



Towards Effective Volunteer Management: Understanding the Dynamics of Volunteers Motivation in Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs)

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Abstract

- Purpose** The objective of this study is to examine the factors that drive people to volunteer and their expectations in terms of support from managers within Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs).
- Theory** The study is based on particular emphasis of multidimensional approach of functional motivation theory, as well as the egoistic and altruistic motivation theory. Role Theory is utilised to examine volunteers' expectations of organisational leadership in order to enhance their experience. The theoretical framework proposed in this paper gives insights about what factors influence motivation levels of volunteers alongside what support from management volunteers expect.
- Method** The study implemented a qualitative approach, with fifteen semi-structured interviews of which two were pilot ones from a purposive sampling. The respondents were active volunteers within the American Field Services (AFS) in Austria.
- Result** The findings have shown that the volunteers participating in this study are influenced by a variety of motivational factors, among others, the social connections and relationships established during volunteer work, the skills developed, as well as altruistic motives, such as the intention to be reciprocal and to have a positive impact on the community.

Foreword

This thesis represents for us a symbol of determination and hard work, it is the culmination of our time as students of the Master in Strategic Human Resources Management and Labor Relations at the University of Gothenburg, and at the same time a new beginning, a new journey that will surely lead us to take on new academic and professional challenges.

During our journey together, both authors have been motivated and driven by the desire to contribute to such a significant sector in our societies as Non-Profit organizations, and it is this desire that led us to try to understand and identify what were the major challenges they face, and how we, from our education, could contribute to solutions. The answer was clear and almost immediate, the management of volunteers was critical for this type of organizations, and within it the recruitment, retention and development of volunteers, but for that, first we had to understand something even more essential, what motivates them to volunteer and maintain their engagement over time, that is how we decided to focus in this research on the motivational factors of volunteering.

This road could not have been travelled without the tireless support and help of our supervisor, Jing Wu, whose insights and feedback during the writing of this paper were invaluable. She was a major influence on the final form this paper took.

We would also like to give special thanks to the AFS team and volunteers for their generosity and commitment with this research and to our families, friends, and fellow students, who were a fundamental pillar and a source of support and inspiration throughout the process, reminding us again and again what we do and why we do it. This work is the synthesis of the collaboration, and support that we were lucky to find in each other and in all the extraordinary people around us.

Thank you very much.

Mohammad Moein Abasin and Mario David Tabares

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1. Introduction

There is no doubt that volunteers are the fundamental pillar of the functioning and growth of non-profit organizations (NPOs) around the world, as they contribute their experience, time, and skills to causes bigger than themselves. This type of work is especially important in fields related to caring for people, education, environmental protection, and the provision of community services, and in doing so, volunteers also contribute to improving the economic and social fabric of their communities (Kemp, 2002). Volunteers are a critical aspect for nonprofit organizations because they often experience limited resources and difficulty securing funding for staffing (Grube & Plavin, 2000).

On the other hand, what makes this topic interesting is that volunteering is often constituted as an important aspect of society, where different groups of individuals work formally or informally to improve their communities and the planet, and these types of initiatives and activities have acquired a global scale (Assonet's et al., 2023). To better define the term, we could say that a volunteer is a person who provides their work and time for free to an organization with the main objective of helping the community, and this is outside volunteers' own family or closest friends, so a large component of altruism can be appreciated in this type of activities (Jenner, 1982).

During 2018, non-profit organizations reported that around one billion people over the age of fifteen, from 145 different countries, participated and collaborated in volunteer activities and services (United Nations Volunteers, 2018). In addition, these organizations reported that at least 2.2 million people served beyond their local communities to help people in need in other latitudes (Sazonovs et al., 2023). Arguably, exploring the underlying reasons that drive volunteering has become a topic of relevance for researchers and practitioners focused on the non-profit sector. Therefore, they recognize that the success and long-term impact of NPOs depend in large part on having volunteers willing to help and perform the tasks necessary to accomplish their goals (Stillwell et al., 2010). Further, understanding the factors that motivate people to volunteer and stay in their roles over the long term is essential due to its nuance and dynamic nature (Pearce (1993).

Finkelstein et al. (2005) provide a theoretical framework for understanding volunteer motivational factors through functional motivation theory. This theory explains that people tend to volunteer to satisfy various desires, which, when gradually fulfilled, generate a long-term commitment. In line with this, Frisch and Gerrard (1981) add that individuals join in volunteer

work because they are motivated by two types of factors, one more selfish and the other more altruistic. However, NPOs still struggle due to shifting in motivations, high volunteer turnover and less engagement of participants (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Moreover, earlier study has looked at the elements that primarily drive individuals to volunteering (Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999). Which there remains a fundamental gap within the comprehension of what keeps volunteers motivated in the long run. Therefore, this study focused on understanding how motivations fluctuate and evolve for volunteers as well as allow management to give ongoing assistance that keeps volunteers interested and contribute successfully.

Furtherly, Pearce (1993) has mentioned that motivational factors meaning is not straightforward due to their multifaceted nature as well as only one part of the story was to understand what motivates volunteers. The other parts of it are to comprehend the expectations of volunteers that by comprehending these needs in NPOs the management could develop tactics which enhance and secure the betterment of volunteer's experience. Conrad (2012), has highlighted that managerial support has a major effect on a volunteer's experience, perhaps impacting their incentive to stay and participate well. Furtherly, Studies regarding volunteer motivation in NPOs emphasizes its relevance, yet there is a lack about comprehension regarding volunteers' perceptions regarding managerial assistance. Prior studies focus on persuading volunteers' motives merely but ignores the continuing assistance they require from the management. Therefore, this is why it is necessary for organizations that work with volunteers to periodically evaluate the predominant factors within their body of collaborators and prospects to be more effective in attracting and retaining volunteers, always bearing in mind that the motivating factors for volunteering are diverse and may even be difficult to understand at first glance (Pearce, 1993).

The circumstances described here represent a unique opportunity for this study to scrutinize the underlying factors that motivate volunteers in the American Field Service (AFS) in Austria. AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the skills and understanding necessary to contribute to a more peaceful world (AFS, 2024). AFS is an organisation that has a worldwide presence and focuses on facilitating youth cultural exchange. It is a mega-organisation, a network of fifty independent organisations, each with its own volunteer corps, a national office, paid staff, and its own board of directors, which is managed by volunteers and makes the most important decisions in each country (AFS, 2022). Beyond this independence of structure, all organisations

present in member countries follow the guidelines and directives of the organisation's global office in New York, while this office creates resources, plans, and audits all national offices. In 2015, a total of 12,578 students from around the world participated in cultural exchange programmes with AFS in over ninety-nine countries (AFS, 2022).

The American Field Ambulance Service, created in April 1915 during World War I by A. Piatt Andrew as an ambulance corps to assist the wounded during the war, was the forerunner of AFS as we know it today. After World War II and under the leadership of Stephen Galotti, this organisation evolved to become a pioneer in the fields of intercultural education, student exchanges, and volunteerism by changing its initial focus and adapting to the new context. The organisation's main objective is to promote world peace by advocating the advancement of cultural understanding through the facilitation of diverse intercultural learning opportunities, providing individuals with the knowledge, and understanding necessary to actively participate in the development of a more equitable and harmonious international community (AFS, 2022).

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The study aims to investigate the factors that motivate volunteers to participate in voluntary work and their expectations in terms of support from the managers at Non-profit organizations. With this objective the following research questions will be addressed:

- 1. What factors motivate volunteers to participate in voluntary work within Non-profit organizations?*
- 2. What do volunteers expect in terms of management support to enhance the volunteer experience?*

1.2 Approach and Contribution

The study of volunteer motivation and management has been a topic of special interest to both academics and practitioners working in the non-profit sector, given the importance of volunteers in the performance and operations of NPOs (Stillwell et al., 2010). According to Caselli (2021), although the significance of volunteers has acknowledged; non-governmental organizations still face difficulties in attracting, retaining, and aligning the desires and interests of their volunteers with organizational objectives. Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a

considerable impact on NPOs, exacerbating problems, significantly affecting volunteer participation, and in some cases, lowering the level of engagement (Choi et al., 2023). This deficit has affected NPOs, often hampering their day-to-day functions and their ability to provide services in their communities. The pandemic as such and its aftermaths have raised considerable logistical and operational issues, such as moving many in-person volunteer activities to virtual environments, and this has changed the volunteer experience and the way volunteers have practiced in many organizations (Choi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, proper management has played a crucial role in fostering volunteer participation in NPOs. However, as highlighted by Clary and Snyder (1999), Managers faces challenges of high turnover which cause a hinder in constant need for recruitment and training of volunteers. Furtherly, volunteers expected that giving them precise guidelines, targets, and information regarding the purpose and effects of the organisation allows them to experience connected and involved through management Conrad (2012). In contrast it exists still significant tensions in understanding the needs and expectations of volunteers such as nonexistence of sense of accomplishment, unclear communication and assigning volunteers in meaning full roles (Ferreira et al. 2009).

Additionally, AFS Austria, the organisation was hit hard during the pandemic when it had to cancel all its exchange programmes in the country due to the health emergency and was subsequently unable to recover and return to the previous numbers of participants, volunteers, and host families, which dropped by 50% (AFS, 2024). This global crisis highlights the need to understand more deeply the elements that motivate people to volunteer in periods of great political, economic, and social instability and stress. All these changes make this post-pandemic world a suitable time using a qualitative method to study the reasons volunteers participates in voluntary works and their expectations from managers in terms of support which could be an opportunity to develop new methods and insights for managing and engaging volunteers.

1. 3 Non-profit Organizations and the Setting of the Study

This research seeks to delve into the motivations behind individuals' decisions to engage in voluntary activities, exploring the factors that not only drive their initial commitment but also sustain their involvement. This study is grounded in the assumption that, unlike paid employees who are motivated by financial rewards and professional advancement, volunteers are propelled

by a deep interest in the activities of non-profit organizations (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991). It questions whether conventional motivational factors, as Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) define power, prestige, and incentives commonly observed in corporate contexts, are applicable to volunteer settings or whether there have been developments and changes. Maintaining a motivated and engaged volunteer corps is a major challenge and given the intangible nature of the benefits of volunteering, it is crucial to ensure that volunteers are motivated. It should be management's commitment to ensure that this is achieved.

Furthermore, the motivation of volunteers presents a complex challenge for organizations as they navigate the diverse aspects of volunteer engagement. However, the volunteer motivation model by Clary and Snyder (1999) significantly enhances our understanding of this domain, providing a foundation for the development and implementation of effective volunteer programs. Despite this widely recognised importance of volunteer management, there remains a lack of understanding of the complex issues that motivate volunteers to join and remain with an organisation for prolonged periods of time.

Accordingly, AFS, which heavily relies on volunteers to advance its mission of promoting global peace and intercultural understanding, underscores the importance of comprehending volunteer motivations (AFS annual report, 2022). Relatedly, Flatscher-Thöni et al. (2015) define the decision to engage in voluntary activities without financial incentives as a complex social phenomenon, highlighting the crucial role of volunteer motivation for both for-profit and not-for-profit entities due to its contribution to society and organizations (Neely et al., 2022). Though all these factors are clearly important, there is additionally an urgency for a deeper examination that includes both the human, or more intrinsic, and the organisational or more extrinsic, aspects of motivation.

The tradition of volunteerism in Austria encompasses a wide range of sectors, including welfare, disaster relief, health, culture, and sports, and manifests in both formal and informal forms. While formal volunteering involves unpaid service within organisations and associations, informal volunteering involves unpaid personal acts of assistance outside an organisational framework. Austrian volunteers engage in diverse activities for several reasons, including the desire to assist others, enjoy their involvement, give back to society, acquire new skills, and stay active (Volunteering in Austria, 2019). Recent data from Statistic Austria (2022) indicates that over a quarter of the Austrian population volunteers; of this, 25.6% are solely involved in formal

volunteering. However, the numbers include approximately 1.21 million of the 7.56 million Austrians who once participated in volunteering but no longer. Professional reasons, limitations on time, as well as family matters and age-associated issues were the most frequently reported reasons for abandoning voluntary work (Statistics Austria, 2022).

In addition, volunteering in Austria faces challenges such as a complex legal framework, demands for greater insurance protection, the need for more volunteer centres, and the impact of external factors like regional development, globalization, and migration (Pelttari & Pissarek, 2018). Further, there seems to be an increasing tendency of unconventional and informal volunteering, which is affected by variables such as advancements in technology and shifts in work (UNECE, 2023). Likewise, Individuals have worries about the hazards of short-term voluntary programmes, particularly when interacting with people who are vulnerable such as children (Hertwig, 2018). Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic has been introduced difficulties in volunteer engagement due to movement restrictions and health concerns, leading to halted or significantly altered initiatives, increased costs, sick staff members, and challenges in government interactions, affecting the operational and organizational aspects of volunteering (Crisiss, 2021).

Despite the value and crucial importance of volunteering in the Austrian context, there is a deficiency in understanding the motivational factors of volunteers and their expectations regarding organisational support strategies (Volunteering in Austria, 2019). The visible challenges of volunteering make it plausible and a compelling reason for this study to consider NPOs such as AFS as a case study. AFS, as a highly structured, volunteer-based non-profit organisation, will benefit from studying volunteers 'motivations as well as understanding volunteers' expectations in terms of management support.

1.4 Outline

The introductory part of the study argues for the relevance of the study, as well as resonating with the topic and the necessity of choosing Non-profit organization. The specific context of the study has been structured to gain a good understanding of the characteristics existing in this environment how this paper may be applicable to other contexts. Subsequently, the second part has explained different terms related to the setting of the study. Further, it has introduced the previous research which has been conducted in this field to gain a better understanding of the different constructed approaches and to resonate which approaches were most common in the

chosen setting. Following this chapter three has introduced and elaborated the relevant theories that serve as the foundation for the setting of the study for further discussion in this research. The method section has given an overview of the chosen research design and present how sampling, data collection and analysis has been implemented. In chapter five, the discussion part following with results of the research as chapter six. Lastly chapter seven followed by a conclusion.

2. Previous research

This section delves further into the research background, defining terms and emphasizing the role of non-profit organizations. Further, the chapter underlines the importance of volunteer motivation in previous studies alongside the management concept of volunteering within the human resources context.

2.1 Definition of terms

2.1.1 Non-profit organizations

According to Salamon et al. (1999), a non-profit organisation is a social entity that operates outside of the private and public spheres. It is also referred to as a not-for-profit organisation, a voluntary organisation, a civil community, the third sector, or the self-governing sector. In addition, Anheier (2005) provides a definition of a non-profit organisation as an entity with a distinct financial structure that distinguishes it from other organisations. The group mostly relies on contributions from participants and supporters rather than revenue generated via market sales. González, Vijande and Casielles (2002) define non-profit organisations as those entities that are privately managed and operate without the objective of generating profit for their members, having as their main objective to promote the welfare of their community and create value for society.

According to Edwards (2011), formal NPOs are a distinct type of organisation within civil society. They are characterised by their strict adherence to legal registration, reliance on external funding in their budgets, and their role as intermediaries between grassroots constituencies and communities and government and other agencies (p. 29–42). Although there is no widely agreed-upon definition of NPOs in both academic and real-world settings, Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009) highlight the inherent uncertainty in conceiving these organisations. Expanding on the seminal research by Salamon and Anheier (1992), it has recognised that non-profit organisations (NPOs) primarily demonstrate five key attributes: a structured or institutional framework, independence from government influence, a restriction on distributing earnings, self-governance, and a significant dependence on voluntary engagement.

This definition should also contain the distinction between formal and informal volunteering. Wilson and Musick (1997) point out that while formal volunteering is characterised by structured efforts towards collective and community goals, informal volunteering is more oriented towards spontaneous acts of helping that are duty-driven and target specific individuals.

Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005) refine this dichotomy by highlighting the organisational context in which formal volunteering tends to occur and its structured nature and long-term vision, elements lacking in informal volunteering. Regarding AFS being an NPO, this study is based on the structural-operational characterization of Salmon and Anheier (1992), which discusses the field within an organisational context (Salmon and Anheier, 1992). Therefore, the research focuses on formal forms of volunteering within an organisational framework.

