
Doing Better by Doing Good

A Quantitative Study on the Effects of Corporate Volunteering on
Employee Well-Being and Organizational Pride

Bachelor of Science Thesis in Retail Management

Stockholm School of Economics

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Abstract

In the pursuit of sustainable strategies to enhance employee well-being and stay competitive in attracting top talent, corporate volunteering (CV) has emerged as a promising approach. This thesis investigates the psychological effects of CV on employee well-being, specifically focusing on happiness and meaningfulness in both life and work, as well as organizational pride. Through a quantitative study, survey data from employees who participated in a CV activity was compared to a control group of non-participants. The results indicate that CV participation significantly enhances participants' happiness and perceptions of meaningfulness, both in life and at work. However, no significant difference was found regarding organizational pride between the two groups, suggesting that a single CV activity may be insufficient to influence feelings of pride. Furthermore, the study reveals that task significance and the perceived effort invested in the CV activity are positively associated with well-being outcomes, underscoring the value of personally meaningful and effortful engagement. These findings position CV not just as a philanthropic initiative, but as a strategic tool for organizations aiming to foster human-centered, resilient workplaces.

Keywords: Corporate volunteering, Happiness, Happiness at work, Meaningfulness, Work meaningfulness, Organizational pride, Task significance, Effort

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Terminology

This section outlines key terms as they are used within the context of this study to ensure clarity and avoid misinterpretations.

Corporate Volunteering (CV):

Refers to the act of giving one's time, knowledge, or skills as part of a community service, outreach or social responsibility activity on company time without additional compensation or direct personal remuneration (Grant, 2012). For efficiency, the abbreviation CV will be used throughout.

Well-Being:

Specified in this study through four dimensions: happiness, happiness at work, meaningfulness, and work meaningfulness.

Volunteer Organization:

Organizations with a social mission that deliver CV programs to businesses, connecting them with meaningful volunteer opportunities.

Organization:

Businesses that engage in volunteer activities as part of their broader operations or corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts.

Participant / Volunteer:

An employee who stated that they participated in a CV activity through their current organization. These terms are used interchangeably.

Non-Participant / Non-Volunteer:

An employee who stated that they did not participate in a CV activity through their current organization. These terms are used interchangeably.

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1.0. Introduction

What if one of the most effective tools for boosting employee well-being isn't a perk or a pay raise - but a few hours of volunteering? After all, employee well-being lays the foundation for both performance and productivity within organizations (Haddon, 2018). In an ever-so digitalized era, where human competence is both scarce and sought after, attracting and retaining the right employees has become a strategic imperative across industries. Research shows that a small group of highly engaged employees often drives the majority of an organization's performance, with around 20% of staff responsible for up to 80-98% of the output (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2016).

So, how do organizations win the ongoing war for recruiting the best talent? Following the common strategy of simply "asking people what they want and giving it to them" often results in a focus on material and top-of-mind incentives, such as salary increases or remote work flexibility. However, these strategies are short-term and easily replicable by competitors. Instead, non-material aspects, such as connection, community and meaning in the workplace are becoming increasingly important for building sustainable employee-employer relationships (Mortensen & Edmondson, 2023). Previous studies show that employees are willing to accept lower salaries for more meaningful work (Lysova et al., 2023), and that Generation Z increasingly values non-monetary incentives over traditional monetary rewards (Tarigan et al., 2022). Thus, fostering employee well-being is not just the right thing to do - it is a competitive imperative.

However, supporting employee well-being is far from easy as the world of work does not exist in a vacuum. Individuals today navigate a constant stream of distressing news and social pressures, which take a toll on their psychological and emotional well-being. Recent data from Ipsos reveal that 15 of the 20 surveyed countries are now less happy than they were 14 years ago, underscoring a global decline in overall life satisfaction (Ipsos, 2025). In Sweden, employee stress-related illness has increased by 25% over the past five years (Försäkringskassan, 2024). This background noise of negativity can easily spill over into the workplace and affect how employees feel when entering their offices.

In the search for effective strategies to enhance employee well-being, corporate volunteering (hereafter referred to as CV), where employees engage in voluntary work during paid

working hours, is one approach within the corporate social responsibility field that is gaining traction (Carroll & Brown, 2018). Indeed, reports from Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose, a global coalition of multi-billion-dollar companies, indicate that 66% of its members offered CV programs in 2019, compared to 56% in 2016 (Rodell, 2021).

Drawing on psychological well-being theories, this thesis explores how CV influences employee well-being, particularly in terms of happiness and meaningfulness, both in life and at work. It also examines the extent to which CV participation influences organizational pride.

The selection of these outcome variables is grounded in both the nature of volunteering and the context in which it occurs. Happiness is a common measure of well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and helps assess whether CV contributes to a more positive emotional state, both at work and in life (e.g., Fisher, 2010; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Meaningfulness is especially relevant given that volunteering is inherently purpose-driven; it offers a natural context for fostering a sense of meaning across personal and professional domains (e.g., Fletcher & Schofield, 2019; Klein, 2016; Rodell, 2013; Schnell & Hoof, 2012; Sherman et al., 2011; Thoits, 2012). We also examine organizational pride, as employer-supported volunteering may strengthen employees' emotional connection to their organization by signaling shared values and a commitment to social impact (e.g., Pereira et al., 2021; Rodell et al., 2017).

Importantly, not all CV experiences are equal. Even when employees participate in the same activity, they may interpret and internalize the experience differently. Two psychological factors are particularly relevant in explaining this variability: task significance and effort. Task significance refers to the perceived impact of one's work on others (Hackman and Oldham, 1976), something especially salient in volunteering contexts where the goal is often to help. Meanwhile, effort reflects the emotional, cognitive, and physical energy an individual invests in an activity (Cady et al., 2017; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d; Sherman & Tal Shavit, 2023). Both constructs have been linked in previous research to enhanced motivation, engagement, and personal well-being (e.g., Faletahan et al., 2020; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Sherman & Tal Shavit, 2023; Lyubomirsky et al., 2011; Chancellor et al., 2014). Yet, their role in shaping the psychological outcomes of CV participation remains underexplored.

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to examine the psychological impact of CV by quantitatively comparing employees who participated in a CV activity with those who did not. This comparison addresses a notable research gap, and the findings advance several strands of literature by examining to what extent CV shapes employee well-being, even when participation is episodic. Through this investigation, we aim to understand if CV is more than a philanthropic gesture - whether it is, in fact, a strategic investment in human capital that organizations should consider in their pursuit of sustainable success.

Our research contributes to the growing literature on CV and employee well-being while offering practical insights for organizations seeking to design meaningful, human-centered strategies for supporting their workforce. The focus on a Swedish context further enhances the applicability of the findings within Swedish work cultures.

The following section explains the purpose and expected contributions of the study, after which the phenomenon of CV is introduced in greater detail, followed by the delimitations of this research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a presentation of the structural disposition of the thesis.

1.1. Purpose & Contributions

The purpose of this study is to examine whether, and to what extent, CV participation influences employee well-being, specifically happiness and meaningfulness, in a Swedish context. Additionally, the study investigates CV's potential effect on organizational pride, and explores whether employees' perceptions of task significance and effort when volunteering are associated with higher levels of well-being.

To address our research purpose, a quantitative approach is applied, comparing employees' wellbeing and organizational pride between those who participated in a CV activity and those who did not. Additionally, variations within the volunteering group are examined to investigate the impact of perceived task significance and effort.

From a practical perspective, the study examines whether CV can serve as a potential managerial tool for strengthening employee well-being. It aims to offer research-based insights for organizations contemplating investments in non-material incentives, and guidance for managers aiming to heighten positive psychological outcomes. Additionally, the

research aims to provide value to volunteer organizations by offering empirical support on how their programs can benefit organizations as well as highlight key considerations for designing impactful initiatives.

1.2. Background on Corporate Volunteering

Volunteering, at its core, refers to the act of freely giving one's time, knowledge, or skills for the benefit of other people, groups, or causes (Grant, 2012; Rodell & Lynch, 2016; Wilson, 2000). Three essential components encapsulate volunteering: it involves (1) the active giving of time and/or skills, rather than passive donations of money; (2) a planned activity, unlike spontaneous acts of helping; and (3) engagement within the context of a volunteer or charitable organization (Grant, 2012; Rodell, 2013). When volunteering takes place within the workplace, it is commonly referred to as corporate volunteering (CV), a concept that has gained increasing attention in both academic research and business practice. We follow Grant's (2012) definition of CV, being "giving one's time, knowledge or skills as part of a community service, outreach or social responsibility activity on company time without additional compensation or direct personal remuneration".

CV activities cover a broad spectrum of causes, from education and healthcare, to environmental sustainability and welfare, often addressing needs related to youth or the elderly (Sekar & Dyaram, 2017). These initiatives can range from formal agreements with volunteer organizations to more informal, flexible arrangements where employees choose their own volunteer activities. Employers typically support their employees' volunteer contributions by offering paid time off, flexible hours, financial benefits, gifts, or logistical support (Boštjančič et al., 2018; Rodell, 2021).

Why do employees choose to participate in CV initiatives? The motivations are diverse. For some, volunteering resonates deeply with their personal values and offers an opportunity for social connection. For others, it serves as an escape from personal challenges (Rodell, 2013; Wilson, 2000). Participation can also be driven by organizational factors, such as encouragement from management, the potential for recognition from supervisors, a desire to impress colleagues, or the opportunity to enhance career prospects (Boštjančič et al., 2018; Rodell, 2021).

