacity to fully employ and express their true selves into their volunteer activities (Shantz et al., 2014). Volunteer engagement relates to how volunteers carry out their role and has significant implications for how organizations operate. Although the volunteering literature has demonstrated the importance of states and attitudes that are similar to engagement, research involving paid workers has shown that engagement more fully explains a range of outcome variables compared to other, more passive states, such as job satisfaction and commitment (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010; Schaufeli, 2013). Moreover, volunteer engagement may be especially relevant given that research in the paid employment context has shown that work engagement contributes to both employee wellbeing (e.g., Schaufeli, Taris, & van Rhenen, 2008) and reduced turnover intentions (e.g., Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013).

Antecedents of Volunteer Engagement

Of the few studies that have explored the antecedents of volunteer engagement, most have focused on individual differences factors, such as autonomy needs, defined as a desire to freely choose courses of action (Gagné, 2003), and prosocial motivation (Shantz et al., 2014). Building on the notion that the volunteer organizational environment is more salient for attitudes and behaviors than individual differences per se (Hustinx et al., 2010), attention has turned to the notion that organizational factors may influence engagement. Only two studies have examined this proposition in relation to volunteers. Huynh et al. (2012) found that social support, performance feedback, and training were positively associated with volunteer engagement. Gagné (2003) found a moderate association between environments that provide volunteers with an opportunity to be autonomous, and engagement.

More generally, studies have demonstrated that supportive organizational factors can positively influence volunteer's dedication to volunteer work and their willingness to sustain volunteering involvement, which in some ways might be considered a proxy for engagement. For example, Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye and Darcy (2006) showed that volunteer management practices such as training were associated with higher levels of volunteer retention. Similarly, research on corporate volunteering programs suggests that employees who are supported by their employer dedicate more time to volunteering (e.g., Booth et al., 2009).

The organizational context is therefore relevant for volunteer engagement because, as explained by the JD-R model, the organization provides resources that reduce the costs of demanding job conditions, are functional in achieving goals, and stimulate personal growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). In the present study, we examine two organization-level resources that research has found to be especially pertinent for volunteers, namely, task and emotion-oriented support.

Task-oriented support includes concrete forms of support that assist volunteers in overcoming problems experienced during the performance of volunteer work (Boezeman &

Ellemers, 2007). It constitutes a resource because it helps volunteers to manage the costs of taxing job conditions and helps them to successfully accomplish tasks. For instance, volunteers who prepare food for homeless people are able to anticipate obstacles in the kitchen, manage the ebb and flow of guests, and correctly follow health and safety rules, to the extent that the organization provides them with the necessary task support to carry out the work.

Emotion-oriented support is defined as a form of support that elicits positive feelings (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007). It is a job resource because it reduces the psychological costs of demanding job conditions and facilitates personal growth. Providing emotion-oriented support (e.g., encouragement) to volunteers who serve food to homeless people, for example, alleviates the stress of cooking for a large number of guests, and helps volunteers to manage emotions that arise when confronted with poverty. The provision of appreciation stimulates personal growth, as appreciation leads volunteers to feel efficacious in their role (Bandura, 1982).

Research in the volunteering literature resonates with these arguments. For instance, Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) argued that task and emotion-oriented support send cues to volunteers concerning their status within the organization, and that volunteers derive feelings of respect and pride as a consequence. Similarly, Lo Presti (2013) found that social and task support are associated with job satisfaction, commitment, and intent to remain. Unlike the aforementioned studies, we examine the relationship between task and emotion-oriented support with engagement among volunteers. Moreover, we examine these forms of support via a different theoretical lens by suggesting that the support provided by the voluntary organization induces a motivational process in that volunteers are more willing to immerse themselves in their voluntary work. Doing so is important, as previous research has demonstrated that engagement is a core underlying mechanism which is better able to explain

how factors in the work environment influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors, compared to alternative explanations commonly used in organizational research (e. g. Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2001; Rich et al., 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Active motivational states such as engagement are likely to be particularly important in the context of volunteer work because volunteers freely give their time without extrinsic motivators.

Drawing on these notions, we suggest that task and emotion-oriented support are resources that are positively associated with volunteers' personal investment in their voluntary work in the form of engagement. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Task-oriented organizational support is positively related to engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Emotion-oriented organizational support is positively related to engagement.