2.1.2 Volunteerism

Multiple academics have discussed different definitions of volunteers. Getz (1997) defines volunteers as "one who recruits or provides their contributions to an NPO within their own choice while not receiving or waiting for remuneration" (p. 198). while Smith (1981) describes volunteers as follows: "an individual engaging in behaviour that is not bio-socially determined (e.g., eating, sleeping), nor economically necessitated (e.g., paid work, housework, home repair), nor socio-politically compelled (e.g., paying one's taxes, partisan favours, etc.), but rather that is essentially motivated by the expectation of benefits of some kind as a result of activities that have a value greater than any remuneration received for such activities" (p. 22). Meijs et al. (2006) have defined the concept of the volunteerability as the act of being an active, non-paid worker in NPOs. Further, communities possess a significant degree of volunteerability if both the demand and supply for volunteers have balanced. In cases where there is a supply-demand imbalance, volunteerism is likely to be minimal.

In addition, volunteering terminology originates from the old French word "voluntaire" as well as the Latin term "voluntas", which implies the will. As well as "voluntarius," which implies willingness OF an individual's (Meijs & Hendriks, 2022). Volunteering could be viewed as a spectrum, which means that the worth associated with what you give and what you receive in exchange might differ significantly. Volunteers are those who dedicate substantial quantities of effort to ongoing voluntary activities. Therefore, volunteering work has been defined as a gesture of individual choice, so people can take part in it and stop doing it at any time (Gidron, 1983). Accordingly, volunteering has been defined by professionals in psychology as long-lasting, scheduled social activities that benefit individuals and take place inside an organisation. According

to this description, volunteering has four key characteristics: duration, regularity, non-obligatory assistance, and an organisational framework (Flatscher-Thöni et al. 2015).

Volunteering within non-profit organisations encompasses a multifaceted realm that necessitates a clear definition before delving into its various aspects. Wilson (2000) articulates volunteering as any activity where time is freely given to benefit another person, group, or cause. Expanding upon Wilson's definition, Van Til (1988) posits that volunteering constitutes a helping action by an individual that intrinsically valued, devoid of direct material gain, and is neither mandated nor coerced by external forces. These definitions collectively provide a broad understanding of volunteering, capturing both its formal and informal dimensions as delineated in the literature.

2.1.3 Motivation

Gellerman (1963) defines motivation as the effort to achieve one's self-concept by living in line with preferred roles, receiving treatment that matches desired status, and being rewarded based on self-assessment of abilities. This idea strongly connects with volunteer environments. This paradigm emphasises the significance of matching volunteer options with an individual's identity and beliefs to ensure that volunteering is a rewarding and self-affirming experience. According to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, motivation depends on one's perception of the value of their goals and the efficacy of their efforts in achieving them. This theory provides important perspectives on volunteer motivation. The conviction that their actions will have a significant impact (expectancy), that this impact will be in line with their intended objectives (instrumentality), and that the results will be personally satisfying (valence) are what motivate volunteers. This highlights the criticality for non-profits to communicate and demonstrate the significance of volunteerism, the way individual contributions result in concrete results, and the acknowledgment and motivation of such contributions in a manner that aligns with volunteers' personal aspirations, beliefs, and expectations.

2.2 Empirical studies

2.2.1 Volunteer motivation

Volunteers intend to achieve their own personal objectives through voluntary service. Most volunteers are from fan groups, donors, conferences, and sports events. As we see, volunteers have turned into an asset to a wide range of organisations. Consequently, this consideration raises questions about the purpose for which they chose to engage and motivate (Girdon, 1983). Hence, volunteer motivation has extensively studied and acknowledged as a crucial factor in different studies. Further, it is well known that motivation plays a significant role in human resource management. Similarly, this is also the case for volunteer management in NPOs. In the case of volunteers, organisations benefit greatly when volunteers are motivated, as this encourages greater commitment on the other hand, it's important to keep in mind that some people also have social motivations, such as the desire to belong, feel connected, or be a part of a community (Park & Word, 2012). It is crucial to keep in mind that people also have social motivations, such as the desire to belong, feel connected, or be a part of a community (Park & Word, 2012).

Scholars in a specific study have Investigated the motives of volunteers experiencing problems of addictive and psychological disorders. Consequently, the study has indicated elements such as generosity or altruistic factors, development as individuals, and job advancement are common motives among volunteers (Lammers et al. 2023). Mobiny and Ramos, (2020) have mentioned that volunteer motivation refers to the challenge of maintaining the enthusiasm and commitment of volunteers over the long term. Therefore, the absence or decrease of motivation could translate into lower engagement, higher turnover, and the challenge faced by non-profits of having to recruit new volunteers on an ongoing basis. Understanding motivational factors among volunteers is an important task for managers because this can allow them to develop approaches to improve volunteer commitment and satisfaction.

In the same line of thought, Hizazi et al. (2023) suggest that non-profits should customise volunteer programmes to match the individual preferences of their volunteers, and that this can improve their sense of engagement and belonging and therefore their commitment. This strategy recognises the volunteers' efforts and aligns their incentives with the organisation's goals and

values. The study shows that personal development, expressing personal beliefs, desires for professional advancement, and strengthening social relationships have a substantial impact on an individual's willingness to volunteer.

Dong and Bavik (2023) have defined volunteer motives as the root causes or driving factors that motivate people to engage in volunteering. In their research project, they analyse how variables such as perception of authority, social visibility, and appeals to volunteerism influence citizens' willingness to serve. According to the research, altruistic principles and one's own needs and interests are what motivate volunteers. Furthermore, another point highlighted by the study is that volunteers are driven by their desire for personal and professional growth, seeking opportunities to network, grow in the organisation, and help their communities. Therefore, according to this research, all these factors influence the willingness of citizens to contribute to volunteering.

Accordingly, whereas the above empirical research gives helpful perspectives on volunteer motivation, it is critical to recognise the distinctive characteristics of behavioural patterns and the broad variety of elements that might impact why people choose to provide voluntary services. By thereby adopting a comprehensive strategy that considers social, emotional, and context-related factors, we may better grasp the depth and multifaceted nature of volunteerism, resulting in further valuable and efficient volunteering experiences for both volunteers and those whom they serve.

2.3 Volunteering and Non- profits in the Austrian context

Volunteers and voluntary work have represented an essential element of the social structure in Austria, beside strong job policies and welfare programmes (Volunteering in Austria, 2019). Flatscher-Thöni et al. (2015) have defined that people in Austria dedicate time as well as abilities for various voluntary projects in organisations despite not receiving financial compensation. Voluntary work plays a key role in providing wide-ranging assistance to individuals in need, generating socioeconomic outputs that might, in other ways, demand financial assets. The UNV Portal of Volunteering Knowledge (2024) shows that 46% of Austrians aged fifteen and over participate in some form of voluntary work locally or overseas, demonstrating the country's strong heritage of civic participation. Moreover, in terms of legislation, the National Voluntary Act came into force in 2012, and the advancement and encouragement of voluntary work in Austria have aided by the 2012 legislation concerning the encouragement and advancement of voluntary

participation. The 2020 Volunteering National Review (VNR) report claimed that voluntary activities had a good impact on the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, one of the problems Austria has been that there is still no national policy or strategy on volunteering (UNV Knowledge Portal, 2024).

To give a historical overview, volunteering, in the formal sense of the term, began in Austria after the end of World War II and has formed by multiple factors, including:

- The political and societal landscape: for almost two hundred years, the presence of two main parties has ruled the political and societal environment.
- There have been two sorts: socialist and Christian-democratic voluntary organisations and associations. Austria acts as a federated nation, and its third sector has a distributed structure.
- The Catholic Church has played an important part in voluntary work in Austria, particularly in medical fields and schooling.
- There is a significant distinction between urban and rural locations when it comes to public services. Communities in the countryside typically rely on volunteers, while these services are fully supported in cities.
- Not-for-profit institutions that help inhabitants in need can receive credit and support from the government.

Further, the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection in Austria (BMSK) has also defined both formal and informal volunteering, explaining that formal voluntary refers to actions conducted within a non-profit organisation, group, or association and has structured and long-term characteristics, while informal volunteering, which is also known as "neighbourhood support," involves personal efforts, lacks an organisational structure, and is more spontaneous. In addition, this report has deepened formal volunteering and defines it as an operation in which individuals serve completely voluntarily and freely within an organisation to promote the public good, lacking any kind of contract or work expertise. Accordingly, the Austrian Council for Volunteering defined volunteering as unpaid voluntary work for the benefit of others in society during a specific period, with no requirement to obtain additional schooling or internships, typically carried out throughout institutionalised organisations, channels, campaigns, or teams, as well as the two informal and formal forms (European Union, n.d.).

Regarding the motivation Austrians show for volunteering, according to Flatscher-Thöni et al. (2015), they vary from altruism to individualistic purposes such as improving the curriculum or developing skills that facilitate job placement. Altruistic reasons, such as those related to the volunteers' intention to help their communities, are related to an increase in the period of participation in volunteer activities, while selfish motivations, centered on the individual and his or her specific goals, are usually associated with a shorter duration of participation. On the other hand, and along the same lines, Sloane and Pröbstl-Haider (2019) add that many people are interested in getting involved and helping with environmental preservation because of the prospects of finding a job through their volunteer experience, the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, and the pursuit of general well-being by engaging in meaningful and purposeful activities.

2.4 The effect of Covid19 pandemic on volunteering

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the challenges of managing volunteer staff in organisations, especially in non-profit sectors. Chow et al. (2021) have uncovered the effects of the pandemic, showing not just operational disturbances but also important consequences for the emotional and physical health of volunteers.

According to Kulik (2021), volunteer participation is facing new challenges in the post-pandemic world. The crisis increased social cooperation and involvement but also raised worries about health, safety, and resilience, impacting volunteers' motivation and engagement. Kulik's research provides a detailed examination of volunteer involvement during the pandemic, differentiating between hybrid and virtual volunteering methods. His research has shown that hybrid volunteers, while having a higher degree of dedication and involvement in community projects, are experiencing increased stress and negative emotions, raising concerns about the potential for volunteer burnout. These and other issues emerged with the pandemic and have highlighted the significant human resource challenges facing organisations in the non-profit sector that face challenges related to the continuity and quality of the services they provide. With this crisis, it has become clear that there is a need to adopt flexible solutions to ensure the well-being of volunteers and to keep their motivation, sustained participation, and support for the objectives of non-profit organizations.

2.5 Volunteer management

Effective volunteer management is necessary to optimise the utilisation of volunteers' skills in achieving the organisation's objectives, which involve the application of strategic planning to align their interests and motivations with organisational needs. This management also involves the coordination of training and ongoing assistance, as well as the ability to give feedback and recognise their contributions to maintain their commitment and motivation in the long term. These are processes that must be well oiled to facilitate the experience and satisfaction. Research highlights the importance of organisational resource allocation and collaboration in efficiently managing and supporting volunteers, thus improving their satisfaction and commitment (Garcia, Rabadi, & Handy, 2018).

Furthermore, Ruth Simsa (2017) has explained in their study about the management of volunteers in crisis in Austria that efficient management of volunteers throughout the Austrian crisis necessitated a multifaceted strategy that included collaboration, distributing resources, volunteering assistance, interaction, managing risks, planning for finances, and capability development. Following, managers in Austria may build more successful and motivating voluntary programmes that correspond with the beliefs and expectations of persons participating in environmental volunteering projects through recognising and responding to their different motivations such as values, esteem, career benefits, new skills, and environmental knowledge. Though these managers face challenges in attracting and retention as well as challenges through strategic planning, effective communication, and tailored support for volunteers (Sloane & Pröbstl-Haider, 2019).

In addition, the combination of technology and novel approaches, such as crowdsourcing for volunteer recruitment and matching, could improve the efficiency of volunteer management. Mazlan, Ahmad, and Kamalrudin (2018) highlight the benefits of using crowdsourcing in volunteer networks. This method is interesting because it automates the selection and assignment of volunteers to tasks, matching the skills and interests of volunteers with the requirements of the task the organisation needs to perform. Snyder and Omoto (2008) claim that strategic volunteer management can improve organisations and communities in a positive way because, by adopting an approach, they can foster civic engagement and social cohesion.

Recent studies share this view and offer further insights into efficient volunteer management. For example, Coleman (2017) examines the difficulties related to volunteer management in faith-based organisations, showing the importance of flexible and context-aware management approaches. York (2017) synthesises extensive survey research to derive capacity-building recommendations for the non-profit sector. The study suggests that proficient involvement and supervision of volunteers are associated with financial savings, heightened public backing, and improved service provision. The results highlight the intricate nature of volunteer management in non-profits and emphasise the importance of using strategic, inventive, and contextually sensitive methods to enhance volunteer involvement, motivation, and retention. On the other hand, Hu, Kapucu, and O'Byrne (2014) show the importance of strategic planning in helping small NPOs deal with difficulties while managing volunteers. They claim that strategic planning is crucial for NPOs looking to maintain and expand their volunteer network.

2.6 Volunteer management

Managing volunteers in non-profit organisations entails a multifaceted assortment of issues that impact volunteer motivation and the general effectiveness of volunteer programmes. Attracting volunteers poses a significant challenge. Identifying individuals who exhibit both willingness and the necessary competencies, and who also align with the organisation's goals, can be a problem. Coleman (2017) points out the difficulties that non-profits have in managing volunteers, noting that conventional business management approaches often do not provide the same level of applicability in the non-profit sector because they are driven by other values and objectives. Retaining volunteers is also a challenge because volunteers, once recruited, require ongoing dedication and resources to sustain their commitment. Hu, Kapucu and O'Byrne (2014) note that a lack of clear direction can cause volunteers to feel unappreciated or insecure about their tasks or contributions, leading to lower motivation and higher turnover rates.

Volunteer management may present difficulties in terms of training and development as well. Continual training programmes serve to ensure that volunteers possess the necessary skills and information to effectively fulfil their responsibilities. According to York (2017), non-profit organisations struggle to effectively engage and manage volunteers due to a lack of resources for enhancing their capabilities. Insufficient training often results in volunteers feeling unprepared or

less confident in their roles, which translates into increased anxiety and decreased motivation and decreases the quality of the service they provide.

In their study on corporate social responsibility and volunteering, Cychota, Ferrante and Schroeder (2016) highlighted the need to align volunteering activities with the specific needs of organisations and the distinctive skills and interests of volunteers. Volunteers may experience frustration and decreased motivation due to a lack of alignment, as they may feel that their efforts are underutilised or that there is no growth because they are always doing the same activities.

It is also necessary to effectively manage the expectations of volunteers to maintain their motivation. Volunteers possess varying expectations regarding their duties, the extent of their impact, and the recognition they will receive. Failing to achieve these expectations could lead to dissatisfaction and disinterest. Snyder and Omoto (2008) investigated the Volunteer Process Model, which emphasises the importance of managing volunteers' experiences to fulfil their expectations and sustain their motivation and commitment to the organisation. Using technology in volunteer management presents both benefits and challenges. Mazlan, Ahmad, and Kamalrudin (2018) highlight the benefits of employing a crowdsourcing approach to choose and pair volunteers, suggesting that technology could enhance processes and enhance efficiency. Introducing and using such technology requires financial resources and training, which may represent a significant obstacle for numerous non-profit organisations, as well as leading to resistance from volunteers who are not comfortable using such modern technologies.

Specifically, managing volunteers in Austria has also faces various challenges which these factors relate to the organizational, economic, the political atmosphere, as well as shifts in social trends.

For instance, recruitment and retention of volunteers having the appropriate abilities and access. Particularly in individuals accessible throughout normal working hours, is a significant difficulty for managers in Austria (Schönböck, 2016). Austrian law establishes volunteers' obligations and privileges. However, managers face challenges with being obliged to verify that participants in voluntary works hold sufficient coverage from insurance for probable injuries or mishaps during their service (Pelttari & Pissarek, 2018).

Non-profit organisations need to demonstrate adaptability and strategic thinking to effectively address external and internal challenges in their volunteer management. Assessing the influence of volunteers and demonstrating the worth they contribute to the organisation can be

difficult but crucial for securing funding and support for volunteer programmes. Finally, Kong (2008) suggests that volunteers contribute to the improvement of non-profit organisations by expanding their knowledge and capabilities, in line with the concept of intellectual capital. Measuring this contribution and communicating its worth to stakeholders require effective strategies and tools, which might provide additional difficulty for non-profit organisations.

