

The Impact of Lower Level Management on Volunteers' Workplace Outcomes in South African Non-profit Organisations: The Mediating Role of Supportive Supervisor Communication

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Abstract This study examined the influence of leader–member exchange on volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay, using supportive supervisor communication as a mediator. A regression analysis undertaken showed that the independent variable (leader–member exchange) had a direct and significant impact on the dependent variables (volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay) in community-based organisations in Eastern Cape, South Africa. Further analysis showed that supportive supervisor communication partially mediated the influence of leader–member exchange on job satisfaction and intention to stay in the community-based organisations examined. These findings confirm previous findings about the impact of workplace relationships on volunteers' attitudes and behaviours, especially as they relate to the influence of supportive supervisor communication on the relationship between leader–member exchange and the identified workplace outcomes in this study. Implications of the findings for the management of volunteers in community-based organisations are discussed.

Keywords Leader–member exchange · Job satisfaction · Intention to stay · Supportive supervisor communication · Volunteers

Introduction

Volunteers are central to non-profit organisations' (NPOs) long-term social goals (Scherer et al. 2016; Cavalcante et al. 2013) of supporting communities through a variety of activities such as assisting in sports events, cultural events and respite activities (Cuskelly et al. 2006). In South Africa, volunteers' support in the community is present in the management of HIV/AIDS in the form of psychosocial and primary healthcare services (Caprara et al. n.d; Friedman 2005).

Volunteer-involving NPOs such as community-based organisations (CBOs) are the main organisations, after religion-based NPOs, in which volunteers want to donate their services in South Africa (Statistics South Africa [StatSA] 2011). Previous studies have confirmed that volunteers comprise an important workforce in NPOs (Usadolo 2016; Karl et al. 2008), that there is a lack of effective management of volunteers in the NPOs (Eisner et al. 2009) and that sustaining robust interpersonal relationships between them and their leaders is necessary (Bang 2011). Hence, understanding the role that management plays in sustaining interpersonal relationships is central to understanding of volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay.

Past studies about CBOs in South Africa have revealed widespread dissatisfaction and decreasing interest among volunteers, with significant negative implications for healthcare programmes (Akintola 2004; Marincowitz et al. 2004). Similarly, a study of a home-based care programme in the Limpopo Province of South Africa revealed that 27% of volunteers had left the programme and a further 5.5% were no longer actively involved, within a year of their training (Marincowitz et al. 2004). Studies conducted by Friedman (2005) and Moetlo et al. (2011) identified lack of

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suitable volunteer management skills and coordination as challenges faced by home-based care volunteers. Thus, we believe that management factors play significant role in the interpersonal relationships volunteers have with their leaders, which consequently results in several workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction and intention to stay. As such, an understanding of management factors, which includes the nature of interactions or communication, between supervisors and volunteers might shed more light on factors influencing volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay. Although few studies have looked at a combination of factors that cause volunteer job satisfaction and turnover intentions in home-based care programmes in South Africa (see Akintola 2011; Marincowitz et al. 2004), none of these studies have looked at how management factor (leader–member exchange [LMX]) affects volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay through supportive communication in South African CBOs.

Hence, research examining the management factors that affect these workplace outcomes is important for NPO management. This article discusses the influence of management factors such as LMX on volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay by examining the possible role of supportive communication from supervisors in CBOs in South Africa. The constructs of LMX, job satisfaction, intention to stay and communication have been well researched in the for-profit organisation (FPO) literature, but the same cannot be said of volunteers in the NPO literature. Thus, there is a need to extend knowledge in these areas in volunteer research. The results of this study will not only help in establishing the link between LMX and supportive supervisor communication, but also increase our understanding of how these factors impact on volunteers' job satisfaction and intentions to remain with their organisations.

Context and Background of the Study

The South African healthcare system is stressed to its limits due to the high number of HIV/AIDS patients (Russel and Schneider 2000; Friedman 2005; Akintola 2008; Mashau and Davhana-Maselesele 2009; Mashau et al. 2016) and a lack of professional medical personnel (Akintola 2008; van Ginneken et al. 2010; Mashau and Davhana-Maselesele 2009). The shortage of personnel is felt in the provision of home-based care services to HIV/AIDS patients. These home-based care services are a prime example of the CBOs' use of volunteers (Friedman 2005; Caprara et al. n.d) in South Africa because many family caregivers lack the skills and resources required to provide care for infected family members (Russel and Schneider 2000; Akintola 2008). The availability of home-based care allows the public health facilities to discharge HIV/AIDS patients

to their homes early (Akintola 2008; Mashau and Davhana-Maselesele 2009; Mashau et al. 2016), where they receive psychosocial and targeted healthcare services provided mainly by volunteers.

Volunteers are an important part of the workforce in developed countries (Usadolo 2016). Hence, countries such as the USA, the UK and Australia regulate, fund and promote volunteerism (Berman and Davidson 2003; Measuring Volunteering: A practical toolkit 2001). Unfortunately, this is not the case in South Africa. Although tax incentives are used to encourage NPO involvement in volunteer projects under the South African Income Tax Act of 1958, there is no national strategy or funding mechanism for volunteer-involving NPOs. This has resulted in funding constraints for NPOs due to the lack of a clear pathway for seeking funding from the government. Funding constraints have been identified as one of the reasons NPOs employ few paid staff and rely more on a volunteer workforce (Dolnicar and Randle 2007).