Outcomes of Volunteer Engagement

A handful of studies have lent preliminary support to the notion that high levels of volunteer engagement yield similar beneficial outcomes to those observed in the private sector, such as time spent volunteering (Gagné, 2003; Shantz et al., 2014), satisfaction, commitment, and intent to remain (Vecina, Chacón, Sueiro, & Barrón, 2012), although one study, by Huynh et al. (2012), yielded mixed results. Even fewer studies have examined the potential outcomes of engagement in a psychological sense for volunteers themselves, although some research has focused on the positive outcomes associated with other attitudinal variables on the part of volunteers. For example, Boezeman and Ellemers (2007, Study 1) found an association between commitment to the voluntary employer and volunteers' intentions to remain. Garner and Garner (2011) found a link between individuals' satisfaction with support and intent to remain. More widely, it has been noted that participating in voluntary work is associated with positive feelings for volunteers (Post, 2005), and Tidwell

(2005) showed that volunteers who identify with their voluntary employer's vision and values are more satisfied and committed with their volunteering work. These findings resonate with studies on corporate sponsored volunteering, which demonstrate that volunteer involvement leads to beneficial outcomes for the volunteers, the voluntary organization, and the employer who sponsored the volunteering activities (e.g., Booth et al., 2009; Jones, 2010; Rodell, 2013). For example, Caliguri et al. (2013) showed that volunteering assignments which included meaningful projects, social support within the voluntary organization, and opportunities for skill development yielded positive benefits for the employer (i.e. higher levels of employee engagement) the voluntary organization (i.e. sustainable impact of volunteering project) and the volunteer (i.e. capability development).

Positive outcomes at the individual level are important for volunteer employers and volunteers alike (Fujiwara, Oroyemi, & McKinnon, 2013; Lewig et al., 2007; United Nations Volunteers, 2012). In order to address these issues, we focus on three potential outcomes of engagement that are relevant for voluntary organizations and volunteers: perceived social worth, happiness, and intent to leave.

Perceived social worth is defined as the "self as valued in interpersonal relationships" (Grant, 2007: 405). Those who invest their time and effort in volunteering are more likely to perform well and therefore develop a personal identity as a socially valued individual (Grant, 2007). This is more probable for volunteers who experience engagement with their voluntary work, given engagement's association with effort and persistence (Schaufeli, 2013). Similarly, Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement states that individuals who experience their work as meaningful and engaging are able to express themselves fully and are therefore are more likely to feel worthwhile, useful and valuable. Hence volunteers who are engaged with their work experience a strong sense of social worth.

The theory of personal engagement further suggests that individuals who fully invest themselves in their role performances, expressing their "preferred self" in a way that promotes self-expression and connections to others, experience positive affective states (Kahn, 1990: 700). The fact that engaged workers are intrinsically motivated and find their work enjoyable (Schaufeli, 2013) may further foster feelings of happiness and reduced depressive symptoms (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012). Thus, engaged volunteers experience higher levels of happiness than their less engaged peers.

Finally, volunteer engagement is negatively related to intention to leave because volunteers who are engaged with their tasks are self-determined to accomplish work and persist in the face of challenges (Meyer & Gagné, 2008). Moreover, volunteers who are engaged with their work are fully absorbed in their work and may experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), that is, they find their volunteer work intrinsically enjoyable and are more likely to stay. This may be particularly relevant in the not-for-profit sector, since volunteer behavior is less easily mandated, and freedom to quit is far greater than in for-profit firms (Farmer & Fedor, 2001; Leonard, Onyx, & Hayward-Brown, 2004). There is some empirical support for the link between engagement and retention in the voluntary sector (Lewig et al., 2007). We therefore additionally propose that engagement is associated with intent to leave the voluntary organization.

Hypothesis 3: Engagement is positively related to (a) perceived social worth, (b) happiness and (c) negatively related to intent to leave the voluntary organization.

The Mediating Role of Volunteer Engagement

Our first three hypotheses culminate to position engagement as a mediator of the relationship between task and emotion-oriented support, as resources, and the three outcome variables under investigation. In other words, the reason why resources lead to valued

outcomes is because they ignite in volunteers a sense of engagement with their role. This hypothesis is consistent with Kahn's (1990) argument that supportive organizational contexts yield high levels of engagement which in turn leads to positive individual outcomes. Moreover, a central tenant of the JD-R model is that engagement mediates the relationship between job resources and positive outcomes. Accordingly, we hypothesize that engagement mediates the relationship between task and emotion-oriented support and the three outcome variables under investigation:

Hypothesis 4: Engagement mediates the relationship between task-oriented organizational support and (a) perceived social worth, (b) happiness and (c) intent to leave the voluntary organization.

Hypothesis 5: Engagement mediates the relationship between emotion-oriented organizational support and (a) perceived social worth, (b) happiness and (c) intent to leave the voluntary organization.