2.7 The connection between volunteer management and human resource management (HRM)

HRM and volunteer management are linked in non-profit organisations. Volunteers play a vital role in the operation of non-profit organisations, serving as a key component of their workforce. Efficiently managing these volunteers as crucial human resources for non-profits is important for the achievement of their goals, emphasising the significance of human resource management practices and systems that are specifically designed to tackle the distinctive difficulties associated with volunteer engagement (Aboramadan, 2020). The integration of HRM techniques in NPOs improves the capacity to attract, involve, motivate, and retain volunteers. Aligning volunteers with non-profit goals is necessary, as they, like paid staff, necessitate careful management. Efficient HRM techniques can be helpful for synchronising staff operations with the organisation's mission and strategic objectives while managing the diverse and occasionally conflicting expectations of different stakeholders. In contrast to the corporate or public sectors, HRM in non-profit settings has the challenge of balancing operational performance with the fulfilment of social missions and a sense of purpose. Consequently, HR procedures in non-profit organisations should be cohesive, closely matching the organisation's strategic direction (Word & Sowa, 2017).

HR practices could be relevant to the different dimensions of NPOs; for example, the AMO model (ability, motivation, and opportunity) could be highly relevant to understanding individual performance in organisations. The individual and the situation itself both have an impact on the AMO model, or the three factors, which play an active role in determining employee performance (Boxall & Purcell, 2022). Hence, as an HR approach, AMO could influence volunteer motivation in these three aspects:

1. Ability-Enhancing Practices: Offering suitable training possibilities improves volunteers' abilities and expertise, enhances confidence, and motivates them to participate efficiently.

Moreover, as volunteers receive practical training as well as witness how they develop, this improves their motivation (Fomude et al., 2020). Further, properly attaining and attracting volunteers by considering their hobbies, skills, abilities, and motives creates an improved person-role match, resulting in more motivation and involvement (Alfes et al. 2017). By adopting HRM concepts for volunteer management, organisations may recognise volunteers' capacity, provide adequate education and training, encourage, acknowledge, and promote self-determination, all of which consequently improve volunteer fulfilment and the desire to continue helping. This relationship emphasises the significance of serving volunteers equally with the same degree of consideration and interest as paid workers, highlighting the necessity for strategic management of volunteers to maximise their motivation and engagement (Cho et al., 2020).

2. Motivation-Enhancing Practices: Recognising and praising volunteers' contributions via official or unofficial incentives, such as diplomas, prizes, or publicly recognised recognition, may strengthen their motivation for volunteering as well as a feeling of accomplishment. Further, volunteers care about and value the help and praise from their managers. Hence, the amount of assistance and recognition offered by managers may have a major influence on volunteers' satisfaction with their roles and their tendency to be motivated to continue with the organisation. (Fomude et al., 2020). However, human resources within NPOs failed to acknowledge the fact that volunteers frequently have a combination of social and intangible benefits driving them to work (Bruno & Fiorillo, 2012).

Regarding the aspect of performance management, Al Mutawa (2015) has explored that delivering constructive feedback, setting concise goals, and including volunteers in the process of decision-making might improve the volunteer's perception of their possession, motivation, and feeling more independent. Further, presenting participants in voluntary work with worthwhile tasks, meaningful roles, more self-determination, and the opportunity for social connection might boost their individual internal motives through meeting their psychological prerequisites (Alfes et al. 2017). Likewise, Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy (2010) noted that role-based volunteering with high autonomy allows organisations to provide clear expectations, standards, and structures that can be beneficial in organising and managing volunteers. However, they also emphasised that it might limit flexibility and responsiveness to individual volunteers' unique skills and preferences.

3. Opportunity-Enhancing Practices: Lepak et al. (2006) have discussed that NPOs, to maintain volunteer participation, must create possibilities that align with individuals' abilities and

objectives. In this sense, the term opportunity refers to a type of volunteering atmosphere that encourages participants in voluntary work by helping and permitting their creativity (Boxall & Purcell, 2022). Additionally, empowering volunteers' access to proper tools and avenues for support, along with favourable working conditions, may enhance their abilities to participate successfully, enhancing their dedication and motivation (Alfes et al. 2017).

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter explains the two theories applied in this study to understand the factors driving volunteer motivation, it has particularly emphasised on the multidimensional approach or the functional motivation theory that serve as the foundation for further discussion in this research, as well as the egoistic and altruistic motivation theory that examines the contrast between egoistic-instrumental and altruistic-emotional impulses, highlighting how volunteers are motivated by both self-serving objectives and a sincere care for the well-being of others. Related to the second research question, about what volunteers expect from managers, the role theory will also be introduced to help us to address this topic.

3.1 Two-dimensional theory or egoist and altruistic motivations

Examining the motives and characteristics of NPOs volunteers serves as essential for gaining an improved understanding of the way non-profit work grows and persists, along with measuring the effect it has on societies as well as its participants. Thus, a two-concept model of Frisch and Gerrard (1981), have defined the concept of volunteering as driven by either "altruism" which defines caring for others or self-serving inspirations which defines as "egoism". Further, both youngsters and older volunteers have stressed the importance of altruistic motivations, which aligns with ideas relating selflessness alongside pro-social conduct. However, the consensus reveals that, although individuals acknowledge Altruistic aspects, they also prioritize less altruistic objectives such as making interpersonal relationships for job advancement, strengthening personal and professional abilities, and pursuing their own well-being (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981).

Furtherly, according to Monga and Treuren (2001) the motivations which are based on altruistic inspiration arise based on the individual's belief in the obligation to help as well as caring for other people's wellbeing. Similarly, Selflessness or the idea of altruism entails the genuine intention of individuals which indicates "be present for others" since it has shown via human behaviour (Winniford et al., 1997). Thus, traditionally volunteering based on altruistic considerations is often defined as the only reason of the individuals for voluntary work which has required significant investment of time, energy, and financial resources (Monga & Treuren, 2001). Based on Pearce (1993), the concept of "altruism" seems inaccurate and "prosocial" provides a much more appropriate meaning. Prosocial activities prioritize the general well-being of other individuals despite payoffs for the performer.

Followingly, Smith's (1981) defines that altruistic motivation serves as a type of human drive-in which people want to improve their inner happiness by helping other people. He also maintains such activities ought to take place despite the explicit anticipation of participating in a mutually beneficial arrangement. Participants in these situations should not expect others to react with comparable initiatives. Likewise, altruism, according to Batson's (1991) description, represents a motivating condition based on a primary aim of improving the situation of others. However, altruism is not associated with self-sacrifice for others. Since altruistic can include self-benefit while being altruistic, if achieving such benefit for oneself does not constitute the main objective. In other words, this viewpoint emphasizes altruism can be associated with behaviours which offer one with advantages and give rise to self-centred or egoistic such as being satisfied, feeling of happiness or being relief. However, as long that the central motive maintains the advancement of other people's wellbeing; it indicates altruism (Batson, 1991).

Conversely, Batson (1991) has defined egoism as a motivating condition that objecting at maximizing one's personal benefit. Self-centred or egoistic incentive has demonstrated when a particular individual does voluntary work primarily for their own advantage. Further, he has stated that whenever individuals offer their voluntary services; they might possess egoistic motivations. This includes looking for comfort, affection, and prosperity, as well as exposing themselves and achieving personal development. Additionally, these egoist motivations might arise from the personal advantages that may include reduced negative emotions including worry, tension, and resentment, along with pleasant consequences of societal, material as well as self-rewarding activities (Batson, 1991). Accordingly, Rubin and Thorelli (1984) has stated that volunteers expected to broaden their involvement to benefit them as well as stressed that the main reasons for voluntary work were broadening their sphere of expertise. Hence, voluntary work not solely benefits the community, but also fosters personal development of individuals.

Furthermore, altruistic and egoistic motivations are significant factors in determining exactly how evaluators interpret actions of charitable relying upon the volunteer's position and the desired exposure related to the helping deed. Egoistic reasons, in contrast, refer to the intended purpose of performing a helpful gesture to one's own advantage, which might include obtaining attention, increasing confidence, gaining praise, or reducing guilt. The distinction between altruistic and

egoistic motives is significant for comprehending human positive social behaviour and the way people view gestures of kindness in various circumstances (Siem & Stürmer, 2018).

Flaws in the theory framework

In lately conducted studies, the egoistic and altruistic ideas of volunteer motivation are often criticised and shown to have shortcomings. Dong & Bavik, (2023) has discussed that although this theory breaks incentives for volunteering into two categories egoistic and altruistic. Academics contend that this division overgeneralizes the complex nature of voluntary motives. Furtherly, Critics argue that individuals may possess divergent motives that make it difficult to categorise them as either self-centred (egoistic) or humanitarian (altruistic). In addition, the theory ignores the nuanced nature of the motivation for volunteering and does not take into consideration the wide range of complex factors that influence people to contribute to voluntary acts (Dong & Bavik, 2023).

Furthermore, certain academics believe that both the altruistic and egoistic frameworks do not adequately represent the ever evolving and alterable character of voluntary motives. Volunteer motivations might shift throughout the years, impacted by individual experiences, societal situations, including changing priorities. Hence, this framework's fixed division between altruistic and egoistic impulses might not be able to capture the flexible character of volunteers (Widjaja, 2010).

3.2. Functional motivation theory or multi-dimensional model

This theory provides a framework for comprehending the underlying motives that drive individuals to participate in volunteer activity, by outlining the internal dynamics involved. The FMT, or Functional Motivation Theory, is widely regarded as a fundamental theoretical approach in the field of volunteer motivation. According to this theory, individuals are motivated to volunteer based on a range of needs and desires. This theory was proposed by Clary and Snyder in 1998. Frisch and Gerrard (1981), for their part, classified these motivations into two dimensions: one related to selfish-instrumental motives, in which the actions carried out by the volunteer are driven by personal desires, and the second dimension described by these authors is related to altruistic-emotional motives, characterized by the aspiration to satisfy the needs of others or to contribute to a cause greater than themselves. Building on this dichotomy, Clary et al. (1998)

further elaborated the motivational landscape through a multifactor model derived from functionalist theory, which calls the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), that identifies six distinct motives: the expression of values, the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the enhancement of social networks, career advancement, ego protection, and ego enhancement. The following explanation regarding these six distinct reasons is outlined below (Clary et al., 1998).

- **Value function:** Based on this, people contribute to voluntary activities because it gives them a chance to live out their own core values to benefit and assist others and compassion such as taking part in humanitarian ideals. Further, individuals who are driven by the values function do voluntary work because they want to support individuals who are less successful than they are.

- **Understanding function:** The VFI model also fulfils a second function, indicating the desire to acquire novel expertise and make use of information or talents that might currently be underutilized. In addition to looking to develop specific areas of ability, volunteers inspired by their comprehension function also want to learn more about the organization, fellow volunteers, as well as the reason for volunteering.

- **Social function:** The third function argues that individuals take part in voluntary acts because gives them the chance to socialise, meet new individuals, and form friendships an example could be contributing to a voluntary work alongside friends or volunteering for an organisational event. Further, examples of The VFI social function measurement variables could be "my buddies or friends contribute to volunteering" or "those that are close put an excessive emphasis on societal service."

- **Career Function:** This implies that individuals contribute to voluntary work thinking it has positive effects on their careers. Additionally, volunteers who are driven by professional goals see volunteering to advance their professional life. Statements such as volunteerism enable me to learn about various career opportunities and volunteering will enable myself to acquire getting my foot in the door in an establishment in which I am interested in employment. This constitutes a portion of the VFI career examples which measures a person's motivation.

- **Protective function:** Proposes that people contribute to voluntary work as it shields their egos over self-criticism that enables them to stay away from unpleasant emotions. The examples could be contributing to voluntary work to distract and run away from personal challenges or sense of guilt as well as being alone or privileged compared to others.

• **Enhancement function:** Serves as the sixth function of the VFI which indicates that people do voluntary work as it fosters cognitive growth by raising their feelings of significance and dignity such as self-confidence, or the conviction that someone becomes better as an individual because of the individual's voluntary work. Statements such as “volunteering makes me feel more positive about myself” or “volunteering increases my confidence” constitute a component of the VFI, which measures a volunteer's motivation according to this model.

This framework suggests that volunteering can serve as a means for individuals to express empathetic and humanitarian values, foster personal growth, and forge meaningful social connections, all while potentially promoting one's own career and bolstering the self-esteem of individuals who participate in such initiatives. Regarding this Okun et al. (1998) has discussed that the presented model has a substantial amount of generalization. In which volunteers in NPOs are motivated by egoistic considerations such as career advancement, enhancement, and protection. While altruistic factors include values, understanding and social contribution.

Further, Clary et al. (1998) created the Volunteer Functions Inventory, a questionnaire-based measuring tool, to capture these volunteering work functions. Considering five assertions per function, volunteers estimate the relevance of this component in inspiring them to engage in activities as volunteers. The Volunteer Functions Inventory is useful for both comparative research across nations or various kinds of volunteering work and practical applications, such as understanding volunteer motivations throughout an organization.

Tschirhart et al (2001) identified five motivating elements for AmeriCorps volunteers, using the VFI method. Their five objectives consist of the instrumental, altruistic, social, self-esteem, and avoidance goals. As before, these can be remarkably comparable to the VFI functions (Clary et al. 1998). The VFI fulfils societal, self-esteem, and avoidance goals through its enhancement, and protection functions. Likewise, Thoits and Hewitt (2001) provide four separate frameworks for understanding the factors that influence volunteering behaviour in which initially they have addressed the volunteer motives. Which states that people contribute to volunteer work based on their own motivations or aspirations.

The framework aligns the one known as VFI since they both contain equivalent factors. Therefore, according to Thoits and Hewitt (2001), volunteers have various motives in NPOs, including learning new abilities, enhancing self-esteem, preparing towards a professional life, reducing ego-conflicts, and expressing their own values. The functional viewpoint about

volunteering assumes that everyone can conduct identical volunteer activities while having distinct motivations. For instance, volunteering to visit hospital patients can provide psychological encouragement and demonstrate personal values, for some people, while for other people, their dedication could be motivated by a desire to pursue a career at the hospital in the future.

Additionally, volunteering might have many separate psychological roles for an identical person. Having compassion for others and a desire to learn and obtain fresh perspectives and skills (Güntert et al. 2022). The functionalist approach according to the Stukas, Worth, Clary and Snyder (2009) are that volunteering provides suggestions regarding how to keep volunteers engaged in their activity. The advantages of volunteering should correspond to the participants' stated motivating functions.

Recent research has continued expanding upon these foundational concepts. For example, research by Haivas, Hofmans, and Pepermans (2012) employed self-determination theory to explore how organizational environments affect volunteer motivation, suggesting that autonomy-supportive cultures can significantly improve volunteer engagement and satisfaction. Moreover, a study by Martin, Slavich, and Gellock (2019) applied functionalist theory to student-athletes, revealing unique motivational profiles and suggesting tailored engagement strategies.

Flaws in the theory framework

The VFI's features offer a comprehensive method of studying motivation for volunteers by integrating the social, psychological, and economic aspects on the subject. Additionally, the VFI is the most popular measure for motivation of volunteers, which is being used as well as approved across a broad range of contexts, various languages, cultures, and organizations (Clary et al., 1998). However, Jiranek et al, (2013) have mentioned limitations of this model based on what Clary et al. (1998) suggested that "Future studies may reveal significant domain-to-domain variation in the number of incentives that are important to volunteers and potential volunteers". This statement indicates the metric could fail to include all factors completely. As a result, there may be additional functional factors that the model does not currently measure that are also significant. Volunteers are motivated mostly by the presentation of their ideals. Nevertheless, a deeper evaluation of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) reveals that it focuses mostly on self-centred features. Merely the values function includes showing concern for individuals as well as looking beyond oneself. Nevertheless, this kind of function is only one general category;

additional roles, such as enhancement, career, protective, social, and understanding, concentrate farther upon oneself. Thus, because volunteering takes diverse forms and broad inquiries could not completely encompass the differences. Hence, it seems logical to expand the VFI through including a function which examines others. To do this, it has recommended incorporating functions connected to political and social responsibility, while demonstrating these extra components, particularly concentrating on others, are legitimate.