In a survey of volunteers and volunteers' managers in South East Queensland, Australia, St. John and Creyton (2014) found that most volunteers stayed in their organisations for an average of only 1–3 months, putting pressure on the remaining volunteers who then experienced burnout (St. John and Creyton 2014), and this has been identified as a factor that ultimately causes dropout or turnover of volunteers (Pines and Aronson 1988; Ross et al. 1999). The high rate of early exit or dropout of volunteers is an indication of dissatisfaction, and this is likely to be the same situation in South Africa due to the lack of adequate funding in NPOs (National Development Agency 2013) to engage more volunteers. High volunteer dropout rates make it impossible for volunteers to understand the cultures of their organisations and develop proper relationships with their supervisors. The same applies to their supervisors who will not have time to develop a proper understanding of volunteers. This understanding is needed to enable supervisors to develop mutually rewarding relationships. It is therefore essential to understand the factors that affect volunteers' decisions to volunteer and remain volunteering, as this will help their managers to improve their job satisfaction and retention rates.

Several studies have found that the relationships that develop between supervisors and their subordinates play a decisive role in the subordinates' behavioural workplace outcomes (Cohen 2006; Mueller and Lee 2002) such as intention to stay and job satisfaction. These relationships have been described as LMX relationships, and they are based on the exchange of rewards that are valuable to the recipients. However, not much is known about how LMX affects volunteer job satisfaction and intention to stay, and the possible role of supportive supervisor communication.

Supportive supervisor communication has been identified as a critical factor for improving employees' motivation. For example, leadership communication has been recognised in both qualitative and quantitative studies as a primary tool for winning followers' trust and acceptance of authority (Reina and Reina 1999) in the workplace. One reason for this is that supportive communication can convey empathy. However, this cannot take place if the leaders do not have the ability to communicate empathy and to acknowledge their subordinates' contributions to the achievement of organisational goals (Flauto 1999). It is important, therefore, to study the influence of supportive supervisor communication on organisational workplace outcomes (Pettit et al. 1997), especially in the relationship between LMX, job satisfaction and intention to stay.

Leader–Member Exchange

LMX in volunteer-involving NPOs focuses on the nature of supervisor–volunteer relationships, and the reciprocal social exchanges that are necessary to maintain these relationships. In LMX theory, the relationships between a supervisor and his or her subordinates are considered to be of high quality when they are characterised by leader and follower communication, and the exchange of resources such as information, support, trust and rewards (Farr-Wharton et al. 2011; Liden et al. 1997).

In high-quality LMX relationships, supervisors count on in-group members (subordinates in high-quality relationships with their supervisors) to get various tasks done and in return they offer them incentives such as influence and support (Graen and Scandura 1987). In line with the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960) and social exchange theory (Blau 1964), these incentives will result in volunteers feeling obligated to reciprocate by working hard to meet the expectations of their supervisors. Previous researchers such as Kram and Isabella (1985) have stated that employees in high-quality LMX relationships exchange information with, and provide emotional support to, their peers. In this type of relationship, the in-group members (also known as the inner circle members) are duly supported within the interpersonal circle and this makes it easy for them to do their work (Gerstner and Day 1997; Mueller and Lee 2002). In NPOs, the in-group members are required as most volunteers are mainly driven by social motivations (Wilson 2000) or a need to belong to a group of like-minded people to carry out their pro-social activities. Thus, it is expected that volunteers' social motivation of wanting to meet people with whom to start a significant and friendly relationship can only be satisfied with the camaraderie that exists among the in-group members. With high-quality LMX, the volunteers become significant members of the in-group and the reciprocal relationships

formed with their supervisors at this level leave workplace relationships in a better situation. Importantly, the supervisors of volunteers require a working inner circle or in-group members to effectively coordinate and motivate volunteers and avoid non-cooperation and non-acceptance of leadership, which according to Pearce (1993) are often observed among volunteers working in the NPOs.

High-quality LMX is a feature of good organisational environments as it shows that the supervisor has a positive influence over his or her subordinates. The influence of supervisors can be termed social as they deal with a group of employees or volunteers. This social influence can have an enduring impact on subordinates' beliefs (Prislin and Wood 2005) because the observations they make of the supervisor's actions not only affect their decision-making, but also inculcate behaviours that align with the organisation's expectations (Nook et al. 2016). For supervisors to have effective communication with volunteers, it is therefore imperative that they have a proper understanding of LMX processes. One of the strengths of LMX theory is its emphasis on good interpersonal communication as a basic requirement for effective leadership (Bang 2011). Since LMX is fundamentally about interpersonal relationships, supervisors need to rely on their communicative strengths to deal with issues with their subordinates and specifically to motivate them to achieve stated work objectives.