Methods

Sample and procedure

The data used in the present study is part of a program of research that explores volunteers' attitudes to their volunteering activities. The participants were individuals volunteering for a large UK wildlife charity. The survey was distributed to 7,008 individuals who were recorded on the organization's volunteer list. Volunteers responded to questions with regards to individual differences characteristics, the extent to which the organization supports them in their volunteering role, psychological engagement, and the outcomes of volunteering. Individuals were sent an e-mail that explained the purpose of the study and its confidentiality, and included a link to the survey. Two weeks after the initial email, a reminder email was sent to the volunteers.

The final sample included 1,064 volunteers, constituting a response rate of 15.18 per cent. In order to test whether the individuals who responded to the survey differed substantially from those who did not respond, we carried out a test as recommended by Armstrong and Overton (1977). Specifically, we split our sample in two groups according to the time when the survey was completed. We then carried out independent t-tests across the study variables. The data revealed that there was no significant difference between early and late respondents on any of the study variables. This lends confidence to the argument that nonresponse bias did not unduly affect our results and that the 15.18 per cent can be considered representative of the total sample.

The respondents dedicated their time to performing a variety of volunteering tasks during the prior 12 months to responding to the survey. The most common volunteering tasks involved practical conservation work (38,809 hours; e.g., land restoration, managing nature reserves); residential volunteering (20,444 hours); visitor services for people visiting the charity's premises (15,477 hours); and administrative work (13,269 hours). Other volunteering activities included answering surveys about wildlife behavior (8,472 hours), fundraising (6,116 hours), member recruitment (4,132 hours), and campaigning (616 hours).

The number of hours that individuals volunteered varied across the sample. Approximately one quarter (23.2 per cent) of the respondents volunteered up to 20 hours a year, whereas 10 per cent volunteered more than 340 hours per year. The average number of hours volunteered per year was 146 (SD=224). The final sample comprised 55.6 per cent men; the average age was 55.34 years (SD = 13.82) and participants had volunteered for the organization for an average of 5.61 years (SD = 7.72). The majority of respondents were married or living in a civil partnership (61 per cent) and from a White Background (98 per cent). 50 per cent of the participants indicated that they were retired, and a further 34 per cent were employed on either a full-time or part-time basis. The remaining participants were

unemployed and seeking work (5 per cent), looking after family members (3 per cent), students (3 per cent), out of work due to illness or disability (2 per cent) or did not indicate their work status (3 per cent). In terms of highest educational qualifications, 16 per cent had a higher degree such as a PhD, 39 per cent had a degree, 14 per cent indicated that they had other higher education qualifications, 9 per cent had completed a pre-university education, 11 per cent finished high school, 8 per cent had job related qualifications and the remaining 3 per cent held other qualifications.

Measures

All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree").

Task-oriented organizational support. Consistent with Boezeman and Ellemers (2007), we used two items to measure task oriented organizational support (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002). An example item is, "The [Organization] assists me sufficiently in my volunteering activities" (α = .96)

Emotion-oriented organizational support. Consistent with Boezeman and Ellemers (2007), we used two items to measure emotion-oriented organizational support (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002). An example item is, "The [organization] makes me feel that it appreciates my efforts" (α = .93).

Volunteer engagement. Volunteer engagement was measured with 9 items, following the approach by Shantz et al. (2014) who adapted Rich et al.'s (2010) engagement scale to measure volunteer engagement. The scale measures the three dimensions identified by Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement: physical engagement (3 items, "I exert a lot of energy when I volunteer"), emotional engagement (3 items, "I am enthusiastic about my volunteering activities"), and cognitive engagement (3 items, "When I volunteer, I focus a

great deal of my attention on my activities"). In line with research on engagement, the

subscales were combined to measure overall engagement (α = .92).

Perceived social worth. We used Grant's (2008) two-item measure of perceived social

worth. An example item is, "I feel that other people value my contributions" (α = .94).

Happiness. We used the eight-item Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle,

2002). An example item is, "I am satisfied with my life" (α = .85).

Intent to leave the voluntary organization. We adapted a two-item measure developed

by Boroff and Lewin (1997). An example item is, "I am seriously considering quitting

volunteering at the [organization]" (α = .75).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table I presents the means and standard deviations for each scale, and inter-scale

correlations, for all study variables.

Insert Table I about here

Preliminary Data Analysis

As all our variables were collected from a single source, we carried out a series of

confirmatory factor analyses (CFA), using Maximum Likelihood estimation in AMOS 22.0

(Arbuckle, 2006), to assess the potential influence of common method variance and to

establish discriminant validity of the scales (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Jeong-Yeon, &

Podsakoff, 2003). We initially tested a full measurement model, in which the three

engagement facets loaded onto a general engagement factor and all other items loaded on to

their respective factors. All factors were allowed to correlate. We used five fit indices to

establish the goodness of fit of our model. For the X^2, values of less than 2.5 indicate a good

model fit and values around 5.0 an acceptable fit (Arbuckle, 2006). For the normed fit index

(NFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI), values greater than .95 represent a good model fit

and values greater than .90 an acceptable fit (Bentler, 1990). For the Root Mean Square Error

of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR),

values less than .08 indicate a good model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler,

1998).