To understand why some employees remain engaged in CV over time, the concept of identity is central (Gill, 2021; Grant, 2012). Specifically, research suggests that when volunteering becomes integrated into one's self-concept, individuals are more likely to continue volunteering over time (Kulik, 2022). This is because the self-concept is often anchored in one's moral identity, a psychological construct that guides actions in line with personal beliefs about morality. As this identity becomes internalized, volunteering becomes not just something a person does, but something that defines them, leading to sustained engagement. Additionally, individuals who have adopted a volunteer identity tend to influence their colleagues to similarly develop such identities (Gill, 2021).

The benefits of CV extend far beyond altruism. For organizations, CV has been linked to a range of positive outcomes, including improved job performance, increased knowledge and skill sharing, and enhanced external recognition (Boštjančič et al., 2018). Additionally, employees who volunteer tend to report deeper identification with their employer and stronger organizational commitment (Grant, 2012). Offering CV opportunities also makes organizations more attractive to potential recruits because applicants are drawn to the anticipated pride of affiliation, the alignment of values, and the promise of positive treatment by their employer (Rodell, 2021). In today's world of remote and hybrid work environments, CV programs are more relevant than ever, offering a powerful way to deepen employee connection, strengthen organizational culture, and cultivate a sense of community (Duschletta, 2024).

From the employee's perspective, CV participation can be a source of energy and increase stamina levels, while also fostering greater engagement and reinforcing the significance of their work (Rodell, 2021). Additionally, CV offers opportunities for social connection and a stronger sense of belonging (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2019; Boštjančič et al., 2018). Previous research has shown that long-term volunteering has been associated with a range of health-related benefits, including reduced symptoms of depression and improved self-perceived health (Wang et al., 2018).

Taken together, CV represents more than just charitable outreach. It is a multifaceted practice with the potential to benefit society, individuals, and the workplace.

1.3. Delimitations

As with any research, this thesis is subject to certain delimitations. These delimitations are primarily attributed to constraints in time and resources. Firstly, the study examines 14 organizations of varying sizes operating across different sectors in Sweden. While this diversity contributes to the generalizability of the findings, the selection of organizations was limited to those affiliated with only two volunteer organizations. Including a broader range of volunteer organizations, particularly those engaged in a wider variety of activities, could have further enriched the study. However, this was not feasible within the given timeframe.

Secondly, the research scope is delimited to exploring employee well-being outcomes in relation to CV initiatives. While we acknowledge that well-being is influenced by a multitude of factors beyond CV participation, investigating these additional influences falls outside the scope of this thesis. Additionally, we recognize the inherently abstract and multifaceted nature of well-being. This study investigates psychological aspects of well-being, such as happiness and meaningfulness, which are conceptually distinct in academic literature (e.g., Lyubomirsky, 2008; Steger et al., 2006). While some conceptual overlap is possible in practice, we argue that these measures offer valuable and theoretically grounded insights into how CV influences different layers of the employee experience. Given the time restrictions faced in real-world organizational settings, it was not feasible to clarify nuanced distinctions during the survey process. These constraints are common in field-based research and reflect a trade-off between academic rigor and access to authentic organizational data.

Furthermore, task significance and effort were only measured among employees who participated in the CV activity, as these questions were designed to capture participants' perceptions of their experience. This limits our ability to examine these variables as potential moderators or mediators of CV participation, since participation is held constant within this subgroup. However, this approach is consistent with our theoretical framework and hypotheses, which focus specifically on how volunteering employees perceived the activity itself, rather than exploring general task significance or effort among non-volunteers in unrelated contexts.

Finally, in order to analyze the data, independent sample comparisons were conducted rather than paired analyses, constituting a delimitation as changes over time cannot be directly

attributed at the individual level. Given that the sample involved employees from real-world organizations where some required full anonymity, paired analyses, which would have necessitated uniquely identifying each participant, were deemed infeasible.

1.4. Disposition

The report is structured into six main chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction, providing a more thorough background to CV, which is followed by the purpose, contributions, and delimitations of the study. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework and hypotheses, establishing the conceptual foundation upon which the research is built. The third chapter, methodology, details the research design and data collection process, and explains how the methodology contributes to addressing the purpose. The fourth chapter presents the results. This is followed by a discussion chapter, where the findings are interpreted and placed into a broader context, along with their practical and theoretical implications. Finally, the conclusion discusses the study's limitations, and offers directions for future research, ending with final remarks.

2.0. Theoretical Framework & Hypotheses

The following section is organized around key literature themes central to understanding the impact of CV initiatives on employee well-being, including *happiness*, *happiness at work*, *meaningfulness*, and *work meaningfulness*. Additionally, it covers other related themes, including *organizational pride*, *task significance* and *effort*.

To conceptually ground the psychological mechanisms through which CV may influence well-being outcomes, we draw on Self-Determination Theory (hereafter referred to as SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT posits that human motivation and flourishing are driven by the fulfillment of three innate psychological needs: autonomy (the experience of volition and self-endorsement), competence (the experience of mastery and effectiveness), and relatedness (the experience of meaningful connections to others). When these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to experience happiness, meaning, and a sense of personal well-being. CV initiatives may provide a promising environment for supporting these needs by offering meaningful, prosocial activities in a socially engaging and self-directed setting.

While prior research has established the psychological benefits of volunteering, much of this work has been based on general or community-based volunteering. Comparatively little is known about how specifically CV influences these psychological benefits. Although constructs like happiness, meaningfulness, and work meaningfulness are conceptually related, they reflect distinct dimensions of well-being. Examining whether CV participation shapes each of these dimensions can offer a more nuanced view of its psychological and professional benefits. Accordingly, each psychological construct is presented and empirically tested independently.

2.1. Happiness

In Western cultures, happiness is widely considered a central human pursuit, not only as a personal goal but also as a societal value (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). While definitions of happiness vary, it is commonly understood as either a temporary emotional state or a more enduring feeling (Kamel et al., 2017), and according to Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), happy people experience a preponderance of positive emotions in their daily lives. Despite its abstract and multifaceted nature, many researchers

have tried to conceptualize happiness in measurable terms. For this study, we adopt the widely cited conceptualization by Lyubomirsky (2008), who defines happiness as “an experience of joy, satisfaction or positive well-being combined with the feeling that our life is good, has meaning and is worthy”.

A substantial body of research has shown that volunteering is positively associated with happiness (Hatami et al., 2023; Musick & Wilson, 2003; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). These studies suggest that people who engage in volunteer work tend to report greater happiness, and that volunteering can also buffer against negative emotional states, such as depression (Borgonovi, 2008; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Researchers attribute these outcomes to several psychological benefits associated with volunteering, including an increased sense of purpose, enhanced self-confidence, and more social relationships (Lee, 2018; Lyubomirsky, 2008). Although most prior research has focused on long-term volunteering, Lyubomirsky (2008) suggests that even short, meaningful activities can produce immediate emotional benefits.

While much of the existing literature focuses on volunteering in personal or community contexts, we argue that similar psychological benefits are likely to emerge when volunteering takes place within the workplace. Participating in a CV activity may foster happiness by offering meaningful experiences, strengthening social connections and boosting self-confidence (Lee, 2018; Musick & Wilson, 2003; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001), all of which are psychological resources linked to increased well-being. Additionally, SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a valuable lens for understanding these effects. From an SDT perspective, happiness arises not only from positive affect but also from engaging in activities that satisfy the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. CV can be seen as one such activity: employees participate voluntarily (autonomy), feel capable of making a difference (competence), and connect with both beneficiaries and coworkers (relatedness). In contrast, employees who do not participate in the CV activity are less likely to experience these outcomes. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H1: Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of happiness.
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2.2. Happiness at Work

While general happiness refers to an individual's overall sense of joy, satisfaction, and meaning in life, happiness at work is a more context-specific experience that arises within the boundaries of one's professional environment. It captures how people feel about their work, their job tasks, and their organization. Fischer (2010) conceptualizes happiness at work as a three-dimensional construct that includes not only job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but also positive experiences of emotions towards the work, the characteristics of the job, and the organization as a whole.

Given the central role that work plays in many individuals' lives, the workplace becomes a key arena for shaping psychological well-being. Consequently, an important responsibility for managers is to act and engage directly in fostering a workplace that enhances employee well-being. Research suggests that workplace initiatives can enhance well-being by promoting flexibility, fostering a shared organizational mindset, encouraging innovation, supporting employee engagement, and continuous learning (Ripoll et al., 2017). Importantly, happiness at work is not only valuable for employees themselves, but also for organizations. Several studies have found that happier employees tend to be more productive (Bellet et al., 2019; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Wright et al., 2002; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).