Furthermore, it has become troubling that scholars had simply presumed the idea that people have inspired to give back solely because they think that volunteering will contribute to one or more of the sixth stated functions of the VFI. Regardless of the fact the VFI have support; scholars which have employed quantitative methods to investigate volunteer motivation did not discover a correspondence between the quantitative findings they obtain and what suggested by the functions of the VFI (Joy, 2020). As an instance, Stergios and Carruthers (2002) have obtained approval of just five of the sixth recommended VFI functions when categorising responses to a wide-ranging query. Likewise, Allison et al. (2002) discovered that apart from the six suggested purposes of the VFI volunteers mentioned pleasure, teamwork, and spirituality as reasons for their motivation to voluntary activities.

3.3 Role theory in the nonprofit context

Role theory is useful to understand and analyse the different expectations and behaviours that are usually linked to roles or functions determined in social interactions. Although this theory is based in sociology, it is also relevant in the study of leadership and management, because the concept of roles is essential in the social systems that occur within organizations (Winkler, 2009).

Roles establish a connection between individuals and between groups, and expectations play a vital role in this theory by elucidating the process of formation and maintenance of organizational roles. Biddle (1979) offers a definition of roles and explains that they are the normal behaviours exhibited by one or more individuals in a specific social or relational environment.

In the context of nonprofit volunteerism, this theory can serve as a basis for analysing and understanding volunteers' expectations of nonprofit management and leaders.

The two branches of this theory are organizational role theory and cognitive role theory. On the one hand, organizational role theory focuses on the roles associated with specific positions within formal organizations, e.g., nonprofits; and examines the challenges of the tension between the role and the expectations others have about that position (Saksida et al., 2017). On the other hand, cognitive role theory examines the impact of circumstances on the formation of expectations and how these expectations subsequently affect the behaviour of the person in the role, this we can see for example between leadership or management roles and volunteer roles in the context of this study (Benevene et al., 2018).

Under this theory, it is suggested that individuals inherently adopt behaviours and duties based on their positions within an organization and based on expectations of them. In addition, volunteers often have expectations about the tasks they should perform, the type of communication with management they should have, and what they expect from their nonprofits experience. When their expectations are met and they find in the organization what they are looking for, individuals tend to have more favourable experiences (Biddle 1986) and therefore are more motivated to work and to stay. However, when these expectations are not met, diverse types of conflicts may arise, such as those caused by contradictory demands or expectations that are unrealistic or cannot be met in the organizational context (Biddle 1986).

To understand the complexity of leadership, we should consider the perception and expectations that exist about different roles in nonprofit contexts, where roles are multifaceted and, for example, there are formal leaders and managers who are part of the paid staff of the organization, and leaders or managers who are volunteers and who at the same time manage other volunteers (Zollo et al., 2018).

Biddle (1986) explains that role conflict usually arises in organizations when there are demands that cannot be reconciled, and on the other hand, ambiguity occurs when there is no clear understanding of what is expected of people, for example in the case of non profits of the leaders themselves or even of the volunteers, these two types of conflict, role conflict or ambiguity often lead to dissatisfaction of volunteers because they create frustration and confusion. Clear communication, defined roles and responsibilities, as well as the provision of robust and continuous support from management, can be a solution or even help prevent such conflicts (Kahn et al., 1964).

It should be also noted that volunteers often expect to receive timely assistance and resources to fulfil their responsibilities. These resources usually include education and training to become more professional, economic or material resources, emotional or even psychological support in tricky situations, among others (House, 1981).

Another key point is the importance of recognizing the contributions of volunteers, since it is important to have instances where the achievements and commitments of volunteers are rewarded and celebrated, as this stimulates their motivation. Recognition is generally expected from volunteers when they feel they did their job well or met the expectations others had of them. This recognition can be formal, such as rewards or diplomas, or at a more informal level through verbal thanks alone or in front of other individuals (House, 1981).

Role theory stresses the importance of expectations in shaping and maintaining roles. Overtly expressed expectations, or not, are the main reason individuals exhibit behaviours. In addition, it is important to note that expectations may be self-imposed, imposed, or directed by others, and may be related to specific individuals or positions in an organizational context (Biddle 1986). Expectations, as such, are often influenced by social norms, beliefs and preferences, and are also shaped by subjective experiences and can be individual or collective, resulting in agreements or disagreements about what should be expected of a given role, function or position (Nesbit et al., 2016).

The diversity of expectations within the non-governmental sector can create difficulties, as individuals in the non-governmental sector are responsible for fulfilling many different responsibilities due to a lack of financial and human resources. While the flexibility exhibited by nonprofit staff is positive, it is also true that this can lead to poor integration of roles, conflicting duties or tasks, or role overload, which occurs when an individual has too many roles or diverse tasks to manage effectively. These conditions can lead to a conflict or clash of roles and expectations, for example, regarding what volunteers expect from management or nonprofit leaders and what they can really offer (Yanay-Ventura et al., 2023).

Using appropriate management strategies and effective communication, it is possible to satisfy and harmonize the expectations of individuals in nonprofit contexts and avoid conflict, dissatisfaction and ambiguity, improving the volunteer experience.

Flaws in the theory framework

Although the role theory is useful to understand the expectations and behaviours that occur in social relationships within organizations in general, and especially those between leaders and subordinates, it may have certain limitations in the specific context of nonprofits. In NGOs it is difficult to find clarity and stability in roles due to their dynamic nature and limited resources, which pushes both leaders and volunteers to wear different hats and perform multiple tasks that are usually associated with distinct functions and roles. It is precisely this that can lead to a lack of clarity and disagreement over responsibilities and duties. This theory can oversimplify the complexities of diverse and dynamic roles and underestimate the impact of individual and cultural differences in international NGOs such as AFS and inadequately address the power relations between volunteers and paid staff which is a major issue in these types of organizations due to the duality of the workforce. In addition, relying on pre-established roles and expectations can hinder the ability of nonprofits to effectively address emerging challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

4. Methodology

This chapter describes in detail the research approach used in this study and explains the rationale for the chosen methodology. The multiple sections that make up this chapter will discuss research design, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, boundaries, and ethical considerations.

4.1. Research design

Due to the nature of our research objectives and research questions, in this study we have decided to use a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the motivational elements influencing volunteers involved in AFS Austria. This type of methodological design allows for a better understanding of the social circumstances in which the phenomenon occurs, according to Myers and Avison (2002). In addition, in this way, the researcher could capture the details and gain a better understanding of the actions of the subjects as they occur (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). This research is exploratory in nature, and we have opted for a deductive approach, building on previous theories about volunteer motivations and conducting semi-structured interviews to examine the experiences and opinions of AFS volunteers in Austria. This decision aligns with the recommendations of Patel and Davidson (2011), who propose that methodological choices should be in line with the complexity of the field of study to adequately fulfil its research questions and objectives. Regarding the way in which data was collected, we used semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Sample selection

To obtain a comprehensive understanding, a non- probability purposive sample technique was used. The sample was selected together with one of the board members of the organisation based on “inherent interest” (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 29), who provided a list of volunteers currently active in AFS Austria. The candidates on the list were contacted, and interviews were scheduled. Our objective was to gain fresh perspectives by studying a sample that encompasses a wide range of volunteer participation with diverse perspectives, ages, roles, and tenures in the organisation and was distributed around the whole country to fully understand the complex dynamics of volunteer motivation at AFS Austria.

Before going into the field to conduct interviews, we developed an interview guide based on existing literature on volunteer management and motivation in non-profit organisations, and we

also drew on initial discussions with AFS managers at the global office in New York and the national office in Vienna, Austria. Through this iterative process in creating the interview guide, we sought to ensure that our questions were relevant and attuned to the characteristics of AFS Austria volunteers' experiences. The interview guide is comprised of open-ended questions aimed at eliciting complete and detailed answers in a way that allows volunteers to express their motivations and experiences freely.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted via Google Meet during 2024. The interviews lasted around an hour. With the consent of the research participants, the interviews were recorded and transcribed to better analyse the data. For reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, the names of the participants were omitted, and an alphanumeric label was assigned to each interview, consisting of a letter and a digit (e.g., V14).

Respondents	Gender	Data Collection Method	Years of experience	Age
V1	Male	Pilot interview	5	21
V2	Female	Pilot interview	8	25
V3	Female	Semi-structured Interview	3	23
V4	Female	Semi-structured Interview	1.5	20
V5	Male	Semi-structured Interview	30	46
V6	Female	Semi-structured Interview	5	25
V7	Male	Semi-structured Interview	4	20
V8	Female	Semi-structured Interview	4	20
V9	Male	Semi-structured Interview	9	24
V10	Male	Semi-structured Interview	4	19
V11	Male	Semi-structured Interview	40	64
V12	Female	Semi-structured Interview	2.5	22
V13	Male	Semi-structured Interview	8	24
V14	Female	Semi-structured Interview	7	22
V15	Female	Semi-structured Interview	2	20

Table 1. Table of participants

4.3. Data collection

To collect data, we used semi-structured interviews with a total of 15 AFS Austria volunteers working in different regions of the country, with a wide range of ages and functions. The choice of this method is because this type of interview allows us to obtain detailed answers from the volunteers, which will facilitate an in-depth examination of their motivations and experiences in the organisation. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this approach offers advantages that structured interviews may not provide. On the other hand, we should point out that semi-structured

interviews' flexibility allows for the in-depth exploration of topics of interest that come up during the interviews, which results in a broader and more complete understanding of the volunteers' experiences in the organisation. These interviews are the main or primary sources of this research, and field notes and transcripts were generated during the interviews.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that secondary sources were also used, such as studies and papers that analyse the topics of interest in this research, reports, and notes on AFS, etc.

4.3. Selecting the interview criteria

In the selection of participants, a purposive sampling method was used to ensure that the interviews were conducted with people who was active as AFS Austria volunteers and, therefore, could give us valuable insights into the phenomenon studied. This approach enables the collection of highly relevant and insightful data concerning the motives and experiences of volunteers within AFS. The selection of interview candidates was based on their active participation as volunteers for AFS. Upon completion of the selection procedure, candidates were primarily receiving communication by email and WhatsApp, which included an overview of the study and the expectations for their involvement. Two pilot interviews were conducted prior to the actual interviews to evaluate the queries, particularly those that were ambiguous or overly conceptual. Further, it has been designed to determine whether the pilot questions being asked could produce responses that were associated with the study topic. Certain of the questions were changed following the feedback received during the pilot interviews; however, they proved to be clear and relevant to the study.

4.4. Data analysis

The selection of the analysis instrument was based on the qualitative nature of the research. The coding process was used to visualise the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews and to give theoretical meaning to the interviews. The theoretical chapter served as a guide to classify the information obtained from the sample and to help us establish themes and sub-themes during the coding process. This methodology allows for both top-down and bottom-

up examinations of information. The research question guides the direction of the study while facilitating the selection of significant data. The researcher has the option of developing codes, core themes, organisational themes, and overarching themes, either by analysing the data itself (bottom-up approach) or by aligning it with the topic of study (top-down approach) (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 337).

According to Basit (2003), data analysis is the most crucial aspect of qualitative research, and coding plays a significant role in organising and classifying the data. Saldaña (2021) defines the code as a concise expression that symbolises a characteristic of a data segment extracted from the interview and that allows for capturing its essence. This process is especially useful because it allows the identification of both patterns and differences within the texts and facilitates the reader's understanding. Coding facilitates the establishment of a linkage that makes data comparable and relatable, allowing researchers to understand emerging phenomena based on the facts and results of fieldwork (Basit, 2003).

The present case study research primarily used a bottom-up approach, although it also conformed to a top-down characterization of the overarching themes. The coding of the data was done manually. The interviews resulted in about 210 pages of transcribed material. The research primarily examined the substance of the responses and not their rhetorical structure (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000, p. 61). Consequently, the transcription did not include any indication of tone of voice or pauses. To maintain confidentiality, the names of all volunteers and other interested parties were anonymized. However, references to AFS Austria were retained in compliance with the agreement with the organisation. AFS Austria has not received transcripts of the interviews to safeguard the identities of the study participants. The data collected during the interviews was abundant and brimming with personal anecdotes, and the subsequent analysis is not intended to be exhaustive. It offers a unique interpretation for multiple stories that attempt to illustrate the factors driving volunteer motivation. Themes are presented in table 2 and which will be used to structure the result section.

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes
Factors that motivate volunteers	Initial Involvement	Possibility of Volunteering
		Fundamental Point to Drive Volunteering Journey at AFS
	Goals, Role and Engagement	Insightful Volunteers Experience
		Flexible AFS Voluntary Role
		Intention of Significant Involvement
		Significant Contribution Aims
	Social Aspect and Skills Development	Personal and Professional Development via Volunteering at AFS
		Improving by Societal Component in volunteering
		Social Dimension of Volunteering
		Recognising Attributes of Volunteer Experience and its Influence on Motivation
	Motivation and Fulfillment	Specific Motives of Volunteering
		Motives of Volunteerism
		Motivation for Volunteering at AFS Austria
		Individuals' Goal within Volunteering
		Aspects that Increased Contentment and Sustain of Volunteers
		Advantages and Appreciation of Volunteering at AFS
		Fluctuation in Volunteers' Motivation and Commitment
		Evolving of Volunteers' Motives and Constant Dedication
		Initial Advantages of Volunteering
Volunteers Expectations	Volunteer Support and Expectations	Participant Expectations from AFS
		Challenges and Solutions While Volunteering
		Role of Acknowledgment and Admiration to Fostering Volunteer Commitment
		Disadvantages of Volunteering at AFS
		Volunteer Respite
		Role of Organizational Managers in Volunteers Motivation
		Barriers and Demotivating Reasons
		Organizational Support Towards Volunteers
	Suggestions from volunteers to improve their experience in the organization	Improvement of Volunteer Experience
		Additional Thoughts about Volunteers Motivation and Engagement

Table 2. Overview of themes identified during the coding process

4.5. Ethical considerations

During our research, we have followed ethical norms and academic standards for handling data. We seek to ensure that participants in the interviews do so according to their wishes, give their permission with full knowledge of the objectives of the research, that the anonymity of their data is respected, and that the interviewees receive clear information about the objectives of the study, the methodology, and their rights as participants. To protect the privacy of the study participants, it was decided to anonymize the identities of all volunteers, and the data were kept securely in a password-protected folder with exclusive access by the two researchers who were part of this study. In addition, a confidentiality agreement was signed with the AFS global office to ensure the protection of the sensitive information and personal data that were provided, guaranteeing that the information provided would only be used for educational purposes.

The study prioritised ethical issues, considering established ethical principles and following the ones presented in Bryman and Bell (2011). Furthermore, this research was intentionally planned to consider biases and the necessity for ethical self-awareness. We keep in mind that, as researchers, we should be mindful of our own biases and the ethical consequence of our study designs on participants. Guaranteeing the confidentiality and anonymity of volunteers ensured that our research methods not only met ethical standards but also created a respectful and safe environment for participants.

4.6. Reliability and validity

Given the qualitative nature of the current study, it is necessary to examine trustworthiness. This study addresses Lincoln and Guba's (1988) requirements for transferability and dependability. When presenting the findings, the researchers made a deliberate effort to offer the reader an authentic and thorough explanation of various interpretations as they arose to ensure the impartiality of the investigation (Lincoln, 1986). Therefore, the author contends that the investigation can be regarded as genuine (Lincoln & Guba, 1988), and it is expected to enhance comprehension of the elements that influence the motivation of volunteers at AFS Austria. Several aspects of the research in the organisation were mutually agreed upon with AFS Austria, including the research design and the timeline of the study. Despite the complete autonomy of the researchers during fieldwork, we often received constructive input during meetings throughout the research work.

5. Results

The chapter outlines the results of this research and sheds light on the factors that motivate individuals to join AFS Austria within their volunteer programmes, and furthermore, what they expect in terms of management support to enhance their volunteering experience. The results were achieved by interviewing fifteen volunteers from various age groups with different years of experience and backgrounds.

5.1 Overview of pilot study findings

For building the basis for a wider research project, this study conducts a two-interview pilot study directed at evaluating whether the look into volunteers' motives for involvement, including perspectives regarding management support, aligns with purpose, questions, and the theoretical framework. Further, this has allowed the researcher to produce an improved choice of questions and subjects for examination.

