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Does Appreciation Matter?

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Abstract

This research examines the relationship between appreciation and commitment in a Swiss volunteer population (N=231). It was hypothesised that appreciation is positively linked to affective commitment and that social support and stress mediate this relationship. The data was collected through an online survey, and the hypotheses were tested using correlation and mediation analyses. The results showed that appreciation is positively associated with affective commitment and that social support mediates this relationship. However, stress did not mediate the relationship. The findings suggest that appreciation plays a crucial role in fostering affective commitment among volunteers, primarily through the mediating role of social support. This research contributes to understanding volunteer motivation and offers practical implications for organisations seeking to enhance volunteer engagement and retention.

Keywords: Appreciation, Stress, Social Support, Commitment, Volunteering, Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, Mediation-Analysis

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Preface

I would like to thank BESJ for their support and quick communication and for allowing me to pursue an interesting project that has future potential in research and practice. In particular, I would like to thank Adrian Jaggi, who always responds reliably and who made it possible for me to pursue this project in the first place. I would also like to thank my mentor, Thomas Grenacher, for his honesty, his support with questions, and his motivating words during our discussions. I would also like to thank Kristi Kola, Marcel Rüegg, and Peter Altmann for reading through my work and their suggestions for improving my thesis. Also very important were all the friends and relatives who asked how I was doing and motivated me. Special thanks to Dr. Jacobshagen for allowing me to use the appreciation scale.

1 Introduction

1.1 Brief Overview

This thesis is supported by the BESJ, an organisation that works with volunteers and grapples with ways to improve volunteering. Similar to any organisation, they could ask questions like why they should want to improve their volunteering or whether it matters whether an organisation values their employees or volunteers.

There might be a lot of possible ways to answer such questions and to improve the working conditions for volunteers. One approach could be to implement certain policies based on psychological insights. A lot of these insights are derived from research in non-volunteering fields. Still, these insights could be applied in different fields. The applications of psychological insights and ideas that were not developed in volunteer work will be studied in this research. Since this research is done not just in any field but in volunteer work, it might be helpful to understand what volunteering is, how prevalent it is and how important it is to society before the challenges are illuminated. These challenges enable researchers to ask the right questions and hypotheses that can shed light on certain challenges and find solutions to overcome them. Moreover, since the BESJ is interested in such solutions, they should also be mentioned.

1.2 Volunteer Work

It is important to have clear definitions and present key statistics to understand better the concept of volunteering and the specific focus of this research. The “Freiwilligen-Monitor Schweiz 2020” (FMS2020), a report conducted by a project group called the “Kommission Forschung Freiwilligkeit” (KFF) of the “Schweizer Gemeinnützige Organisation (GSS)” conducts data exactly about volunteering and in their report, they make some useful definition of volunteering (Lamprecht et al., 2020). They borrow the term volunteering from Wilson (2000), a sociologist (Lamprecht et al., 2020, p. 21). According to the FMS2020, volunteering can be defined as any unpaid activity in which time or money is invested in being useful to other humans or organisations. This activity must be done outside one’s household (Lamprecht et al., 2020, p. 21).

This definition reveals three important criteria for volunteering. The first criterion is that the activity is unpaid. Nevertheless, small expense allowances are often given (Lamprecht et al., 2020, p. 21).

The second criterion, which is revealed in Wilson's (2000) definition, is that the beneficiaries are people outside their household. This criterion excludes all the work from domestic and family labour and care services for household members.

The third criterion refers to the fact that the engagement and the activity should be useful to others. This means that the work should be of a certain value for organisations or individuals that could be paid, but the work being done despite the value not being paid (Lamprecht et al., 2020, p. 21).

Besides these criteria, something else should be important. Volunteering should not be forced. It should be done voluntarily, hence the name volunteering. In modern times, slavery is still an unpleasant global problem, which can also be defined as a form of unpaid work useful to others (Caruana et al., 2021).

Besides this, there are different types of volunteering, and only one type gives an idea of this thesis' research field. This research is focused on formal volunteer work, such as charitable commitments with low compensation in different organisations. Formal volunteering occurs within the framework of an association or organisation. According to the FMS2020, 39% of the population is engaged in formal volunteering (Lamprecht et al., 2020, p. 2024). This is a lot and shows how important volunteering is in Switzerland (Lamprecht et al., 2020, p. 29). Volunteering is priceless and has a tradition that goes back over 200 years. Volunteers engage in youth work and help out in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and churches. (Helmig et al., 2010; Lamprecht et al., 2020; Schumacher & Degen, 2010).

1.3 BESJ's Place in Volunteer Work

One of these organisations is the BESJ. It is a youth organisation. They engage in work similar to scouts. This means they do mainly outdoor activities for youth and children. Such activities include outdoor games. Furthermore, they help children and young people to develop soft skills, such as cooking, first aid, and other useful survival skills.

However, compared to the scouts, the BESJ is inspired by Christian beliefs. Their vision is that every child in Switzerland can hear the gospel, decide for Jesus, and be encouraged in their discipleship of following Jesus Christ, as per Matthew 28:18 (BESJ, 2024a).

They employ seven paid employees who are specialists in different areas of youth work. One of them is responsible for administrative work. Another one is responsible for accounting. They do not do any volunteering but support the 700 different youth groups in the German-

speaking part of Switzerland that engage an estimated 15'500 volunteers. They support these 700 groups through leadership training or other educational programs. They also help to connect these 700 hundred groups again in regional groups. Their work is recognised in Switzerland and is important for society (BESJ, 2024b).

Since they work with many volunteers bound together by one mission, they are interested in the well-being, motivation and commitment of these volunteers. On these grounds, they support this research.