In contrast, the relationships between a supervisor and his subordinates that are characterised by the absence of quality resource exchanges are referred to as low-quality LMX (Dienesch and Liden 1986) and subordinates in such relations are referred to as out-group members. In low-quality LMX, the trust between supervisors and their subordinates is low and, in most cases, both parties are confined to the formal role requirements specified in their job descriptions (Liden and Maslyn 1998). Such relationships are also characterised by poor communication, as the focus tends to be on organisational rules rather than mutual support and understanding (Graen and Scandura 1987). The out-group members in low-quality LMX have poor workplace relationships with their supervisors. In light of this, volunteers in the out-group circle are likely to feel left out as their efforts will seem unappreciated by their supervisors. They are also likely to have poor integration with other organisational members due to the lack of strong interpersonal relationships with each other and with their supervisors.

Volunteer's Intentions to Stay

High turnover rates have negative consequences on NPOs' productivity (Lee 2016). Hence, factors affecting volunteers' continuity have featured prominently in research (Usadolo 2016; Clary and Snyder 1999). One of these

factors is referred to as intention to stay and is defined as an individual's deliberate plan to keep on volunteering with an organisation (Blau and Holladay 2006). A volunteer's intention to stay is linked to their feelings of satisfaction due to their organisation fulfilling their expectations. Such fulfilment could be due to the provision by a supervisor or manager of rewards that satisfy the volunteer's needs or motives for volunteering.

Intention to stay has been found to be a significant predictor of longevity or permanence (de León and Fuertes 2007). According to Penner (2002) and Taylor et al. (2006) a volunteer's relationships with an organisation and its agents are among the factors that affect how long they stay with an organisation. Similarly, Balta (2014) states that an employee's retention or intention to stay is enhanced if the organisation formulates and implements policies and procedures that address the needs of employees. Other studies have identified different factors such as differences between expectations and real experiences (Kim et al. 2009), relationships with other staff, working conditions (Hidalgo and Moreno 2009) and opportunities for positive peer interaction (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal 2008) as determinants of intention to stay or to leave.

Intention to stay is associated with low rates of absenteeism, which leads to high retention rates (Griffeth et al. 2000), and these outcomes are beneficial to the organisation because they reduce the cost of recruitment and training. Retention of volunteers also reduces the negative impacts of turnover intentions, which are devastating for NPOs because they depend mostly on volunteers to succeed due to a lack of sufficient financial resources, as opposed to for-profit organisations which have more financial resources to hire employees when there is a need to do so. Also, intention to stay reduces the loss of volunteers who have acquired organisational memory that will impact on the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency (Usadolo 2016). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence retention is important for the managers of volunteers because it enables them to develop effective policies, specifically for the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Effective policies developed in this regard are essential as the operational principles of NPOs are quite different from those of FPOs (Usadolo 2016).

As observed by Scherer et al. (2016), several studies have dealt with predictors of paid employees' intentions to quit, which in reverse means intention to stay, but few studies have examined key predictors of volunteers' intentions to quit. This further highlights the need for more research into volunteer retention. Recent studies such as Usadolo (2016) have found that high-quality LMX predicts volunteers' intention to stay in community NPOs in Queensland, Australia. Vecina et al.'s (2010) demonstrated

that an intention to leave is linked to several factors, among which is less satisfaction with the management of the NPO.

The studies by Usadolo (2016) and Vecina et al. (2010) are consistent with several LMX theorists who posit that a supervisor's behaviour influences followers' attitudes and behaviours (Liden et al. 1997; Maslyn and Uhl-Bien 2001) such as intention to stay. This is possible because an employee's unhappiness in the workplace could be due to a poor relationship with their supervisor. Such poor relationships are likely to cause volunteers to consider leaving the organisation. The impacts of negative relationships between supervisors and subordinates have been reported in the literature. It has been found that workplace outcomes such as turnover intention are high among employees who perceive their relationships with supervisors as unsatisfactory (Harris et al. 2005; Morrow et al. 2005).

According to Wheeler et al. (2007), turnover will decrease—and intention to stay will increase—when employees experience high-quality LMX. This is consistent with Northouse (2001) who found that lower turnover intentions, greater organisational commitment and positive job attitudes were related to high-quality LMX. Also, the quality of LMX was found to be negatively related to turnover intention in the meta-analytic study of Gerstner and Day (1997), while Griffeth et al. (2000) found LMX was negatively related to actual turnover. These findings mean that as the quality of LMX increases, intention to stay increases and turnover intention decreases.

Given the discussion above, it is expected that high-quality LMX will increase volunteers' intentions to stay in CBOs in South Africa. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1 High-quality LMX is positively related to volunteers' intention to stay.

Volunteer's Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to how employees feel about their jobs, or the extent to which employees like or dislike their jobs (Cabrita and Perista 2007). It is also referred to as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the perception of one's job as fulfilling ... one's important job values, providing the values are compatible with one's needs" (Locke 1976, p. 1304). Volunteers' job satisfaction is an indication of the extent to which the support provided by their organisation meets their expectations (Jiménez and Fuertes 2005; Okun and Eisenberg 1992). When volunteers feel that their needs are being satisfied by the management or supervisor, they are likely to keep volunteering (Finkelstein 2008).

Evidence from the literature confirms that LMX relationships have a direct impact on employee job satisfaction

(Farr-Wharton and Brunetto 2007; Stringer 2006; Mardanov et al. 2007). The meta-analysis study of LMX by Dulebohn et al. (2012) supports the view that LMX has a significant influence on a variety of attitudinal and behavioural workplace outcomes. For example, Erdogan and Enders (2007) found that employees in high-quality LMX relationships are more satisfied than those in low-quality relationships. This means employees in low-quality relationships are likely to be less satisfied with their jobs. A volunteer who is satisfied with his or her job is more likely to continue volunteering. Hence, examining the factors that result in job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is important.

