

Ph.D. Thesis Review Report

on

Effects of corporate volunteering on employee behaviors

authored by Yusheng Fu,

written under the supervision of prof. Aldona Glińska-Neweś and
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Legal framework

On 17 May 2023 I was assigned, by the Management and Quality Sciences Research Council at Nicolaus Copernicus University, as an external reviewer the PhD thesis of Yusheng Fu, written under the supervision of prof. Aldona Glińska-Neweś.

Following the above assignment, the below PhD thesis review report has been prepared according to the regulations specified in the Higher Education Act as of 20 July 2018 (Dz. U. 2018 poz. 1668) with further amendments.

General comment on the topic

This PhD thesis tackles a relatively poorly – in empirical research – explored topic regarding corporate volunteering, including its potential effects on employees commitment. The very concept and general idea of corporate volunteering are closely related to – the far more broadly discussed topic of corporate social responsibility. Moreover, corporate volunteering engagement is widely considered a social bonding factor for the company`s employees. Notably, this social bonding element is – at least in my opinion - directly converted into employee engagement in various economic actions of firms, which potentially impacts company`s competitiveness, its market share, general position and prospects. Considering the latter, company leaders should cultivate and enhance corporate volunteering activities as a practice leading to greater employee engagement and commitment.

This work traces the impact of corporate volunteering on two significant aspects: organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour, as its primary goal is to *"explore and explain the mechanisms by which corporate volunteering influences organizational commitment (OC) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of employees participating in the volunteering"*. This research purpose seems very broad in its scope and ambition. Especially the part explaining the mechanisms behind this phenomenon is challenging to tackle; hence this topic yields broad studies in terms of the interrelatedness of discussed elements.

The existing literature on corporate volunteering combines these practices with human resources aspects, broadly defined corporate social responsibility, or various cultural contexts. Since I do not find much robust evidence combining issues of corporate volunteering with organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour, this work extensively adds to the present state of knowledge.

While reading this work, it brings to mind the thought on relative importance of this topic for business practices. This thesis exemplifies the rare case of scientific-based work in which outcomes yield broad applicability, mainly from managers aiming to increase employee commitment and long-run engagement. This is the real value added to this work.

This PhD thesis can be claimed as interdisciplinary. Its central theme edges with management, sociology and psychology. It brings on board various perspectives, also on the conceptual and theoretical ground. Such a combined approach makes the topic discussed more interesting.

Structure, the logic of the work and quality assessment

The assessed PhD thesis combines four merit chapters. The thesis starts with the Introduction explaining this study's general context and background and its rationale. The introductory part additionally signals the identified research gap and defines this research's major aims and scopes. This part is written clearly, and the reader gets a general idea about the remainder of the work. The only slight drawback of the Introduction is that it does not offer the research hypotheses that are consecutively tested in the course of the work. Presenting the research hypotheses at this stage would add clarity and clarified more the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 1 provides conceptual background and contextualizes the whole work. This part of the thesis also provides solid theoretical foundations for consecutive research hypotheses. Chapter 1 is logically structured since it guides the reader from the initial explanations of corporate volunteering and then goes through its antecedents to its outcomes. This chapter collects a solid body of referred literature, which on the one hand, adds clarity regarding the thesis aims, and on the other – it shows that the PhD Candidate is very familiar with the topic.

The last part of Chapter 1 is entirely devoted to the meta-analysis of two selected corporate volunteering outcomes - affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviours. This approach is justified since the central theme of the thesis focuses on these above-mentioned corporate volunteering outcomes. The presented meta-analysis constitutes a solid background for consecutive research processes, primarily comparing obtained results with past evidence.

The following two parts – Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are entirely devoted to the empirical research. Chapter 2 is designed to answer the question of the effects of corporate volunteering on affective commitment, while Chapter 3 explores the effects of corporate volunteering on organizational citizenship behaviour. Both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 enter with an exhaustive explanation of the hypotheses formulation relying on existing literature. Next, the conceptual models are developed – adopting the structural equation modelling approach, the samples are explained, and finally – the results are presented and discussed.

Examining the effects of corporate volunteering on affective commitment

In this part, six major hypotheses are tested, plus five sub-hypotheses developed regarding H6. The main aim is to test if and how corporate volunteering affects affective commitment. The author assumes, relying on previous literature review, that employee behaviour is determined by – among other things, corporate volunteering, which is explained by perceived supervisor support, positive relationships at work or job satisfaction. The study is run instead as a business case since only one company was tested out of four preselected companies. In this study, both employees engaged and non-engaged in corporate volunteering were included in the sample. The general conclusion from the SEM modelling is that *“employees engaged in corporate volunteering, compared to non-volunteers, are more likely to commit to the organization effectively”*. Moreover, the test has shown that *“employees' positive workplace relationships are positively associated with affective commitment”* and *“(..) job satisfaction is a significant mediator connecting job resources and affective commitment”*. These results seem to align with past evidence and general logic that employees are more engaged in corporate volunteering and “automatically” more committed to their companies.