1.4 Challenges

The motivation to join such associations can also be varied. One stark driver of volunteer work is social justice (Wehner & Güntert, 2015). Nevertheless, people who engage in volunteer work are usually high-performers who engage in things that are very important to them personally (Wehner & Güntert, 2015, p. 33). Since volunteering is often done in teams and organisational settings. Volunteering is becoming increasingly professionalised (Wehner & Güntert, 2015, p. 7). This means NGOs and associations want to use and attract highly motivated people. Hence, they must involve volunteers in the work and harmonise their ideas about working hours, motives, and their organisation's needs. This ensures and further develops the quality standards in organisations. (Rosenkranz & Weber, 2012, p. 13).

In other words, organisations need to find out how the volunteers can be attracted to their organisation. Furthermore, organisations must determine how to keep volunteers engaged and motivated for their cause (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). To try this, associations and NGOs often show recognition by inviting them to an annual dinner, providing compensation for expenses, offering a small fee, or even offering further training opportunities (Lamprecht et al., 2020, p. 55). Unfortunately, such external incentives could backfire. It must only sometimes be the case, but external incentives can undermine internal motivation. This widely researched phenomenon is known as the overjustification effect (Boggiano & Ruble, 1979; Jang et al., 2023; Mills, 2021). So, Associations and NGOs like the BESJ, which supports this research, might need to focus on other ways to keep the volunteers, especially since volunteers tend to leave if they are unsatisfied with the situation (Wehner & Güntert, 2015, p. 15). This challenge to keep volunteers could be solved with appreciation, which, as it will be shown, is arguably different from recognition and might be more aligned with social support (Elfering et al., 2002). Sincerely showing appreciation and social support in volunteering might be useful to keep high-performing people committed.

Organisations like BESJ usually have a broader vision for society, which they deem helpful for humanity (BESJ, 2024a). So, they may not be profit-orientated, but they are certainly goal- and success-orientated. In order to achieve their objective, showing appreciation towards their volunteers could be a pivotal factor.

Interestingly, it has already been shown that commitment is related to work performance (Wright & Bonett, 2002). Therefore, finding out if appreciation is linked to commitment could be useful. Measuring work performance is challenging (Bititci et al., 2012), so it might be more accessible to investigate links between appreciation and commitment in volunteer work. This kind of research in Switzerland has yet to be done. Some ETH Zurich research examined the link between appreciation and commitment. What they used as a definition for appreciation was closer to recognition (Wehner & Güntert, 2015, p. 155). Furthermore, the original study could not be found. This does not allow others to examine the conceptualisation methodology and overall design. So, investigating the link between commitment and appreciation, as defined by Semmer (2019, 2021), might even close or at least shed light on some research gaps.

Moreover, it may be helpful to understand this possible relationship with mediating variables, which in this research are health and social support. This could be worthwhile since research has shown that the concepts of social support and appreciation are quite similar, and appreciation, according to the Stress-as-Offense theory, is related to health issues in the workplace (Semmer et al., 2019). Similar relations might also be there in the case of volunteering. The finding of these possible relationships could help create policies that can create better work environments and improve the conditions for volunteering. So that NGOs and associations can work together with healthy, engaged volunteers who feel appreciated and valued.

1.5 Research Questions and Research Goal

As one might be able to extract from this introduction. The research question might have to do something with the relationship between appreciation and commitment to volunteer work. Which it is. As mentioned before, psychological health and social support might play a role in the relationship of commitment, and therefore, the first and main research questions are:

- How does the appreciation of volunteers from team members and supervisors relate to work commitment?
- How do stress and social support mediate the relationship of appreciation by team members?

Since the BESJ is interested in this research and is supportive, this thesis will implement some practical aspects so that the BESJ can improve its appreciation of others in their groups across Switzerland if there is a positive relationship between appreciation and commitment. Consequently, the next research questions are:

- How can the BESJ, other associations, and NGOs improve appreciation in their teams?

1.6 Work Structure

Throughout this thesis, a series of hypotheses are developed and integrated into the theoretical framework. Each hypothesis is assigned a unique identifier using H numbers, and Chapter 2.6 illustrates the resulting hypotheses. Based on these hypotheses, a hypothetical model is formulated and tested by data analysis. The data was collected in an online survey. The findings of the data analysis are subsequently presented and discussed. Finally, actionable recommendations are provided for the BESJ, which are also relevant for other organisations and associations.

2 Theoretical Frame

This section will delve into self-worth and how it relates to stress. The significance of appreciation and social support will be highlighted, especially for volunteers, to foster a healthy self-worth. Furthermore, the bachelor Thesis will discuss the influence that stress, recognition, and social support have on one's dedication to work. The theoretical framework is inspired by the Stress of offence Theory (SOS) but places it into the context of volunteering (Semmer et al., 2019).

2.1 Self-Esteem and Role Identity

This chapter looks at self-esteem and self-confidence. These concepts are fundamental to the other basic concepts and hypotheses.

2.1.1 Self-Esteem

To better understand the SOS theory, it is compulsory to understand certain aspects of the self. In particular, the term self-esteem needs to be understood. Self-esteem is a self-assessment of a person's value (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). It is distinguished by global and domain-specific self-esteem. Global self-esteem expresses a global judgment of one's value, whilst domain-specific self-esteem encompasses appraising one's value in a specific area. This could be the appraisal of one's musical, mathematical or social abilities (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). It is important to note that self-esteem is subjective and may not necessarily reflect one's objective talents or accomplishments (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Self-esteem is mostly affective. However, it can be cognitive as well. If people succeed, not only do they know they succeeded, but they also feel good about themselves. On the contrary, if they do not succeed, they know they do not succeed, and they could feel bad (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Whether one succeeds or not is influenced partially by certain learning processes, by comparison to others, and by the feedback of others (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1993; Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Ong & Hodges, 2018).

Global and domain-specific self-esteem is less of an objective measure of one's self but of the perception of other's evaluation of one's self. In other words, self-esteem is influenced by others. (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Social interaction and feedback can enhance one's self-esteem. A meta-study by Harris and Orth (2020) found that the link between people's social relationships and their degree of self-

esteem interacts in all developmental stages across one's life span in a positive feedback loop.