One way to enhance happiness at work is through experiences that foster positive emotions, meaning, and social connection during work (Fischer, 2010; Ripoll et al., 2017). In light of this, CV may act as a work-related positive experience that ultimately promotes happiness at work. In our study, employees are invited to participate in a CV activity aimed at supporting and tutoring youths, offering opportunities for employees to engage in meaningful, prosocial work with their colleagues in a setting endorsed by their employer. By participating in a CV activity, employees may experience positive emotions through prosocial behavior, and strengthen their connection to colleagues, all of which are drivers of happiness at work. In contrast, employees who do not participate in the CV event are less likely to experience these positive effects. Thus, based on the established link between positive work experiences and happiness at work, we hypothesize that:

H2: Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of happiness at work.
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2.3. Meaningfulness

The question of what makes life meaningful has long intrigued philosophers and researchers alike. Aristotle believed that the meaning of life, the highest human good, is flourishing. Maslow (1943), on the other hand, proposed that a meaningful life is achieved by satisfying a hierarchy of needs, with self-actualization as the ultimate goal. Others emphasize the role of religion in providing meaning through systems of belief, rituals, symbols, and belonging (Fletcher, 2004). In this research, we measure the degree of meaning in life, that is, meaningfulness. We adopt the definition of meaningfulness proposed by Steger et al. (2006), who describe it as “the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one’s being and existence”. As a fundamental psychological need, meaningfulness contributes to individual well-being by reinforcing self-worth and enriching the overall life experience (Fletcher & Schofield, 2019).

Baumeister (1991) outlines four fundamental needs that underlie the experience of meaningfulness: *purpose*, or the pursuit of goals and fulfillment; *values*, the guiding principles one seeks to realize; *self-worth*, the sense of being a valuable person; and *efficacy*, the belief that one’s actions can make a difference. The degree to which these needs are satisfied will determine an individual’s meaningfulness (Rechberg, 2021). These needs closely align with the tenets of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes that meaningfulness arises when the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. In this way, SDT offers a complementary framework for understanding how meaningfulness can emerge from value-aligned activities.

Volunteering has repeatedly been identified as a powerful avenue for fulfilling these needs and enhancing meaning in life (Fletcher & Schofield, 2019; Klein, 2016; Schnell & Hoof, 2012; Sherman et al., 2011; Thoits, 2012). Schnell and Hoof (2012), for instance, suggest that volunteering creates meaningful experiences by helping others in need, offering clear and prosocial goals, and building a sense of belonging. Thoits (2012) emphasizes the role of identity, showing that individuals who view themselves as volunteers are more likely to feel they matter to others, a perception closely tied to self-worth and meaningfulness.

Participating in a CV activity may enhance employees’ sense of meaningfulness by satisfying the core needs identified by Baumeister (1991). Through contributing to something larger

than themselves, expressing personal and organizational values, helping others, and seeing tangible impact, employees may experience a renewed sense of purpose, values, self-worth, and efficacy. CV might also enhance meaningfulness through the internalization of prosocial values and goals, a process central to SDT. By engaging in activities that align with one's values and support others, individuals satisfy the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, thereby reinforcing the perception that life has purpose and significance. In contrast, employees who do not participate are less likely to experience these psychological outcomes during the same period. Based on these theoretical foundations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of meaningfulness.
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2.4. Work Meaningfulness

While closely related, the concepts of meaningfulness and work meaningfulness are not interchangeable. Meaningfulness refers to a general sense of purpose and significance in life as a whole, whereas work meaningfulness is tied specifically to how individuals experience value, purpose, and worth in the context of their professional roles. Both contribute to well-being, but they are shaped by different situational factors and psychological mechanisms. Although there is no single, universally accepted definition of work meaningfulness, many existing definitions build upon the foundational work of Hackman and Oldham (1975), who described it as “the degree to which the employee experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile.”

Fletcher and Schofield (2019) offer a helpful distinction between two dimensions of meaning related to work: meaningfulness *in* work, which refers to the personal value attached to one's tasks and goals (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), and meaningfulness *at* work, which refers to the broader sense of belonging and purpose within the organization. The former is often shaped by rewarding social interactions, job design, and perceived fit of one's job role, while the latter reflects the extent to which one views work as enhancing membership and connection with the firm. Strong organizational cultures and identities foster a sense of meaningfulness *at* work (Fletcher & Schofield, 2019). In this study, we conceptualize work meaningfulness as encompassing both of these dimensions since this integrated approach

allows us to more fully capture the ways in which CV contributes to meaningfulness in the workplace.

The importance of experiencing meaning through work has been widely documented. Rechberg (2021) summarizes numerous previous findings, highlighting that individuals who experience higher meaningfulness at work report greater job satisfaction, personal fulfillment, and organizational commitment. They are also more likely to exhibit higher levels of performance and engagement, and show lower intentions to leave their organization. In this sense, work meaningfulness not only benefits the individual employee, but also contributes to organizational success.

Prior research offers two competing theoretical mechanisms that explain how volunteering might influence work meaningfulness: compensation and enhancement (Rodell, 2013). These mechanisms draw on a multiple-domain perspective, where individuals derive meaning from various life spheres, such as work, family and volunteering. The compensation mechanism suggests that individuals seek to balance meaning across life domains: when meaning is lacking in one area (e.g., in work), they may seek it in another (e.g., through volunteering). In this view, CV offers a way to fulfill unmet needs for purpose and value (Rodell, 2013). Conversely, the enhancement mechanism posits that the relationship between CV and work meaningfulness is not merely compensatory. Rather, employees who already perceive their work as meaningful can choose to participate in CV programs as an extension of that meaning, for example to express gratitude and deepen their connection to the organization, (Boštjančič et al., 2018; Rodell, 2013).

Building on these contrasting theoretical perspectives, we argue that CV can enhance both dimensions of work meaningfulness. In our study, employees participate in a CV activity where they support and tutor youths, a form of engagement that is likely to be perceived as socially rewarding and aligned with prosocial values. These characteristics enhance meaningfulness *in* work by increasing perceived value and purpose in the activity itself. Simultaneously, because the initiative is framed and supported by the organization, it reinforces meaningfulness *at* work by strengthening employees' connection to company values and shared goals (Fletcher & Schofield, 2019). In line with the enhancement mechanism (Rodell, 2013), we believe that CV participation will deepen senses of meaning and spill over from the volunteering domain into the work domain, thereby increasing overall

levels of work meaningfulness. In contrast, employees who do not participate are less likely to experience these effects. Building on this theoretical foundation, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of work meaningfulness.

2.5. Organizational Pride

Pride, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), is “the feeling of satisfaction, pleasure or elation derived from some action, ability, possession, etc., which one believes does one credit.”. When transposed to an organizational context, there is no universally agreed-upon definition of organizational pride. Helm (2012) describes it as stemming from employees’ appreciation of their organization’s achievement, while Kraemer and Gouthier (2014) define it more broadly as the outcome of a positive, encouraging work environment, contingent on strong identification with the firm. Jones (2010) refers to it as the extent to which individuals experience a sense of pleasure and self-respect arising from their organizational membership. Overall, it can be concluded that it is a positive feeling resulting from being a member of an organization.

Organizational pride has been linked to a number of positive workplace outcomes. Employees who feel proud of their organization tend to demonstrate stronger service orientation, increased creativity and job satisfaction, and greater commitment to their work, while also showing lower turnover intentions (e.g. Gouthier & Rhein, 2011; Helm, 2012; Pereira et al., 2021). Moreover, Schaefer et al. (2024) found that proud employees experience higher emotional well-being and higher trust in management.

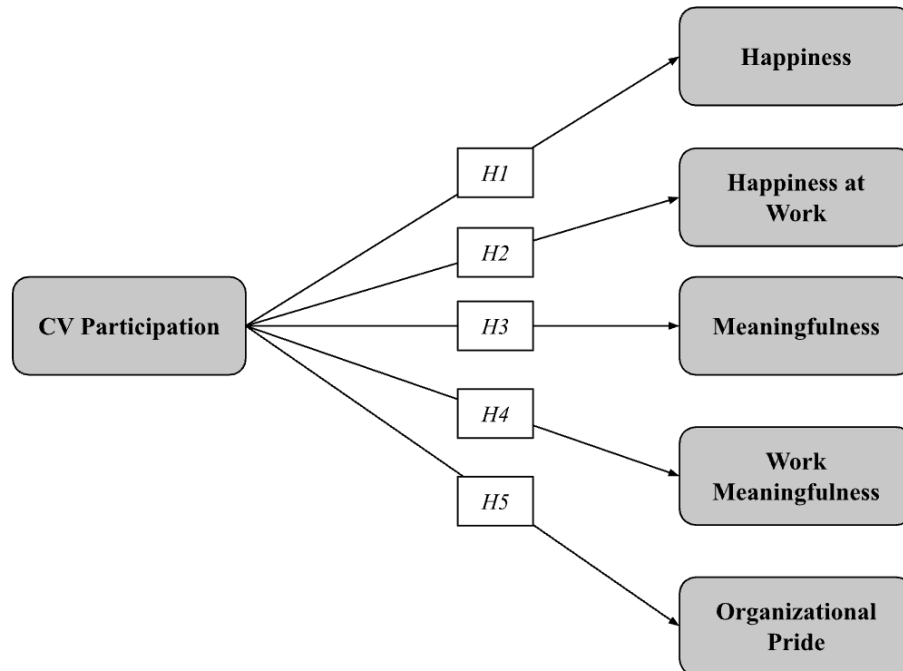
Given these positive outcomes, understanding how organizational pride is cultivated becomes a strategic imperative for organizations. Pereira et al. (2021) identify three principal antecedents: distributive justice, favorable work conditions, and organizational identification. Of these, organizational identification, the process through which employees internalize and align with their organization’s values, is particularly relevant in the context of CV. By providing opportunities for employees to participate in socially responsible initiatives that mirror the company’s mission and values, CV may function as a direct route to enhancing this form of identification. Other previous research has emphasized the role of organizational

climate in fostering pride, highlighting how a strong CV culture, where volunteering is seen as an integral part of organizational life, can promote organizational pride (Rodell et al., 2017). However, while a positive climate may shape collective norms, it is less clear whether actual participation in a CV activity influences experiences of pride.