According to the results of the pilot interviews, the main theme of this study, defining the factors that motivate volunteers, was identified in the respondents' answers. They have recognized social engagement along with conviction for the organisation objectives as the key motivators for their involvement. It was stated: *"The primary motivation was the people I met through AFS; they were genuinely cool and shared similar values. Additionally, AFS's mission of fostering educational goals and intercultural understanding resonated with me deeply. (VI)"*

Further, regarding the main motives, the respondents have mentioned several other aspects: *"Organising the Volunteers training last year was a decisive moment for me. Seeing the gratitude and positive impact of my work on others solidified my commitment to volunteering. Attending international meetings and realising the global scale of AFS also played a role." (VI)*

Repetitively in the data, the respondents cited that the social component has the most crucial role in volunteering in that it leads to variations in interpersonal relationships and community relationships:

"The social aspects I mentioned are not so much a limiting factor altogether; it just makes my priorities lean towards other projects where I'm getting along better with the people and where

I think I can make more of an impact... The social aspect is a bigger one, like I said, mainly because I want other people to have this chance. That is why I want to help with that..." (V2).

Additionally, as a support and enriching aspect for volunteers to conduct volunteering and aspects that increase contentment and sustainment of volunteers, the volunteers empathized that recognition and appreciation also play a role: *"Recognition and appreciation are central to fostering a sense of belonging and commitment. They validate the effort and time we invest in our volunteer work..." (V1).* Consequently, as a factor impacting volunteer motivation, the participants brought up that they grew personally from their experience: *"... Seeing that kind of character development that I had when I did my exchange as well was quite rewarding..." (V2),* as well as citing that diverse responsibility and obligations would also enrich their motive towards volunteering *"... I'm still doing the same stuff I was doing when I came back from my exchange, like six, seven years ago... I'm just being repetitive in a way. It's not something I would loudly proclaim that I'm doing so happily, because it's like, well, doing the same stuff..."* The same volunteer mentions the need as well for more training for volunteers to improve their experiences: *".... I've gotten the feeling that instead of me training, for example, doing a training or workshop for the kids who are here right now, we should be doing more training for the volunteers... And maybe helping with that would get volunteers more motivated ..." (V2).*

The preliminary pilot study's results showed that reasons for participation are quite comparable to what functional motivation theory and egoistic and altruistic theory discussed. As an illustration, participants indicated the identification with the mission of the organization as a significant incentive, suggesting an interest in contributing to the organisation's objectives and aims. Followingly, it is aligned in accordance with both theories, focusing on individuals pursuing voluntary activities which reflect their own unique values and views. This is aligned with the Value function and egoistic motive of the chosen theory that data has also supported. Further, as an additional example, participants found personal fulfilment in their tasks as volunteers, supporting the theoretical framework's emphasis on individuals looking for activities which satisfy their career and professional growth as well as fundamental desires for independence, skill, and connection.

The second theme which the pilot study followed was volunteer support and their expectations from the managers. The pilot interviews have shown that the participants had insufficient support from the organisation. As quoted by the respondent, "... So, I don't think it's been very efficient the support we have received..." (V2) and "...it feels like you're putting energy into something that you're not really sure is going anywhere. Like, Is AFS Austria even going to continue to exist? I don't know..." (V2).

However, the data from the respondents cited for effective interaction, encouraging supervision, being a well organised or effective organisation, being concerned towards volunteers as well as acknowledging of accomplishments have been identified as critical components of good management support from the volunteer's perspective to enhance their experience and motivate them towards volunteering activities. As indicated... "*I expect AFS to be well-organised, genuinely care for its participants and volunteers, and show gratitude towards the community that supports it...*" (V1) and "*Recognition and appreciation are central to fostering a sense of belonging and commitment. They validate the effort and time we invest in our volunteer work*" (V1).

The pilot study provided valuable insights into participants' motivations and expectations, establishing a solid foundation for a larger research project. It demonstrated that social interaction and a strong connection to the purpose of the organization are significant factors that drive volunteers, and this is in line with what is indicated by Functional Motivation Theory and selfish-altruistic perspectives. The pilot also highlighted the important role of recognition and appreciation in cultivating a sense of inclusion and maintaining volunteer motivation. In addition, great importance was given to the need for improved organizational support and increased training opportunities for volunteers. This indicates specific areas that require improvement to enhance the overall experience and motivation of volunteers.

5.2 Main findings

This section will present the results of the main study, dividing them into the two main research themes with the sub-themes that make up each one, as follows:

Main theme 1: Factors that motivate volunteers

Sub-themes linked to this main theme:

- a) Initial Involvement
- b) Goals, Role and Engagement
- c) Social Aspect and Skills Development
- d) Motivation and Fulfilment

Main theme 2: Volunteers Expectations from Management

Subtopics linked to this main theme:

- a) Volunteer Support and Expectations
- b) Suggestions from volunteers to improve their experience in the organization

It should be noted that the pilot research produced was identical to all the data collected during the following interview period from which the main findings were derived. However, minor modifications were introduced to improve the clarity of the questions in the main research. Among other things, the semi-structured nature of some questions was improved, and more follow-up questions were introduced.

5.2.1 Main theme 1: Factors that motivate Volunteers

The primary results link to this main theme suggest that volunteers are frequently driven by a profound commitment and conviction with the mission of the organisation, perceiving it as an essential aspect of their life. Volunteers often mention feeling a strong connection with the organization's objectives and principles, which motivates their continued dedication. Furthermore, numerous volunteers experience satisfaction and joy received from helping others, which impacts their choice to serve.

Participants emphasise the gratifying social exchanges and personal fulfilment derived from making meaningful contributions to the cause of the organisation as well. A recurring motif is the common desire to contribute to the lives and experiences of others, this was frequently arising from positive previous experiences of the volunteers with the programs of the own organisation. The social aspect of volunteering is also important, as it fosters a feeling of community and inclusion that enhances the volunteer's experience and maintains their long-term commitment. Volunteers reported that they were able to improve a wide range of skills during their work with

the organisation, including communication, social interaction, project management, and leadership abilities. Now, we will examine each sub-theme thoroughly and analyse the testimonies and reflections of the volunteers interviewed.

5.2.1.1 Subtheme 1: Initial Involvement

Regarding the initial decision to join AFS and the factors that motivated the volunteers to join the organisation, the fieldwork elicited responses like giving back to the organisation what it had given them. It is worth noting that 13 of the 15 volunteers interviewed had travelled on exchange and had been participants in AFS intercultural programmes themselves, so there was a desire for reciprocity.

Thus, we can observe that one respondent expressed: *“So when I went abroad, it was almost a kind of natural thing to do. Oh, you went abroad, so now you're going to be a volunteer... And then it became very easy to just jump into the volunteering space”* (V2); we can also appreciate that it was a similar way of getting involved with AFS for another interviewed, who points out that the initial factor for their decision to join AFS as a volunteer was mainly the returnee camp the organization offers to the Austrian exchange students once they are back. Many volunteers mentioned that they really enjoy that camp, and that after that experience they liked the idea of helping other students to have a similar experience to theirs. All respondents mentioned the idea that AFS builds a very good character for young people, and that they wanted help further that goal.

The return camp it is key moment for volunteer to learn about the possibility of volunteering and getting involved in the project.

Regarding the initial motives, another respondent also mentions a reciprocity factor in his motives to become involved and that he wanted to give the opportunity to others to have a similar experience: *“My first thoughts were that I just had such a great time abroad, and I wanted to give this opportunity to also the people coming from the whole world to Austria. So, I just thought it's fair that I had this great experience, and I also can give it to other people”* (V15); it can be

observed that the interviewee mentions the concept that it was 'fair' to get involved and to give such an experience to other people as one of his motives, highlighting the reciprocity factor.

It can be noted that to have experienced the benefits that the organization provides to its participants and the desire to give back and allow others to have similar experiences were relevant factors in deciding to join as volunteers for many former participants.

5.2.1.2 Subtheme 2: Goals, role and Engagement

Regarding the goals that the participants had with their volunteer work, in the fieldwork it emerged that some of the volunteers wanted to have a positive impact on the world, For example, one volunteer mentioned: *"For me, the goal is to make a better world"* (V11); for his part, interviewee 2 mentioned as one of his goals that his exchange experience had been very good and that he wanted other people to experience the same thing. An additional point regarding his objectives is that he mentions having the feeling that AFS as an organisation is struggling and that he is afraid that the organisation will fail in its mission, so a deep connection between the volunteer and AFS can be observed:

"Originally, it was just, okay, this was amazing; the whole exchange has been amazing. I want people to be able to experience this, and I think it's a worthwhile political goal to further this. Currently, however, I've been getting the feeling that AFS Austria is struggling a bit, so it's been more like, it almost feels like damage control a bit sometimes. I mean, to be perfectly honest, at this point, I'm a bit afraid that AFS Austria is going to start to fail as an organisation" (V2).

The findings point those participants gained personal fulfilment via their voluntary efforts, discovering meaning and a sense of accomplishment within their contribution supporting the organisation's aims. As an interviewee stated: *"...Currently, volunteering gives me a feeling of meaning and happiness because I think that will make a difference in my society..."* (V3).

In turn, volunteers 5, like 2 and 11, also mentioned this idea of giving back and giving something to individuals who go on exchange to Austria as the main goals they have with their

work. Half of the respondents brought up their concern about the critical situation that the organisation is facing and their willingness to help to solve the problems as one of their main goals with volunteering.

Based on the fieldwork findings, the role, tasks, and engagement of volunteers in AFS are diverse and subject to significant variation on a daily basis. Volunteers actively engage in meetings to exchange ideas and coordinate events, with the objective of increasing participant involvement and enhancing community engagement. Furthermore, they engage in social and training activities, such as "Impulse Events", which serve to inspire and train new volunteers as well as prepare them for future roles as trainers.

Volunteers mostly engage in tasks such as monitoring the welfare of students, coordinating events, conducting follow-ups on family visits and potential host family house visits, as well as conducting interviews and participating in activities with schools.

According to the interviews, volunteers are also crucial in engaging in social networking activities, as well as in planning and organising events. This demonstrates a joint effort to support and expand the organisation. Volunteers derive joy and experience personal growth through their interactions, family visits, and support of the AFS purpose, despite the inconsistent nature of tasks. However, effectively managing these commitments alongside personal responsibilities seems to be a difficulty for most volunteers.

5.2.1.3 Subtheme 3: Social Aspect and Skills Development

The data gathered revealed that social interactions are powerful motivators for volunteering. Respondents enjoyed having the chance to meet people and form important ties inside the organisation, as well as getting motivation from this. Further, more than thirteen respondents empathized that social interaction is the main motive of their voluntary work: "*...The social part is the main focus... It's always an interesting talk, an interesting experience with people from another culture or people who want to go abroad, or just understanding a bit more of the life of others. So that's why I enjoy it...*" (V14) and other volunteer mentioned that "*...What keeps me going right now is the social aspect of the AFS volunteering experience. It's always interesting to hang out with very diverse people, and I think that's where my motivation still comes from...*" (V9).

However, the findings also expressed that some respondents somehow realised more of the significance of skills development over social connections, as mentioned:

"... Between the skills you can develop and the social aspect of it, the social part definitely kept me more motivated to stay in the organisation. But looking back, the benefits were bigger from the skills... If I didn't see the skills that I developed, I think I would look back at my experience with AFS differently...In hindsight, the social skills were a nice add-on, but the skills I developed were actually the more significant benefit..." (V9).

Another Main motive the respondents mentioned in relation to the social dimension of volunteering is the sense of community and belonging as a motive for volunteering: *"...I would say the most important factor for me was a feeling of community... I think it did help a lot with becoming a volunteer because I wanted to give others what I wasn't able to have..." (V10).*

Moreover, social dimension has been seen in collected data as the significance of social interaction and friendships in empowering volunteer experience, not the main motive factor, instead, it plays as an enriching aspect of volunteer work. Some respondents mentioned ideas along these lines:

"...the social interaction at AFS volunteering work is definitely important for me. It's not the motivating factor, I think, but at the same time, it's different because it's the thing I look most forward to, and I think if it wouldn't be so great, if I didn't have AFS friends... so it's an essential part, but it's not the only thing..." (V13).

The data has not merely indicated the social dimension as a main motivator but also a benefit that enriches the incentives of individuals towards volunteering, as it has stated that: *" Personally, I think it is a friendship, meeting people. that is the main benefit I am getting" (V7).*

Accordingly, the results of the study have stated that social interactions with diverse groups as an advantage of volunteering that encourage and enrich their tendency toward volunteering and not a central motive which based on this the pursue volunteering. As the respondents cited: *"...So, I would say it's like connecting with other people. What is quite nice is that I meet people from different professions as well..." (V10);* the same volunteer has stated that another motivator is the appreciation he received from the students *"...As well, appreciation by the students is like if, at the*

end of the year, they tell you it was fun, or like they felt they improved themselves, and it feels quite good...I think that is quite a nice form of appreciation and, therefore, a benefit, yes..." (V10).

Another knowledge related aspect that the results of the study has shown is that social interaction was the reason for sustainability and resilience in volunteer motivation during challenging times. In other words, the respondents mention that, through the exchange of ideas and sharing with others, they succeed in prolonging their volunteering. One respondent reported, *"... I think I maintain motivation through exchange, like personal exchange with others, so that's why the social aspect is still important... That personal exchange keeps me motivated..." (V12).*

In terms of personal and professional growth and volunteer work, all the volunteers interviewed indicated having developed different personal and professional skills and competencies during their work as AFS volunteers. Volunteers expressed ideas along these lines:

"Through my volunteer work, I have learned to approach people better because I was just too shy to ask for things if I needed support with a task. And I think I've just gotten better at that because I have to ask people very often if they can do something." (V7).

In a similar vein, another respondent said that he has developed social skills, communication skills, and understanding of others:

"I think mainly, I worked a lot on my social skills, I think, a lot, and like, the skills that I mainly developed through AFS, I think, are my social skills. Just learning how to communicate with people from different backgrounds was something that I really learned as a volunteer...I think I also grew a lot in terms of organisational skills. Just running projects, organising camps, and organising various activities gave me a lot of insight into project management and how that works." (V9)

Further, another volunteer has stated that:

"... AFS has definitely helped me grow, both on personal and professional levels... I learned a lot about the students and how their experiences are, and they... like a lot more about human behaviour... Yes, and then on a professional level, I feel like it's given me the chance to experiment and to try out new things that I've learned in my studies..." (V12).

Additionally, regarding the professional aspect for volunteers' career from all interviews, more than eleven respondents have stated that they enhanced their professional skill. These developments occurred in terms of development of social skills, communication abilities, deep insight into project management, finding the ability to frame situations positively and the skill for group management and coordination. As quoted, that:

"... I think mainly, I worked a lot on my social skills, I think, a lot, and like, the skills that I mainly developed through AFS, I think, are my social skills... Just running projects, organizing camps, and organizing various activities gave me a lot of insight into project management and how that works..." (V9).

Likewise, related to the professional aspect, the respondents have mentioned specific soft skills development, as said that: *"...I think I developed a lot of soft skills, like communication, understanding different backgrounds and cultures, having empathy for the people, and trying to understand something instead of judging directly..."* (V14).

Another knowledge related aspect which has been mentioned in the result was that for long term volunteers, it has guaranteed that they have acquired both personal and professional growth, which can be seen in the result as an aspect of differentiation between those who volunteered for long term and those who did volunteer for short period of time.

The learning aspects have been mentioned among most of the volunteers interviewed. The respondents have mentioned different learning aspects which are related to personal and professional learning.

The findings with respect to this sub-theme underscore the important role that both social connections and skills development play in enhancing the volunteer experience and motivating volunteers to continue their work. As could be seen, many interviewees were motivated by social factors, such as forming meaningful relationships, cultivating a sense of community, and the opportunity for cultural exchange. However, a considerable proportion of volunteers recognized the lasting benefits of improved professional skills, highlighting the advancement they experienced in their professional and personal development as a result of their volunteer work. Such skills and

competencies included improved communication, project management and the opportunity to refine their public speaking skills.

Another relevant point to note is that during the fieldwork, the social aspect was considered a key element in maintaining motivation, especially during difficult times. However, it was observed that although social contacts offered immediate motivation and a sense of belonging, the long-term influence of skills development was recognized as a significant advantage of the experience of being a volunteer at the organisation.

5.2.1.4 Subtheme 4: Motivation and Fulfilment

Regarding the most rewarding and motivating aspects of the volunteering experience, we found during the fieldwork varied reasons, but they converge in the same point: the social aspect and the possibility of helping others.