Bang (2011) studied the effect of LMX on job satisfaction and intention to stay from the perspective of leaders and followers among sports volunteers in America. The study found that the quality of LMX influences volunteers' satisfaction and intention to stay. Thus, in this study, it is expected that high-quality supervisor–volunteer relationships will be positively related to job satisfaction for volunteers working in CBOs in South Africa. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 2 High-quality LMX is positively relatively related to volunteers' job satisfaction.

Supportive Supervisor Communication

An organisation is a collection of individuals with a commitment to carrying out activities that will result in the achievement of its strategic objectives. The commitment of a volunteer to work towards achieving organisational strategic objectives arises out of informal or formal interactions with their supervisor. A supervisor who works with others to achieve the objective of his organisation must put in place a communication platform for the necessary interactions to take place. This is important because effective communication removes barriers to the adoption of roles common in in-groups within the organisation (Mayfield and Mayfield 1998).

Essentially, without communication, it is impossible to control employees' behaviour, clarify issues about work tasks and motivate employees by energising and sustaining their work-related behaviours. Supportive supervisor communication minimises the ambiguity which causes job dissatisfaction. For example, when employees understand what is expected of them regarding their jobs, in most cases they perform their assigned tasks in line with expected outcomes, and consequently, they are satisfied with their jobs (Vinokur-Kaplan 1996).

Positive communication helps in the encounters that take place between volunteers and supervisors. Wińska (2010) asserts that communication with supervisors gives a platform for employees to express their satisfaction or

dissatisfaction with their jobs. Hence, effective and supportive communication strategies that result in high-quality supervisor–subordinate relationships will promote positive workplace outcomes such as volunteers' intention to stay.

According to Michael (2014a, b) supportive communication in an organisation is described as an expression of sensitivity and empathy for employees on the part of supervisors. Supportive supervisor communication encompasses interpersonal skills that combine social insight and the ability to adjust to different situational demands in a manner that is sincere, and this is needed for communication to result in a positive influence on employees' behaviours (Ferris et al. 2005). Consequently, supportive communication with volunteers enables supervisors to identify empathetically with their subordinates' feelings and give appropriate responses (Molenberghs 2017).

Past studies have shown that employees in high-quality LMX engage in supportive behaviours that are beneficial to their organisations (Wayne and Green 1993). In addition, some studies have found that communication behaviours are the main factors influencing employee turnover decisions. For example, the ability to mentor and the ability to recognise employees' achievements have been identified as two major skills that leaders need (Mitchell et al. 2001). Leaders also need to provide performance appraisals, feedback and communication in a manner that mitigates role conflict and ambiguity. They also need to understand the performance–reward links that have a positive influence on retention outcomes (Becker et al. 2001).

Evidence from past research suggests that high-quality LMX relationships improve supportive supervisor communication, which in turn increases affective commitment and reduces turnover intentions (Michael 2014a, b). In a survey by Firescu (2008) that examined Romanian employees, participants ranked feedback in the workplace as one of the elements of job satisfaction. Studies of organisational communication have found that satisfaction with leaders' communication (both top management and lower management) positively relates to job satisfaction (Pincus et al. 1990). These empirical findings, particularly those of Michael (2014a, b), Firescu (2008) and Pincus et al. (1990), have all confirmed there is a link between LMX and communication.

Therefore, it can be concluded that supportive supervisor communication may play a role in the relationships between LMX, volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay. Despite these insights, further research is needed to examine supportive supervisor communication processes and their impacts on volunteers' job satisfaction and intentions to stay. Prior studies have dealt mainly with paid employees, and so the aim of the present study is to test whether their findings in relation to the importance of

supervisor communication apply to volunteers' job satisfaction and intentions to stay in CBOs in South Africa. The following hypotheses are therefore formulated:

Hypothesis 3 Supportive supervisor communication will mediate the relationship between LMX and volunteers' job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4 Supportive supervisor communication will mediate the relationship between LMX and volunteers' intention to stay.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

The data were collected through a self-administered survey (cross-sectional research design), which involved the distribution of questionnaires to 300 participants in CBOs in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, and 196 questionnaires were returned.

Prior to the distribution of the questionnaires, meetings were held with different CBO supervisors and managers by one of the researchers to explain the objectives of the research and to seek permission for data collection. Subsequently, the researchers met with volunteers and explained to them the importance and objectives of the research. In the meetings that took place, both the volunteers and their managers were given assurances that the information collected would be kept confidential and findings would be reported anonymously.

Most questionnaires were handed out by hand to the volunteers and collected by the researchers after these meetings or subsequent meetings.

Measures

All measures used in this study were adapted from previous studies. Respondents were asked to state their levels of agreement or disagreement using a six-point Likert scale, with possible responses ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6).

The unidimensional LMX-7 instrument that was developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) for measuring supervisor–subordinate relationships was adapted in this study. This instrument was selected because of its high reliability value and sound psychometric properties (Gerstner and Day 1997; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). An example of the statements the participants were asked to respond to is: “I have a good working relationship with my supervisor”.