Insert Table II about here

The six-factor model showed a good model fit ($X^2 = 547$; $df = 136$; NFI = .96; CFI =

.97; RMSEA = .054; SRMR = .036). Next, sequential X^2 difference tests were carried out.

Specifically, the full measurement model was compared to five alternative nested models as

shown in Table II. This analysis was conducted in order to examine whether the items that

make up the constructs under study should be clustered as predicted. For instance, the full

measurement model represents a model in which the constructs under investigation are

distinct, and the items are clustered according to their theoretical constructs. Model A, on the

other hand, represents a model that does not differentiate between task and emotion oriented

support, in that the items that make up those constructs are combined into a single factor. The

results showed that Model A fitted the data significantly worse than the full measurement

model. This indicates that task and emotion-oriented support are best treated as distinct

constructs. Likewise, the results of the other models, in comparison with the full

measurement model, revealed that their model fits were significantly worse compared to the

full measurement model (all at $p<.001$). Specifically, the results showed that three models

which combined both forms of support and volunteer engagement (Model B), perceived

social worth (Model C) and intention to leave (Model D) fitted the data significantly worse

compared to the full measurement model. This suggests that these variables capture different

constructs and should be treated as distinct.

Finally, we introduced an unmeasured latent method factor to our original measurement model allowing all items to load on to their theoretical constructs, as well as on to the latent method factor. This is done to evaluate the extent to which common method variance may influence the results. As expected, the fit of the model including the common methods factor was significantly better ($\Delta X2$ (1) = 56, p<.001). However, there was only a marginal improvement in the fit indices between both models. The changes of CFI and NFI value, comparing both models, were 0.005, and the changes in RMSEA and SRMR values were 0.004 and 0.001, which does not exceed the suggested rule of thumb of 0.05 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990). We performed an additional test for common method variance following the procedure suggested by Widaman (1985) and applied by Williams, Cote and Buckley (1989). This approach involves a comparison between a null model, a measurement model, a single method factor model, and a measurement model with an additional method factor. The results indicated that the common method factor did improve model fit, however, it only accounted for a relatively small portion of the variance (16.8 %), which is considerably lower than the amount of common method variance (25%) observed in Williams et al.'s (1989) study.

Finally, we carried out tests to assess the validity of the scales. To assess evidence for convergent validity, we computed estimates of construct reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). Construct reliabilities from the CFA results ranged from .62 to .93 and therefore either approached or exceeded the recommended threshold of .70 suggested by Hair et al. (2009). AVE values ranged between .44 and .92, approaching or exceeding the recommended threshold of .50 (Hair et al., 2009). We found evidence for the discriminant validity of the study constructs using the method described by Fornell and Larcker (1981), as each construct's AVE value exceeded the squared correlation between it and each of the other study constructs. In summary, the results of the additional tests mitigated concerns that the associations found in the data were unduly influenced by common method variance.

Test of Hypotheses

We employed latent variable structural equation modelling using Maximum Likelihood estimation in AMOS 22.0 (Arbuckle, 2006) to test our theoretical model. To examine whether engagement mediated the hypothesized relationships, we followed the steps outlined by Mathieu and Taylor (2006). The procedure compares three alternative models: saturated, direct effects, and indirect effects models. For the saturated model, paths were estimated from each independent variable to engagement, perceived social worth, happiness and intent to leave, and a direct path from engagement to the three outcome variables. The saturated model provided a good fit for the data ($X^2 = 551$; $df = 139$; NFI = .96; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .04).

For the direct effects model, direct paths were estimated from each independent variable to the outcome variables, whereas no path led to or stemmed from engagement. The indirect effects model estimated direct paths from each independent variable to the mediator engagement and a direct path from engagement to the three outcome variables. The direct effects model and the indirect effects model were both nested within the saturated model, which enabled us to use X^2 difference tests to compare the statistical fit of the three models. Hence, the X^2 difference between the direct effects model and the saturated model, as well as between the indirect effects model and the saturated model, were tested for significance while accounting for the change in degrees of freedom between the models. The data are shown in Table III.