2.1.2 Role Identity

How one feels about one's self is part of one's identity (Blankenship & Stewart, 2017). Domain-specific self-esteem is similar to role identity (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Any self-evaluation is the self-evaluation of one's identity (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Stryker & Burke, 2000). A role is given externally. It is associated with the social standing of individuals within various social structures. Interconnecting positions and connected roles create social structures, each associated with different activities and resources. Additionally, each role is embedded in different varieties of groups that give context to the meanings and expectations associated with a role (Stryker & Burke, 2000). This means that different social contexts influence the different role identities. A social context could be the family or an association where one volunteers and where they are different (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). It has been shown that perceived expectations of others are associated with the identity with which they engage (Grube & Piliavin, 2000).

Summarised, social interactions and context influence both identity and self-esteem. Positive relationships influence one's self-esteem and, therefore, identity positively, whilst negative events threaten one's identity and even cause negative health issues (Dickerson et al., 2004; Smurda et al., 2006). People usually try to protect their self-perception and self-esteem (Gruenewald et al., 2004).

This is why it could be argued that if a role identity is not valued positively in a specific context, such as volunteering, it could be understood as a threat to one's role identity (Semmer et al., 2019).

2.2 Stress

This chapter shows how stress is related to self-esteem and how certain stressors can be seen as a threat to one's self.

2.2.1 Appraisal Theory

Lazarus's appraisal stress is a stress model that can be used to understand threats to one's self (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). This theory is also helpful in formulating the first and later hypotheses (Semmer et al., 2019). As mentioned before, if one is not valued enough or experiences negative social interactions, it can be perceived as a threat to one's self (Semmer et al., 2019, 2021; Smurda et al., 2006). It has even been found that these threats impact one's self-esteem and health negatively (Gruenewald et al., 2004).

The appraisal stress theory addresses this issue and adds useful insights that will be important later on. If a certain situation arises, it will be evaluated for the first time (Semmer et al., 2019).

The appraisal stress theory addresses this issue. Upon the occurrence of a certain situation, a preliminary assessment will be conducted, which is commonly referred to as primary appraisal. During this assessment, the situation is evaluated based on the perceived threat level to an individual's goals, values, or identity, which are parts of one's identity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). In the primary appraisal, the situation is judged according to how threatening it is to one's goal, expectation, or expectations of others' value or identity (Lazarus, 2000; Lönnqvist et al., 2009; Smith & Kirby, 2009). Personal values and goals are linked to identity and self-esteem (Breakwell, 2021; Crocker & Park, 2004; Lönnqvist et al., 2009). If the situation is assessed as a threat, a second assessment, the secondary appraisal, will be made. During the secondary appraisal, available resources or coping abilities will be assessed. Without available resources, these threats to one's self will cause stress (Lazarus, 2000). Social support and appreciation can also be considered resources (Kerksieck et al., 2019). Research has shown that threats to one's self or low self-esteem are associated with higher cortisol levels (Gruenewald et al., 2004). Cortisol is a hormone that can be used as a stress biomarker, and high cortisol levels are associated with poorer immune responses and hypertension (Espelid et al., 1996; Gruenewald et al., 2004; Kelly et al., 1998). This could even explain why higher stress levels are not only associated with higher cortisol levels in saliva. It also could clarify the relationship between stress and absenteeism since a poor immune response caused by stress could result in health issues. Anyone knows it is difficult to attend work if one is not well (Ornek & Esin, 2020). Furthermore, stress negatively impacts one's attitude towards one's organisation (Göransson et al., 2009). So, it is fair to say that stress is not just a problem for an individual but is costly for any organisation, even for organisations where people are engaged voluntarily (Crocker & Park, 2004; Göransson et al., 2009).

To overcome this stress, one can engage in coping strategies. Generally, it is differentiated into emotional and problem-oriented coping (Lazarus, 2000). Problem-focused coping constitutes an effort to change the current situation. Usually, it involves several phases, like coming up with solutions, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of those solutions, and solving the problem (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion-focused coping refers to trying to control the emotional discomfort brought on by the circumstance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Social support builds on this concept of instrumental and emotional coping strategies by dividing social support into instrumental and emotional support. Sometimes, informational support is also

a part of the conceptualisation of social support (Schulz & Schwarzer, 2003). The following chapters will complement the role of social support in stress and other issues.

Summed up, it can be argued that social stressors can be seen as threats to one's identity and harm one's health, amongst other things, if there are now resources available to overcome these stressful situations. Furthermore, emotional and instrumental support can be utilised to cope with stress, which will be demonstrated in the next chapters (Thoits, 1986).

2.3 Social Support

In Chapter 2.2, it could be shown how negative a lack of positive social interaction and other stressors can be. This chapter will display how social support can be used as a resource during the secondary appraisal to overcome stress and as a coping tool.

2.3.1 Instrumental and Emotional Support

Thoits (1986) argued that social support operates as a coping assistance since it helps to change a situation by assisting. Additionally, it can change an individual's affective reaction to a stressor. Furthermore, scholars have reasoned that social support enhances self-esteem by giving others control over the environment (Pearlin et al., 1981). So, social support enhances self-esteem and gives someone confidence in their ability to succeed in specific situations, which experts describe as self-efficacy. Contemporary research supports such arguments, showing a positive relationship between social support and self-efficacy (Karademas, 2006; X. Wang et al., 2024). Self-efficacy can be considered a stress subconstruct (Schneider et al., 2020). Likewise, a positive correlation between self-esteem and social support could be found among Chinese nurses (Feng et al., 2018). Changing a situation plays into the definition of instrumental support. Instrumental support is generally defined as providing material resources and other services to change a challenging situation and reduce stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Emotional support, however, is described as valuing others for who they are and accepting them despite any difficulties or struggles. Emotional support has the goal of lightening up someone's support (Morelli et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Social Support as a Resource

The job demands and resources model has been thoroughly researched and further developed in the last decade (Bakker et al., 2023). It is also applicable to volunteering (Lewig et al., 2007). This theory contemplates the interaction between demands and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands are called physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects that need continued physical and or psychological effort or skills. Therefore, job demand is associated with psychological and or physiological costs. High work pressure conflicts with colleagues, clients, or a disadvantageous physical environment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources, however, can be motivational and lead to higher work engagement (Bakker et al., 2023). Additionally, job resources have been ascribed as a buffering factor of the demands. So, social support can be ascribed as a job resource, which could be shown empirically (Kerksieck et al., 2019).