As stated previously, intention to stay is the opposite of a worker's intention to leave. Hence, Irving et al.'s (1997) turnover intention measure, which consists of three items,

was used. The questions were reworded to reflect the extent to which each of the volunteers was thinking of remaining with their present organisation. A sample item is: “I intend to keep on doing my job in this organisation, for the foreseeable future”.

Job satisfaction was assessed using the measures developed by Hackman and Oldham (1980). The instrument consisted of four items, and respondents were asked to state their levels of agreement or disagreement. The questions were modified to capture volunteers' overall job satisfaction. An example of the items used is: “I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job”. The consistency and reliability of the instrument has been confirmed in previous studies of FPOs and volunteers. For example, Farmer and Fedor (1997) reported a satisfactory internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .81.

Supportive supervisor communication was assessed using ten items adapted from Wiemann's (1977) communicative competence scale. The items adapted were modified because they were originally self-assessment items. Like most studies involving LMX, the present study involved subordinates assessing their supervisors, and the wording of the scale was modified accordingly. The items selected from Wiemann's (1977) scale were ones that convey empathy or an expression of humanity. Their use by a leader such as a supervisor indicates a willingness to share emotions with subordinates. These measures were used by Michael (2014a, b) because their reliability and validity had been confirmed in past studies (see Douglas 1991; Street et al. 1988). Volunteers responded to ten statements about the degree to which their supervisors communicated with them in a supportive manner. An example of the modified items is: “My supervisor communicates with others in a supportive way”.

Data Analysis

The biographical details of the participants in the study were analysed using simple descriptive statistics as detailed in Table 1.

Descriptive statistics, including means, frequency distributions and percentages, were calculated to indicate the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. A simple linear regression analysis was used to test the predictive power of LMX on volunteer job satisfaction and intention to stay. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the mediating effect of supportive supervisor communication on the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction and intention to stay. All procedures were based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendations.

Factor analysis was performed to ensure that each of the variables represented a separate construct. The process of factor analysis involved extracting the variables using

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of the participants

Gender		Male								Female
Frequency		59								136
Percentage		30								70
Age	18 years	19–23 years	24–28 years	29–33 years	34–38 years	39–43 years	44–48 years	49–53 years	54–58 years	
Frequency	18	33	45	16	16	17	25	10	16	
Percentage	9	17	23	8	8	9	13	5	8	
Hours volunteered			1–2		3–4		5–6		7–8	
Frequency			17		69		83		27	
Percentage			9		35		42		14	
Number of years in volunteering				2 years		3 years		4 years		5 years
Frequency				69		26		46		55
Percentage				35		13		24		28

Table 2 Mean, standard deviations and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.71	.51	1							
2. Age	4.83	3.17	-.274**	1						
3. Hours volunteered	2.61	.83	-.116	.209**	1					
4. No. of years volunteering	2.44	1.23	-.114	.731**	.259**	1				
5. LMX	3.87	1.12	.086	-.305**	-.244**	-.161*	1			
6. Job satisfaction	3.72	1.17	.027	-.219**	-.111	-.032	.710**	1		
7. Intention to stay	3.77	1.23	.071	-.181*	-.035	-.071	.584**	.616**	1	
8. Supportive communication	3.70	1.16	.082	-.158*	-.089	-.020	.568**	.605**	.615**	1

$N = 196$

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

principal axis factoring set at a cut-off point of .50. The process identified four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, and these factors explained 79.87% of the variance. Equally, Bartlett's test for sphericity was significant (χ^2 value = 4557.672, $P < .0001$) and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .934. The internal consistency of the items was supported, with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients above the minimum level (.70) recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The Cronbach's alpha of the independent variable (LMX) was .949 and for the dependent variables (job satisfaction and intention to stay), they were .912 and .922, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha for supportive supervisor communication was .969. The correlation matrix shows that all the variables correlated significantly with each other, and they were above the recommended

minimum of .3, and none was above .9. Hence, multicollinearity was not an issue. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations of all the variables.

A simple linear regression was used to test the validity of Hypotheses 1 and 2 which predicted direct relationships between LMX and job satisfaction, and between LMX and intention to stay. To test Hypotheses 3 and 4, which addressed the possible indirect relationships, multiple linear regressions were used. To ensure that the mediation analysis process fulfilled the conditions put forward by Baron and Kenny (1986), a series of regressions was used to examine each of the hypotheses. The first condition, which was to test for the effect of the independent variable (LMX) on the mediator, was fulfilled by regressing the mediator on each of the independent variables. The second condition, which was to test for the effect of the

Table 3 Regression analysis detailing the relationship between LMX and volunteers' job satisfaction

Variable	Job satisfaction		
	<i>B</i> scores	ES <i>B</i> scores	β scores
Constant	.720	.326	
Gender	– .061	.116	– .027
No. of years	.077	.049	.081
LMX	.754	.053	.725***
R^2	.511***		
F	66.946***		

$N = 196$

***Correlation is significant at the $< .0001$ level

**Correlation is significant at the $< .001$ level

Table 4 Regression analysis detailing the relationship between LMX and volunteers' intention to stay