Insert Table III about here

The direct effects model showed a weak model fit ($X^2 = 1085$; $df = 145$; NFI = .92; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .14), and differed significantly from the saturated model ($\Delta X^2 (6) = 534$, $p<.001$). This indicates that at least one support variable has a significant

direct relationship with engagement, or engagement is significantly related with the outcome variables; this reinforces the importance of the mediator variable, that is, engagement. The indirect effects model showed a weak model fit (X^2= 1286; df = 145; NFI = .90; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .09; SRMR = .07) and, again, different significantly from the saturated model (ΔX^2 (6) = 735, p<.001). This lack of fit indicates that one or more of the antecedents has a direct relationship with the outcome variables.

In the next step, we used the indirect effects model as a base and added direct paths between the support measures and the outcome variables. We first added individual paths from task-oriented support to perceived social worth, then to happiness, and then to intent to leave. Next, we added individual paths from emotion-oriented support to perceived social worth, then to happiness and finally to intent to leave. We kept paths in the model if they were significant and if adding them resulted in a significant improvement of the overall model fit, as assessed by X^2 difference tests. Apart from the effect of emotion-oriented support on happiness, all other direct effects were significant and led to an improved model fit, as assessed by X^2 difference tests. The fit statistics for the final model are presented in Table III.

Our results demonstrate that task-oriented (ß=.27) and emotion-oriented (ß =.24) support were positively and significantly related to engagement; thus hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. Engagement, in turn, was positively and significantly related to perceived social worth (ß =.18), happiness (ß =.23), and negatively related to intent to leave (ß =-.23), providing evidence in support of hypothesis 3. We examined the significance of indirect effects using the product-of-coefficients approach combined with bootstrapping in AMOS 22.0. The indirect effects of task-oriented and emotion-oriented support on perceived social worth, happiness and intent to leave were all significant at the p<.01 level.

In addition, task-oriented support was significantly and positively related to perceived social worth *(ß =.33)*, happiness (ß =.19), and negatively related to intent to leave (ß =-.15). Moreover, emotion-oriented support had a positive and significant relationship with perceived social worth (ß =.27) and a negative and significant relationship with intent to leave (ß =-.63), but no significant relationship with happiness. This implies that the relationship between emotion-oriented support and happiness was fully mediated by volunteer engagement and that the relationships between emotion-oriented support, perceived social worth and intent to leave as well as the relationships between task-oriented support, perceived social worth, happiness and intent to leave were partially mediated by engagement. The standardized estimates of the final model are represented in Figure 1. Thus we found evidence to fully support hypothesis 5b and our results lent partial support to hypotheses 4a, b, and c and hypotheses 5 a and c.

Finally, we re-estimated the mediation models by adding a latent method factor, which loaded on the indicators of all constructs, following the procedure by MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Fetter (1993). We compared the standardized parameter estimates when common method variance was, and was not controlled for. The results revealed that, while the strength of some associations changed slightly, the conclusions drawn from the model did not change.

Discussion: Theoretical and Practical Implications

The present study responds to calls to identify factors associated with volunteer engagement, and specifically for studies that explore the role that various forms of organizational support can play in fostering engagement (Huynh et al., 2012; Vecina et al., 2012). Our study contributes to this literature by examining the associations between task-oriented and emotion-oriented organizational support (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007) and

volunteer engagement, and three outcomes of engagement that are of interest to both

volunteers and voluntary sector organizations: perceived social worth, happiness, and intent

to leave.

Consistent with our expectations, we found that both task and emotion-oriented

support were positively associated with volunteer engagement. These findings build on those

of Boezeman and Ellemers (2007), who found a link between these two forms of support and

feelings of respect among volunteers towards their voluntary organization. We extend their

findings in the application of the JD-R model to show that task and emotion-oriented support

are job resources, which are associated with high levels of volunteer engagement.

Our study is the first to examine the link between these two forms of support and

engagement, and also one of a small number of studies that have examined the role of

organizational factors implemented by the voluntary organization, as distinct from individual

factors, in enhancing volunteer engagement. We thus contribute to the sparse empirical

literature on the antecedents of engagement in the context of voluntary work.

It is noteworthy that task and emotion-oriented support – which we showed were

empirically distinct – had similarly strong effects on engagement such that the provision of

each is equally important in igniting volunteers' enthusiasm and interest in their volunteer

tasks. However, the indirect effects on the dependent variables in the partially mediated

relationships differed; notably, emotion-oriented support was more strongly related to

turnover intentions than task-oriented support. This suggests that the general appreciation

volunteers receive from their voluntary organization is more important in retaining them

compared to more specific task-focused support.

In line with Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement, we also found that

volunteer engagement was positively associated with two facets of employee wellbeing –

happiness and perceived social worth. Understanding volunteering's role in generating

wellbeing is important not just for volunteers themselves, but also for voluntary organizations. National and international policy makers are becoming increasingly concerned with the wellbeing of its citizenship, and they view volunteering as an avenue to achieve this goal. Since many non-profit organizations are funded through government agencies, it is in their interest to show how their work increases volunteer wellbeing.