One interviewee mentioned that the social aspect and meeting people from all over the world were the most rewarding part of his experience: *“I think the most rewarding part is meeting so many people from all over the world, different countries, different insights, different people. That's the rewarding part”* (V11); while interviewee 14 indicated that this was something that was linked to her tasks as a volunteer by being the contact person for students and being able to see their growth and development process during the exchange period:

“The most rewarding is being a contact person for a student who is currently in Vienna because you see the whole AFS experience from the moment they arrive and the first days and weeks in Vienna... It's so nice to accompany the students during a period of six months or one year... I just love to see the process because it reminds me a lot of my own experience, and I get a lot of nostalgia to look back on” (V14).

Echoing this, one respondent mentioned that being someone the students could talk to and understand was the most rewarding: *“For me, I think it's like being someone for the kids to talk to because nobody really understands what they went through.”* (V4). Finally, another volunteer also

mentioned that his work and interaction with the students were the most rewarding, especially being seen (V7).

It is clear from the fragments presented that the social aspect and the one linked to the interaction with the exchange students and being able to help them are the most rewarding within the analysed sample.

On how volunteers maintain motivation and enthusiasm for volunteering in difficult times, we could observe that volunteers use a variety of strategies to deal with challenging situations. While some appeal to good memories with the organization and to their own experiences as volunteers, others stay motivated through personal connections made in the organisation or by taking breaks to recharge and keep going.

Under the first idea volunteers 8 and 13 appeal to their good memories to stay motivated: *“What keeps me motivated are two things again, which would be my memories of the good things, I guess, and also the other volunteers who are relentlessly approaching me, which I actually appreciate”* (V13); in turn interviewee 8 mentions: *“I like to remember how it was for me to be an exchange student and my experience, and that gives me motivation”* (V8).

In a different vein, interviewee 1 indicates that what allows him to face difficult moments is to take short breaks from the organisation: *“Taking short breaks from AFS-related tasks helps me recharge and maintain my enthusiasm for the work”* (V1).

Finally, V4 explains that it is his personal connections and the certainty that the rough patch is not forever what keeps him going even during challenging times:

“Yeah, it's like my personal connections. I realise, like, okay, this person, I would not have met if not for AFS...And, I know it's like the exchange student curve. It's not bad forever; it's just bad for now” (V4).

As can be appreciated, the strategies used by the volunteers to overcome difficult moments and cope with bad times are different, but the use of good memories and the connections made in the organisation emerge as strong cope mechanisms.

In terms of factors and challenges that AFS Austria volunteers experience and that are particularly demotivating, the volunteers interviewed mentioned during the fieldwork the following: 1) The lack of response and communication of the exchange students; 2) the difficulty in finding host families, 3) the lack of response from other volunteers when help is needed, 4) the reduction in the number of students received by the organisation and 5) the lack of volunteers.

One of the respondents mentioned that what is frustrating at times is the lack of response and connection to the exchange students living their experience in Austria, which can be demotivating:

“One thing that we are struggling a bit with is the connection to the AFS students on exchange here in Austria. I remember that being a topic quite often...it's just kind of hard to reach out to them or to get a response from them whenever there is an upcoming event... It feels like we're missing something to get this connection to them or to motivate them about this whole experience they're in right now” (V7).

In a different sense, some of the respondents indicates that they find the lack or loss of host families for exchange students demotivating, and this has become an increasingly problematic point for the organisation: *“Especially demotivating is being neglected by a lot of host families, or non-host families whatsoever. It has, since COVID, become a big problem to find host families, especially in the last two years. Like, calling families and being rejected like 19 out of 20 times is quite hard” (V10).*

Another reason, as expressed by one of the respondents, is the difficulty in contacting volunteers and getting a response when there is a task to be done:

“One thing that demotivates me is that I feel like we can't reach a lot of volunteers. Sometimes it's just that you really need volunteers to do something; sometimes it's just a little thing, and you write someone a message, or you write messages in the group chat, and nobody is answering; that's really annoying” (V15).

This volunteer also mentions that the lack of support from the office is demotivating. *“ Also, sometimes I feel like the office isn't supporting the volunteers that much. I feel like the office could be more involved in the tasks that the volunteers are doing because a lot of times, I feel like the office doesn't know exactly what we are doing or all the work we are doing and what's going on. So, that also demotivates me”* (V15).

Finally, another volunteer mentioned that the reduction in the number of exchange students is demotivating, as well as the feeling that volunteer work can be overwhelming: *“One thing is that we have just few exchange students, and it is more motivating when we have many exchange students. I am also a little bit scared that the volunteer work could be overwhelming”* (V8).

As can be noted from these excerpts, there are different causes that are demotivating for the volunteers; some of them are related to communication problems with volunteers or students, and others are related to a lack of support from the national office. These two topics emerged in most of the interviews conducted.

On the other hand, when we asked participants about the benefits they gained from their volunteer work, the main topics that emerged were related to the feeling of belonging to a community, learning new skills, and the possibility of cultural exchange. Several interviewees mentioned that their main benefit was feeling connected to others and being part of a community (V4, V7, V8, V12). Along similar lines, it was expressed that the learning new skills was also important.

Again, interviewees indicated social aspects such as friends made through volunteering, meeting like-minded people and cultural exchange as the main benefit that they were getting from their volunteer experience. *“Personally, I think friendships and meeting people are the main benefit I am getting”* (V7); *“I've been asking myself, is there a benefit?... yes. I mean, I feel like I've been learning a lot, and it's definitely given me a chance to meet other like-minded people.... I guess the cultural exchange is something that is a benefit”* (V12).

Most of the interviewees who participated in this study mentioned the aspects presented here as the main benefits they gained from their volunteer work.

When we asked volunteers about the most difficult part of volunteering in the organization, we obtained varied responses, among them were the challenges of long-term commitment due to other tasks or responsibilities in their personal or professional life, the feeling of frustration and obligation that arose during the volunteer work that diminished the enjoyment of the activities, the lack of appreciation and having to always depend on the same volunteers, and finally the feeling of being alone and without support from the national office.

One of the interviewees, for example, indicated that he found difficult to make a long-term commitment to AFS because of his other responsibilities (V14). In a different sense, interviewee 3 indicated that the most difficult thing about volunteering was the sense of frustration that was experienced and that impacted even the more enjoyable aspects of volunteer work, noting that the feeling of obligation seemed stronger than the enthusiasm to perform the tasks (V3). Echoing this, respondent 6 also mentioned this sense of obligation in performing tasks and lack of appreciation as challenging factors as we can appreciate here:

“Just not being shown appreciation, that kind of sucks. And the fact that it's always the same people that have to do the things—it's like a false sense of obligation... I feel like I'm obliged to do it, which isn't true” (V6).

Adding a different motive, other respondents mentioned that the worst part of volunteering is the feeling of being alone and of feeling annoying by insisting and sending messages to other volunteers to get involved and help with the tasks that need to be performed (V15).

One finding regarding this subject that caught our attention is the sense of obligation that some of the volunteers interviewed claimed to experience, which appears to sap their enthusiasm and joy for doing volunteer work.

The results of this section demonstrate that participants are motivated by a mix of intrinsic motives, social ties, and skills development. A considerable number of participants perceive the organisation as a crucial component of their lives, aligning themselves with its goals and finding motivation in its mission. Social connections are important, as volunteers emphasise the value of establishing meaningful connections and experiencing a sense of community. The social aspect of this component serves both as an initial motivation and as a means of sustaining long-term commitment. Volunteers reported also significant personal and professional growth, highlighting the acquisition of social skills, communication skills and project management competences as the main benefits of volunteering. As we can appreciate, the results indicate that a combination of individual satisfaction, social connections and skills development opportunities are the main factors that motivate and sustain volunteer engagement.

5.2.2 Main theme 2: Volunteer Expectations in terms of Management Support

The second main theme highlights the key results of the collected data about support from management and its influence on volunteers' motivation and experiences. Respondents shared their perspectives on the important components of successful support from management via interviews.

5.2.2.1 Subtheme 5: Volunteer Expectations

In terms of what volunteers expect from the organisation, we can see a varied set of opinions from the volunteers interviewed.

One of the respondents mentioned that what he expects is the possibility of being in contact with the organisation if he needs something, and that the organisation also communicates with him (V13). Along similar lines, respondent nine indicates that what he expects from AFS is support, and to feel that he has someone that holds him up. He indicates that this is something that was missing and for that reason he did not decide to take on more responsibility within the organization (V9).

Another volunteer, similarly, expressed the need for support, indicating that he expects communication to overcome the feeling that no one knows what the others are doing:

"I expect from AFS in general that the communication gets a bit better because I feel like sometimes every local chapter is doing their own thing, but nobody knows about it. Everybody is doing their stuff, but nobody knows what the others are doing, and I also don't quite get sometimes what the board of AFS is doing or what kind of work the office is doing." (V15).

In a different tone, one volunteer expresses that he does not expect anything from the organisation, feeling the responsibility that whatever he expects he will have to do it by himself, it should be noted that this volunteer is a member of the board of the organization: *"I don't think I expect anything back because it's been like, well, you know, I feel like right now, I'm in a position where everything I'm expecting, I have to do it by myself. So, it's really hard to get something back."* (V3).

As has noted from the above excerpts, the volunteers interviewed expect support from the organisation and an improvement in communication.

As the primary vital support that participants indicated, it was the necessity for clearer communications and alternative channels. Respondents emphasised the critical value of clear communication between all related parties which participate in voluntary activities. Participants mentioned that: *"... I think that the office isn't that involved in the volunteer work and in the local chapters, and I have to think about what can be better. Yeah, maybe it's just communication. I feel like this is the main problem or the main thing that we can improve..."* (V15). Similarly, it has been expressed that:

"...unclear communication is another way to form it. Like, I don't know who I'm supposed to get my information from because there might be several different people posting things. There might be some people from the office posting things. Half of these people, I might know; half of them, I might not. I'm not quite sure what their roles are, what their functions are. Like, why is this person messaging me about this topic XYZ..." (V2).

Additionally, as a disadvantage of volunteering, which influences their motivation, the respondents indicated that one challenging aspect they have is their communications with the other volunteers and the organisation:

" ...The worst thing, I think, is that sometimes it can happen that you just feel a bit alone because you don't get the answer from volunteers...Sometimes it's because, for example, we don't get that much help from the office, for example, so it's just a lot to do, and it takes time..." (V15)

Similarly, other respondent mentioned that one demotivational factor was ineffective communication during the organization of AFS activities:

" ... One thing that we are struggling a bit with is the connection to the AFS students on exchange here in Austria... it's just kind of hard to reach out to them or to get a response from them whenever there is an upcoming event...The part of getting in touch with them and knowing if they would be coming or not is kind of a struggle..." (V7).

Consequently, the respondents demand that the manager's support is necessary in terms of creating clear communication channels with high responsiveness from the office and that it creates alignment among volunteers and organisers. As cited:

".... often, the office has a different perspective on things than us volunteers, so it would be very beneficial to maybe get in contact more often...we always communicate via email. So, it's harder to have a direct conversation on how they should deal with this. It's sometimes difficult to get on the same side on certain things with the office..." (V10).

In the same sense, this participant added that the lack of understanding of the office on some of the demands or needs of the volunteers is due to the fact that the office is less involved in the relationship with the students, and it is the volunteers who have more knowledge about these dynamics because they are the ones who do the field work.

Regarding recognition and appreciation, all the volunteers interviewed indicated that it was a central issue and that it affected their motivation levels. While some indicated that they felt appreciated and recognised; most of them argued the opposite. Furtherly the key findings indicated

this aspect as a necessity to support volunteers and one aspect that is expected of managers. As stated,:

“...appreciation is like the main reason why people are committed to something. Because if nobody cares, or if there is no feedback, or if you have the feeling that what you're doing isn't being recognized, it's very demotivating. It's always the most disappointing when you feel like everything you're doing is for nothing or that it's just so whatever. So, like, why would you continue doing it?...” (V15).

In the same line of thought the respondents maintained that it gives them joy when people appreciate them for what they have done: *“...I am doing voluntarily, I do not get anything out of this, people saying thank you and people showing appreciation is one of the most important things. One thing that give me a lot of joy is people saying thank you...” (V6).*

The findings showed the importance of appreciation and indicates that the national office was having trouble expressing it and that it is a factor that could be improved:

“...I think gratitude and appreciation for volunteers and in our work as volunteers are very important, and I think that is something that is really lacking. The appreciation, indeed, like I was just saying about the office, not only the understanding but also just the appreciation and gratitude for what we do, is a very important role...” (V9).

Recognizing volunteers' efforts provided beneficial encouragement, increasing their feeling of importance along with a stronger motive towards volunteering. Participants liked receiving recognition from the managers of the organization as a need for more direct and genuine expressions of gratitude.

The findings of this study have also indicated some other expectations of support. The respondents have mentioned several aspects, from their own perspective, which are subjective concepts. For instance, one of the respondents mentioned that the office should bring more transparency and clarity on organisational activities and responsibilities:

“...Everybody's doing their stuff, but nobody knows what the others are doing, and I also don't quite get sometimes what the board of AFS is doing or what kind of work the office is doing...” (V9).

In a similar line, another respondent indicated that the office could make the work easier for volunteers by preparing the administrative work beforehand so that volunteers could do their tasks in a better way:

“... AFS can try to make it easy for the volunteers to prepare everything behind the scenes and to do the organizational work, like who comes to which family, in which school do they go, if there's any difficulties with something formal during the day of AFS students who are in Austria so that the volunteers can do the actual stuff ...” (V14).

Further, some volunteers have stated the idea of the need of taking care of the younger volunteers to prevent them from burning out:

“I have the feeling sometimes that the volunteers, or it depends, but I think especially the young volunteers, the completely new ones, are, in part, getting too much load of work. So, they're not really left alone, but they get a lot of work and also a lot of responsibility for something, and they're still too young...” (V11)

The general phenomena of supportive leadership have also been identified via the collected data as a desire of volunteers from managers. As one of the respondents said:

“...Definitely, letting us know about events earlier because two weeks for me is too short to say... I need to know two months in advance. So maybe the time management. Also, volunteers getting to know each other more, it would help if we had stuff just for volunteers, like one night or one evening a month...” (V4).

The same volunteer expressed that fostering a stronger connection among the volunteers will help the work and motivation.

Based on the results of this section, we can see that volunteers have a wide range of expectations regarding management support, but these expectations are mainly based on the desire for improved communication and recognition. Volunteers frequently stressed the need for better

and more effective communication channels between themselves and the organization, suggesting that this would improve coordination and reduce the feeling of isolation. On the other hand, recognition and appreciation were also elements mentioned and considered to be of high relevance, as numerous volunteers stated that lack of gratitude from the organization greatly diminished their motivation. In addition, as we noted, the findings revealed that volunteers need greater clarity from the office regarding organizational tasks and responsibilities, as well as proactive administrative assistance to alleviate their workload. These results underscore the importance of having a supportive type of leadership in place to improve volunteer engagement, motivation and retention.

5.2.2.2 Subtheme 6: Suggestions from volunteers to improve their experience in the organization

In terms of actions that could be taken by management to improve the volunteer experience and consequently motivation, the main topics that emerged during the interviews were the need for management to inform volunteers in advance, as far in advance as possible, about the activities or tasks that need to be performed, as well as an emphasis on providing networking, social and community development opportunities for volunteers. Another topic that emerged was the need to emphasise the development of volunteers to increase their motivation and commitment, and that it was necessary to clarify the roles and responsibilities, especially for new volunteers.

One interviewee noted that time management and giving advance notice facilitated the volunteer experience by allowing volunteers to plan for AFS events (V4); this interviewee also mentioned the facilitation of networking and volunteer activities as another important aspect of improving his experience with the organisation: *“Also, volunteers getting to know each other more, it would help if we had stuff just for volunteers, like one night or one evening a month where it's just like.... So, I think more of just volunteer networking”* (V4).

Taking the focus to a different topic, another respondent suggested that managers could, as a motivational tool, emphasise the skills that can be developed through volunteer work and that is important that they work more on showing volunteers that they can not only develop social skills

and be part of the AFS mission and so on but also to actually show how many skills they can develop. The skill development of the volunteer experience is something that the respondents find important (V9).