2.4 Appreciation and Dignity

In Chapter 2.3, it can be demonstrated that social support is important to buffer or cope with stress. Furthermore, it enhances self-esteem and self-efficacy instead of threatening the self. This chapter will give a brief overview of dignity and appreciation. Furthermore, it will show how appreciation is embedded in the concept of threat to one's self.

Appreciation has been seen as a part of social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Semmer et al., 2019). Some even argued that appreciation is a core element of social support (Semmer et al., 2019). Semmer et al. (2019) state that emotional and instrumental support communicates esteem. However, according to Semmer et al. (2019), social support without showing any esteem towards others can be considered a stressor and lacks positive effects. Thus, it is important to see appreciation as one construct.

Esteem is core to the concept of appreciation (Semmer et al., 2019). To understand the relationship between esteem and appreciation, it is essential to comprehend the concept of dignity. The idea of dignity is attributed to the Jewish and Christian ideas of *Imago Dei*. Dignity is derived from the Latin *dignitas* (Harper, 2016). The Greek equivalent is *ἀξίωμα*, /ak'si.o.ma. Nevertheless, the Latin noun *Dignity* derives from *dignus*, an adjective. *Digna* means worthy. To give worth is *dare dignum*. *Imago Dei* is Latin as well and means in the image of God. However, it has a deeper meaning (Harper, 2016). Since every human is made in the Image of God, they are inherently worthy. Gregory of Nazianzus especially pushed this idea. He argued that the value of humans created in the image of God – could not be expressed monetarily. He said the cosmos

could not be exchanged for a human's soul (Harper, 2016). The idea that humans are inherently worthy has influenced modern human rights and psychological research (Harper, 2016; Lucas, 2015).

Human dignity usually has two aspects. First is the belief that human worth is derived from God. It is also called "human dignity". Nowadays, the God-given part has been disassociated. However, humans' inherent worth or value is still absolute without any exception (Brennan & Lo, 2007; Lucas, 2015). The second aspect is "earned dignity". It reflects the belief that one's value is conditional due to differential qualities, abilities or efforts by an individual (Brennan & Lo, 2007; Lucas, 2015). This is similar to how Stocker et al. (2019) define it. They define appreciation as communicating that one unconditionally values and appreciates someone else or acknowledges the person's performance, behaviour, or quality. Therefore, it could be argued that recognising the communication of a person's value, esteem, or worth consists of showing them their dignity (Stocker et al., 2019).

The word esteem is, in other ways, important. It is connected to self-esteem. In the previous chapters, positive interactions act as a positive feedback loop. In other words, if others value someone, the person feels valued (Harris & Orth, 2020). This could be shown among nurses, where dignity was positively linked to positive self-esteem (Sturm & Dellert, 2016). Like social support, appreciation can give someone confidence in their ability to succeed in specific situations. This could be shown where appreciation by supervisors was correlated with self-efficacy (Stocker et al., 2019). This shows that appreciation or dignity generally do not threaten one's self in an organisational setting or at least boost one's self-esteem. In contrast, the lack of appreciation can threaten one's self and cause stress. For example, it has been shown that depression is negatively associated with appreciation by supervisors in the work context (Stocker et al., 2019). Appreciation can be shown by expressing praise and gratitude, expressing trust by asking employees about their opinions and by granting responsibility. Furthermore, it can be shown by respect and enjoyment of working with others. Handing out tangible rewards is also possible (Semmer et al., 2019). According to White (2023), it is even possible to show appreciation through acts of service, like helping someone with their work if they request help.

Reducing the uncertainty about one's performance by showing that one's contribution is valued reduces the risk of resentment towards one's organisation. A study with 193 employees from different Swiss organisations demonstrated that resentment arises from a lack of appreciation (Pfister et al., 2020).

2.5 Commitment

This chapter will ponder work commitment and how the concept is related to the “Stress as Offense to Self-Theory”. It will also be shown how appreciation could be connected to commitment.

Allen and Meyer (1990) conceptualise a commitment construct with three main parts: affective, continuance, and normative. This conceptualisation of commitment is called the “Three-Component Model of Organisational Commitment” (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Solinger et al., 2008). However, only affective and continuance commitment will be used for this research.

2.5.1 Affective Commitment

Affective commitment represents a feeling or an attitude of connection and emotional identification with the employer. The overall feeling could be understood as wanting to stay, known as turnover intention (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Gansser & Godbersen, 2023; Wong & Wong, 2017). This could be shown in a study where affective commitment mediated between social support and turnover rate (Wong & Wong, 2017). Furthermore, employees establish a connection with the organisation by aligning with its goals and values. Additionally, they identify with the work they are doing for the organisation (Gansser & Godbersen, 2023; Wong & Wong, 2017). Already, appreciation is related to low negative attitudes towards an organisation. Moreover, since social support is similar to appreciation, it makes sense that appreciation correlates negatively with the intention to leave (Pfister et al., 2020). Interestingly, stress, which can be interpreted as stress to one’s self, is shown to be correlated with intending to leave. This means that the higher the stress is, the more likely someone wants to leave (Göransson et al., 2009).