Unlike previous studies in the volunteer literature, which have shown mixed results with regards to the relationship between engagement and retention (e.g., Huynh et al., 2012), our data showed a positive relationship between the two. This finding is consistent with empirical work in the paid context (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Moreover, it appears theoretically valid and may in fact be stronger in the case of volunteering. This is because individuals experience a greater degree of choice over their voluntary work than their paid employment counterparts, and in many instances, they purposely set aside other activities such as leisure pursuits in order to undertake volunteering.

We expected to find that engagement fully mediated the relationships between task and emotion-oriented support and the three outcome variables. Although we found evidence of full mediation in the association between emotion-oriented support and happiness, in other associations, our data showed partial mediation. Specifically, we found that the relationship between emotion-oriented support, perceived social worth and intent to leave, as well as between task-oriented support, perceived social worth, happiness and intent to leave were partially mediated by engagement. This reinforces the notion that both forms of support exert different effects on the outcome variables in our study. To an extent, these findings also reflect those of Huynh et al. (2012). Although they found that connectedness was correlated with job resources and intent to remain volunteering to approximately the same extent as engagement was related to those variables, they found that connectedness, and not engagement, mediated the relationship between the job resources and intention to remain.

The discrepancy in our findings vis-à-vis those of Huynh et al.'s (2012) may be due to the nature of the samples. In their study, the volunteers worked with AIDS and cancer patients, where connectedness to other people may be particularly relevant. This is because the nature of that work likely contains elements of emotional labor, and therefore is emotionally and mentally depleting. Hence, being engaged with work tasks may be less central in this context because volunteers may be influenced more by the plight of the recipients themselves, and focused on responding to them appropriately, in contrast to focusing solely on their mandated volunteer tasks. In the present study, the volunteers worked for an environmental non-profit organization and worked on more physical tasks such as conservation work; engagement with the task may be more germane here compared to connectedness given the type of work. We echo Huynh et al.'s (2012) suggestion that future research should examine the relationship between volunteer engagement and retention across the type of work that volunteers carry out. Our findings and those of Huynh et al (2012) imply that there may be additional mediators, aside from engagement, that may be relevant in a volunteering context. For example, the experience of task and emotion-oriented organizational support might enhance levels of organizational identification which then in turn might mediate the relationship with the outcomes in our study. Further research could explore such relationships.

A final contribution is that we demonstrate that engagement is a concept that holds in the non-profit sector. Indeed, our results complement those found by Lewig et al. (2007) who used the JD-R model to examine the effects of job demands and job resources on volunteers. They also complement those of Lo Presti (2013) who found that job resources in the form of social support, task support, appreciation and information were all associated with levels of commitment, satisfaction and intent to remain. Similarly, in the present study, we found that the motivational process, as outlined in the JD-R model is likewise relevant for non-profit

organizations. Hence, engagement theory may be useful in unifying the two sectors, and lessons learned from each may be interchangeable.

From a practical perspective, our research highlights the importance of volunteer engagement for voluntary sector organizations. Our study suggests that, for those managing volunteers, the provision of task and emotion-oriented forms of support equally enhance volunteers' engagement with their voluntary work. Research in the volunteering literature provides a number of practical suggestions to facilitate these forms of support (e.g., Brudney & Nezhina, 2005; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009; Hobson & Heler, 2007). For example, task-oriented support could be enhanced by providing volunteers with a thorough induction into the volunteering role, guidelines on how to carry out their role, appropriate resources, and guidance from other volunteers and paid staff. Doing so may not only benefit the volunteer organization in ensuring that volunteer hours are maximized, but this form of support might also benefit volunteers in terms of enhancing their employability, especially when volunteers are assigned to tasks that can help them develop skills (Booth et al., 2009). Emotion-oriented support could be provided through opportunities to network and meet with other volunteers and paid staff, through feedback and appreciation, access to a mentor, and awards and recognition.

Finding ways of raising engagement levels amongst volunteers would also be beneficial. One way to increase volunteer engagement and participation could be to actively search for opportunities to collaborate with employers from the paid sector. Employees' involvement in community work outside their organization is positively related to performance at work (Rodell, 2013). Hence, voluntary organizations could market the benefits of volunteering to employers and establish joint corporate volunteering programs. This would not only increase levels of volunteer engagement, but also yield long-term benefits for the voluntary organization (Caligiuri et al., 2013).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are a number of limitations to our study. First, it was based on a self-report survey, which raises concerns about common method variance. However, we moderated its influence by using established scales, and we carried out empirical tests to check for its influence. These additional analyses lessened concerns that our conclusions were unduly influenced by common method variance. Nonetheless, studies that draw on data from several sources (e.g., turnover rates) would further help to alleviate concerns related to common method variance.