One of the volunteers (V12) mentioned that what could be improved is the clarity of roles and functions in the organisation, taking into consideration especially the new and less experienced volunteers. Other volunteers also expressed that they need more knowledge about what each person is doing.

In terms of how managers can help maintain volunteer motivation, interviewees mentioned issues related to the importance of maintaining a positive spirit, frequent contact with volunteers, opportunities to reflect on accomplishments, and staying motivated despite adversity.

One interviewee (V5) mentioned that managers can help increase motivation by maintaining a positive spirit, and that this approach was particularly beneficial during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the goal was to keep morale high through engaging meetings.

On a different note, another interviewee recommended managers be more active in reaching out to volunteers and have more contact with volunteers on a local level: *“...to be more active in reaching out to volunteers and have more contact with volunteers on a local level. I can imagine that's quite challenging, but I do believe that what would keep volunteers more aboard, more motivated, and also make you feel more included”* (V9).

From a more reflective perspective, another interviewee mentioned that one strategy could be for managers to create space for reflection on achievements, In the context of the interview, this volunteer mentioned that in this way they could reflect on achievements and create a space for celebration and learning (V13).

Finally, one of the respondents mentioned building resilience and strength to not get frustrated and to keep trying and insisting as a way managers could motivate volunteers:

“To not give up, to not get frustrated. It's very repetitive; you have to do the same things and ask the same people over and over again. But in the end, someone might stick. So, I guess it's

just not to get frustrated because it's like the same five people showing up to every event, but instead of being sad or frustrated about it, just be glad to see them showing up and be happy about every single one that shows up additionally” (V6).

As we can see, there are actions that, in the opinion of the volunteers, managers could take to support and boost the motivation of volunteers.

Recognising this study's key findings allow organisations to further comprehend the supportive areas for volunteers to increase overall motivation and involvement. Volunteers stressed the need for better communication, recognition, and support from management. Respondents emphasised the importance of clear communication, expressing some dissatisfaction with how these aspects are being addressed. These problems can lead to feelings of isolation and demotivation. It is important to mention the need for greater transparency in the organisation's operations, better administrative support to ease the workload of volunteers, and the protection of younger volunteers from burnout.

The results presented in this section offer some insights into the factors that motivate volunteers to initiate and maintain their work, as well as the expectations they have from the managers. As can be seen from the findings, factors such as the desire to give back, the social component of the experience, and the possibility of learning new skills are some of the major motivators that emerged during the fieldwork.

6. Discussion

This chapter offers an interpretation of the results of this study, considering the functional approach theory and the egoistic and altruistic theories of volunteer motivation. Therefore, the results of the data that have been collected will be analysed and interpreted based on two main questions related to the factors that motivate volunteers' participation in AFS Austria and their expectations regarding management support to enhance the volunteering experience.

6.1 Factors motivating volunteer participation in functional motivation theory

Mobiny and Ramos (2020) have explained volunteer motivation as the challenge of maintaining the enthusiasm and commitment of volunteers over the long term for voluntary acts. As a result, many non-profit organizations may experience a decrease in collaboration and an increase in the shortage of volunteers. Thus, understanding motivational factors of volunteers as well as what support expects a volunteer manager is the central target for this study because this can allow them to develop approaches to improve volunteer commitment and satisfaction. However, it has been mentioned that understanding the motivational factors is not direct and clear (Pearce 1993). Hence, based on the previously mentioned theory, this study has chosen the multi-dimensional approach, or functional motivation theory, for understanding volunteer motivational factors. The theory mentions that individuals tend to volunteer to satisfy their desires, which leads gradually to a long-term commitment act for them (Finkelstein et al., 2005).

This study's results identified numerous elements that motivate volunteers' involvement in voluntary work at AFS Austria. According to the functional model hypothesis, achieving multiple goals motivates volunteers. As well, the current study indicated identical results for most of the dimensions of the VFI model. Based on the findings of the study, participants in voluntary activities expressed an interest in social interaction, a sense of identity, being a part of a community, and mutual help based on their personal experience within the organisation.

A significant alignment with the value function of the VFI model was detected among the participants, indicating that the reason why people are driven to join this type of activities is the identification with the values of the nonprofit and the possibility of helping and benefiting others Clary et al. (1998). The results collected during the fieldwork showed that a major portion of the volunteers are motivated and feel aligned with the mission of the organization. According to the values aspect of the VFI inventory, when people do volunteer activities, they commit themselves as a way of showing the principles of altruism and empathy that they have. Participants expressed their desire and intention to contribute to society and support the organization's cause. The idea of having a positive influence, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and encouraging cultural exchanges to that end was expressed multiple times by the volunteers interviewed.

Regarding the understanding function, this was another aspect that came up repeatedly during the interviews. Volunteers expressed their desire to acquire new knowledge and skills

through their work. All interviewees indicated that their participation in the organization had allowed them to develop social, communication, project management and other skills. This function of the VFI model refers to the fact that volunteers are motivated to do their work by the opportunities for personal and professional development that volunteering offers them, and at the same time they can acquire new knowledge and life experiences Clary et al. (1998). The findings collected underscore this idea, as several volunteers, especially those who had been collaborating for a long time with the organization, expressed that they valued both the skills and the new knowledge they had acquired in the personal and professional sphere through their experiences with the NGO. This evidence supports the idea that through volunteer work individuals could find a way to satisfy the desire for continuous development, as expressed in this theory.

Concerning the social function, this was widely mentioned during the fieldwork by all the volunteers interviewed, and it is a highly relevant incentive and motivator. Individuals in their volunteer role seem to be attracted by the idea of meeting new people, having interesting conversations and establishing meaningful connections with other members and participants while working for the NGO. Clary et al. (1998) emphasize that social function is relevant because it acts as a mechanism for building relationships and widening the social circles of individuals. The importance that was expressed regarding this function in maintaining volunteer commitment and motivation reflects the need for NGOs to create a sense of belonging and community among their volunteers.

With respect to the enhancement function, all volunteers interviewed expressed experiencing personal gratification and fulfilment through their work, especially when they could see the impact of their tasks on the participants of the organization's programs. These positive and satisfying emotions that are sought and valued by volunteers are related to the positive influence of volunteer work on individuals, especially concerning their own self-esteem and personal development. What happens when experiencing these emotions is that volunteers' motivation is reinforced, and the satisfaction of helping others and at the same time being able to see the direct results of their efforts in a brief period helps keep them committed to the organization's cause. This is consistent with the VFI model's emphasis on the Enhancement function of volunteering, in which individuals pursue self-improvement and self-fulfilment through volunteering. The enhancement function emphasizes the idea that individuals perform volunteer work because it fosters their cognitive growth by providing them with feelings of meaning, fulfilment, and dignity

(Clary et al., 1998). This has been significantly depicted in the respondents' answers, in which the absolute majority possess the feelings of fulfilment and enjoy their self-confidence upon beginning volunteer work and upon completion and feel that the desired outcomes have been achieved. This suggests that the emphasis and suggestions of the functional approach theory serve most of the empirical results of the present study.

In contrast, the career part, or the career function dimension in the VFI approach of the functional approach theory received less support from the data gathered from the interviewees and has not been considered a strong or the most relevant contributing motive. This dimension indicates that individuals join NGOs to do volunteer work in a quest to improve their professional skills or to find job opportunities (Clary et al., 1998). It is relevant to mention that a small percentage of the respondents focused on the career function, but they recognized the professional benefits of their volunteer work, such as the acquisition of practical skills, such as project management or the ability to practice public speaking and team management, which can later be transferred to professional contexts, as well as the increase in the size of their network, which may imply access to better opportunities in the future.

Similarly, the protective function of the VFI (Clary et al., 1998), was not directly expressed in the empirical findings. However the data collected have supported the pleasurable or enjoyable aspect of volunteering, which explains that individuals, while volunteering, feel appreciated for their contribution, and their work provides them with a sense of purpose. We can say that the pursuit of these pleasurable emotions and purpose could function as a defence mechanism against other more unpleasant emotions.

In addition, current studies have emphasised that this model implies that volunteering might assist people in conveying empathy and humanitarian norms, promoting individual development, and forming significant relationships, while simultaneously potentially advancing one's own professional life and boosting the self-worth of those involved with such projects. Further, it has been noted that the provided model has a high degree of generalisation (Okun et al., 1998). Similarly, Martin et al. (2019) used the functionalist approach with student-athletes, finding distinct motivating characteristics and proposing personalised engagement tactics. The VFI takes a dynamic functionalist perspective, arguing how the attitudes and behaviours of individuals fulfil a variety of psychological purposes. This dynamic model investigates the unique roles that volunteering may provide for various humans (Martins et al., 2024).

However, to an extent, some flaws have additionally been encountered in the chosen theory, which does not include many aspects that the data indicates. For instance, the protective functions of functional theory have seemed totally absent in the empirical findings of this research, and many fresh motives have been encountered by the obtained data. For instance, community support for volunteering or word of mouth about volunteering, the positive effects of volunteering on others from an individual's point of view, understanding and participating in the own experiences and programs facilitated by the organisation, and being aware of the organization's global reach and impact were all presented as important factors that drove respondents to volunteer, which are all areas that the functional approach does not consider.

Several studies have also mentioned that the metric in the functional approach could fail to include all factors completely, and there are additional functional factors that the model does not currently measure that are also significant (Jiranek et al., 2013). Therefore, some metrics of the theory contradict or lacks empirical data. Hence, it might seem logical to recommend an expansion of the VFI metrics in a functional approach, including functions that include other aspects.

Therefore, based on the findings of the study, a closer look into the VFI metrics reveals that they are particularly concerned with self-centred qualities. Simply put, a values-based function entails caring for others and seeing above oneself. However, this type of functionality is merely one general group. This goes beyond the scope of this study's limitations and might have high plausibility in future research. Further, Stergios and Carruthers (2002) have obtained approval for just five of the six recommended VFI functions. Similarly, another study has discovered that, apart from the six suggested purposes of the VFI volunteers mentioned, pleasure, teamwork, and spirituality only represented the VFI metrics (Allison et al., 2002).

6.2 Factors motivating volunteer participation within the egoistic and altruistic motivation theory

According to this theory, there are two distinct types of motives for people to engage in volunteering. The first is composed of egoistic motivations, which is a more individualistic approach motivated by self-interest and focused on the pursuit of individual benefit for the person through volunteering. As a second category, we find altruistic motivations, which are those that seek the benefit of other individuals through volunteer work (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981).

During the field work, it found that there were several motivational factors among the volunteers, which corresponded to both altruistic and egoistic aspects. Some of the main motivations expressed by the interviewees were the desire to acquire new skills and experiences on the one hand, which can be understood as an individual need to be covered, and therefore more aligned with the egoistic motivation, but at the same time also emerged as a motivational factor the belief and desire to contribute to the goals and vision of the organization, which is in line with the idea of altruism proposed by Frisch and Gerrard (1981).

The need for connection, the importance of social contacts, and the feeling of belonging to a community also emerged as primary motivators throughout the data collected in this study. This is in line with the social element of volunteering outlined by the altruistic hypothesis, in which people feel fulfilled by helping other individuals and being part of a community (Smith 1981). In addition, motivations based on altruistic inspiration arise from the individual's belief in the obligation to help, as well as concern for the welfare of others (Monga & Treuren, 2001). For his part, Pearce (1993) has mentioned that organizations that employ volunteers should routinely evaluate the motivator of the entire team of volunteers to successfully attract and retain them according to their dominant motivational factors. However, it should be noted that various motivational elements can be difficult to understand and are often mixed. The possibility of making a positive difference to others while pursuing personal goals seems common among volunteers, although one of these two factors is often the prevailing and the one that drives the first decision to join the organization in a volunteer role.

In addition, Batson (1991) defines the altruistic aspect as not only helping or improving the situation of others, but also contributing to something meaningful. The data show that the intention of most interviewees was to help the organization survive and overcome the tough time it is going through, especially after Covid19 because of the reduction in the number of participants on its exchange programmes. This is aligned with and supported within the selfless or altruistic hypothesis, in which individuals gain fulfilment through helping others, including the feeling of significance it brings to help a cause larger than themselves, in this case the survival of the organization and its mission.

In addition, the research findings reveal that participants appreciate the ability to foster cross-cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding, as well as to positively influence the lives of the participants of the nonprofit programs, and they reported the joy of seeing their personal growth

by participating in the programs offered by the organization. This also supports Smith's (1981) assertion that motivation that has altruistic origins is enhanced, along with personal satisfaction, by helping others. The findings and theory are mutually supportive, as the idea of altruism implies an individual's genuine intention to be present for others; and displays altruistic behaviour (Winniford et al., 1997), Pearce (1993) also reinforces this idea by indicating that prosocial activities are those that prioritize the welfare of others over the individual or selfish benefits that the volunteer may derive from his or her work.

However, the presence of selfish motivations that also emerged during the fieldwork should be noted. The aspect of selfishness has been defined as a motivational condition that focuses on maximizing personal benefit (Batson, 1991). This latter aspect is demonstrated when an individual performs volunteer work primarily for personal benefit and not focused on that of others. Although this aspect was minor in the data obtained, traces were found. In this way some of the respondents sought with their volunteer work the possibility of developing skills, experiences and improving their professional profile and therefore their employability. This shows the self-centred perspective in some of the respondents, who seek their own personal development according to Batson (1991).

Furthermore, the data support the egocentric approach by indicating that volunteers may seek alignment of their personal goals with the organization's mission to advance their own personal agendas, as well as the pursuit of their learning objectives, and see the organization as a laboratory or training school to acquire skills in a practical way and in a real-world context. These seem to be key points in pushing some respondents towards volunteering.

As already mentioned, people who volunteer often possess selfish motivations, and the reason for seeking alignment between their personal goals and those of the organization could act as a justification for pursuing their own benefits, which could involve the reduction of adverse emotions such as worry, stress and anger and the pleasurable results of pro-social, ego-satisfying actions of the individuals (Batson, 1991).

The findings and theory have not been opposed, and the data support both selfish and altruistic motivations. This suggests that what drives volunteers is a combination of these two factors. While altruism is the motive that most drives volunteers, there are also priorities of individuals that are aligned with more selfish goals that should also be addressed, such as seeking to form new contacts for future opportunities and to develop their personal and professional skills

(Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). It is important to recognize that volunteer motivation is driven by a variety of drivers rather than a single category (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991).

6.3 Management support to enhance the volunteer experience

The data have shown that volunteers revealed a number of expectations and requests from the organization's leadership to improve their experience. Specifically, the study revealed that participants emphasized the importance of direct and straightforward communication, support from the organization's management to be able to perform their tasks properly, the desire to receive recognition and appreciation, and the clear delineation of responsibilities and roles between volunteers and the organization's paid staff.

To eliminate ambiguity in communication, it is necessary to allocate resources for the development of robust communication strategies that serve to inform volunteers in a clear manner and that seek to align volunteers' expectations with those of the organization, thus minimizing the confusion that volunteers expressed during fieldwork.

On the other hand, with regard to role conflict, between the tasks performed by volunteers for example and the tasks performed by paid office staff, it is important to ensure that volunteers have a clear understanding of their roles and what is expected of them and what exactly are the responsibilities and duties of the paid office staff (Biddle, 1986).

Regarding the need for recognition expressed by volunteers in the fieldwork, it was found that the absence of it from the organization's management turned out to be a factor that contributes to demotivation and to volunteers feeling emotions of isolation, or of not having support, and also frustration. Volunteers expressed that receiving recognition for their work generated a feeling of inclusion and belonging, which is in line with House's (1981) concept that offering help and emotional support, such as recognition of achievements, is an important point in maintaining volunteer motivation. Biddle (1986) indicates that when expectations are not met, this causes dissatisfaction and reduces motivation. Non-profit organizations should establish different initiatives to encourage recognition of volunteer work through acts such as public praise, personal expressions of gratitude or institutional recognition such as awards (House 1981). Lack of clear

direction and recognition can make volunteers feel unappreciated or insecure about their contributions, leading to lower motivation and higher turnover rates (Hu et al., 2014).

Regarding the need for assistance and support from the organization's management to the volunteers, the need for volunteers to receive training to improve their task performance and thus increase their confidence and sense of mastery of the work to be performed in the context of the organization also emerged as a clear expectation, which as indicated by Kahn et al. (1964) can lead to higher levels of satisfaction and increased motivation among volunteers. Initiatives such as mentoring programs within the nonprofits and check-ins between volunteers and management could contribute to improving the support and assistance that volunteers get, so that they feel more supported.