2.5.2 Cognitive Commitment

Cognitive employee commitment or continuance component is calculative. It describes an individual’s perception or weighing of costs and risks associated with leaving the current organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It is often negatively associated with affective commitment. Sometimes, the relationship was very low (Solinger et al., 2008). That is why the three-component model of organisational commitment has been criticised. According to Solinger et al. (2008), several studies have shown negative correlations between continuance commitment and job satisfaction (Khaskheli et al., 2020; Solinger et al., 2008). One study has demonstrated a small but significant correlation between anxiety and cognitive commitment (Glazer & Kruse, 2008). So, it can be said that continuance commitment does not necessarily have anything to do with

positive attitudes towards an organisation. For this reason, the hypotheses will focus on affective commitment instead of continuance commitment.

2.6 Derivation of the Hypotheses

Suppose someone reduces the uncertainty about someone's performance by valuing someone's contribution. In that case, it reduces the risk of resenting one's organisation since the part of one's self embedded in an organisation is not threatened (Pfister et al., 2020). This could make people feel appreciated and make it easier for them to want to stay and commit effectively (Glazer & Kruse, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2017). Suppose people feel comfortable and are not threatened. In that case, their organisational context can shape and strengthen someone's role identity more easily, and it should be easier for them to identify with their organisation. Therefore, the first hypothesis H1 is following:

H1: There is a positive link between appreciation and affective commitment.

Now, the second hypothesis will be derived. If people are stressed and one's self is threatened, it is more likely that they will be more confident in their ability to succeed or overcome difficult situations, which could reduce the threat to one's self or stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Semmer et al., 2019; Thoits, 1986). Furthermore, if people are less stressed, they are more likely to intend to stay and can identify with the organisation they are volunteering in (Glazer & Kruse, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2017). Therefore, the second hypothesis is the following:

H2: Stress mediates the relationship between appreciation and affective commitment.

H2a: There will be a negative relationship between appreciation and stress.

H2b: There will be a negative relationship between stress and affective commitment.

The third hypothesis suggests that appreciation is similar to social support in that it shapes one's attitude towards an organisation (Pfister et al., 2020; Wong & Wong, 2017). Furthermore, appreciation, similar to social support, can be seen as a resource to boost one's self-esteem and strengthen the role identity that has evolved in the context of volunteering in an organisation (Semmer et al., 2019). Appreciation may enhance the reception of social support, making it easier to build a connection with the organisation and reducing the desire to leave.

H3: Social support mediates the relationship between appreciation and affective commitment.

H3a. There is a positive relationship between appreciation and social support.

H3b. There is a positive relationship between affective commitment and social support.

3 Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive explanation of the methodology used in this study. This will enable others to replicate the study if they so desire. This will provide an overview of the methodology used, followed by a detailed explanation of each step in the process. This includes data collection, sampling, implementation, and data analysis.

3.1 Assignment Clarification

The order process began with me writing to BESJ to see if they would be interested in collaborating on my bachelor's thesis. They then said that I should write them an email. Which I did, explaining in detail what I wanted to do and what I wanted to achieve with it. They then told me I was welcome to do it and that I could just about realise this idea. In a further conversation, they clarified how BESJ could support me.

3.2 Research Design

This study took a completely quantitative approach. The questions were not created independently. Instead, a careful literature review was undertaken to determine which measurement instruments were most appropriate. Care was taken to ensure that these measurement instruments are validated and have robust reliability or have proven themselves in research practice.

Professor Semmer and Dr. Jacobshagen were asked if their instrument could be used for the measurement instrument that measures appreciation. They gave this research permission for non-commercial purposes. The idea was to measure social support, stress, and commitment besides appreciation. Only the items/questions of the measure instruments that were important to the research question were used for a questionnaire that measured all the mentioned constructs. The goal was not only to collect data from volunteers working with BESJ but also anyone involved in formal volunteering. This was done to get a broader picture of volunteer work.

The BESJ distributed the questionnaire in their newsletter and connected me with a newspaper called IDEA Schweiz that printed a QR code on their newspaper. Furthermore, some acquaintances on social media outlets were asked to fill in and distribute the questionnaire. As it will be shown, it made it possible to recruit volunteers from different groups.

The goal of this research design was to measure certain constructs in a population of volunteers to see then if those constructs correlate or even could show a mediating effect as hypothesised in Chapter 2.6

3.2.1 Measurements

Jacobshagen et al. (2008) measured appreciation by an instrument or scale. It has been used in several research studies and, as will be shown later, is quite reliable (Pfister et al., 2020; Stocker et al., 2010, 2019). The scale is divided into three subscales. The first subscale is an appreciation by a supervisor, the second is by colleagues, and the third is by clients. The latter was not used since clients were not a part of the research. Appreciation by supervisors consists of items like “My supervisors always listen to my concerns.” or “My supervisors praise me when I carry out my tasks well.”. The appreciation by colleagues included items like “My colleagues appreciate it that I help whenever they run into problems.” or “My colleagues ask for my advice.”. The answer options ranged from 1(not at all) to 7 (very much). This answer option was recommended by Jacobshagen et al. (2008).

The next scale was the “Berlin Social Support Scale” (Schulz & Schwarzer, 2003). The scale has been validated and has a strong internal consistency, making it reliable (Boz Semerci & Tayfur Ekmekci, 2020; DiMillo et al., 2019; Schulz & Schwarzer, 2003).

The subscale of perceived available support was used. This subscale is again divided into emotional and instrumental support. Emotional support consists of items like “Whenever I am sad, there are people who cheer me up.” or “There are people who truly like me.”. Instrumental support has items like “There are people who offer me help when I need it.” or “When I am worried, there is someone who helps me.”. Like with the appreciation scales, answer options ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)

The next measurement instrument was an adapted German variation of the perceived stress scale (PSS-10) (Schneider et al., 2020). The PSS-10 is widely used in research (Schneider et al., 2020). It is validated and reliable (Schneider et al., 2020). The subscales are divided into helplessness (PH) and perceived self-efficacy (PSE). PH includes items like “In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?” or “In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?” and PSE consists of items like “In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?”, or “In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?” (Schneider et al., 2020). The answer options ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Four Items were coded reversed. So, a

high expression of self-efficacy can be translated into less stress, and a low expression of self-efficacy can be translated into more stress.