In our study, we anticipate that participating in a CV activity leads to higher levels of organizational pride by allowing employees to embody and enact the organization's values. Taking part in a shared, purpose-driven initiative may affirm their connection to the company and enhance their sense of belonging. As a result, employees might experience heightened pride in being affiliated with an organization that not only communicates values but also creates opportunities to live them. In contrast, employees who do not participate in the CV activity may remain more peripheral to these value-affirming experiences, and are therefore less likely to report an increase in organizational pride. Based on this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of organizational pride.
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2.6. Conceptual Framework H1- H5



This framework illustrates hypotheses H1 to H5, hypothesizing that participation in CV leads to enhanced outcomes in well-being and organizational pride.

While this initial model outlines the general relationship between CV participation and well-being outcomes, it does not account for the variability within participants' experiences. Even when individuals take part in the same volunteering activity, they may perceive and interpret that experience differently. To explore this, the following sections shift focus to two specific psychological mechanisms, task significance and effort.

2.7. Task Significance

Task significance, defined by Hackman and Oldham (1976) as “the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or works of other people, whether in the immediate organization or the external environment”, is a central construct in work design theory. This theory, a key framework in management, posits that task characteristics, such as skill variety, autonomy and task significance influence key outcomes such as motivation, satisfaction and

engagement (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Among these characteristics, task significance has consistently emerged as a powerful predictor of experienced meaningfulness at work (Humphrey et al., 2007).

The concept of task significance is particularly relevant in the context of volunteering, where the core purpose is to make a positive impact. Prior research has shown that when volunteers perceive their work as meaningful, they report greater satisfaction and engagement. For example, Pajo and Lee (2010) found that volunteers who viewed their contributions as central to the success of a project reported more positive experiences. Groza and Groza (2021) similarly observed that volunteers who perceived a strong connection between their actions and the outcomes experienced by beneficiaries felt more emotionally invested. These studies suggest that perceived task significance enhances the subjective value of volunteering.

Although most existing research on task significance has been conducted in traditional employment or general volunteering settings, its psychological mechanisms are likely to extend to CV contexts as well. For instance, Grant (2008) demonstrated that employees who were made aware of how their work benefited others experienced greater motivation and persistence. Although not focused on CV, this study illustrates how perceived social impact activates prosocial motivation and enhances psychological outcomes such as meaningfulness. In CV, where the social purpose is even more explicit, the role of task significance may be even more pronounced.

In our study, all participating employees undertook the same activity: tutoring and supporting youths. Nevertheless, participants may differ in the extent to which they perceive their contribution as meaningful or impactful. One may feel they are truly influencing a young person's future, while another may be uncertain whether they are making any difference. These individual differences in perceived task significance allow us to explore its role in shaping volunteers' psychological outcomes. Indeed, Faletahan et al. (2020) found that volunteers who perceived their work as more meaningful reported greater life satisfaction and a stronger sense of purpose. This suggests that the psychological effects of task significance, both general (happiness, meaningfulness) and work-related (happiness at work, work meaningfulness), may vary depending on how that task is subjectively experienced.

Taken together, prior research consistently links task significance to increased meaningfulness, satisfaction, and motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007; Pajo & Lee, 2010). We therefore anticipate that employees who perceive their CV activity as high in task significance will experience stronger psychological outcomes. When volunteers believe their contribution has a considerable impact, they are likely to report greater happiness, higher happiness at work, a deeper sense of meaning, and greater work meaningfulness, since the activity reinforces a broader sense of purpose. In contrast, participants who perceive lower task significance may not experience these benefits to the same extent. Therefore, our hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

H6: Among CV participants, higher perceived task significance of the CV activity will be positively associated with (a) happiness, (b) happiness at work, (c) meaningfulness, (d) work meaningfulness.

2.8. Effort

Effort refers to the investment of physical, emotional, or cognitive resources toward a goal or task (Cady et al., 2017; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d; Sherman & Tal Shavit, 2023). In the context of volunteering, effort is a common subject of research, as non-profit organizations often operate with limited resources, depending heavily on the willingness of individuals to invest effort into their causes (Bidee et al., 2012; Vantilborgh et al., 2012).

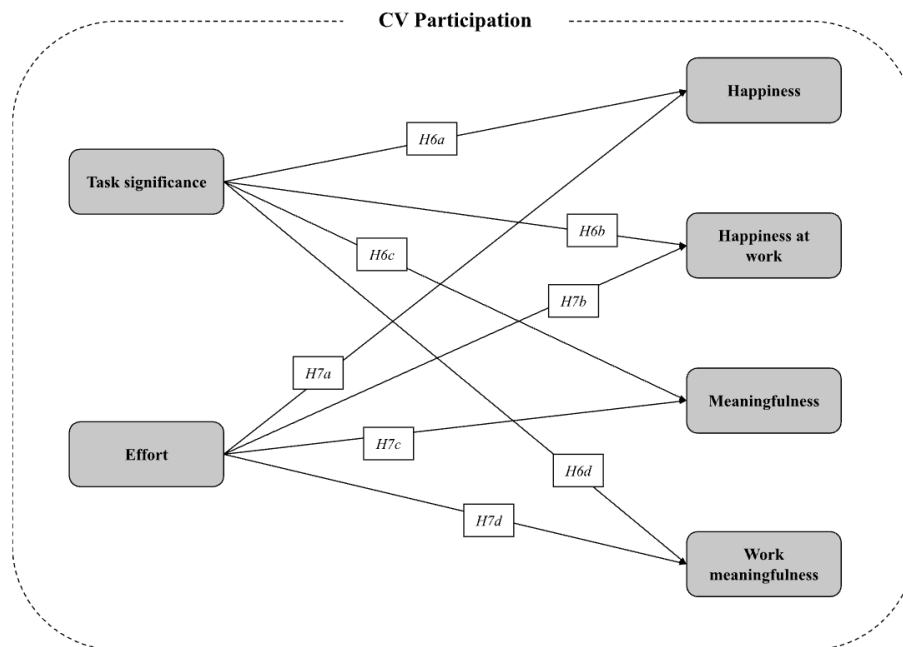
Beyond operational necessity, the effort individuals expend in such contexts may play a crucial psychological role. Indeed, research suggests that effort can serve as a source of enhanced personal well-being. For instance, Sherman and Tal Shavit (2023) highlight that effort is positively associated with life satisfaction and personal welfare, which becomes important for a satisfying, meaningful and enjoyable life. Lyubomirsky et al. (2011) found that individuals who invested more effort into a given activity reported greater boosts in well-being than those who invested less. Similarly, Chancellor et al. (2014) demonstrated that greater effort invested in a positive activity led to increased happiness over time.

Given the previous findings that effort leads to increased well-being, we hypothesize that higher perceived effort in the context of CV also will be associated with stronger positive outcomes. Specifically, we expect that those participants who perceive themselves as having invested more effort into the tutoring, whether cognitively, physically, or emotionally, will

experience greater psychological returns. Drawing from prior findings, we argue that this increased investment enhances their overall happiness, their happiness at work, and their experience of meaningfulness, both in life and in work. In contrast, participants who perceived themselves as having invested less effort into the tutoring may be less likely to experience these effects. Based on this, we hypothesize the following:

H7: Among CV participants, higher perceived effort of the CV activity will be positively associated with (a) happiness, (b) happiness at work, (c) meaningfulness, (d) work meaningfulness.

2.9. Conceptual Framework H6 - H7



This conceptual framework focuses exclusively on CV participants, illustrating hypotheses H6a-d to H7a-d, which propose that higher task significance and greater effort in CV participation are associated with higher levels of well-being outcomes.

3.0. Methodology

This section outlines the methodology of our research. We begin by describing the overall research approach and methodological considerations, followed by details on study design, sample, and survey construction. We then present the measures and conclude with a discussion on reliability, validity, and generalizability.

3.1. Research Approach & Methodological Considerations

We applied a deductive, quantitative approach, guided by our causal research purpose, which examines the extent to which CV participation affects employees' well-being and other related constructs (Olsson & Sörensen, 2021; Oflazoglu, 2017). While a quantitative method offers less in-depth insight and nuance compared to a qualitative approach, its strengths lie in providing structured, comparable data. Additionally, given the subjectivity of well-being (Shin et al., 2017), we deem it necessary to support our findings with exact numerical results, rather than qualitative, subjective insights.

As our study examines differences between groups before and after a naturally occurring event (i.e., a CV activity), it aligns with the characteristics of a natural experiment (Leatherdale, 2019). However, since participants were not randomly assigned but self-selected into volunteering, our design is better described as quasi-experimental, introducing a risk of self-selection bias (Malhotra, 2020). To address this risk, we compared pre-event group characteristics. The demographic distribution was similar between the groups, and among the well-being variables and organizational pride, only one (work meaningfulness) exhibited a significant pre-event difference. This supports the comparability of the groups and strengthens confidence in our post-event analysis, since the groups were largely equivalent prior to the CV activity [see Section [4.1.1.](#)].