In addition, the data indicated that volunteers also reported a need for autonomy and adaptability with respect to their activities, which would allow them to manage their volunteer responsibilities along with other elements of their personal lives. Along with this, another interesting finding was the expectation of networking opportunities and connection with other members of the organization that volunteers have in order to satisfy their social motivations, since as we saw, this is what drives many individuals to engage in volunteering in the first place. There is an expectation that managers encourage these volunteer encounters and social events for networking and strengthening the team feeling which promotes a sense of belonging (Zollo et al., 2018).

The process of integrating theoretical perspectives with collected data and previous studies has shown a united direction regarding this topic. Therefore, this combination of management assistance and understanding of theoretical structures not only enhances the understanding of volunteer motivational factors, but also provides a holistic strategy for organizations seeking to optimize the success of volunteer programs. Consequently, further study and discussion on this topic could provide significant insight into effective volunteer management and support practices in a variety of organizational situations.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

In terms of methodological design, future research could include two distinct groups to study motivation and expectations for engaging as AFS volunteers: a) current volunteers and b) former volunteers who are no longer affiliated with the organisation.

Another recommendation for improvement would be to refine the data collection methodologies. The use of semi-structured interviews is advantageous, despite the possibility of creating an artificial context during the conduct of the interviews, which could lead participants to provide narratives that do not match their actual daily volunteer behaviours or real opinions. In addition, volunteers may have idealised their volunteer experiences, thus altering their true perceptions and opinions regarding motivational factors and expectations from AFS management. The use of other qualitative or quantitative methodologies could have enriched the study through triangulation. However, we want to point out that we soon reached a point of data saturation, allowing us to say with confidence that the realities experienced by the respondents matched those we identified.

Further research could improve the current study by applying it to a variety of organisations, potentially with larger samples. Conducting a quantitative longitudinal study would provide a valuable opportunity to investigate the interconnectedness of motivational drivers.

Given that most of the literature suggests that understanding the drivers of motivation is crucial to attracting and retaining volunteers, conducting additional studies on volunteer motivation could benefit non-profit organisations. This would allow them to strategically engage volunteers and allocate resources to structures and processes that align with both volunteer interests and organisational goals

7. Conclusion

Non-profit organizations play a crucial role in contemporary societies, frequently filling the gaps left by the public and private sectors in particular social spaces that also require attention and have the potential to produce value. Volunteers, those people who offer their time, skills, and work without receiving any financial remuneration, are one of the fundamental pillars for the functioning of this type of organisation and help them to facilitate the provision of their services in a sustained manner over time. The motivations that drive people to volunteer have been of great interest to these two researchers, as well as to the academic community in general. However, studies that have focused on what motivates individuals to volunteer with non-profit organisations in the post-COVID world, and specifically in the Austrian context, have been limited.

This thesis has sought to understand the reasons that motivate individuals to volunteer with non-profit organisations, with a particular focus on the case of American Field Services in Austria. After a literature review of the discipline, two pilot interviews with AFS Austria volunteers, and alignment meetings with the AFS global office in New York and the AFS Austria national office in Vienna, a case study has conducted through semi-structured interviews with fifteen volunteers from a wide age range and performing diverse types of tasks across the country.

Having delved into the theoretical and practical dimensions of volunteer management, the research aimed to contribute to the recognition of the importance of volunteers as the main human capital in the non-profit sector and also to bring the attention of human resource specialists and practitioners to the factors that motivate volunteers in their work as well as to the expectations that volunteers have of the organisations. The insights provided by this research can help HR practitioners working in nonprofits improve their practices and strategies to both motivate volunteers and improve the performance of nonprofits.

The perspectives provided by the functional motivation theory and the dualistic model of egoistic and altruistic motivations presented in this paper were essential for understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of volunteer motivation. These two theories were useful in identifying and categorising the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that influence volunteers to engage in nonprofits. Specifically, the function-motivation theory with the six motivational functions it proposes gave us a structure from which to start to analyse the motivations and needs of individuals who engage in this type of activity, while the egoistic-altruistic model facilitated the understanding of the existence of this duality present in volunteers, who seek on the one hand to

contribute but at the same time to satisfy the desires and objectives of their personal agendas, which influences their commitment and motivation towards volunteering.

Thus, the research questions are answered:

What factors motivate volunteers to participate in AFS Austria?

Following the fieldwork, the results indicate that the main factors that motivate volunteers to work for AFS Austria and underpin their motivation over time range from a strong alignment and commitment to the mission of the organisation, the desire to give back what they have received through their own intercultural exchange experiences and thus contribute to the community, the personal and professional development opportunities offered by AFS, to social factors such as meeting other people and the feeling of community and belonging that comes with being an AFS volunteer.

The following drivers are worth highlighting and exploring further:

1) A driver is based on the personal relationships they develop through their volunteer work with others in the organisation, where friendships, as well as a sense of identity, camaraderie, and community, play a key role in their choice to volunteer and continue their work.

This type of driver may be more selfish than altruistic, but it is important to note that the social interactions that arise from volunteering create a network of support and camaraderie that enriches the volunteer experience and increases their motivation to dedicate themselves to the tasks at hand. This finding underlines the importance for AFS to reinforce and develop this spirit of community and belonging among its volunteer corps to strengthen motivation eventually. During the fieldwork, it became clear that social ties and relationships are fundamental to motivation and retention. The participants interviews have indicated that they would not continue their work or feel motivated without these relationships and a sense of belonging to a community—to something bigger than themselves. Despite the apparent importance of this driver for volunteer motivation, it is worth noting that it became apparent that social activities for volunteers and face-to-face interaction have significantly decreased in AFS Austria after COVID-19.

2) A driver focused on the development of professional competencies

In relation to this point, the fieldwork revealed the importance that volunteers attributed to continuous education and training in skills relevant to the performance of their tasks, as well as to their continuous professional development as a motivational factor.

These results are in line with the theory of intrinsic motivation, which explains that individuals are more likely to continue with their work when they feel they have opportunities for development and are in line with their own goals for professional development and growth.

3) Driver based on alignment with the organisation's mission and the quest to give back and contribute to their communities.

This factor highlights the importance of feeling a deep connection to the organisation's mission and the desire to give back what they have received through their own multicultural experiences, as well as the importance of volunteers enabling other individuals to live such experiences.

What do volunteers expect in terms of management support to enhance the volunteering experience?

Regarding this question, it emerged clearly that the volunteers expect an improvement in management practices and support for the tasks performed by the volunteers. During the fieldwork, there was a particular emphasis on the need for improved communication between the national office in Vienna and volunteers, a greater understanding of the tasks performed by volunteers, and a need to clarify and delineate the roles of volunteers and the responsibilities of paid office staff.

There is also a strong expectation of support from AFS management in terms of relevant training for volunteers on topics related to their activities and tasks, as well as more specialised training and not just general intercultural training. Similarly, there was also a demand for empathy and understanding on the part of the management regarding the reality of the volunteers' tasks and the limitations they have in terms of the time available to conduct the volunteer work.

Based on these results, we can say that while factors such as social connections, strong alignment with the organisation's mission, growth and skill development, and the altruistic desire to contribute and help are important, they are significantly reinforced by other external factors that are more related to the management of the organisation and its Human Capital, such as the

expectation mentioned by the volunteers to receive more support from the organisation and to feel understood and listened to by the AFS management.

Therefore, and returning to human resource management, the results of this research emphasise the role of HRM in non-profit organisations and understanding the motivational factors and expectations of volunteers in improving volunteer recruitment and retention. By aligning HR practices in this type of environment with these insights, NPOs could significantly improve their efficiency and operations through customised and adapted strategies.

Nonprofits organisations depend on volunteers; they are like the lifeblood that keeps the organisation going and alive, so it is necessary to foster a committed and motivated volunteer corps. By understanding the factors that motivate its volunteers and striving to meet their expectations of the organisation, making them feel supported and understood, and thus ensuring a positive and rewarding experience, the organisation will be better equipped to fulfil its mission and vision, while volunteers will be able to achieve their personal goals and aspirations through their volunteer experience.

7.1 Limitations

Regarding the limitations of the present study, it should be noted that the sample studied could be an area for improvement. The introduction of a control group would also improve the environment in which the data is collected. Due to time constraints, the sample was restricted to a specific organisation, AFS, and covered only a few volunteer structures within the country. Consequently, it was unfeasible to incorporate volunteers from other AFS networks or external organisations as a control group. Given that the sample was composed of volunteers who are actively involved in volunteer activities, it is likely that they had stronger motivations than those who are no longer volunteers.

It should also note that another limitation could be the choice of a sole case study for the conduct of this research. Even though the case study had good conditions for internal validity and its qualitative nature made it easier to figure out what people meant and what drove them to participate, the results may not be directly useful or applicable to other organisations. However, it should note that the researchers' objective was to provide comprehensive and detailed descriptions

of the case and not necessarily to extend the applicability of the results to other non-profits, although it is understood that some of these insights may be valuable for understanding motivational dynamics in other organisations with similar characteristics. Finally, due to the methodological design, it was not feasible to identify and examine cause-and-effect relationships between the themes that emerged during the interviews.

7.2 Implications for practice

The possible implications of the results have significant value for scholars and non-profit organisations in various fields. First, the drivers of volunteer motivation are prioritised as a focal point of discussion and address a topic of significant importance to non-profits. Explaining the elements related to volunteer motivation and their consequent interconnectedness can help AFS get a clearer idea of what is loosely referred to in the literature as “understanding volunteer motivation.” This may help AFS Austria, and other organisations improve their resources for attracting and retaining volunteers. Furthermore, it provides a basis for future studies aimed at exploring the motivation of individuals in non-profit organisations in Austrian and international contexts.

From a strategic human resource management standpoint, the findings presented here reflect distinctive characteristics of volunteer management compared to human resource management in more conventional industries that HR professionals should consider.

The foundation of a non-profit organization's human resources are volunteers, but unlike employees who receive compensation, volunteers' motivations are complex interplays of factors ranging from altruism and the desire to support a greater cause to selfish factors like the desire to advance their professional careers and increase their employability. This implies that HR professionals working in this sector are required to understand the motivational factors of volunteers and to apply strategies that go beyond the more traditional incentives.

Another point to be considered by HR professionals when developing processes or personnel strategies in this type of organisation is to attend to the different motivational factors and expectations that volunteers have towards the organisation in order to be able to integrate both the opportunities for personal and professional growth with the desire to contribute altruistically and help to achieve the mission of the organisation.

The importance of the organisational climate in motivating volunteers should also be considered, and HR professionals should try to foster a positive organisational climate that promotes recognition, feedback, and support for volunteers, as well as a sense of community, identity, and belonging, facilitates networking spaces, and fosters the development of personal relationships among volunteers in order to strengthen their commitment and motivation.

On the other hand, recruitment, retention, and training practices should take into account not only the needs of the organisation but also the expectations, desires, and motivational factors of the volunteer workforce, as well as the need to develop structured onboarding and training processes that enable volunteers to be trained and aligned with the organisation's mission while at the same time allowing them to develop their personal and professional skills that can serve them well outside the nonprofit environment.

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9. Appendixes

Appendix 1: Coding Scheme

Respondents	Data	Raw data	Code	Sub- theme	Main theme
V5	Semi-structured Interview	Despite the initial reluctance I feel before AFS meetings, thinking about the time commitment, I always end up enjoying them immensely once I'm there because of the people and the activities we do. Whether it's social gatherings or board meetings, the engagement is always fulfilling. Just three weeks ago, I organized an event for the host families in Lower Austria. It was supposed to be a short hike, which turned out to be more of an extensive walk, but it was incredibly fun, and now I'm Contemplating organizing another event on May 1st with them and the Vienna families.	Social dimension of volunteering	Skills Development and Social Aspect	Factors that motivate volunteers
V11	Semi-structured Interview	In reality, I must say, being so long with AFS, it's just a part of my life already. So, I think if there hadn't been any course of AFS, I would have the feeling something is missing. And the thing is, there had been times where I didn't do anything for AFS except telling people what AFS is, but that's not really a big thing. But now, I have the feeling I really want to keep that going on because I think it's a good idea and it's a good thing, but we should really keep maintaining it, to keep going on and not to close AFS.	Motivation and Fulfillment	Sustainability and resilience in volunteer motivation	Factors that motivate volunteers
V9	Semi-structured Interview	Gratitude and appreciation is very important and it is something that was really lacking, not only the understanding, but the appreciation and understanding of what we do is very important, the reason of appreciation between volunteers I felt it, from the office and from the international level they could show more appreciation. AFS Austria was abit sloppy in the way they were showing gratitude, if they frame it in a way of showing as an appreciation, the appreciation and gratitude is there but need to be express more directly.	Volunteer Support and Expectations	Role of Acknowledgment and Admiration to Fostering Volunteer Commitment	Volunteers Expectations
V1	Semi-structured Interview	I expect AFS to be well-organized, genuinely care for its participants and volunteers, and show gratitude towards the community that supports it.	Participant Expectations from AFS	Volunteer Support and Expectations	Volunteers Expectations

Table 3. Coding Scheme

Appendix 2: Ethical Consent Form

information to participants about the student Master thesis Understanding the Dynamics of Volunteers Motivation in Nonprofit Organizations (Case study: AFS Austria)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in our research on the motivation of volunteers in non-profit organizations, specifically focusing on the American Field Service (AFS) in Austria. This research is a crucial part of our master's thesis in Strategic Human Resource Management at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, Department of Sociology and Work Science. The study is non-invasive and has been approved by both our University's Supervisor and the AFS Austria Board.

Implementation of the study

The data collection consists of observations and qualitative semi –structured interviews. Interviews are recorded with the permission of the participant. Selected data collection strategies will be implemented face to face, more specifically, observations will take place at the workplace and interviews will take place at the common meeting place, in which you can suggest. The study follows good research practice.

Your personal data will be confidential. You can withdraw your participation at any time. The interview will last around 35-45 minutes. Responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, however AFS Austria will be specifically identified in our reports.

Handling of collected material

Collected data are kept locked away on password protected computers and are only available to authorized persons. Interview recordings will be transcribed. In the final thesis, extracts from interviews may be cited and interviewees are given a pseudonym to keep anonymity. The collected material will be used for the master thesis under the conditions described herein. Collected data will be erased after completion of the thesis.

Results and publication

The results of the study will be published in the form of a Master thesis that is planned to be completed in 2023. The thesis may be published electronically by University of Gothenburg, and participants will be able to download the essay from GUPEA <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/>.

Voluntary participation

Participation is voluntary and consent is given orally or in written. You can withdraw your participation at any time. You can withdraw your participation at any time and no explanation is needed; the data can be erased at any time during the study.

For questions and further information, please contact:

We sincerely value your input to this research. Your insights will greatly contribute to improving our comprehension of volunteer motivation in non-profit organizations. If you have any inquiries or require additional details before or after the interview, feel free to reach out to us via email at gustabarma@student.gu.se (Mario David) or at gusabasm@student.gu.se (Moein Abasin).

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Toward Effective Volunteer Management: Understanding the Dynamics of Volunteers Motivation in Nonprofit Organisations Case study: American Field Service (AFS) in Austria

Researchers: Mohammad Moein Abasin (gusabasm@student.gu.se) and Mario David Tabares (gustabarma@student.gu.se)

Supervisor: Dr Jing Wu, Associate Professor of Strategic Human Resource Management, master's Program in Strategic Human Resource Management, University of Gothenburg. (jing.wu@gu.se)

For Participant Completion

Kindly respond (circle) to each question below to indicate your consent:

Do you believe you have received adequate information about this study to make an informed decision about your participation? **Yes - No**

Have you had the chance to pose any questions you might have about this study? **Yes - No**

Do you understand that your involvement in this study is entirely optional, and you have the right to discontinue participation at any time without any consequences or need to justify your decision? **Yes - No**

Are you willing to take part in the research? **Yes - No**

Do you consent to the recording of the interview through audio/video means? **Yes - No**

Do you permit the research team to use anonymized excerpts from your interview in academic presentations and publications? **Yes - No**

Do you agree to let the anonymized data be stored for future secondary analysis and to aid in educating upcoming researchers? **Yes - No**

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: // _____

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the study's findings, please share your email address below: