



Exploring Employee Experiences in Corporate Volunteering: A Qualitative Study of Enablers and Barriers

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Abstract

This study explores the factors that enable or hinder employee participation in corporate volunteering (CV) initiatives, a key mechanism for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Social Innovation (CSI). A qualitative study was conducted through 13 semi-structured interviews with employees, CSR organizers and managers from two different companies, and to project managers and coordinators from a non-profit organization. The research investigates how individual factors, such as personal motivation, values and perception of work, and organizational factors, such as organizational culture, communication, flexibility, influence employee experience and decision to take part in corporate volunteering actions. The results show a dynamic relationship between the different individual and organizational factors, different enablers/barriers can affect more/less the decision making depending on each individual, nevertheless, identifying and strengthening enablers while mitigating barriers fosters employee participation. The study supports existing literature on corporate volunteering, reinforcing that CV is a promoter of sense of belonging, meaningfulness, and motivation at work, but realizes this is only true when CSR/CSI practices are of genuine intention from the organizations side, part of its values and culture, bringing legitimacy to the organization. Be that as it may, the study is subject to methodological limitations, such as sample size, purposive sampling and possible social desirability. Future research is suggested, namely, including a study with employees who have never taken part in corporate volunteering, or a quantitative methodology study to generalize the findings.

Keywords: Corporate Volunteering, Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Innovation, Organizational Enablers, Organizational Barriers

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Sumário Executivo

Este estudo explora os fatores que facilitam ou dificultam a participação de colaboradores em iniciativas de voluntariado corporativo, um mecanismo fundamental para a Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC) e a Inovação Social Corporativa (ISC). Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo realizado por meio de 13 entrevistas semiestruturadas a colaboradores, responsáveis de RSC e chefias de duas empresas diferentes e a coordenadores e gestores de projeto de uma organização sem fins lucrativos. O estudo investiga como fatores individuais, motivação pessoal, valores e percepção do trabalho, e fatores organizacionais, cultura organizacional, comunicação e flexibilidade, influenciam a experiência e a decisão dos colaboradores a participar em ações de voluntariado corporativo. Os resultados mostram uma relação dinâmica entre os fatores individuais e organizacionais; diferentes facilitadores/barreiras podem afetar mais ou menos a tomada de decisão, dependendo de cada indivíduo; no entanto, fortalecer os facilitadores, enquanto se mitigam as barreiras, promove a participação dos colaboradores. O estudo corrobora a literatura existente, reforçando a ideia de que o voluntariado corporativo sentimento de pertença, significado e motivação no trabalho, mas reconhece que isso só se verifica quando as práticas de RSC/ISC são de intenção genuína por parte da organização, integradas nos seus valores e cultura, o que confere legitimidade à empresa. Contudo, o estudo apresenta limitações metodológicas, como o tamanho da amostra, a amostragem intencional e a possível influência da desejabilidade social. Sugere-se que investigação futura procure realizar um estudo com funcionários que não participaram em atividades de voluntariado corporativo ou um estudo com metodologia quantitativa para generalizar os resultados.

Palavras-chave: Voluntariado Corporativo, Responsabilidade Social Corporativa, Inovação Social Corporativa, Barreiras Organizacionais, Facilitadores Organizacionais

Título: Estudo explorativo às experiências de colaboradores em voluntariado corporativo: um estudo qualitativo sobre facilitadores e barreiras

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1. Introduction

Over time, organizations have been taking on a bigger role solving social and environmental problems alongside their usual business agenda, through the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies. Via CSR practices, organizations develop social aid initiatives, promoting their community well-being, which in turn, strengthens their relationships with their stakeholders (Kim et al., 2010; Portales, 2019). Generally, CSR strategies are developed partially with a philanthropic view, but literature has shown that if it becomes embedded in the company's culture and values, these practices can advance to Corporate Social Innovation, which are viewed as more sustainable and profitable solutions to social problems, given the bigger organizational commitment (Dionisio & De Vargas, 2020; Portales, 2019). One of the most commonly used strategies to pursue CSR and CSI is Corporate Volunteering (CV), which consists of the participation of employees on volunteering actions promoted by their organizations, normally in partnerships with non-profit organizations (Rodell, 2013; Rodell et al., 2016). Existing literature has shown that CV can have a negative impact on employees when it is perceived as symbolic, meaning it is "just for show", which compromises organization legitimacy and disengages employees (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Schons & Steinmeier, 2016). Despite the potential downsides of CV, which only come up when the organizations intentions are not genuine towards CSI, corporate volunteering has been shown to have multiple positive outcomes, through generating a bigger affective commitment (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019), fostering sense of belonging and purpose (Brzustewicz et al., 2024), employee satisfaction (Boštjančič et al., 2018) and identification (Jones, 2010). Furthermore, corporate volunteering can contribute to employee retention; organizations committed to CSR practices are perceived as more attractive, given they show more positive cultural values and work conditions, which promotes job applications (Greening & Turban, 2000) and intention to stay in the company, reducing organization's turnover costs, reinforcing competitive advantage (Gazzola & Mella, 2017). In light of the benefits CV brings to employees and organizations, it becomes important to understand why and when these activities are successful. This study aims to comprehend employee participation in corporate volunteering activities, why it fluctuates, exploring individual factors, such as personal values, motivations, previous experiences, and organizational factors, such as culture, communication, leadership, in order to understand what factors might function as enablers and which one's act as barriers to employee participation. This apprehension is key to develop more efficient and genuine CSR and CSI strategies, ensuring these will generate shared value and meaningful experience for employees, capturing

all possible benefits these practices can generate. In this regard, the study's main objective is to explore employees' experiences in corporate volunteering actions, in order to understand what individual and organizational factors act as enablers or barriers for their participation in CV. This objective is further explored through the study's research questions:

1. What enablers and barriers influence employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?

- 1.1. What organizational factors enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?

- 1.2. What individual factors influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

2.1.1. Corporate Social Innovation (CSI): concept, definitions, and its relationship to CSR

CSR is a strategy that emerged in companies, where initiatives are developed, together with other charitable to tackle social problems, creating value for stakeholders (Dionisio & De Vargas, 2020; Kim et al., 2010; Zuo et al., 2025). Through CSR companies create a bond with its surrounding environment and open doors to a start of a dialogue, which allows the company to understand the needs of this society and carry out socially responsible actions to tackle the cultural and social problems their surrounding environment might have. It is important to note that how CSR is implemented depends on each company's commercial interests, its culture, its strategic alignment with the social causes/needs (Portales, 2019). Naturally, CSR generates value and benefits for society, builds and strengthens the relationship between the company and its stakeholders. These actions, when embedded in the company's business model, objectively increase profits for the company, and position it competitively in the market, ultimately creating a win-win situation between society and the company (Portales, 2019). When the organization gives stakeholders tools for them to autonomously address their social problems, it reduces long-term dependencies, creating value for society and strengthen the relationship with its stakeholders, building a path for stakeholders to be able to tackle their needs on their own. This way CSR becomes a beginning point for social innovation, where change in society can be achieved (Portales, 2019). As a result, emerging through CSR (and other concepts such as Creating Shared Value (CSV) and hybrid organizations) was Corporate Social Innovation (CSI), a more recent concept also focusing on innovative strategies that can address social problems, through partnerships with external firms (Dionisio & De Vargas, 2020). From the five definitions encountered in the literature review of Dionisio & De Vargas (2020) it is possible to find a common ground: CSI is described as an innovative and strategic partnership between a firm and external partners, such as non-profit organizations, governments, etc., to create a sustainable and profitable solution to a social problem, and ultimately establish the firm in a unique position in the market, enhancing its competitive advantage. CSI differs in its way from CSR, because it is defined as a process that "requires time to be consolidated" (Nieto Antolín & Fernández Gago, 2004 cited in Portales, 2019), as it is a process that begins as CSR, with a partial philanthropy view, but that evolves over time to a bigger commitment, with the aim to foster change in a society, jointly with non-profit organizations (Portales, 2019).

Corporate Social Innovation can be developed in organizations through different strategies. A common chosen strategy for CSR and CSI is corporate volunteering, given it can be a mechanism through which companies can achieve their social commitment goals (Brzustewicz et al., 2024; Escher & Brzustewicz, 2020).

2.2. Corporate Volunteering (CV)

2.2.1. Defining volunteering and corporate volunteering

Companies are increasingly adopting corporate volunteering (CV) in their corporate social initiatives. (Brzustewicz et al., 2024; Do Paço & Cláudia Nave, 2013). Volunteering is defined as the act of “*giving time or skills during a planned activity for a volunteer group or organization*” such as non-profit organizations or charitable groups (Rodell, 2013). It is also important to note that passive contributions, such as a money donation, are not englobed in this definition, volunteering is an active participation, where volunteers contribute to the charitable organizations through applying their already acquired skills (for example, work related skills) or simply through their participation in areas they might not have prior experience (Rodell et al., 2016).

Corporate volunteering is a structured form of volunteering, organized by a company and its employees, in collaboration with non-profit organizations, with the goal to tackle a social or an environmental problem and support its beneficiaries (e.g. social solidary institutions, special schools) (Escher & Brzustewicz, 2020). Corporate volunteering is the most institutionalized form of CSR, where companies offer volunteering programs for their employees to be a part of, typically aligned with the company’s mission or with a collective interest from its employees (Do Paço & Cláudia Nave, 2013; Rodell et al., 2016). Through employee volunteering programs companies are enriching both their employee’s experience and skills and the community there are included in, creating shared value for their different set of stakeholders. Moreover, research has shown that CV programs have an impact on employee’s productivity, retention and recruitment, ultimately serving as a strategy for employee engagement (Basil et al., 2009; Escher & Brzustewicz, 2020).

Corporate volunteering is commonly assumed as a Corporate Social Responsibility practice, but it can also be developed as a Corporate Social Innovation practice. CSR evolves to CSI

when the strategies developed look to be more than philanthropic or symbolic actions, practiced regularly and with the aim to create sustainable social value (Portales, 2019). CV can be assumed as a CSI practice when it is integrated in the organization's strategy and aligned with its culture, values and long-term objectives, looking to build structure and lasting partnerships with external organizations, such as NGOs (non-governmental organizations), to combat societal problems (Dionisio & De Vargas, 2020; Escher & Brzustewicz, 2020; Portales, 2019). This way, not all CV actions can be seen as CSI practices, especially when they are of symbolic or public relations nature, given it limits the potential for social innovation and authenticity of actions (Gatignon-Turnau & Mignonac, 2015; Rodell et al., 2016). Corporate volunteering should be understood as a practice situated between CSR and CSI, where its true character depends on the organization's strategical integration, perceived authenticity and ability to promote change in society and create shared value with stakeholders.

2.3. Benefits and Risks of Corporate Volunteering

2.3.1. Benefits for companies and employees

Research has shown that corporate volunteering has multiples positive outcomes, both for companies and their employees. Haski-Leventhal et al. (2019) demonstrated that CV has a positive effect on both job satisfaction and affective commitment. Affective commitment (AC) is understood as the emotional connection, identification and involvement an employee has with its organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Higher levels of AC and job satisfaction contribute to a more satisfied and dedicated workforce (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019).

It is commonly believed that corporate volunteering enhances work engagement, employee satisfaction (Boštjančič et al., 2018), identification (Jones, 2010) and attracts a higher number of candidates (Gazzola & Mella, 2017), ultimately fostering a sense of meaningfulness at work. Volunteering can be seen as a complement to satisfy needs that are not fulfilled in other parts of one's life, bringing more significance and value. Corporate volunteering has the same role in organizations, offering employees more opportunities to engage in social interactions, establish friendships, give and receive support, addressing needs that might not be met in their jobs (Boštjančič et al., 2018; Grant, 2012; Rodell, 2013). Rodell (2013) reported that employees with a lower sense of meaningfulness in their jobs seek more volunteering opportunities, as a way to bring more meaning into their lives. Accordingly, CV enriches the sentiment of relatedness; that is enhancing the employees' sense of belonging and the

development of meaningful relationships (Brzustewicz et al., 2024). A study developed by Babiak & Trendafilova (2011) revealed that sport businesses were preventing legal actions, reducing costs and building better relationships with their stakeholders and partners due to their social responsibility initiatives which aimed to mitigate their environmental footprint. Companies who practice corporate social initiatives create an environment which is more prone to maximize their employee's success and happiness (Gazzola & Mella, 2017; Hatami et al., 2024), as well as improve their legitimacy (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011).

Greening & Turban (2000) defend that organization's social practices serve as a source of competitive advantage by increasing employee attractiveness and retention. Their study shows that CSR practices demonstrate for employees and potential candidates the company's values and work conditions, allowing for a better alignment between personal and organizational values, which will, ultimately, attract more qualified employees, increase the number of job applicants and job offers accepted, even when salary and growth opportunities are controlled. Corporate volunteering, as a CSR strategy serves as a mechanism through which organizations can simultaneously answer social necessities and promote high levels of engagement, identification and commitment.

2.3.3. Potential downsides

Not all corporate social strategies are inherently beneficial, their value depends on the true purpose that lies underneath their implementation; a false purpose can create barriers for successful CSI. The relevant questions one could ask is if these initiatives are genuine and in compliance with the organizations culture or mere symbolic actions (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Cycyota et al., 2016).

Organizations must implement CSR strategies that are aligned with their own goals and strategies as well as supported by top management and employees, as way to ensure engagement (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Breeze & Wiepking, 2020; Cycyota et al., 2016). A problem arises when organizations and its employees have a different preference for which charitable group they would like to support, organizations want to create corporate social strategies that meet their mission and goals, whereas employees want to aid causes they personally identify with. Different types of corporate volunteering have a different influence on employee experience and organizational objectives. In general, two types of corporate volunteering can be distinguished: general volunteering activities, which are related to more

simple activities, such as food collection and distribution, volunteering in shelters, renovations, and volunteering based on skills, where employees apply their work skills in social contexts. Literature suggests that skill-based volunteering fosters more engagement and meaningfulness, as well as a bigger perception of impact and alignment with one's professional identity while general volunteering activities when not aligned with employees values can limit these effects on employees (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Rodell, 2013; Rodell et al., 2016). Businesses might try to use top-down influence to guide employees into a CSR strategy that is in accordance with their own, but this may reduce employees' interest and sense of meaningfulness (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Breeze & Wiepking, 2020).

Equally, obstacles surface when employees understand CSR strategies as primarily public relations motives. Employees who perceive their organization's social initiatives as a mean to enhance their reputation and image might interpret their relationship to the organization in exchange terms instead of communal terms, meaning employees will look at their work more as a transaction and not a value based, significant relationship (Clark et al., 1986; Gatignon-Turnau & Mignonac, 2015). As a result, employees might feel less connected, losing affective commitment at an organization level (Gatignon-Turnau & Mignonac, 2015). Public relations efforts might also send forth an idea that the social responsibility initiatives are only symbolic, as a way for the company to clean its hands, which consequently transmits to the employee that they are working in a company that contributes to social and/or environmental problems (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019).

2.4. Theoretical Perspectives

2.4.1. Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR

Companies seek legitimacy and therefore develop social initiatives to help create this perception (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). A company attains legitimacy when its business actions are considered prudent, adequate and relevant within the type of society and culture it is inserted in. The notion of legitimacy is created through the joint opinion of a societal group, one person alone cannot determine if a company is legitimate or not, it results from a collective perception of individual judgements (Suchman, 1995), either they be internal or external stakeholders (Schaltegger & Hörisch, 2017). According to Schaltegger & Hörisch (2017) companies pursue social strategies not with the end goal of generating profit, but as a way to

create stronger legitimacy; which in turn positions them as more trustworthy and meaningful by stakeholders (Schons & Steinmeier, 2016).