The last measurement was a scale derived from the “Vier-Komponenten-Modell der Mitarbeiterbindung” or, in English, the “Four-component model of employee commitment” (Gansser & Godbersen, 2023). The model is inspired by Allen and Meyer’s (1990) conceptualisation of commitment. However, only the affective and cognitive commitment subscales were used since the other subscales were not useful for this research. Like the others, the subscales were validated, and their reliability is acceptable. However, the items were slightly modified to suit the context of volunteering. The answer choices ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). A translated item of the affective commitment subscale is: “I find it pleasant to work for my employer.”. A translated item of the cognitive commitment is: “The time required for a change ties me to my employer.”. The answer options ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The questionnaire was in German.

3.2.2 Structure of the Questionnaire

Firstly, demographic data was queried. This included gender, age, and the organisation in which the participants volunteered. The age was divided into age groups. The first was young people (up to 18 years). The second was young adults (18-34 years). The last two groups were adults (35-64 years) and senior citizens (65 years and older)

There was an answer option where participants could choose well-known volunteering organisations or areas. If their organisation or area was not, and if it needed to be specified, they could. If it was not indicated, they were redirected to an open field where they could indicate where they were volunteering.

After the demographics, scales in the following order were included: appreciation, social support, commitment, and stress.

At the questionnaire’s end was a prize draw for three vouchers worth 50 Swiss francs.

3.3 Data Collection

In this chapter, the data collection is illustrated. First, the sampling data is shown, and then something brief is said about the pretest. Then, something about the implementation of the survey is discussed.

3.3.1 Sampling

For this research, snowball sampling was used (Leighton et al., 2021). In this research, subjects were partially recruited from acquaintances. It started with a pool of carefully selected people who are engaged in volunteering. These acquaintances were asked to distribute the questionnaire through their friends or familiars. The hope was that the sample would grow through referrals and could reach a hidden population. As mentioned in Chapter 3.2, BESJ and IDEA Schweiz also recruited participants who fit the criteria.

3.3.2 Pretest

During calendar week nine, a short pretest was conducted with 12 people. The focus was finding errors in the survey. The scales used were not allowed to change due to copyright laws, except for the commitment scale. However, a few errors in the structure of the questionnaire and a few repetitive items were found. Some people made recommendations for the introduction of the survey.

The internal consistency was not checked during the pretest. The reasoning was that it would have been unnecessary since most items were already tested and widely used. In addition, pretests usually have a larger sample size than the usual required sample size of more than 30 people in a short study would have allowed (Perneger et al., 2015).

3.4 Conducting the Survey

The survey was first sent out privately to various people on the 4th of March, and on the 6th of March, it was sent out via the BESJ newsletter. IDEA Schweiz, a Christian magazine, quickly became aware of this and requested that the questionnaire's QR code be printed in their newspaper. They were then permitted to print the QR code. The closing was on the 7th of April. In the meantime, people were reminded to complete the questionnaire.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Post-Hoc Reliability

After conducting the data, a reliability test was taken post-hoc to see if the different scales and subscales were reliable. The goal was to determine the internal consistency. The values can be found in Table 1. The internal consistency is determined by Cronbach's alpha, for which the following classifications apply:

$\alpha > .80$ good; $\alpha > .70$ satisfactory; $\alpha > .60$ just satisfactory; $\alpha > .50$ borderline; $\alpha < .40$ inadequate

To summarise, it can be said that except for commitment and self-efficacy $\alpha < .70$, the results were more than satisfactory.

Table 1

Internal Consistency of Measured Constructs

Scale	Internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)
Appreciation	$\alpha = .861$
Appreciation by supervisor	$\alpha = .836$
Appreciation by colleagues	$\alpha = .790$
Social support	$\alpha = .735$
Emotional support	$\alpha = .873$
Instrumental support	$\alpha = .841$
Commitment	$\alpha = .638$
Affective commitment	$\alpha = .776$
Cognitive commitment	$\alpha = .749$
Stress	$\alpha = .854$
Helplessness	$\alpha = .840$
Self-efficacy	$\alpha = .665$

3.5.2 Evaluation Method

The data generated by the questionnaire was analysed using software like R and SPSS. Different data frames were created with R, making it easier to sort the data later. Unnecessary data such as time stamps could thus be removed. The item's responses on the appreciation scale were grouped in such a way that it can be stated that the participants either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The PSS-10 was partially recoded. So that negatively formulated items are correctly polarised. The answers to the scales were summed up. The summed scores made it possible to work with interval-scaled data. For example, interval-scaled data is required for certain regressions or correlations (Heimsch et al., 2018). Nevertheless, Kendall's tau was used for the correlation since the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and the Shapiro-Wilk test showed that no scale was normally distributed (Heimsch et al., 2018). If it is known whether the data is normally distributed or not, it is possible to know which test is needed to see how the central tendencies of the groups differ. Tests such as the U-test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to test group differences since the data was not normally distributed.

The Breusch-Pagan statistical test was used to assess the homoskedasticity of each scale (Breusch & Pagan, 1979). The test revealed heteroskedasticity for all constructs, indicating that the assumption of constant variance of the residuals across all levels of the independent variables was violated.

Since all scales or variables violated this assumption, robust linear regressions were made with R. The library was "robmed". Robust methods ignore heteroskedasticity and outlier by assigning different weights to observations based on their influence. Robust regressions weight outliers less. If outliers receive less weight, they influence the linear regression model less (Chatterjee & Mächler, 1997).

With these methods, crucial assumptions for a regression could be overcome. Regressions were used for the mediation analysis. A mediation analysis assesses how the variable "X" influences "Y" through the inclusion of a mediator "M". Therefore, it is a causal approach. The goal is to see if there is an indirect effect of "X" on "Y". This approach is only possible if the direct effect has already been shown (Hayes, 2022, pp. 79–95). A Sobel test was used to estimate the p-value of the indirect effect, the mediation effect (Sobel, 1982; Sober, 2006).

4 Results

This chapter describes the demographic data and the overall characteristics of the sample. Then, it looks into the specifics of how BESJ volunteers have answered the appreciation scale. Later, specific improvement proposals will be recommended in Chapter 5. Then, there is an exploratory data analysis, such as group comparisons. However, these are focussed on appreciation because this analysis can be useful later to understand how appreciation can be promoted or what should be considered in appreciation. It, therefore, serves to contextualise the hypothesis testing. Finally, the hypotheses will be tested.

4.1 Characterisation of the Sample

A total of N= 231 volunteers across different organisations completed the questionnaire. Amongst them, 76 were men, and 154 were women - one person identified neither as male nor female. Table 2 shows the distribution. The majority were young adults between 18 and 34. Followed by youth under 18.

Table 2

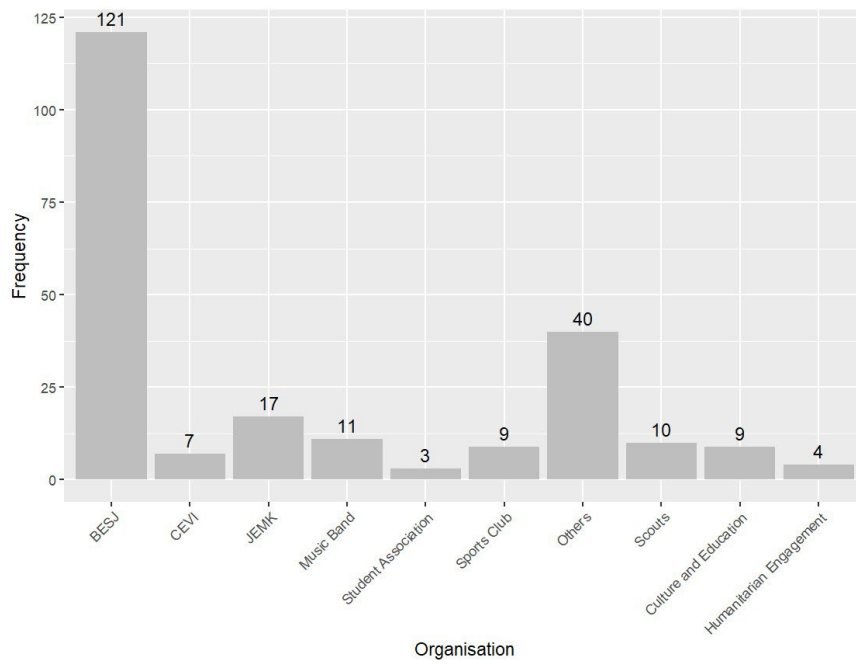
Age Groups

Age Groups	N	Portion
Youth (under 18)	46	19.91 %
Young Adults (18 bis 34)	160	69.26 %
Adults (35 bis 64)	22	9.52 %
Senior citizens (64+)	3	1.30 %

Regarding the organisations, it became clear that most BESJ members work voluntarily. The next largest group was “Others”. This group consisted of various volunteer activities, such as fire brigades, church elders or political activities. The overall frequency of every organisation is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Different Organisations



4.2 Explorative Analysis

This chapter shows some descriptive data on key constructs and will test whether there is a difference between groups in the expression of the characteristics. Since the data is not normally distributed, non-parametric tests such as the U-test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used (Heimsch et al., 2018).

This descriptive data and the differences in the constructs allow the questions regarding the hypothesis to be explained later in the discussion and also help to formulate practical implications.

4.2.1 Appreciation Items

Table 3 shows the mean, the standard deviation, and the acceptance rate of the appreciation scale (Jacobshagen et al., 2008), as explained in Chapter 3.5.2. N consists of counted volunteers from BESJ. The data shows that the overall acceptance rate was high. Every item also has a very high mean (M) and narrow standard deviation (SD). The items scored from 1 (does not apply at all) to 7 completely true. 4 would be “partly partly”, and 5 is “applies somewhat”. So, anything above 5 is not a bad value. Table 3 additionally shows the agreement. However, every item below or equal to the appreciation scale’s mean value of 5.73 has been marked. Since these items express certain behaviours that show appreciation, those behaviours still have the potential to improve. These behaviours seem to be that supervisors could praise and compliment their volunteers more and that supervisors could ask more for advice. Team members could show more appreciation if one voices their opinion.

Table 3*Appreciation Items*

Item	N	M	SD	Agreement in %
Gesamtsample	121			
Praise by Supervisor		5.60	1.11	85.3 %
Expressing one's opinion openly		6.39	0.84	96.7 %
Supervisor listens openly		6.21	0.92	95.7 %
Further interesting tasks are assigned.		5.83	1.12	91.7 %
Compliments from the supervisor		5.55	1.10	83.5 %
Asked for advice		5.66	1.07	83.5 %
Trusted by colleagues		5.96	0.99	92.7 %
Beautiful Interaction		6.09	1.05	89.3 %
Appreciation of opinion		5.73	0.93	90.1 %
Total mean value of the appreciation scale		5.89		

4.2.2 Differences in Appreciation across Age Groups

Table 4 shows the Mdn and SD in the appreciation (sub-)scale. To see if there is a group difference, a Kruskal-Wallis test indicated no significant difference in appreciation across all the age groups, χ^2 (df, 3) = [3.680], $p = 0.29$. It was also insignificant in the appreciation received from the team across all the age groups, χ^2 (df, 3) = [3.495], $p = 0.32$. However, the test showed that there was a significant difference in appreciation received from the supervisors across all the age groups, χ^2 (df, 3) = [8.213], $p = 0.04$, since $p < 0.05$. A post-hoc test showed significant differences between the age group “Youth” and “Young Adults” as well as “Young Adults” and “Adults” (all $p_{adj} < 0.05$). Since the Mdn in appreciation by supervisors in the group “Young Adults” is higher than in the other groups, it suggests that youth and young adults experience higher appreciation than is expressed by the supervisors.