Variable	Intention to stay		
	<i>B</i> scores	ES <i>B</i> scores	β scores
Constant	1.145	.397	
Gender	.055	.141	.023
No. of years	.025	.060	.025
LMX	.638	.065	.586***
R^2	.342***		
F	33.201***		

$N = 196$

***Correlation is significant at the $< .0001$ level

**Correlation is significant at the $< .001$ level

independent variable on the dependent variables, was fulfilled by regressing the dependent variables on the independent variable. The third condition, which was to test for the effect of the mediator on the dependent variables, was fulfilled by regressing each of the dependent variables on supportive supervisor communication. Lastly, the fourth condition, which was to test for mediator's effect, was fulfilled by regressing the dependent variables on both the independent variable and the mediator. However, since the second condition would have been met with the analysis of the direct relationship between the independent and the dependent variables, only the other three steps were performed. Thus, three separate steps are shown in the tables under the mediation analysis.

Results

The Influence of LMX on Volunteers' Job Satisfaction

The regression analysis that was conducted provided findings that support the acceptance of Hypothesis 1 because the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction was positive and significant ($R^2 = .511$, $F = 66.946$, $P < .0001$). LMX accounted for 51.1% of the variance in job satisfaction. The results suggest that a positive relationship between volunteers and supervisors increased the volunteers' levels of job satisfaction in CBOs in South Africa (Table 3).

The Influence of LMX on Volunteers' Intention to Stay

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to evaluate the influence of LMX on volunteer intention to stay. The regression analysis provided support for the acceptance of Hypothesis 2 because the relationship between LMX and intention to stay was positive and significant ($R^2 = .342$, $F = 33.201$, $P < .0001$) as predicted. LMX accounted for 34.2% of the variance in intention to stay. This finding indicates that good exchanges between supervisors and volunteers influence volunteers' intention to stay in their CBOs in South Africa (Table 4).

The Mediating Effect of Supportive Supervisor Communication on the Relationship Between High-Quality LMX and Job Satisfaction

Multiple regression analysis showed that Hypothesis 3 was partially supported, as the results showed a decrease in the effect of LMX on job satisfaction ($R^2 = .510$, $F = 200.216$, $P = .0001$). The beta (β) weight of LMX dropped from .725 to .556 after the mediating variable was included in the multiple regression model. The analysis clearly shows that supportive supervisor communication played a significant role in the association between volunteers' LMX and job satisfaction. Table 5 shows the mediation results and the step-by-step regressions that were conducted to ensure that the model met all the conditions of mediation analysis.

The Mediating Effect of Supportive Supervisor Communication on the Relationship Between High-Quality LMX and Intention to Stay

To investigate the mediating effect of supportive supervisor communication (Hypothesis 4), multiple regression

Table 5 Mediated multiple regression detailing the relationships between LMX and job satisfaction through supportive supervisor communication

	<i>B</i> scores	ES <i>B</i> scores	β scores
1 (LMX on supportive supervisor communication)			
Constant	1.048	.381	
Gender	.094	.135	.042
No. of years	.074	.057	.078
LMX	.597	.062	.577***
R^2	.557***		
F	36.869***		
2 (supportive supervisor communication on job satisfaction)			
Constant	1.627	.345	
Gender	– .059	.132	– .026
No. of years	– .022	.055	– .024
Supportive supervisor communication	.609	.058	.606***
R^2	.367***		
F	37.071***		
3 (LMX and supportive supervisor communication on job satisfaction)			
Constant	.411	.313	
Gender	– .089	.109	– .039
No. of years	.055	.046	.058
LMX	.578	.061	.556***
Supportive supervisor communication	.295	.058	.294***
R^2	.569***		
R^2 change	.058***		
F	66.946***		

$N = 196$

***Correlation is significant at the $< .0001$ level

**Correlation is significant at the $< .001$ level

analysis was undertaken. The hypothesis was partially supported as the results showed a decrease in the effect of LMX on intention to stay ($R^2 = .460$, $F = 41.726$, $P = .0001$). The beta (β) weight of LMX dropped from .577 to .344 when the mediating variable was included in the multiple regression model. The analysis clearly indicates an indirect effect of LMX through supportive supervisor communication on intention to stay, confirming therefore that supportive supervisor communication played a significant role in the association between volunteers' LMX and intention to stay. The steps taken to ensure that the model met all the conditions of mediation analysis are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Mediated multiple regression detailing the relationships between LMX and intention to stay through the mediators

Model	<i>B</i> scores	ES <i>B</i> scores	β scores
1 (LMX on supportive supervisor communication)			
Constant	1.048	.381	
Gender	.094	.135	.042
No. of years	.074	.057	.078
LMX	.597	.062	.577***
R^2	.557***		
F	36.869***		
2 (supportive supervisor communication on intention to stay)			
Constant	1.472	.358	
Gender	.032	.136	– .026
No. of years	– .058	.057	– .058]
Supportive supervisor communication	.645	.060	.613***
R^2	.382***		
F	39.599***		
3 (LMX and supportive supervisor communication on intention to stay)			
Constant	.683	.368	
Gender	.013	.128	.006
No. of years	– .007	.054	– .007
LMX	.375	.072	.344***
Supportive supervisor communication	.441	.068	.420***
R^2	.460***		
R^2 change	.118***		
F	41.726***		

$N = 196$

***Correlation is significant at the $< .0001$ level

**Correlation is significant at the $< .001$ level

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of LMX on volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay, and to investigate whether supportive supervisor communication would mediate the relationship between volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay in CBOs in South Africa. The results revealed that supervisors' relationships had a significant influence on their volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay. Equally, the influence of supervisors on volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay was partially influenced by supportive supervisor communication.

Beginning with the influence of LMX on job satisfaction, the results support previous studies that have found a significant and positive relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. For example, Golden and Veiga's (2008) finding that high-quality LMX relationships result in higher

levels of job satisfaction for virtual workers is consistent with ours. Similarly, studies on nurses (Farr-Wharton and Brunetto 2007; Nelson 2012) and a study on sport organisation volunteers (Bang 2007) have found significant relationships between LMX and job satisfaction. The positive effect of LMX on job satisfaction has also been reported in many other studies (see Kónya et al. 2015; Addae et al. 2006). The present study finds a direct relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. This indicates that a good exchange relationship between supervisors and volunteers in CBOs in South Africa will increase volunteer job satisfaction, which in turn has a positive effect on their workplace relationships.

Although the studies mentioned above have explored the direct influence of LMX on the job satisfaction, they are on paid employees, except Bang (2007) which was on volunteers in sport organisations. Hence, the present study contributes new knowledge by providing a better understanding of the impact of lower level management (LMX) relationships on volunteers' job satisfaction in CBOs in South Africa. It provides a better understanding of the antecedents of volunteer job satisfaction for volunteers in CBOs.

On the influence of LMX on intention to stay, the findings of the present study are consistent with Ansari et al.'s (2007) finding that LMX negatively influences turnover intention, which is the opposite of intention to stay. The findings are also consistent with Elanain's (2014) findings in the non-western context of the United Arab Emirates that perceptions about the quality of LMX have a significant impact on intention to leave. They are also consistent with Usadolo's (2016) study in which LMX predicted intention stay in community NPOs in Queensland, Australia. However, most of the studies mentioned were on paid employees, indicating a very different workplace relationship and motive for work. Although Usadolo (2016) study is related, given that it was based on volunteers in community NPOs, our study was based on CBOs in South Africa. Therefore, the findings from this study contribute new knowledge by revealing a direct and positive impact of LMX on volunteers' intention to stay. It has confirmed that LMX is a direct predictor of volunteers' intention to stay in CBOs in South Africa.

In addition to testing Hypotheses 1 and 2, we tested the influence of supportive supervisor communication on the indirect effects of LMX on volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay. Our findings in this regard show that supportive supervisor communication has influence on the relationships between LMX and job satisfaction and between LMX and intention to stay. According to Mueller and Lee (2002), supervisor–subordinate communication practices have been shown to have a strong influence on job satisfaction. LMX research also suggests effective

supervisory communication enhances the job satisfaction of organisation members such as supervisors' subordinates (Bakar et al. 2010). A study by Sias and Jablin (1995), for example, found that differences in the quality of supervisors' communication exchanges with their subordinates have an influence on members of the work group in such a way that the differential treatment is acknowledged by each member of the work group.

Equally, the findings in this study are supported by Kim and Lee's (2009) findings that job-relevant supervisory communication had a significant direct effect on turnover intention among social workers in healthcare settings. Mayfield and Mayfield (2007) also found a positive and significant relationship between leaders' motivating language (ML) and intention to stay with an organisation. ML focuses on communication as the primary means of increasing positive workplace outcomes such as intention to stay, and it has empathetic communication as one of its vital elements. In addition, several studies have asserted that leader communication practices such as assignment clarification, performance feedback and information sharing have an enduring influence on employee turnover intention (Harris et al. 2005; Iverson and Pullman 2000).

The above studies have all shown that there is a relationship between supervisors' communication, job satisfaction and intention to stay. However, with one exception, none of these studies has explicitly examined the mediating effects of supportive supervisor communication as we did in this study. The exception is Michael's (2014a, b) study in which supportive supervisor communication was found to partially mediate the relationship between LMX and turnover intentions among bank employees. In the present study, we explored the mediating effects of supportive supervisor communication on the relationships between LMX, job satisfaction and intention to stay of volunteers in CBOs in South Africa. Our results add to the emerging body of research on supervisor–subordinate relationships in volunteer-involving organisations by revealing that supportive supervisor communication affects the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction and the relationship between LMX and intention to stay. As shown by the findings, in CBOs in South Africa, high-quality LMX relationships can be seen by subordinates as an indicator of supportive supervisor communication, which in turn results in higher job satisfaction and intention to stay. These results suggest that supportive supervisor communication can promote effective interpersonal work relationships between supervisors and their in-group members in the organisation. Although high-quality relationships between supervisors and their subordinates are important precursors of subordinate job satisfaction and intention to stay, the mediation results show that supportive supervisor

communication has an important influence on these workplace outcomes.

Implications for Practice

This study has several practical implications for management interested in increasing their volunteers' job satisfaction and intention to stay. The results from this study will provide useful information that can be used to improve policies that promote antecedents that encourage the two work outcomes examined in this study.

As indicated previously, a supportive work environment fosters volunteers' positive workplace experiences—and supervisors play a key role in ensuring a positive workplace environment. As such, the mediation framework provides useful information that will help to promote programmes that focus on positive interpersonal relationships between lower level managers (supervisors) and volunteers. In the context of this study, this means using empathetic communication—as embodied by supportive supervisor communication—that mediates the influence of LMX on the two workplace outcomes. The recognition of the fundamental role of supportive supervisor communication in relation to volunteers will increase volunteers' positive work experiences and increase their intention to stay. This will help organisations to save resources through reduced expenditure on training new volunteers, and through a reduced need for recruitment, as volunteers who are satisfied with their volunteering experiences are more likely to help in recruiting others to join the organisation (Boezeman and Ellemers 2008).

A healthy work environment is one where employees or volunteers are satisfied with their jobs. Research has consistently demonstrated that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to want to leave, and this indicates an intention to stay in their organisation (Pearce 1993). In light of this, our research is useful for managers in CBOs as they can draw on it with respect to the antecedents of workplace outcomes and possible variables that mediate the antecedents. However, this requires good organisational policies that promote positive supervisor–subordinate relationships characterised by supportive supervisor communication which includes the provision of guidance, the expression of concern and trust, and the building of relationships and consensus.

The current study posits that supportive supervisor communication affects relationships between LMX and volunteer job satisfaction and intention to stay. As Hypotheses 3 and 4 support this notion, this means that the quality of communication and the information volunteers receive from their supervisors has a significant positive influence on their job satisfaction and intentions to stay.

Healthy and supportive supervisor communication will enhance volunteer workplace relationships, as the volunteers' expectations and experiences will find expression in the high-quality supervisor–subordinate relationships that emerge. Therefore, volunteers' supervisors should use their supportive communication competence to emphasise to volunteers that their well-being is important in the organisation. As this will be a demonstration of empathetic feelings by the supervisor, the consequence will be job satisfaction and intention to continue to volunteer, as shown by the findings of this study. In addition, it is important that the management acknowledges the role of supportive supervisor communication in the relationship between the supervisor and the volunteers, and by so doing, provide resources that will enable the supervisor to articulate the contribution of the volunteers' role in the realisation of the organisation's goals. According to Malinen and Harju (2017), this may enhance volunteers' commitment to the organisation and in turn increase their desire to continue to volunteer.

Lastly, most CBOs' health programmes are referred to as community development programmes because, according to Tamasane and Seager (2004), HIV/AIDS is not just a health problem but also a cultural, societal and development problem. In this light, most of the HIV/AIDS programmes are theoretically situated to reflect community empowerment practices in the form of community conversation and mobilisation (Russel and Schneider 2000; Tamasane and Seager 2004). Oftentimes, the CBOs that adopt these approaches tend to focus on the quantitative outcomes regarding the size of the uptake of their health-care programmes. While this is not bad on its own as an organisational goal, a study that focuses on management factors relating to the interpersonal characteristics required to sustain volunteers' relationship with their supervisors in CBOs is needed. Our study is particularly important in this regard as it examines the interpersonal characteristics of high-quality LMX between the main actors (supervisors and the volunteers), particularly in relation to the role of in-group members. It therefore provides key information which can contribute to making community-based health-care service delivery a success. The discussion of the LMX's in-group characteristics and our findings about high-quality LMX are not only important for management to ensure volunteers' job satisfaction and increased desire to continue to volunteer; they are equally important features of the positive workplace relationships that are required to ensure the long-term development of South Africa's CBOs.

Limitations of the Study

This study has contributed useful information to the literature, but it has some limitations. Hence, the findings reported should be treated with some caution. The use of a cross-sectional design is a limitation because, according to Bowen and Wiersema (1999), data collected at one particular time may not be suitable for the effective examination of causal relationships. Thus, instead of using a cross-sectional design, a longitudinal approach would be preferable as it could provide an in-depth examination of the causal relationships involved because it would allow data to be collected more than once. Despite this possible limitation, the study offers interesting and important findings that can be generalised to other categories of NPOs such as sport, recreational and religious NPOs.

This study utilised a sample of respondents volunteering in one type of volunteer organisation (CBOs). Although the respondents were drawn from diverse backgrounds, it is likely that the competence of volunteers and the requirements for being a volunteer in these categories of NPOs may be different from the CBOs we studied. These differences may affect the generalisability of the findings of this study.

Conclusion

Volunteers who are satisfied with their jobs and who have no intention of quitting their jobs are important to the continued existence of many CBOs because of the funding constraints they face. This study, like many previous studies, has confirmed that high-quality LMX is an antecedent of job satisfaction and intention to remain volunteering. Volunteers' supervisors need more effective strategies to involve volunteers in decision-making, and to give them a feeling of being treated fairly in their workplace relationships. The current study has shown that supportive supervisor communication is an important construct in this regard, as it enables supervisors to demonstrate their empathetic values to their subordinates.

This study has helped to provide important information for the managers of CBOs regarding the role of supportive communication strategies within supervisor–subordinate relationships and the likely workplace outcomes that will emerge. The message for managers, therefore, is to promote effective communication relationships between the supervisors and their volunteers in order to facilitate high-quality LMX which has been shown to improve volunteer workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction and intention to stay.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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