Ashforth & Gibbs (1990) research illustrates that legitimacy can be obtained either through substantive or symbolic management. Substantive management refers to real changes that occur in the organizations structure, operations and practices to align them with social norms and values, while symbolic management does not involve real change, it's merely a matter of appearance (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Rodrigue et al., 2013). The same applies for symbolic and substantive CSR and the search for legitimacy. Symbolic CSR, contrary to substantive, can have harmful consequences for organizations, given that superficial social initiatives are perceived negatively by stakeholders. Substantive social practices, on the other hand, enhance stakeholders sense of meaningfulness at work and affective commitment (Schons & Steinmeier, 2016).

2.4.2. Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) sheds light on the perceptions stakeholders make of organizations and the relationship employees develop with them (Slack et al., 2015). Following Emerson (1976), SET is a continuous two-sided exchange or transaction where a reward is expected for a given action. This fosters a trusting, loyal and committed relationship between the parties involved (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In organizations, employees and management engage in social exchange; employees expect their efforts in the workplace to be recognized and rewarded, likewise management expect employees to do their best in exchange for the given rewards and support. A supportive management is likely to have supportive employees, creating a mutual benefitting relationship, based on trust, fairness and loyalty (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Some authors believe that social exchange relationships in organizations are strengthened by corporate social responsibility initiatives, given it brings benefits for the employee itself — through the fostering a bigger sense of meaningfulness in their personal and work lives —and benefits the organizations socially and economically (Lee, 2021; Slack et al., 2015). For this reason, CSR can be assumed as a form of exchange, where the organization provides an ethical and value-based work environment and the employee supports and identifies with the organization, strengthening the organization legitimacy.

2.4.3. Meaningfulness at work

The desire for one's work to be meaningful, this being that it is considered to be, by the employee, significant and purposeful, is increasing and meaningfulness at work is more and more important. Meaningfulness can be achieved in different ways, it does not necessarily need to be achieved through the accomplishment of one's work objectives, the simple idea of an employee working towards value-based objectives, that they find worthwhile, can be enough for them to feel meaningfulness at work (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).

Organizations can cultivate meaningfulness at work not only by focusing in achieving the company's goals, which will merely result in employees feeling disconnected and undervalued. In order to promote meaningfulness an organization must take into account the needs and requests of their employees, foster an environment of trust and support and have value-based goals, beyond profit maximization, as a way to better the work experience, ultimately creating a sense of community at the workplace (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). It is also important to understand that meaningful work does not have the same meaning for everyone, one employee working in company X might feel meaningfulness at work, but his coworker, sitting on the desk next to him, might not. Nevertheless, meaningfulness has been shown to have a positive impact for organizations (Rosso et al., 2010).

Corporate social initiatives help foster a sense of meaningfulness at work, because it gives employees the opportunity to broaden their perception of their work life by participating in new experiences and having contact with realities and beneficiaries outside of their organization, enabling employees to feel that they have contributed to society through their work life (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). Prior research suggest that meaningfulness is a positive outcome of corporate volunteering, which, in turn fosters employees' affective commitment and job satisfaction.

In the context of Corporate Social Innovation, it is important that organizations internal resources are involved in the strategies developed to create sustainable social value. CSI initiatives are dependent not only on external partnerships but also on employees' motivation and commitment, as these internal resources are important to sustain social practices (Dionisio & De Vargas, 2020; Portales, 2019). In this sense, corporate volunteering can be seen as an

operational mechanism for CSI, given that through it employees experience the impact of their contribution directly on organizational initiatives, fostering their sense of purpose and social contribution at work and thereby reinforcing meaningfulness at work (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Grant, 2012; Rodell, 2013).

2.5. Research Gap

Despite the vast literature about corporate volunteering as a vehicle of corporate social innovation and responsibility, there are still research gaps that need to be addressed. Grant (2012) identified the need to deepen the research about why participation in corporate volunteering initiatives varies between employees, as well as what organizational factors influence the employees will to volunteer. Additionally, Gatignon-Turnau and Mignonac (2015) call for future research on employee's motivations to volunteer and on the "dark side" of CSR, meaning the barriers for employees to perceive their corporate social initiatives as truthful and genuine, decreasing their willingness to volunteer. Furthermore, most research on CV has focused on the organizational motives to implement corporate social innovation strategies, such as corporate volunteering initiatives, overlooking the driver of success for these strategies, employee engagement. Research has yet to explore enablers and barriers that drive employee engagement in CSI initiatives, as well as the internal impact of CSR and CV as a catalyst for Corporate Social Innovation. Literature has shown that CSR practices influence employees' motivation, sense of meaningfulness at work (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019) as well as perception of organizational legitimacy (Schons & Steinmeier, 2016). Understanding what factors support or hinder employee engagement in corporate volunteering actions is also understanding how these factors contribute to the internal success of CSI, being seen as legitimate and contributing to employees' sense of belonging and meaningfulness at work.

Limited research has explored the practical conditions that function as enablers or barriers for employee engagement in CSI initiatives. In this regard this study aims to understand the individual and organizational factors that drive or constrain employee engagement in CSI through the analysis of employees' participation in corporate social initiatives. In light of this research gap, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What enablers and barriers influence employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?

1.1. What organizational factors enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?

1.2. What individual factors influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?

3. Methodology

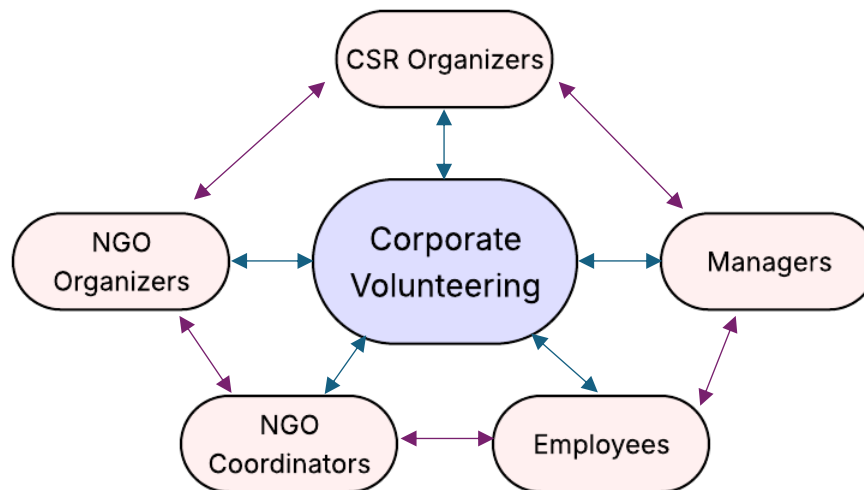
Considering the research questions of the study, which aim to understand the barriers and enablers of employee participation in corporate volunteering activities this research is not based on pre-determined hypotheses that need to be tested, mainly because the possible answers to the research questions were not fixed nor universal, but rather dependent on individual's experiences, perceptions, culture and values. It was thought that to analyze the different study dimensions from each participant the better method would be to talk to each one directly and allowing them to state their individual opinions, for a better and more detailed comprehension of the issue in question (Creswell & Poth, 2016). As a result, the most appropriate method to follow was a qualitative method, for analyzing and understanding social processes and lived experiences, and in this case, to better capture the participants personal experiences and their true meaning (Bickman & Rog, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Larsen, 2023; Rich & Ginsburg, 1999; Sofaer, 1999, p. 1999).

3.1. Sampling Strategy

Sampling in qualitative research is about collecting specific cases or events that can contribute and deepen the researcher's knowledge and ability to answer the study's research questions (Mohd Ishak & Abu Bakar, 2014). The cases chosen for this research are believed to be ones who can offer meaningful insights into the enablers and barriers of employee participation in corporate volunteering activities.

Considering that this research was conducted in partnership with a non-profit organization, specifically, in their corporate volunteering team-building activities, the sampling method chosen to carry out the research was the purposive sampling method. This type of sampling allows the researcher to sort out which categories of individuals are fit to study — in this case, to interview — in order to be able to collect relevant and rich data that will address the research questions at hand (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Mason, 2002; Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024; Robinson, 2014). Following Freedman's Stakeholder Theory, the sample was composed of different stakeholders: employees, managers, CSR organizers/responsible and project managers and coordinators from the non-profit organization. Different clusters of stakeholders were interviewed given that, in the context of corporate volunteering, they all play an equally important role and consequently have an individual perspective on the subject; additionally, before, during and after these initiatives, relationships between these clusters are developed or

were pre-existing, which leads to the experience for one stakeholder to be influenced by another, creating an interdependent relationship (Freeman et al., 2007; Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). For example, employee's experience is influenced by their manager being present, as well as it also depends on the company's organization and NGO project management. Figure 1 represents the interdependent relations between the different interview clusters included in the purposive sample.



1: Interdependent relationship between sampling clusters

The selected individuals or groups of individuals have characteristics that made them relevant to address the research questions and subsequently interviewing them allowed the formulation of theories and concepts designed to answer the central lines of inquiry (J. Devers & M. Frankel, 2000; Mason, 2002). In this sense, the sample clusters consisted of employees, to understand their experiences, motivations and perception of corporate volunteer, as well as what factors, individual or organizational that facilitate or hinder their participation; employees in management positions, to explore their perception regarding employee participation and organizational support as well as the challenges that can serve as a barrier; CSR initiatives organizers from the participating company, to understand how companies plan, communicate, evaluate these initiatives, and identify factors that enable or hinder participations; corporate volunteering organizers from non-profit association, to analyze the collaboration between the promoter and the company and what challenges might appear and coordinators, to understand what is a typical volunteer activity with this NGO and what their perceptions of company volunteers are through the activity.

3.2. Data Collection Method

The qualitative data collection method thought out to be the best fit for this study were interviews, specifically a semi-structured interview method. Semi-structure interviews are organized interviews that have open-ended question, giving the interviewee more space to share his/hers experiences and opinions, and therefore allowing more forthcoming answers. At the same time, this type of interview offers to the interviewer more room to maneuver the questions, not having to stick thoroughly to the original interview guide — for example, the interviewer can add or remove questions during the interview based on the flow of the conversation and the answers from the interviewee (Basias & Pollalis, 2018; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The use of semi-structured interviews allows the creation of an interview environment where the participants have the opportunity to fully express their thoughts and opinions. Thus, the participants find themselves in a setting where they can more easily share their personal experiences and insights on the barriers and enablers of employee participation in corporate volunteering initiatives, potentially providing answers to the study's guiding research questions.

The data was collected during corporate volunteering activities organized by the non-profit organization. The NGO is an association that combats house poverty in Portugal, and one of their active programs, which is a corporate volunteer activity where companies help rehabilitate Portuguese institutions, like orphanages, nursing homes, day centers, mainly through painting (and sometimes other technical work). The non-profit organization helped organize and schedule interviews, opening its doors to their CV activities and facilitating participant recruitment in the interviews.

A total of 13 interviews were conducted during the data collection phase. The sample is represented in the figure below.

Interview Index		
Number of Interview	Cluster/ Role	Company
1	Managers	Company A
1	Managers	Company B
2	Employees	Company A
3	Employees	Company B
1	CSR Organizers	Company A
2	CSR Organizers	Company B
2	CV Organizer	Non Profit
1	CV Coordinator	Non Profit

2: Sample composition

An interview guide was designed and followed for each cluster of interviewees but, in addition, following the semi-structured interview method, additional questions or sub-questions were asked when an answer did not fully respond to the asked question. Furthermore, in the first interviews with a new cluster, additional questions were also asked when a new topic emerged that felt important to explore, and the same questions would be reproduced in further interviews. It is believed that data saturation was reached with all 13 interviews, meaning that no new findings or themes were emerging in the data (Francis et al., 2010; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). Although the interviews were structured according to their targeted cluster interview, the same topics were addressed across all interviews (taking apart some exceptions questions related to the specific cluster/role of the interviewee). Moreover, it important to note that the participants share a common experience, namely, all of them taking part in corporate volunteering actions. As a result, the same themes and concepts started to arise through the data collection process, allowing for data saturation to be reached through the answers of multiple participants to the same questions/topic questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). All interviews were conducted in person, in Portuguese and were audio recorded, with the consent of all participants and with full guarantee of confidentiality of personal or identifiable information and were later transcribed to a Word document with the help of Gladia, an audio transcription AI platform.

Section / Literature Theme	Research Questions	Interview Question
Introductory/ Contextual Questions	—	- What is your age? - How long have you been working in the company? - Can you tell me about your role in the company and how you first got involved in the volunteering activity? - How would you describe your company's culture? - How did the opportunity to participate in this activity come up? - Have you participated in other volunteering initiatives before, either inside or outside the company?
Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) and Corporate Volunteering as a CSI mechanism Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR	RQ 1. What enablers and barriers shape employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	- How are the supported projects for these initiatives selected? - How would you describe your experience during the volunteering day?
Benefits and Risks of Corporate Volunteering	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- How did you first learn about this experience? What information was given to you about the activity?
Benefits of Corporate Volunteering for companies and employees Motivation and Meaningfulness at work Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.2 What individual factors (personal values, motivations, or previous experiences) influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?	- What motivated you to take part in this volunteering activity? Do you feel there is a connection between volunteering and your personal values? - In your perspective, would you say that corporate volunteering has an impact in your motivation at work? What about in the team spirit? - Would you say you gained or learned something from this experience? - Does taking part in corporate volunteering affect in any way how you view your company or your work? - What would make the experience more appealing for you to participate again?
Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- How did your company support your participation (e.g., workload reduction, organized ride, provided lunch)? - Were there any challenges related to your workload, schedule, or management support?
Conclusion / Closing Questions	—	- In general, how would you describe your corporate volunteering experience? - Is there anything else related to your experience or opinion about corporate volunteering that you feel is

important to share, which we haven't discussed during this interview?

3: Alignment between literature review, research questions and employee interview questions

Section / Literature Theme	Research Questions	Interview Question
Introductory/ Contextual Questions	—	- What is your age? - How long have you been working in the company? - Can you describe your role in the company? - What is your role relatively to volunteering initiatives promoted by the company? - Have you participated in other volunteering initiatives before, either inside or outside the company?
Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) and Corporate Volunteering as a CSI mechanism Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- How are the supported projects for these initiatives selected? - What goals do you think the company is trying to achieve by promoting corporate volunteering initiatives?
Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) and Corporate Volunteering as a CSI mechanism Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR	RQ 1.2 What individual factors (personal values, motivations, or previous experiences) influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?	- How do employees generally react when these volunteering opportunities are announced?
Social Exchange Theory Benefits of Corporate	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- What is your opinion relatively to the realization of these activities? - What factors do you think encourage employees to participate? Is there any kind of incentives to participate in these initiatives? (i.e.

Volunteering for companies and employees		internal recognition, team goals, rewards)
Social Exchange Theory Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- Do you usually communicate or promote these activities to your team?
Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- How does the company support or prepare teams for volunteering (workload reduction, logistics, communication)? - Are there any barriers from a managerial perspective, for example, lack of resources, work overload, derived from the participation in these initiatives? - Do you see any challenges balancing business priorities with volunteering initiatives?
Potential Downsides and Risks of Corporate Volunteering	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees’ experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	- Have you noticed any factors that discourage employee participation? - Do you see any challenges balancing business priorities with volunteering initiatives?
Benefits of Corporate Volunteering for companies and employees Meaningfulness at work Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.2 What individual factors (personal values, motivations, or previous experiences) influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?	- From your perspective, how does volunteering impact employees’ motivation, teamwork, or morale? - What improvements could make future volunteering experiences more effective and gratifying?
Conclusion / Closing Questions	—	- In general, how you evaluate the impact of corporate volunteering in the work environment and teams? - Is there anything else related to your experience or opinion about corporate volunteering that you feel is important to share, which we haven’t discussed during this interview?

4: Alignment between literature review, research questions and managers' interview questions

Section / Literature Theme	Research Questions	Interview Question
Introductory/ Contextual Questions	—	- What is your age? - How long have you been working in the company? - Can you describe your role in the company and the planning and managing corporate volunteering initiatives? - How would you describe your company's culture?
Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) and Corporate Volunteering as a CSI mechanism Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives? RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- How does corporate volunteering fit within your company's broader CSR strategy? - What are the main goals the company hopes to achieve through these volunteering activities? - How do you decide which projects or partners to work with? - o What do you take most into account when making this decision? (i.e. employee opinion, company values) - How does the company measure the success or impact of its volunteering activities? - What changes you would like to implement that could improve future initiatives?
Motivation and Meaningfulness at work Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering? RQ 1.2 What individual factors (personal values, motivations, or previous experiences) influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?	- Would you say the employees are receptive and supportive of these initiatives? - o If so, do you think it's because of their own personal values or because the company encourages this environment (or both)?
Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- What strategies are put into action to encourage employee participation? - How does the company balance volunteering activities with the business operations (time, budget, workload)?
Potential Downsides and Risks of Corporate Volunteering	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	- What are the biggest challenges you face when organizing volunteering initiatives?

Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees’ experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	- Do you encounter any participation resistance from employees or management?
Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR		
Benefits of Corporate Volunteering for companies and employees	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees’ experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives? RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- Based on your experience, what organizational factors help positive employee experiences? o What factors hinder positive experiences? - In general, how do you evaluate the contribution of corporate volunteering initiatives for the company and for employees?
Potential Downsides and Risks of Corporate Volunteering		
Conclusion / Closing Questions	—	- Is there anything else related to your experience or opinion about corporate volunteering that you feel is important to share, which we haven’t discussed during this interview?

5: Alignment between literature review, research questions and CSR responsible interview questions

Section / Literature Theme	Research Questions	Interview Question
Introductory/ Contextual Questions	—	- What is your age? - How long have you been working in this NGO? - Could you describe your role in this NGO? - What is your role in organizing corporate volunteering events with partner companies?
Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) and Corporate Volunteering as a CSI mechanism	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- How do you collaborate with companies to plan and coordinate volunteering activities?
Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR Benefits of Corporate Volunteering for companies and employees Motivation and Meaningfulness at work	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees’ experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	- What elements do you consider essential for a successful corporate volunteering project?
Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- What factors from companies make coordination easier? - o And what factors make it more difficult?
Motivation and Meaningfulness at work Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.2 What individual factors (personal values, motivations, or previous experiences) influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?	- How would you describe the motivation and involvement of employees during the activities? - Have you noticed any patterns of motivation or reluctance among corporate volunteers?
Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees’ experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	- What barriers or logistical challenges often come up during preparation or implementation of the activity? - From your perspective, what organizational practices from companies could enable smoother collaboration?

Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	- How does this NGO evaluate the outcomes or success of these corporate volunteering projects?
Benefits of Corporate Volunteering for companies and employees	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	- In general, how would you evaluate the impact of these initiatives in companies?
Potential Downsides and Risks of Corporate Volunteering		
Conclusion / Closing Questions	—	- Is there anything else related to your experience or opinion about corporate volunteering that you feel is important to share, which we haven't discussed during this interview?

6: Alignment between literature review, research questions and NGO project manager interview questions

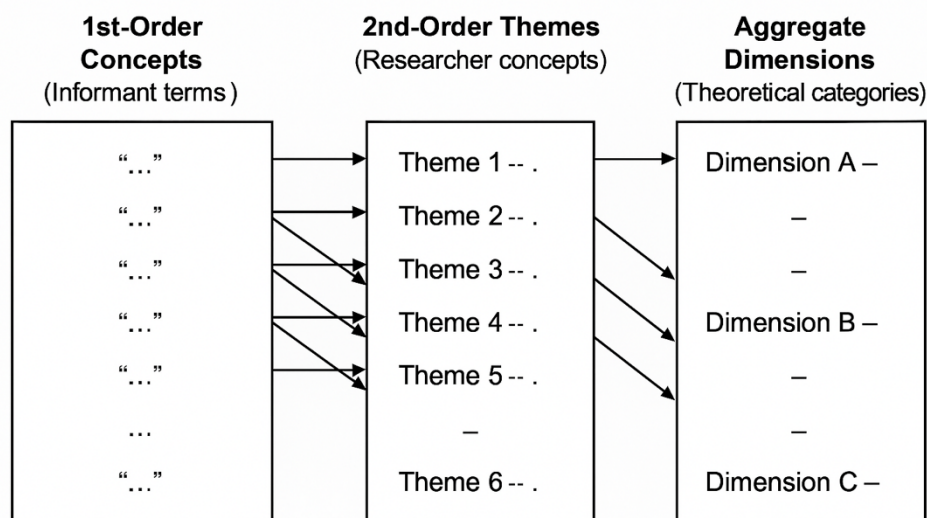
Section / Literature Theme	Research Questions	Interview Question
Introductory/ Contextual Questions	—	What is your age? How long have you been working in NP? Can you describe your role as a team building coordinator for this NGO? What is your role in organizing corporate volunteering events with partner companies? What kind of orientation and information do you receive from the NGO before coordinating a team? Can you describe a day in a NP team building? What responsibilities do you have during the team building initiative? (i.e. team management, communication, logistics)
Motivation and Meaningfulness at work Social Exchange Theory	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering? RQ 1.2 What individual factors (personal values, motivations, or previous experiences) influence how employees respond to corporate volunteering?	How would you describe your interaction with the volunteers during the initiative? Would you say that the coordinator has a fundamental role in the motivation of the volunteers during the activity? Would you say the participants experience varies depending on the coordinator? In what way? What strategies do you normally use to motivate the volunteers and guarantee a good group environment?
Potential Downsides and Risks of Corporate Volunteering	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	What types of challenges do you usually face with the volunteers? And the companies themselves? How do you deal with these challenges?
Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR Benefits of Corporate Volunteering for companies and employees Motivation and Meaningfulness at work	RQ 1 – What enablers and barriers shape employees' experiences of corporate volunteering initiatives?	In your experience what are the main factors that make this type of initiative successful? What behaviors or attitudes from volunteers facilitate the flow of the activity? What behaviors make difficult the experience or dynamic?
Legitimacy; Symbolic vs Substantive CSR Corporate Social	RQ 1.1 What organizational factors (communication, leadership support) enable or hinder positive employee experiences of corporate volunteering?	Do you notice differences between companies, in terms of involvement, motivation or team spirit? Can you tell me why do you think those differences exist? (i.e. company environment, type of industry)

Innovation (CSI) and Corporate Volunteering as a CSI mechanism		
Conclusion / Closing Questions	—	Do you have any suggestion to better the flow and dynamic of the Team Buildings? And to better the experience for volunteers? In general, how you evaluate the contribution of these types of activities for the volunteers and for the companies? Is there anything else related to your experience or opinion about corporate volunteering that you feel is important to share, which we haven't discussed during this interview?

7: Alignment between literature review, research questions and NGO team-building coordinator interview questions

3.3. Data Analysis Method

The analyses of the interviews were conducted following the Gioia methodology. According to Gioia et al. (2013) the method follows an inductive approach, meaning it begins with the analysis of raw data — in this case, the semi-structured interviews — with the aim of developing “grounded theory” based on the participants organizational experiences, through a three-step coding system. Furthermore, it is also based on two theoretical assumptions, first that the organizational world is socially constructed and second that people can make sense of their lived experiences, understand them and explain them. On the first step of analysis the researcher distills the information on a superficial level, the information is separated into all types of different categories according to the answers from the participants, keeping the categories coherent with the terms selected by the informants. On the second step the researcher examines the already formulated categories to try and find patterns that might suggest concepts and themes that can answer the research questions. On the third step of the method the researcher reviews the themes found on the second step and looks to further narrowing down the categories into aggregated dimensions. Once the researcher develops the aggregated dimensions a base has been established for the creation of a data structure, a visual aid that shows how the researcher moved from raw data to themes to aggregated dimensions, as a way to show qualitative rigor. Once a clear data structure is built the research can proceed to developing a grounded theory model, transparently showing the data to theory connections (Gioia et al., 2013).



8: Example of a Data Structure Following the Gioia Methodology. adapted from Gioia et al., 2013. generated by Chatgpt

4. Findings

Following the Gioia Method, after the transcriptions of all the interviews, they were carefully analyzed one by one, to collect direct quotes from participants, that later would be transformed into first order concepts. On this first step, 115 quotes were isolated and analyzed, which then were transformed into 110 first order concepts. On the second step of the method, 27 second order themes were formulated which were then grouped into 8 aggregated dimensions. This chapter explores each aggregated dimension, explaining its meaning and analyzing it empirically. Figure 9, attached below, consists of part of a visual representation of the data structure of the Gioia Method, the aggregated dimension analyzed in 4.1.

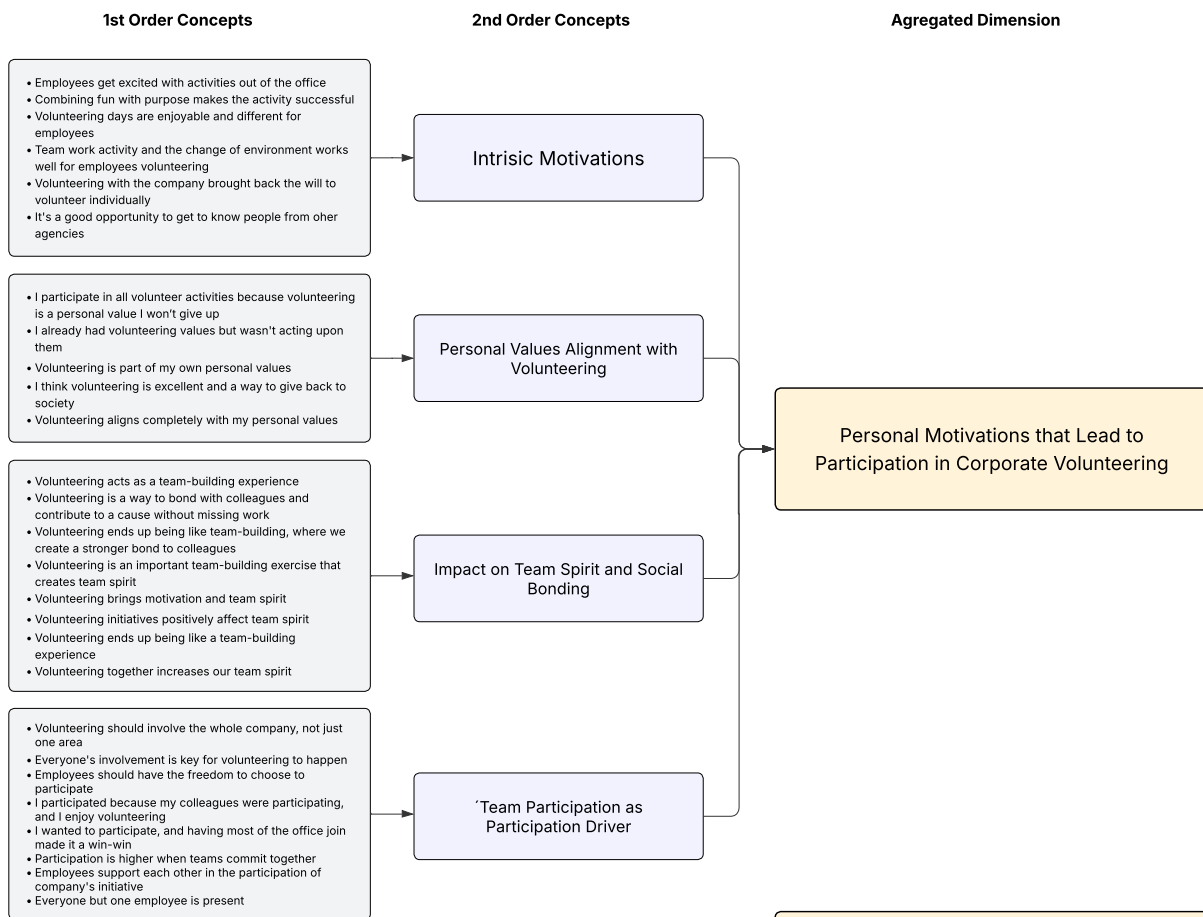


Figure 9: Gioia Method: (Part of) Visual Data Structure

4.1. Personal Motivations that Lead to Participation in Corporate Volunteering

This aggregated dimension, represented in Figure 9, captures different personal reasons participants shared that lead them to want to participate in corporate volunteering, such as their own personal motivations: wanting to get to know other employees better or a change of environment; their personal values aligning with volunteering; the impact CV activities have on team spirit and social bonding; and the participation of other colleagues and freedom of choice, which incentivizes their own participation: “We all came together; we had already planned the cars [...] there's this mutual support.” (EB3)

Individual factors are related to employees' own view on volunteering and corporate volunteering, whether they see it as an expression of their personal values, as an opportunity for growth or social bonding, or as an obligation or disruption of their work agenda. When volunteering is already part of employees' personal values, CV will be an opportunity for them to express and act upon them through their work life, adding more meaning to their jobs. Once employees view it as an activity that will be different from their normal workday, that will add value to their personal and work lives, they are more open to join, as well as when they realize that other colleagues will also participate, because it will contribute to team-spirit and sense of belonging.

4.2. Personal Barriers to Participate in Corporate Volunteering

Individual Prioritization of Work Over Volunteering was the main and only explicit personal barrier found, where it was understood that some people do not join the activities because they are very work-focused due to own personal reasons or due to management pressure. If employees have a very worked focused mindset, participating in activities such as corporate volunteering might be pushed to second place or seem incompatible with their work schedule, as they prioritize working over engaging in these activities.

4.3. Employee Experience Outcomes of Corporate Volunteering

Inside this aggregated dimension there are two second order concepts: Corporate Volunteering as a Source of Meaningful Motivation and Impact on Employees View of Organization. This dimension essentially expresses the aftermath of some employee's experience from corporate volunteering such as a motivation, purpose and a bigger appeal to the organization:

“It's clear that the company cares about social causes, and for me that's a very positive thing and gives me more motivation to work.”

— EA2

Like EA2, other interviewees also showed that by their organization having a clear initiative to support to social causes, especially one they can be a part of, allows employees to see their work as more than a job, cultivates a sense of pride in their job, fosters motivation to work as well as it makes the organization be perceived as a more attractive place to work.