3.2. Study Design

The study included one pretest and two main surveys: a pre-event survey, distributed one week before the CV activity, and a post-event survey, distributed the day after. Distributing the post-event survey promptly was important for several reasons. First, to maintain respondents' interest. Second, general research suggests that the effects of an experience are most pronounced within the first few days (Carnes, 2023). Third, research on well-being

constructs such as happiness suggests that helping others triggers an immediate rush of happiness, as the brain's reward centers are activated during volunteering (Liu & Aaker, 2008), highlighting the importance of rapid survey distribution. All data were collected via self-administered online questionnaires and analyzed using standard quantitative methods.

3.2.1. Pretest

A pretest ($n = 8$) was conducted to test whether the study was comprehensive and make adjustments before expanding the research. This helped identify issues related to question clarity, layout, and overall design - particularly important for self-administered questionnaires where layout can affect data quality (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002, p. 131; Malhotra, 2020, p. 336).

3.2.2. Sample Selection & Respondents

We employed a judgmental sampling technique, contacting companies actively engaged in CV through two volunteer organizations. Although this nonprobability sampling method may introduce bias and limit the generalizability (Malhotra, 2020, pp. 363-364), it was the most feasible approach given the time constraints of our research. While both volunteer organizations share the mission of supporting young people by offering networking opportunities, inspiration, and motivation, their volunteering activities differ slightly. One organizes tutoring events at offices, while the other focuses on inspirational talks and study visits. Of 38 organizations approached, via the two volunteer organizations, 14 agreed to participate. The remaining organizations either faced scheduling conflicts with our internal deadlines, lacked upcoming CV events, or declined to participate.

The main surveys were distributed to 14 companies across Malmö, Gothenburg, and Stockholm, ranging in size from approximately 20 to 17,500 employees. The sample included firms from various sectors, such as law, finance, retail, industry, and consulting. While some organizations had longstanding involvement in CV, for others, this marked their first engagement.

The final sample consisted of 14 companies across Malmö, Gothenburg, and Stockholm, ranging from small to large enterprises in line with the SME definition (European Commission, 2024). The sample spans a variety of sectors, including law, finance, retail, industry, and consulting. All 14 companies contributed responses from both groups:

employees who had participated in corporate volunteering activities (volunteer group) and those who had not (non-volunteer group). To ensure balanced group comparisons, companies were instructed to distribute the survey to an approximately equal number of volunteers and non-volunteers. While some organizations had longstanding involvement in CV, for others, this marked their first engagement..

3.2.3. Survey Designs

The surveys were structured to optimize response quality and minimize bias. Recognizing that questions placed higher on a page tend to receive more attention (Malhotra, 2020, p. 336), the questionnaire was divided into several sections, each focusing on different constructs. Questions measuring the same theme, such as work-related attitudes or demographic characteristics, were grouped together on the same page. Additionally, the questionnaire was designed to prevent respondents from going back, as later questions could potentially influence earlier responses.

Both the pre-and post-event surveys shared the same baseline structure [see [Appendix 1](#)]. However, the post-event survey included a branch into two paths (Malhotra, 2020, p. 335) based on whether the respondent stated that they had participated in a CV activity or not. Those who participated received additional questions, evaluating their CV experience on perceived effort and task significance [see [Appendix 2](#)]. All other sections of the pre-and post-event survey remained the same.

The first page of each survey provided essential information, including that the research was conducted as part of a bachelor thesis, as well as details on data storage, confidentiality, and GDPR rights. Respondents then reported their company of employment through an open-ended question, followed by a dichotomous question on CV participation. All respondents were then asked questions related to dependent variables (i.e. happiness, happiness at work, meaningfulness, work meaningfulness, and organizational pride).

The survey concluded with demographic questions, including age and gender. These classification questions were intentionally placed at the end to minimize the risk of respondent bias and social desirability bias (Malhotra, 2020, p.334). Lastly, a control question was included to identify and filter out respondents later on in the data analysis who had not been attentive during the study.

3.3. Measures

Several types of measurements were applied throughout the surveys [see Appendix [1](#) & [2](#)]. The majority of the measures relied on noncomparative scales, in which each question was assessed independently of the other questions in the survey. A seven-point Likert scale was used for most questions, ranging from "Not at all" (1) to "Very much" (7). This scale was chosen for its clarity, ease of use, and suitability for online surveys. An odd-numbered format was chosen to provide a neutral midpoint for respondents who may have felt indifferent. Lastly, nominal scales were applied for descriptive variables (Malhotra, 2020).

Although there is ongoing debate regarding the accuracy of self-reported happiness, meaningfulness, and life satisfaction as indicators of true well-being, self-reported measures are widely used and accepted. Despite the potential for bias, research has shown that self-reported data tend to align well with biological, behavioral, and peer-assessed indicators (Borgonovi, 2008), making them valid and useful tools in this context.

That said, using multiple self-reported constructs that relate to well-being, such as happiness, happiness at work, meaningfulness, and work meaningfulness, raises the question of conceptual overlap. While these variables may seem closely related, prior research emphasizes that they are in fact distinct (e.g., Lyubomirsky, 2008; Steger et al., 2006). These constructs are interrelated but not interchangeable. Each reflects a unique facet of well-being, and recognizing these distinctions is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the results.

Lastly, it should be noted that the questionnaires contained additional variables that were later excluded from the final analysis. Below, we will only present the variables that were deemed relevant for the purpose of this study.

CV participation

CV participation was measured through the single-item question "Will you participate in a volunteering event with your employer for [volunteer organization name] any time soon?" in the pre-event survey. The post-event survey asked "Did you participate in the volunteering event with your employer for [volunteer organization name]?". These questions were based on Boštjančič et al. (2018), who used similar measures in their research on CV and its outcomes.

Happiness

Happiness was captured using two items: “How satisfied are you with life overall?” and “How happy are you right now?”, both rated on a seven-point Likert scale. The first item was adapted from Lee (2018). Inspired by Borgonovi (2008), the second item incorporated a time-specific element, deemed important given the short time span between the pre-and post-event surveys. These two items were indexed, yielding Pearson correlation coefficients of $r = 0.722$ (pre-event, $p < 0.001^{***}$) and $r = 0.843$ (post-event, $p < 0.001^{***}$).

Happiness at work

Happiness at work was measured with the question “How happy are you at work right now?” using endpoints “Not at all” (1) and “Very much” (7). This was adapted from Williams and Smith (2016), who validated single-item measures for assessing domain-specific well-being, including job satisfaction. A time-specific element was included to align with the study’s short pre- and post-event timeline.

Meaningfulness

Meaningfulness in life was assessed using the item “To what extent do you feel that your life is meaningful?”, based on the Meaning in Life Questionnaire developed by Steger et al. (2006). This measure has been widely adopted in psychological research and was similarly rated on a seven-point scale using endpoints “Not at all” (1) and “Very much” (7).

Work meaningfulness

Work meaningfulness was measured with the question “How meaningful do you find your job?” using endpoints “Not at all” (1) and “Very much” (7). This measure was based on Rodell’s (2013) scale developed in the context of CV research.

Organizational pride

Organizational pride was measured with the item “I am proud to tell people that I work for this organization.”, rated on a seven-point likert scale using endpoints “Strongly disagree” (1) and “Strongly agree” (7). This question was adapted from a single-item measure by Ellickson et al. (2025), drawing on the work of Matthews et al. (2022), who provided empirical support for the validity and reliability of single-item constructs in organizational research.

Effort

Amount of effort was measured through the question “How much effort did you put into your volunteer work?”, with endpoints “Not at all” (1) and “Very much (7). Instead of measuring the time spent volunteering, the focus was placed on subjective effort, in line with Rodell’s (2013) findings that the raw amount of time alone may not reflect the actual intensity of engagement. The measure was based on the single-item measure of work engagement by Kulikowski (2018), to fit the context of volunteer work.

Task significance

Task significance was measured using the item “How valuable do you feel that your volunteer work was to others?”, with endpoints “Not at all” (1) and “Very much (7). This measure was adapted from a single-item scale on perceived appreciation of volunteer work, developed by Jongenelis et al. (2021), and adjusted for relevance to this study.

Demographics

The demographic variables were included to verify that there were no systematic differences between participants in the pre-event survey and post-event survey. The demographic questions asked were “Age” and “What gender do you identify as?”, with nominal scales.

3.4. Assessment of Reliability, Validity & Generalizability

We applied several strategies to enhance the study’s reliability, validity, and generalisability. Established measurements were used for multiple reasons. First, they support validity by ensuring that the variables accurately capture the intended concepts. Second, they enhance the study’s reliability by being clearly and unambiguously defined (Adams et al., 2014, pp. 246–250), which is particularly important in self-administered questionnaires, where wording and formulation can significantly influence results (Olsson & Sörensen, 2021, p. 151; Malhotra, 2020, p. 336).

To ensure data quality, we included a control question to detect inattentive respondents (Olsson & Sörensen, 2021, p. 125), and the purpose of the study was kept non-obvious for respondents to reduce the risk of hypothesis guessing (Söderlund, 2018). In addition, variables were measured using uneven scales, enabling all opinions to be expressed, even neutral ones (Adams et al., 2014, p. 251).

Reliability was further supported by using a multi-item index or single-item measures, all derived from previous research. For instance, the happiness index demonstrated good internal consistency, with Pearson correlation coefficients of $r = 0.722$ (pre-event, $p < 0.001^{***}$) and $r = 0.843$ (post-event, $p < 0.001^{***}$). The use of validated measures minimizes the risk of measurement error and supports the replicability of the findings under similar conditions (Adams et al., 2014, pp. 246–250).