Second, although our hypotheses are based on established theoretical models, our study is cross-sectional which limits our ability to infer causality (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2010). This is specifically relevant, as our theoretical model involves mediating relationships. Therefore, the relationships in the present study should be interpreted as correlations. In addition, we encourage future studies to employ longitudinal research designs to test the mechanism proposed in the present study.

Third, our sample involved volunteers working for a single wildlife charity based in the UK. We therefore cannot be sure that our findings would hold true in other charitable sectors or in other national contexts. Further research that explores the role played by engagement with a wider sample and in different contexts would help show whether the findings are generalizable.

Finally, our analyses were limited to an examination of two resources as predictors of engagement. Future studies could explore the association between other forms of resources and engagement. A preliminary qualitative phase may be useful in order to identify predictors that are salient to the organizational context. In addition, research could examine personal resources (e.g., hope, resiliency) as factors that promote volunteer engagement, relying on the JD-R model as a source of theory.

Our study also highlights the similarity of factors affecting work motivations and outcomes between the voluntary and paid employment sectors. Although our research did not explore the interface between the two, it remains the case that many volunteers are also paid employees. The intersection between the work and the volunteering domains is one of great interest and importance, particularly given research findings that suggest spillover and compensatory effects between the two spheres of activity (Rodell, 2013). Future research could extend this body of work by examining the association between work engagement in the paid versus the voluntary context for individuals, as well as the differences and similarities in antecedents and outcomes.

Conclusion

Voluntary work is of growing economic, political and social importance. The success of non-profit organizations relies not just on volunteers being motivated to volunteer in the first place, but also to sustain their volunteering efforts over time. Our study has shown that engagement is an important motivational pathway for volunteers, and that the provision of task and emotion-oriented support to volunteers are related to higher engagement levels. We found that high levels of volunteer engagement are associated with the happiness and perceived social worth of volunteers, feelings that are likely to enhance the experience of volunteering, and are of increasing importance to national and international policy shapers. We also found that engagement was negatively associated with intent to turnover with the volunteer employer, a desirable outcome for non-profit organizations. Our research demonstrates the importance of volunteer engagement, and shows that engagement theory is relevant not just for paid employees, but for volunteers as well.

TABLE I

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Scale Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	.44	.50							
2. Age	55.34	13.12	-.20**						
3. Task-oriented organizational support	5.77	1.29	.08**	-.07*					
4. Emotion-oriented organizational support	6.06	1.27	.06*	.00	.74**				
5. Volunteer Engagement	6.01	.79	.04	-.11**	.34**	.31**			
6. Happiness	5.69	.72	.15**	-.02	.27**	.20**	.28**		
7. Perceived Social Worth	5.88	1.09	.08*	-.07*	.58**	.58**	.40**	.24**	
8. Intent to leave the voluntary organization	5.95	1.23	-.04	-.01	-.63**	-.73**	-.37**	-.22**	-.47**

Notes: n = 1064; gender (female=1; male=0); ** p < .01, * p< .05

TABLE II

Fit Statistics from Measurement Model Comparison

Models	χ^2(df)	NFI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	χ^2_{diff}	df_{diff}
Full measurement model	**547 (136)**	**.958**	**.968**	**.054**	**.036**		
Model A[a]	1328 (141)	.899	.909	.089	.047	781	5***
Model B[b]	2204 (145)	.833	.842	.116	.087	1657	9***
Model C[c]	2586 (145)	.804	.812	.127	.063	2039	9***
Model D[d]	1489 (145)	.887	.897	.094	.048	942	9***
Model E[e]	3886 (145)	.705	.712	.157	.170	3339	9***
Model F[f]	4573 (148)	.653	.660	.169	.144	4026	12***
Model G[g] (Harman's single-factor test)	6075 (151)	.545	.539	.193	.169	5528	15***

Notes: N = 1064, ***p<.001; χ^2=chi-square discrepancy, df=degrees of freedom; NFI=Normed Fit Index; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR= Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, χ^2_{diff}=difference in chi-square, df_{diff} =difference in degrees of freedom; in all measurement models, error terms were free to covary between two facets of volunteer engagement to improve fit and help reduce bias in the estimated parameter values (Reddy, 1992). All models are compared to the full measurement model.