4.4. Strategic and Cultural Drives of Corporate Volunteering

Belonging to this aggregated dimension are 6 second order concepts, that together reflect organization's view on corporate volunteering, specifically how their culture, strategy and actions are aligned with it and support it: Company's Culture, Company's Commitment to Corporate Volunteering, Company Support of CV, Company's Orientation Toward Social Responsibility, Company's Strategic Alignment with Volunteering, Company's Motivation. These concepts represent structural organizational characteristics where corporate volunteering is or should be present: "I can add that I think all companies should do this at the societal level." And "The company is completely open to us, in fact, they encourage us to come." (EB1).

Organizational culture, support, strategic alignment, motivations and orientation can be seen for employees as drivers of corporate volunteering when the organization embraces corporate social responsibility as part of its culture and employees can see it reflected in the company's values and investment decisions. Together with this, it is also important that social responsibility is maintained, meaning support and action of social charisma should entail a level of compromise and consistency, given one time actions do not translate to a social responsibility culture.

4.5. Organizational Support Structures for Corporate Volunteering

Captured by this aggregated dimension are support systems the company provides in order for employee participation to run smoothly and avoid their participation to cause setbacks to their work. Integrated in this dimension are Leadership Support, Time-off Policies, Flexibility in Managing Work Schedules and Company's Operational and Logistical Planning for Volunteering Activities, such as preparation and disclosure of when these events will happen: "We know in advance; we organize our work in such a way that we already know that we won't be there that day."

— MB1

It is important for organizations to establish support structures for a positive employee experience: leadership support, from direct managers as well as company leaders, given management can have the decision power to limit CV activities and because their support and

actual participation serve as role modeling examples, legitimizing the organization's intentions. Absence from management can make employees perceive less permission to participate and place more pressure on the decision-making. Time-off policies, preplanning and flexibility shows consideration for employees' work, cutting off work overload and stress, assuring the company's true support.

4.6. Communication and Recognition

Internal Recognition and Visibility, Internal Communication and External Communication/Recognition are the 3 second order concepts that make up this aggregated dimension, and as the name suggests, it represents the different forms of communication made by the organization, external and internal, of corporate volunteering as well as if or how employees are recognize for participating in these activities: "We also repost on social media so that people feel recognized as well." (CB1)

Communication serves as pre-event preparation, to publicize and notify employees, guarantying everyone is informed and can organize their work schedule around the event, and as post-event reporting, both internally and externally, recognizing employees for their work and meaningful contribution. Preparation and recognition demonstrate to employees that the organization truly supports their participation and cares about the social initiatives undertaken.

4.7. Organizational Limitations to Support Corporate Volunteering

This aggregated dimension captures some of the obstacles faced by employees when they participate or want to participate in corporate volunteering actions, such as Lack of Incentives to Volunteer; Perception of Workload Impact, meaning that employee's might have the idea that participating in these actions will accumulate work; Time Constraints on Volunteering, refers to employees having time to participate for half a day or a whole day in these actions, which also depends on the time of the year and work peaks and Limited Variety of Volunteering Opportunities, which refers to employees wanting volunteering opportunities in different sectors. Lack of incentives and of variety of volunteering opportunities might make CV less appealing for some employees. Time constraints and work peaks can also influence participation, it is important for companies to understand their work peaks and seasonality, it was understood that in periods of more work employees are less open to participate in CV activities, given they will have less time to manage any possible extra workload that might surge. This does not mean employees do not value corporate volunteering activities, but that

organizations, especially CSR organizers, should have work peaks and seasonality in consideration before setting a date or time for the activity.

4.8. Organizational Structural Constraints on Participation

This aggregated dimension refers to structural and inherent limitations companies have on employee participation in corporate volunteering activities, such as Company's Operational and Logistical Planning for Volunteering Activities, for example, location, schedule organization and Company's Characteristics Affect Participation, namely size of the company:

"I rarely see anyone say they don't want to, [...] or that it's too far away; our network is also very widespread throughout the country, and therefore most of the initiatives are more focused on Lisbon, Porto, and Braga."

— CB2

Despite efforts from organizations, there can still be structural limitations on supporting employee participation in corporate volunteering. It was perceived that workers responsible for organizing CV activities strive to choose a date for these events where everyone can be present, but this may not be easy, especially in companies where employees are more independent and do not share a common work schedule. The same happens when employees are spread out through different locations across the country, which makes it harder for employees that live outside of the main cities to participate. Employees who are affected by these limitations are excluded from organizational social bonding moments, which can have a negative impact on their affective commitment to the organization.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings brought up from the Gioia Methodology and its relation to the study's research questions, as well as theoretical and practical contributions, followed by future research and an acknowledgment of the limitations the study was subjected to.

The findings show that employee's participation in these activities is dependent simultaneously on their own will, motivation and idea of how CV will affect them and on organizational encouragement and support.

5.1. Enablers and Barriers Influencing Employees' Experiences of Corporate Volunteering

The findings show that employee's participation in these activities is dependent simultaneously on their own will, motivation and idea of how CV will affect them and on organizational encouragement and support. Through the analysis of the aggregated dimensions and their 2nd order concepts it is possible to point out what individual factors will act as enablers, fostering will to participate and what factors act as barriers and push away employees. Individual enablers are of simple understanding, employees are more prone to take part when they see CV as an activity that will add meaning to their jobs and as an opportunity to engage in social interactions, ultimately building stronger relationships with coworkers, reinforcing Pratt & Ashforth (2003) posit that meaningfulness at work can be achieved through value driven goals, besides task-oriented objectives and Boštjančič et al. (2018) claim that CV creates opportunities for social interactions and establishing friendships. On the other side, employees that have a higher sense of meaningfulness in their job, might not have much regard for CV activities, and prioritize work instead of participating (Rosso et al., 2010).

The analysis of the organizational factors, although similarly shows what organizational characteristics act as enablers and barriers, also present us with factors that can act both as an enabler or as a barrier. Some organizational enablers, much like individual enablers, derive from the meaningful experience it might be to participate in CV, fulfilling a possible work meaningfulness gap, enriching employees' work experience, ultimately enhancing employees' sense of belonging in the company (Boštjančič et al., 2018; Brzustewicz et al., 2024). Organizational barriers derive from a lack of support structures or logistic planning which can transform participation in CV into an added weight for employees instead of a meaningful

experience. Corporate volunteering needs to be seen as an activity that will contribute to employees' happiness and work motivation, but this does not occur when there isn't an applied effort from the organization to incentivize employees' participation or minimize the impact on their work, either by carefully scheduling the activity or giving work flexibility. Lack of support can also translate into a perceived lack of legitimacy of CV actions, to be thought of as just for appearance, lacking real effort to realize the actions and to achieve change (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Rodrigue et al., 2013). Other organizational barriers are connected to intrinsic characteristics, for example, the size, location or online work. When employees feel disconnected from other coworkers, either because they live far away or because they work online, their will to build strong relationships is lower, reducing the chances to participate in corporate volunteering activities, an activity that generates societal value but that also fosters team spirit and social bonding (Boštjančič et al., 2018). Organizational factors that can act as both enablers and barriers depend on the organizational approach to corporate volunteering. Purpose is at the baseline of corporate volunteering; organizations choose to approach CV either with an honest goal of contributing to society or use it as a symbolic act for public relations purposes (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Rodrigue et al., 2013). The study's findings are consistent with Schons & Steinmeier (2016) research, the organization's culture, commitment and strategic alignment with CV ultimately reveals their true purpose; if this purpose is genuine employees embrace the culture and are more likely to participate in these initiatives, however a lack of authenticity creates a barrier to participation. Additionally, the study shows that management has a power position in relation to CV and, therefore, to employees' participation. When management is in alignment with CV their support or even participation serve as role modeling for employees' own participation, but, on the other hand, if management is not in accordance with these initiatives employees might feel doubts about participating, which can set up a barrier, which depicts the Social Exchange Theory present in an employee-manager relation in the context of CV (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Slack et al., 2015). Another dimension worth noting is communication, both in terms of pre-event communication, to promote the activity but also to give employees time to prepare and organize their work accordingly, and post-event communication, as an employee recognition method, which will incentivize them to join in future activities. Lack of communication, recognition and advanced planning difficults employees' participation because they might not be able to dispense of a workday or half day to join a CV activity when not previously warned, as well as might not see future benefits from participating. As Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) mention, in Social Exchange Theory, a reward is expected for a given action in a two-sided continuous

exchange. In this sense employees that do not have recognition for participating in CV might not participate again, knowing they will not receive recognition from their organization.