Here, in this part of the PhD thesis, I find some questions to deal with:

- My first doubt/question refers to the second hypothesis that states that "Job Satisfaction (JS) mediates the relationship between perceived supervisor support (PSS) and affective commitment (AC). Is it instead that **job satisfaction is an effect** of PSS, which results in affective commitment? How do you see this topic?
- How would you treat Job Satisfaction as a final result in the instance that affective commitment drives this satisfaction? Do you know any studies that treat these two elements and *vice versa*?
- The third hypothesis stating that “There is a positive relationship between positive relationships at work (PRW) and affective commitment (AC)” is rather obvious. Could it be the other way around?, so that positive relationships at work and affective commitment are NOT positively related? What would that mean?
- In the case of the fourth hypothesis stating that "Job Satisfaction (JS) mediates the relationship between positive relationships at work (PRW) and affective commitment (AC)" I see a similar issue, e.g. in H2. Do you think Job Satisfaction results from only some of these elements?
- We read in the text that four companies were initially selected for the first sample, and after all, only one was tested. Can you explain WHY the remaining three have been excluded from the analysis? Basing on what criteria?
- As the first sample, you have the company that, as we read: "The CSR mission of this company is to support sustainable social and economic growth in Poland. In addition,

the selected company has substantial volunteering experiences". How does this strong company's commitment to volunteering affect your results? Does it constitute some bias, in your opinion?

- On page 55, we read that data from the sample *partially supported* the hypotheses. Please bear in mind that we do not "support" the hypothesis, but rather, we use formal tests to conclude that the hypothesis is rejected or cannot be rejected.

Examining the effects of corporate volunteering on organizational citizenship behavior

Another five hypotheses were tested in this section to uncover the relationship between corporate volunteering and organizational citizenship behaviour mediated by job satisfaction. After running formal tests, the author concludes that only one hypothesis (H9) could not be rejected, and henceforth the study confirms that positive relations at work positively affect organizational citizenship behaviour. The formal tests indicated that the remaining three hypotheses should be rejected.

Similarly, as in the preceding case, here, in this part of the PhD thesis, I find some questions to deal with:

- What do you think is why the remaining three hypotheses are rejected throughout the formal testing? Remember that they have been formulated based on past evidence and theoretical readings. Do you think that your sample may be biased? If so, in what sense?
- Why was data collection limited exclusively to employees already engaged in corporate volunteering in this sample?
- Again as in the case of H3, is the statement in H9 (the only hypothesis not rejected) likely obvious? It is relatively straightforward that positive relationships positively impact organizational citizenship behaviour. In what case would it be different?

My general impression regarding Chapters 2 and 3 content is that the empirical parts are well-done, and the results are well-explained. Still, one thing draws my attention when reading the conclusions – it seems that the author concludes on high level of generality. It shall be borne in mind that these results refer only to these two tested companies; hence any generalization might lead to misleading conclusions. Still, it would be interesting to see how these positive effects of corporate volunteering convert into the "real" economic effects of companies. Another thing that brings attention across both samples is that the percentage of women participating in the survey is much higher than men. How do you think – if the sample was more balanced, how would it affect the results? Finally, my concern again regards the samples' compositions, which are hardly "comparable". The first sample encompasses both employees volunteering and those non-volunteering, while the second one is only employees volunteering.

Finally, are your results sector-specific / sector-sensitive? How would the results of analogous analysis be in different sectors / different companies?

In my opinion, despite several drawbacks and doubts, the presented work demonstrates several vital elements:

- The PhD Candidate proves high-quality analytical skills. The structural modelling is appropriately done, and the statistics and parameters are adequately interpreted;
- The conceptual and theoretical part is substantial. The author proves his extensive knowledge of the field.
- The hypotheses are developed based on past literature – this is also a solid point since not often met even in such analytical works;
- The empirical analysis is well-referred to the theories; the practical implications seem to be well-explained and extrapolated;
- The thesis is concise and logically structured; no insignificant elements are provided.
- The numerical results are well-discussed and interpreted.

Conclusion and recommendation

The presented PhD thesis of Yusheng Fu is well grounded in social sciences, especially management theories and concepts. The author uses advanced quantitative techniques of analysis. This work was of high quality, professionally and logically structured, presenting a fresh perspective on the issues discussed.

I find this work especially valuable for the following reasons:

- The presented work is well and logically structured; the flow of the chapters is perfect;
- All parts of the theses are well grounded in related literature – both theoretical and empirical, showing the author`s professionalism in this respect;
- The author applied sophisticated statistical and econometric methods, which also deserves special attention; this proves high analytical skills of the author;
- Presented work contributes to our understanding of the phenomenon discussed and thus may be claimed as really contributing to the present state of the art.

Regarding the previous, I fully acknowledge the significance of the topic today and express my respect for the author who undertook this vital problem. The discussed PhD thesis is of very high overall quality; it contributes to the present state of the art and demonstrates new results and knowledge. Considering all arguments above, **I acknowledge that this work fully satisfies academic research standards and can be presented for further procedural steps.** I hereby recommend admitting this PhD dissertation to be defended orally in front of the respective committee.

Ewa Lechman