[a]=Task-oriented and emotion-oriented organizational support combined into one factor
[b]=Task-oriented and emotion-oriented organizational support and volunteer engagement combined into one factor
[c]=Task-oriented and emotion-oriented organizational support and perceived social worth combined into one factor
[d]=Task-oriented and emotion-oriented organizational support and intent to leave combined into one factor
[e]=Happiness, perceived social worth and intent to leave combined into one factor
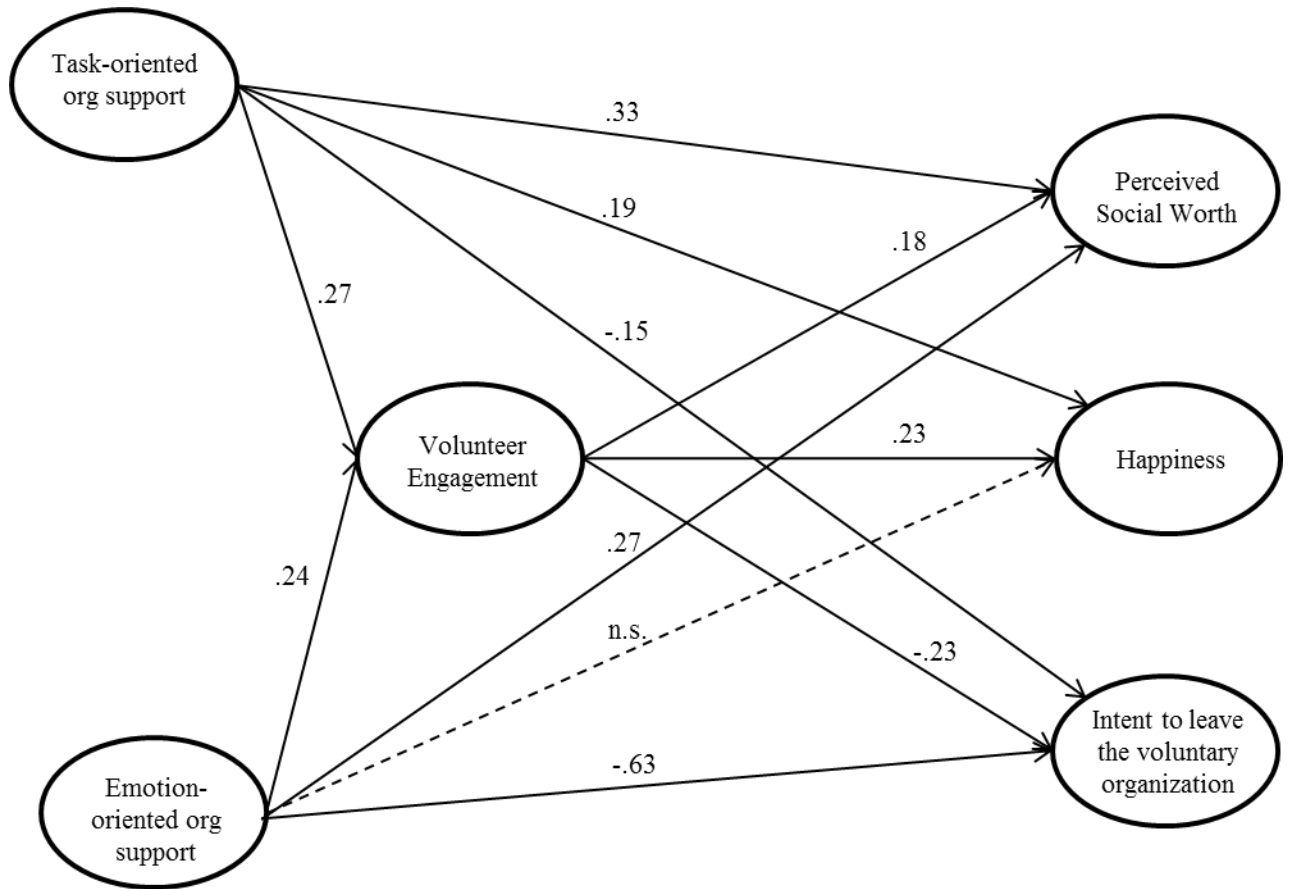[f]=Happiness, perceived social worth, intent to leave and volunteer engagement combined into one factor
[g]=All constructs combined into one factor

TABLE III

Structural Equation Model Comparisons

Models		NFI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Comparisons
Saturated model	551 (139)	.958	.968	.053	.037	
Direct effects model	1085 (145)***	.918	.928	.078	.140	Compared to saturated model
Indirect effects model	1286 (145)***	.902	.912	.086	.065	Compared to saturated model
Final model	557 (140)**	.958	.968	.053	.038	Compared to saturated model

Notes: n = 1064. Error terms were free to covary between two facets of volunteer engagement to improve fit and help reduce bias in the estimated parameter values (Reddy, 1992); *** p < .001, **p < .01

FIGURE 1

Standardized Estimates of Final Model

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