Results also showed a dynamic relationship between enablers and barriers to employee participation. It was realized that not all enablers and barriers present the same weight on decision making, and that essentially it depends on what each individual values in their personal and work lives. For example, relating to individual enablers, some employees might find important the presence of their coworkers in CV to drive their own participation, while what might drive other employees is their personal alignment with volunteering values. Similarly, relating to organizational enablers/barriers, the perception of workload impact might be greater for some employees, which might hinder their participation, while others might focus more on the support and flexibility the organization provides them. Participation is subjective, promoting enablers does not automatically guarantee employee participation, barriers can outweigh enablers, and vice-versa, depending on individuals' values, work habits and priorities. This dynamic relation explains why employees submitted to the same corporate conditions might respond differently to CV. Nevertheless, it is important to note that organizations with strong, embedded enablers have a high participation rate, as it is the case of company A.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes, in different dimensions to literature on Corporate Volunteering (CV) and Corporate Social Innovation (CSI). First, the study responds to Grant (2012) and Gatignon-Turnau & Mignonac (2015) call on further understanding why participation in corporate volunteering varies amongst employees, by exploring individual and organizational factors that affect employees will and wish to participate. The study demonstrated a dynamic relationship between different factors, such as perception of work meaningfulness, workload impact, social bonding and support structures. Second, it reinforces Social Exchange Theory (SET) in the context of CV, as the results revealed employees take into consideration the benefits, they will take out of participating in CV activities, namely sense of belonging, work meaningfulness and the perceived costs, such as time and impact on workload. This perspective serves as support evidence that organizational enablers might balance employees perceived cost. Third, this research has contributed to literature on symbolic and substantive CSR, and the search for corporate legitimacy. It was understood that an organization's culture, strategy and communication that embraces CV is perceived as genuine, even when PR comes along with it, because employees are also involved in the process. Finally, the study reinforces literature on

CV as a source of meaningfulness at work. Several employees demonstrated that participating in CV actions enhances their work motivation and team spirit and makes them see their job beyond a set of tasks, which ultimately contributes to their intention to stay at the company.

5.3. Practical Contributions

This study offers different practical contributions for the literature on implementation of corporate volunteering initiatives, demonstrating that employee participation is not dependent on a single factor, but is influenced by different organizational elements. The empirical findings were transformed into an implementation guideline, represented by Figure 10, which organizations can consult to structure or better their implementation of CV activities.

Incentive Dimension	Practical Incentive	Barrier/Enabler Addressed	Key Actor
Structural incentives	Time-off for volunteering	Time constraints	Managers
	Advanced planning and calendar integration	Work-volunteering conciliation	CSR Organizers
Support incentives	Flexibility	Workload Impact	Managers
Leadership incentives	Leadership participation in CV	Lack of leadership support on participation	Managers
Recognition incentives	Internal and external recognition through communication	Lack of recognition	Managers; Communication department; HR
Meaning incentive	CV connected to personal values or related to organizational skills	Low meaningfulness	CSR Organizers; NGOs
Social bonding incentives	Team based CV experience	Low team spirit	CSR Organizers
CV options incentive	Different CV opportunities	Low attachment to CV cause	CSR Organizers; NGOs

10: CV implementation incentives/guidelines

For organizations, Figure 10 shows that employee participation depends on how CV is intrinsically structured, its culture and communication and how it is supported, schedule flexibility, leadership support, among other findings. Organizations can learn from these new insights and implement or reinvent their corporate volunteering strategies according to the organizational enablers described in the study, to boost employee participation. The same goes for CSR organizers, as Figure 10 offers orientation on how to align employee and organizational expectations. A timely preparation, alongside clear communication, variety of opportunities and recognition strategies are key practices to follow to enhance employee engagement. For intermediaries, like non-profit organizations, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of organizational dynamics regarding corporate volunteering, allowing for anticipation on participation barriers. These insights help better intermediaries' collaboration models with organizations and implement practices that will generate more social impact.

6. Conclusion

This study is one of the first analysis of enablers and barriers that influence employee participation in corporate volunteering actions in the Portuguese context, bringing together different factors that shape employees' experience and deconstructing them to understand their impact. The findings show a dynamic relationship between these different factors; the decision to take part in CV initiatives is influenced by a mix of personal and organizational motivations and discouragements, where each individual weighs their individual motivations, perception of cost-benefit and organizational support structures, or lack of them, in their decision. It is important to recognize that even though each enabler/barrier can have a different weight on each employee's individual decision, an organization that fosters enablers, such as flexibility or recognition, opens more doors for employee's participation in their corporate volunteering activities, and ultimately, in their CSR and CSI initiatives. Corporate Volunteering is an initiative integrated in organizations Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Social Innovation strategies that can serve a strategic role of developing a bond between the organization and its employees, reinforcing employee's perception of legitimacy, meaningfulness and sense of belonging. However, this bond can only be developed when employees perceive their organization's CSI practices as genuine, as part of the organization itself, embedded in the culture and practices. Therefore, the initiative to develop Corporate Volunteering activities can be an expression of the organization's values, practices and culture, therefore, fostering CV and its enablers is simultaneously fortifying the organization CSR and CSI practices, ensuring authentic experiences, that generate shared value.

6.1. Research Limitations

The research presents several limitations that are important to recognize for a better interpretation of the results. First, the qualitative design, although suitable to explore perception and experiences this methodology entails subjectivity and interpretation from the investigators side. The small sample of 13 interviews and the chosen sampling strategy, purposive sampling limited the generality and comparative validity of the study, for they may not represent all the different experiences there may be in other contexts or organizations. Second, given the topics of volunteering and corporate responsibility, the answers from some participants may have presented social desirability bias, where perhaps their answers showed more positive experiences than negative, which may have affected positive interpretation of some of the

enablers and minimize effect of barriers. Furthermore, the data was collected during the corporate volunteering activities, which may have influenced the answers from participants, given they may have reflected their momentary experience and not long-term opinions. Third, time and resources limitations influenced the number of interviews and the capacity of study's depth. The field work and access to participants were limited, which may have restricted complementary observations and conclusions.

6.2. Future research

Considering the study's findings and presented limitations, future research can be further developed. It would be of interest to deepen this research by interviewing employees who did not take part in the volunteering activities, as this study only includes interviews with employees who attended the CV action. By studying those who chose not to participate, especially those exposed to the same participation conditions, would allow for a better clarification on the barriers to participation, the one that have more weight, and possibility uncover barriers that this study did not find. It would also be of interest to advance to a quantitative study, with a bigger sample, to test the relative weight of the different enablers and barriers, and how they are connected to each other, understanding the relationship amongst them and to the employee. Future research could create a better understanding of enablers and barriers for employee participation, helping organizations better implement these activities and ultimately better their CSR and CSI strategies.

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Appendices

Interview Index Codes

Interview Index		
Interview Code	Cluster/ Role	Company
MA1	Manager	Company A
CA1	CV organizer	Company A
EA1	Employee	Company A
EA2	Employee	Company A
sMB1	Manager	Company B
CB1	CV organizer	Company B
CB2	CV organizer	Company B
EB1	Employee	Company B
EB2	Employee	Company B
EB3	Employee	Company B
NGO1	Partnership Manager	Non-profit
NGO2	Project Managers	Non-profit
NGO3	Team-buildingCoordinator	Non-profit

Visual Data Structure Gioia Method