To strengthen validity, we were attentive to whether alternative explanations could be reasonably ruled out. To ensure that our findings reflect effects of CV participation, rather than unrelated factors, we compared participants and non-participants on demographic characteristics, as well as on well-being and organizational pride, prior to the CV activity. The demographic distribution was similar between the groups. With the exception of one variable, no significant differences were found in well-being and organizational pride, suggesting that the groups were relatively similar at baseline [see section [4.1.1](#)]. This strengthens the internal validity of the study, as it indicates that observed changes in the post-event survey are likely attributable to the volunteering experience itself, rather than pre-existing group differences.

Finally, while the use of judgmental sampling limits the generalisability of the findings, this approach was necessary due to time-related constraints. Nevertheless, the relatively large sample, comprising 14 companies working with two different volunteer organizations across diverse industries and regions, provides a reasonable basis for cautiously extending the findings to similar organizational contexts.

4.0. Results

This section presents the findings of our study, beginning with descriptive statistics and correlation analyses, followed by hypothesis testing in chronological order.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics & Correlation Analyses

A total of 118 respondents completed the post-event survey, of whom 12 were excluded for failing the control question, resulting in a valid sample of 106 respondents. Gender distribution was relatively even: 36% male, 62% female, and 2% preferred not to disclose. In terms of age, 32% were between 25-34 years old, 26% between 35-44, 18% between 45-54, 15% between 55-64 and 9% were 18-24. Regarding CV participation, 57% of respondents stated that they participated in the CV activity, indicating a relatively balanced sample between the volunteer and non-volunteer groups. Demographic characteristics remained consistent with the pre-event survey, with only minor attritions, which is expected in studies conducted in real-world organizational settings.

To gain an initial overview of the relationships between the dependent variables, a correlation analysis was conducted among organizational pride and all well-being constructs included in the study: happiness, happiness at work, meaningfulness, and work meaningfulness [see [Table 1 & 2](#)]. This analysis serves to identify the degree of empirical overlap between variables prior to conducting further statistical testing. Notably, happiness and meaningfulness showed the highest correlation in the dataset, suggesting a strong empirical relationship. While this correlation may imply that the constructs are closely related, the theoretical foundation suggests that the variables tap into distinct facets of well-being. Therefore, despite the empirical similarity, we maintain that these variables represent conceptually distinct dimensions of psychological well-being.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix of the Measured Variables (Pre-event, N=127)

	Happiness	Happiness at work	Meaningfulness	Work meaningfulness	Organizational pride
Happiness	-				
Happiness at work	0.478***	-			
Meaningfulness	0.684***	0.426***	-		
Work meaningfulness	0.531***	0.643***	0.632***	-	
Organizational pride	0.273**	0.617***	0.263**	0.533***	-

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of the Measured Variables (Post-event, N=118)

	Happiness	Happiness at work	Meaningfulness	Work meaningfulness	Organizational pride
Happiness	-				
Happiness at work	0.601***	-			
Meaningfulness	0.694***	0.577***	-		
Work meaningfulness	0.512***	0.649***	0.678***	-	
Organizational pride	0.234*	0.399***	0.186**	0.358***	-

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

4.1.1. Examining Pre-event Data to Address Sampling Bias

To address the risk of self-selection bias and support validity, we compared the baseline characteristics of the participants and non-participants. Both groups were demographically similar, primarily consisting of women and displaying comparable age distributions. Regarding the well-being related dependent variables and organizational pride prior to the CV activity, no significant differences were found between the two groups, except for work meaningfulness, where CV participants reported higher levels [see [Table 3](#)]. This enhances confidence in the validity of our post-event comparison and addresses sampling bias.

Table 3. Pre-Event Independent Samples t-Test Examining Sampling Bias

	Employee Group		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Volunteers (<i>v</i>)	Non-Volunteers (<i>nv</i>)		
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Happiness	5.51 (0.87)	5.22 (1.06)	1.67	0.097
Happiness at work	5.24 (1.07)	4.95 (1.36)	1.30	0.099
Meaningfulness	5.60 (1.10)	5.62 (1.07)	-0.05	0.481
Work meaningfulness	5.38 (1.12)	4.91 (1.49)	1.99	0.048*
Organizational pride	5.67 (1.24)	5.32 (1.42)	1.41	0.081

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

Independent samples t-tests and partial least squares structural equation modeling were conducted to examine the hypotheses. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$, following conventional standards in research (Körner & Wahlgren, 2015). While alternative confidence intervals could be applied, this study prioritized minimizing the risk of Type I error.

4.2.1. Effects of CV Participation on Well-Being & Organizational Pride (H1 - H5)

In order to examine group differences between corporate volunteers (*v*) and non-corporate volunteers (*nv*) across five dependent variables: happiness, happiness at work, meaningfulness, work meaningfulness, and organizational pride, independent samples t-tests were conducted.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-Test: H1-H5

	Employee Group		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Volunteers (<i>v</i>)	Non-Volunteers (<i>nv</i>)		
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Happiness	5.68 (0.92)	4.84 (1.42)	3.67	<0.001***
Happiness at work	5.41 (1.26)	4.46 (1.76)	3.25	0.001**
Meaningfulness	5.93 (0.95)	5.29 (1.73)	2.41	0.012*
Work meaningfulness	5.55 (1.13)	4.88 (1.68)	2.47	0.010*
Organizational pride	5.76 (1.23)	5.75 (1.39)	0.03	0.487

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Results indicated significantly higher post-event mean scores for volunteers across four of the five variables. Each variable is explained below:

Volunteers reported significantly higher levels of happiness than non-volunteers ($M_v = 5.68$, $M_{nv} = 4.84$, $p = <0.001^{***}$), supporting H1.

Volunteers reported significantly higher levels of happiness at work than non-volunteers ($M_v = 5.41$, $M_{nv} = 4.46$, $p = 0.001^{**}$), supporting H2.

Volunteers reported significantly higher levels of meaningfulness than non-volunteers ($M_v = 5.93$, $M_{nv} = 5.29$, $p = 0.012^*$), supporting H3.

Volunteers reported significantly higher levels of work meaningfulness than non-volunteers ($M_v = 5.55$, $M_{nv} = 4.88$, $p = 0.010^*$), supporting H4.

No statistically significant difference was found between the groups on organizational pride ($M_v = 5.76$, $M_{nv} = 5.75$, $p = 0.487$), thus H5 is rejected.

Important to note, when comparing the post-event survey mean scores with the pre-event survey, the observed differences appear more moderate. Although the well-being variables show statistically significant changes between the groups after the CV activity, the overall magnitude of change at the group level remains relatively limited. All variables displayed directional but non-significant trends already in the pre-test, suggesting that some of the post-intervention changes may reflect existing tendencies. Acknowledging these nuances is essential to provide a more balanced interpretation of the impact of CV participation.

4.2.2. Effects of Effort & Task Significance on Well-Being (H6 - H7)

To test hypotheses H6a-d and H7a-d, examining the associations between perceived task significance and effort with the four well-being-related dependent variables; happiness, happiness at work, meaningfulness, and work meaningfulness, we applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was considered appropriate given its suitability for complex path models involving multiple independent and dependent variables, as well as its robustness in studies with relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis employed 5,000 bootstrap resamples.

Table 5. PLS-SEM: H6 - H7

Path	β	p	Adj. R^2	f^2	t
<i>H6a</i> : Task significance → Happiness	0.173	0.047*	0.115	0.031	1.987
<i>H7a</i> : Effort → Happiness	0.268	0.001**	''	0.074	3.221
<i>H6b</i> : Task significance → Happiness at work	0.236	0.006**	0.074	0.055	2.775
<i>H7b</i> : Effort → Happiness at work	0.129	0.112	''	0.016	1.592
<i>H6c</i> : Task significance → Meaningfulness	0.196	0.018*	0.109	0.039	2.358
<i>H7c</i> : Effort → Meaningfulness	0.239	0.003**	''	0.059	2.970
<i>H6d</i> : Task significance → Work meaningfulness	0.222	0.012*	0.118	0.051	2.502
<i>H7d</i> : Effort → Work meaningfulness	0.229	0.024*	''	0.054	2.258

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$
 $n = 60$

As presented in [Table 5](#), seven out of eight hypothesized relationships were statistically significant. The adjusted R^2 values ranged from 0.074 to 0.118, indicating a modest level of explained variance across the well-being outcomes, suggesting that other factors likely influence well-being outcomes. Overall, effort showed slightly stronger positive associations than task significance across the significant paths, especially for happiness ($\beta = 0.268$ vs. 0.173) and meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.239$ vs. 0.196). Each pathway is explained in detail below:

Task significance was significantly and positively associated with happiness ($\beta = 0.173$, $p = 0.047^*$), supporting H6a.

Effort was significantly and positively associated with happiness ($\beta = 0.268$, $p = 0.001^{**}$), supporting H7a.

Task significance was significantly and positively associated with happiness at work ($\beta = 0.236$, $p = 0.006^{**}$), supporting H6b.

Effort was not significantly associated with happiness at work ($\beta = 0.129$, $p = 0.112$), thus H7b is rejected.

Task significance was significantly and positively associated with meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.196$, $p = 0.018^*$), supporting H6c.

Effort was significantly and positively associated with meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.239$, $p = 0.003^{**}$), supporting H7c.

Task significance was significantly and positively associated with work meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.222$, $p = 0.012^*$), supporting H6d.

Effort was significantly and positively associated with work meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.229$, $p = 0.024^*$), supporting H7d.

4.2.3. Hypotheses Testing Summary

H1	Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of happiness.	Supported
H2	Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of happiness at work.	Supported
H3	Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of meaningfulness.	Supported
H4	Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of work meaningfulness.	Supported
H5	Employees who participated (vs not) in a CV activity report higher levels of organizational pride.	Not supported
H6	Among CV participants, higher perceived task significance of the CV activity will be positively associated with (a) happiness, (b) happiness at work, (c) meaningfulness, (d) work meaningfulness.	Supported (a,b,c,d)
H7	Among CV participants, higher perceived effort of the CV activity will be positively associated with (a) happiness, (b) happiness at work, (c) meaningfulness, (d) work meaningfulness.	Supported (a,c,d) Not supported (b)

5.0. Discussion

At the outset of this thesis, we asked whether a few hours of volunteering could be an effective tool for boosting employee well-being. Our research indicates that this may very well be the case. The question was grounded in the evolving understanding of work, where human capital is increasingly valued, and employees seek more than just financial compensation; they want purpose, connection, and impact. Taken together, these notions highlight a need for organizations to provide their employees with activities beyond their normal duties that aim to foster well-being and contribute to society, leading us to the concept of CV, where employees engage in voluntary work during paid working hours.

Ultimately, after reviewing the current literature on CV and well-being, this research was guided by the purpose of examining whether, and to what extent, CV participation influences employee well-being, specifically happiness and meaningfulness, in both life and work domains. The results of our empirical study shows that participating in CV does affect well-being outcomes. The employees who participated in the event were happier, both in general and at work, and perceived their life and work as more meaningful compared to the employees who did not participate.

We also looked into the extent to which CV participation affects organizational pride. Interestingly, the study found no significant difference in levels of organizational pride between the participants and non-participants. This could possibly be explained by the fact that a single CV event does not have a strong enough identity-building effect to shift perceptions of organizational pride.

Notably, when comparing the post-event survey mean scores with the pre-event survey, the observed differences appear more moderate. Although changes in well-being were statistically significant, the overall magnitude of change was limited. Directional but non-significant trends were already present in the pre-event survey, and recognizing these nuances allows for a more balanced interpretation of the impact of CV participation.

Additionally, our research extended to investigate whether volunteering employees' perceptions of task significance and effort affect various dimensions of well-being. The empirical findings provide support for this relationship. Seven out of eight paths were

statistically significant, indicating that both task significance and effort are positively associated with happiness, meaningfulness, and work meaningfulness. It is worth noting that the explained variance across well-being outcomes was moderate. However, this is not unexpected given the complex and subjective nature of well-being, which is influenced by a multitude of external and internal factors beyond the scope of the present study.

Overall, effort demonstrated slightly stronger effects than task significance. This finding supports the idea that the feeling that one is making an effort can enhance one's sense of well-being. The only non-significant path was between effort and happiness at work. While the effect was in the expected positive direction, it marginally failed our significance threshold. One possible explanation is that happiness at work may be more directly shaped by organizational or contextual factors, such as leadership, workload, and organizational culture dynamics (Farooq et al., 2024), which were not controlled for this research.

In sum, this study adds to the understanding of how and why volunteering can support employee well-being. It shows that not only *what* employees do matters (i.e., volunteering), but also *how* they perceive the activity and their contribution - especially their sense of significance and investment of effort. In the following section, we discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of these findings.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to examine the psychological impact of CV by quantitatively comparing employees who participated in a CV activity with those who did not. This comparison addresses a notable gap in both psychological and management research, and the findings advance several strands of literature by clarifying how CV shapes employee well-being, even when participation is episodic.

First, our findings reinforce prior research linking volunteering to increased happiness (Hatami et al., 2023; Musick & Wilson, 2003; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). However, unlike much of the existing literature, which primarily focuses on general or long-term volunteering, this study extends that body of research by specifically examining a single CV activity. The comparison between volunteers and non-volunteers demonstrates that even short-term volunteering can increase happiness, providing support for Lyubomirsky's (2008) assertion.

Our study also contributes to the growing body of research on happiness at work. While previous research has suggested that it is fostered through positive organizational experiences (Fischer, 2010; Ripoll et al., 2017), our results offer empirical support suggesting that CV participation can function as such an experience. By identifying CV as a concrete mechanism for enhancing happiness at work, our study adds clarity to such literature.

In terms of meaningfulness, the findings support the idea that volunteering enhances one's sense of meaningfulness (Fletcher & Schofield, 2019; Klein, 2016; Schnell & Hoof, 2012; Sherman et al., 2011; Thoits, 2012). Beyond confirming this general relationship, our study extends prior work showing that CV, specifically, contributes to meaningfulness. Moreover, our findings provide indirect empirical support for Baumeister's (1991) theory of meaning. Although this study does not disentangle which of these four needs were most strongly activated by CV participation, the observed increase in meaningfulness suggests that at least one of them was effectively fulfilled.

Our findings extend Fletcher and Schofield's (2019) conceptualization of work meaningfulness by showing that both meaning *in* work and meaning *at* work can be fostered through a single CV initiative, extending previous findings on work design theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Additionally, while this study does not examine motivations for participation, our results align with the logic of the enhancement mechanism (Rodell, 2013), suggesting that CV may amplify existing sources of work meaning rather than serve as a substitute for them. In this sense, our study contributes to the ongoing theoretical discussion by applying the enhancement perspective to the outcome-side of CV participation, offering a plausible explanation for how and why such initiatives may increase work meaningfulness.

Moreover, the absence of a significant relationship between CV participation and organizational pride enriches previous literature (e.g. Pereira et al., 2021; Rodell et al., 2017) on what cultivates organizational pride. Our results add to this body of literature by implying that one-off efforts are not sufficient to significantly impact organizational pride among employees. This finding brings more depth to the concept of organizational climate (Rodell et al., 2017), as it suggests that a CV culture is shaped through more long-term efforts. In this sense, our findings nuance the existing literature by suggesting that pride may function more as a long-term, identity-based outcome, less sensitive to single-event interventions than happiness or meaningfulness.

The findings related to task significance and effort contribute to the literature on work design, volunteering, CV, and employee well-being. Taken together, the results suggest that high levels of perceived task significance and effort during CV are associated with increased well-being, emphasizing that how employees actually experience CV matters. While prior research has primarily emphasized the role of task significance in traditional job settings (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007), few studies have examined its role in prosocial work, such as CV. Our findings suggest that task significance is a predictor of well-being in CV contexts, thereby supporting the theoretical generalizability of work design models beyond formal job roles.

Furthermore, our results support the view that effort can be a contributor to well-being (Chancellor et al., 2014; Lyubomirsky et al., 2011; Sherman & Tal Shavit, 2023), also within the specific CV context. Interestingly, effort did not significantly predict happiness at work, suggesting that while individuals may derive personal fulfillment from investing effort, this does not always extend to how they feel about their broader work environment.

These findings also align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that well-being is enhanced when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Although this study did not explicitly test SDT, the observed relationships suggest that CV activities may support these basic psychological needs. Employees may experience autonomy by voluntarily engaging in work outside their normal duties, competence through successfully contributing to a social cause, and relatedness by collaborating with colleagues or beneficiaries. The significant associations between perceived task significance, effort, and well-being further underscore the idea that psychological investment and meaningful engagement, central to SDT, are key mechanisms through which CV supports employee well-being. In this sense, SDT offers a valuable theoretical lens for interpreting how and why CV participation can contribute to increased happiness and meaningfulness at work.

To summarize, this study contributes to the literature on CV, psychological well-being, and management. It confirms the well-being benefits of volunteering, highlights task significance and effort as critical psychological mechanisms, and offers a multi-level understanding of how CV enhances both individual fulfillment and the workplace experience. By identifying

positive associations, namely, between task significance and effort and various well-being outcomes, this study lays the ground for more nuanced research into how and why CV matters, not only for organizations, but for the people within them.

5.2. Managerial Implications

Several managerial implications can be drawn from the present research. First and foremost, managers should prioritize implementing CV programs not merely as a part of corporate social responsibility strategies, but as a deliberate investment in employee well-being. Our findings offer tangible, quantifiable data indicating that CV participation can significantly enhance employees' feelings of happiness and meaningfulness, both at work and in life, suggesting that CV is more than a feel-good initiative; it can be a strategic lever for improving well-being, with potential downstream effects on engagement, retention, talent attraction, and overall organizational performance.

Crucially, our results show that even short-term participation in CV, limited to a single event, can lead to measurable improvements in well-being. This finding is particularly relevant for organizations that may lack the resources or capacity to implement large-scale or ongoing volunteer programs. It suggests that companies do not need to wait for long-term engagement to notice benefits. Instead, one-off or time-limited volunteering opportunities can still generate meaningful psychological outcomes for employees. For managers, this means that incorporating CV into existing employee programs could provide a cost-effective and scalable way to foster well-being, boost morale, and introduce employees to the value of purpose-driven work without requiring sustained commitment upfront, appealing to employees' growing need for non-material incentives. These shorter interventions can also serve as a stepping stone, encouraging broader participation in long-term initiatives over time.

The finding that higher task significance and perceived effort are associated with greater well-being has several practical implications. If organizations wish to leverage CV as a strategic tool to enhance employee well-being, the CV activity should be designed to feel both impactful and effortful in order to heighten positive psychological outcomes. Moreover, maintaining long-term participation in CV programs has often proved to be more challenging than initial recruitment (Grant, 2012). However, if volunteering employees experience

increased well-being as a result of engaging in activities they perceive as high in both task significance and effort, they may be more likely to remain engaged over time, thereby helping organizations address this retention challenge.

Beyond the internal organizational implications, this research also holds value for volunteer organizations that serve as hosts for corporate volunteers. During this research process and literature review, one unexpected realization was the challenge for volunteer organizations to maintain engagement from organizations (Farny et al., 2018; Ngah et al., 2021). By leveraging evidence that even short-term CV experiences can yield significant benefits for employee well-being, volunteer organizations can make a stronger case for the value of continued partnership. Emphasizing the psychological benefits for employees, in terms of increased happiness and meaningfulness, allows volunteer organizations to position themselves not only as community actors, but also as strategic partners to managers in fostering employee well-being. Moreover, by designing and offering volunteering opportunities that are perceived as effortful and significant, these organizations can help ensure that the experiences they offer align with increased well-being.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1. Limitations & Future Research

This study provides valuable insights into the potential effects of CV on employee well-being, organizational pride, as well as task significance and perceived effort in relation to well-being. However, several limitations must be acknowledged.

First, the study does not assess the long-term effects of CV participation. Given the limited timeframe, it was not possible to examine how the impact of CV evolves over time. Yet, volunteering is often a sustained behavior, and research suggests that long-term volunteers experience greater psychological benefits, including a stronger sense of competence, self-acceptance, and sense of effort and growth than short-term volunteers (Elias et al., 2016; Penner, 2002). Future studies could adopt longitudinal designs to explore whether repeated or ongoing CV participation yields stronger or different outcomes in well-being and organizational pride between participants and non-participants.

Second, the study initially aimed to capture the external perception of participants' well-being through responses from close associates. However, few participants provided contact information to a close associate, and as a result, the study was unable to capture the secondary perceptions of participants' well-being, and potential “contagious” effects of CV. As prior research shows that CV can have broader “contagious” effects on workplace culture (Rodell, 2021), future research should revisit this design. Integrating dyadic feedback directly into the survey process, with clearer instructions, could offer richer, multi-perspective insights on how CV affects not only the volunteer, but also those around them.

Third, the sample size limited subgroup analyses by age. It would be valuable to investigate whether generational differences exist in how CV participation is perceived and experienced. Particularly, Generation Z is often cited as valuing purpose-driven work more highly than previous generations (Tarigan et al., 2022). Future research could explore whether this translates into stronger effects of CV participation on well-being or organizational pride among younger employees.

6.2. Concluding Remarks

This thesis explored whether, and to what extent, CV can improve employee well-being, using a short-term initiative and a comparative survey design in a Swedish context. The results suggest that even a single volunteering event can enhance employees' general and work-related happiness, as well as their sense of life and work meaningfulness. No significant difference was found in organizational pride, indicating that deeper identity-based outcomes may require more sustained engagement. Notably, the positive effects were strongest when employees perceived their tasks as meaningful and effortful, highlighting the importance of how volunteering is experienced, not just that it happens.

This research contributes to the literature in organizational psychology, work design, and employee well-being by providing empirical support for the positive effects of episodic CV. It also extends existing theories by demonstrating that both perceived task significance and effort play crucial roles in driving the benefits of volunteering. While not directly tested, SDT offers a compelling framework for interpreting how CV may fulfill core psychological needs, thereby enhancing well-being. From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that CV initiatives, even on a small scale, can be strategically leveraged to boost employee well-being. Designing volunteering opportunities that feel impactful and involve meaningful effort may amplify these benefits.

This thesis marks an important starting point. Future research should continue to explore CV's long-term potential, potential spillover effects on colleagues or family, and uncover how different generations experience CV.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Pre-event Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey is a part of a thesis in the Retail Management program at the Stockholm School of Economics. The thesis is connected to volunteering initiatives together with volunteering organizations [Volunteering organization names]. Participation is naturally entirely voluntary, and this text is intended to provide you with necessary information that may concern your participation in the study. You can at any time withdraw your consent and your data will thereafter be permanently erased. The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality: Anything you say or state in the survey or to the interviewers will be held strictly confidential and will only be made available to supervisors, tutors and the course management team.

Secured storage of data: All data will be stored and processed safely by the SSE and will be permanently deleted when the project is completed.

No personal data will be published: The thesis written by the students will not contain any information that may identify you as a participant to the survey or interview subject.

Your rights under GDPR: You are welcome to visit <https://www.hhs.se/en/about-us/data-protection/> in order to read more and obtain information on your rights related to personal data.

By clicking continue you confirm that you have acknowledged the information provided above and consent to participate in this study.

1. Please specify your company of employment:
2. Will you participate in the volunteering event with your employer for [Name of Volunteer organization?]
 - Yes
 - No

[If “Yes”]: Which volunteering organization will you work with?

 - Name of Volunteer organization 1
 - Name of Volunteer organization 2

[If “[Volunteer organization 2]”]: What type of volunteering work will you do?

 - Klasscoach
 - Studiebesök
 - Framtidsdag
3. Is this your first time participating in a [Name of Volunteer organization] event with your employer?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = Not at all and 7 = Very much
 - How happy are you right now?
 - How satisfied are you with life overall?
 - To what extent do you feel your life is meaningful?
5. Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = Not at all/Strongly disagree and 7 = Very much/Strongly agree
 - How happy are you at work right now?
 - How meaningful do you find your job?
 - I am proud to tell people that I work for this organization.
6. A part of this study is to investigate a close associate’s wellbeing and perception of your mindset. Please provide an email address to a close associate of yours that you interact with frequently (for example, a spouse, best friend or parent) and believe would be willing to participate in this study:
7. Age
 - Under 18
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-65
 - 65-74
 - 75 or older
8. What gender do you identify as?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say

Appendix 2. Post-event Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey is a part of a thesis in the Retail Management program at the Stockholm School of Economics. The thesis is connected to volunteering initiatives together with volunteering organizations [Volunteering organization names]. Participation is naturally entirely voluntary, and this text is intended to provide you with necessary information that may concern your participation in the study. You can at any time withdraw your consent and your data will thereafter be permanently erased. The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality: Anything you say or state in the survey or to the interviewers will be held strictly confidential and will only be made available to supervisors, tutors and the course management team.

Secured storage of data: All data will be stored and processed safely by the SSE and will be permanently deleted when the project is completed.

No personal data will be published: The thesis written by the students will not contain any information that may identify you as a participant to the survey or interview subject.

Your rights under GDPR: You are welcome to visit <https://www.hhs.se/en/about-us/data-protection/> in order to read more and obtain information on your rights related to personal data.

By clicking continue you confirm that you have acknowledged the information provided above and consent to participate in this study.

1. Please specify your company of employment:
2. Did you participate in the volunteering event with your employer for [Name of Volunteer organization?]
 - Yes
 - No

[If “Yes”]: Which volunteering organization did you work with?

 - Name of Volunteer organization 1
 - Name of Volunteer organization 2

[If “[Volunteer organization 2]”]: What type of volunteering work did you do?

 - Klasscoach
 - Studiebesök
 - Framtidsdag
3. Was this your first time participating in a [Name of Volunteer organization] event with your employer?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = Not at all and 7 = Very much
 - How much effort did you put into your volunteer work?
 - How valuable do you feel that your volunteer work was to others?
 - To what extent did you share your experience from the volunteering event with other colleagues?
 - To what extent did you share your experience from the volunteering event with other people?
5. Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = Not at all and 7 = Very much
 - How happy are you right now?
 - How satisfied are you with life overall?
 - To what extent do you feel your life is meaningful?
6. Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = Not at all/Strongly disagree and 7 = Very much/Strongly agree
 - How happy are you at work right now?
 - How meaningful do you find your job?
 - I am proud to tell people that I work for this organization.
7. A part of this study is to investigate a close associate's wellbeing and perception of your mindset. Please provide an email address to a close associate of yours that you interact with frequently (for example, a spouse, best friend or parent) and believe would be willing to participate in this study:
8. Age
 - Under 18
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-65
 - 65-74
 - 75 or older

9. What gender do you identify as?
- Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say

Appendix 3. Artificial Intelligence (AI) disclosure

In this research, we have leveraged generative AI tools for support in the writing process, specifically ChatGPT-4, Perplexity, and the SSE Library's Primo Research Assistant. ChatGPT was used for paraphrasing, improving language flow, and ensuring grammatical accuracy. It contributed by helping us find appropriate synonyms, refine sentence structure, and maintain a clear and coherent tone throughout the thesis. Moreover, both Perplexity and Primo Research Assistant were used to generate inspiration for relevant articles and discover topics within our research area. Additionally, they supported our understanding of certain concepts, thereby streamlining the initial stages of the research process.

One of the known risks associated with generative AI models, such as ChatGPT, is the risk of producing factually inaccurate information. However, in this study, AI tools were employed solely to enhance language clarity and style, without contributing to any generation of information. As such, the risk did not impact the integrity of our research.