Table 4

Differences in Appreciation (Sub-)Scale across all Age Groups

Scale/Subscale	Youth (under 18)		Young Adults (18 to 34)		Adults (35 to 64)		Senior citizens (64+)	
Scale/Subscale	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Appreciation	54.00	5.94	53.00	6.21	51.00	10.55	55.00	1.53
Appreciation by Supervisors	30.50	3.13	29.00	4.07	28.50	6.55	33.00	1.55
Appreciation by Colleagues	23.00	3.49	24.00	3.11	23.00	3.49	23.00	3.49

Note. N=231

4.2.3 Differences in Appreciation between BESJ and other Organisations

A Wilcoxon rank sum test, or U-Test, was conducted to compare appreciation between BESJ and other organisations. Every organisation or reply that did not belong to the BESJ was grouped into one group, so there were two groups. The test yielded a significant result $W = 8022.5$, $p = 0.006$, indicating a difference in appreciation between the volunteers engaged in BESJ (Mdn=54) and other organisations (Mdn=51). However, there was no significant difference in the appreciation by supervisors between BESJ (Mdn=30) and the other Organisations (Mdn=29) $W = 7603$, $p = 0.06$. The difference in appreciation by colleagues between BESJ (Mdn=24) and other organisations (Mdn=23) $W = 8096$, $p = 0.004$, was significant. This suggests that at least team members in BESJ showed more appreciation than other organisations.

Table 5 shows the Mdn and the SD in the two groups' appreciation (sub-) scale.

Table 5

Differences of Appreciation between BESJ and other Organisations

Scale/Subscale	BESJ		Other Organisations	
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Appreciation	54.00	6.33	51.00	7.07
Appreciation by Supervisors	30.00	4.09	29.00	4.42
Appreciation by Colleagues	24.00	3.18	23.00	3.52

Note. N= 231

4.2.4 Differences in Appreciation between Genders

Table 6 shows the Mdn and SD in the two groups' appreciation scale (subscale). To see if there is a difference in how gender perceived appreciation, a u-test was conducted, and no significant difference was observed.

The difference in appreciation between male (Mdn=52.50) and female participants (Mdn=53) $W = 5540$, $p = 0.51$, was insignificant. The difference in appreciation by supervisors between males (Mdn=52.50) and females (Mdn=53) $W = 5572$, $p = 0.42$, was also insignificant. The same was true of the difference in appreciation by colleagues between male (Mdn=23.50) and female (Mdn=24.00) volunteers (Mdn=53) $W = 5668$, $p = 0.69$.

Table 6

Differences of Appreciation between Genders

Scale/Subscale	Male		Female	
Scale/Subscale	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Appreciation	52.05	7.56	53.50	6.24
Appreciation by Supervisors	29.00	4.57	30.00	4.06
Appreciation by Colleagues	23.5	3.72	24.00	3.20

Note N=230

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

This chapter shows the results of the correlation analysis and the mediation analysis to test the hypotheses. Kendall's rank-order correlation coefficient was used since the data was not normally distributed, and many data points had the same ranks. Some literature suggests that Kendall's Tau should be preferred over Spearman's correlation coefficient if there are outliers since it is more conservative (Heimsch et al., 2018). Kendall's tau symbol is " τ ". Table 7 shows how Kendall's rank-order correlation coefficient can be interpreted compared to Pearson's. Heimsch et al. (2018) gave some suggestions on interpreting Pearsons and Spearman. However, since Kendall Tau's correlations are narrower, the interpretation was adjusted with the help of Strahan's (1982) paper, which compared different correlation coefficients.

Table 7

Magnitude of correlation coefficients (inspired by Heimsch et al., 2018 and by Strahan, 1982)

Kendall's	Pearson's	Interpretation
$ \tau \leq 0.1$	$ r \leq 0.2$	Very low
$0.1 \leq \tau \leq 0.3$	$0.2 \leq r \leq 0.5$	low
$0.3 \leq \tau \leq 0.5$	$0.5 \leq r \leq 0.7$	middle
$0.5 \leq \tau \leq 0.7$	$0.7 \leq r \leq 0.9$	high
$0.7 \leq \tau \leq 1$	$0.9 \leq r \leq 1$	Very high

As mentioned in Chapter 3.5.2, some assumptions were violated. Nevertheless, with robust methods, it is possible to overcome such methods. For this reason, the mediation analysis was done with robust regressions.

4.3.1 Correlation Coefficients

Appreciation and Commitment

Table 8 shows the correlations between the constructs measured in a Swiss volunteer population. Appreciation correlated low with commitment and was highly significant, $\tau = .152$, $N = 231$, $p < .001$. However, if you look at the correlation of appreciation with affective commitment, the correlation was higher, $\tau = .370$, $N = 231$, $p < .001$. On the contrary, cognitive commitment showed a very small negative correlation with appreciation, $\tau = -.063$, $N = 231$, $p > .05$, which is not significant. Therefore, it can be argued that esteem has no association with cognitive commitment. Interestingly enough, affective and cognitive commitment showed no significant correlation, $\tau = -.075$, $N = 231$, $p > .05$. This supports, on the one hand, H1, and the other hand, it shows furthermore why the three-component model of organisational Commitment has been criticised (Solinger et al., 2008)

Appreciation and Stress

Appreciation and stress showed no significant correlation, $\tau = -.083$, $N = 231$, $p > .05$. Nevertheless, Appreciation correlated low but very highly with self-efficacy $\tau = -.162$, $N = 231$, $p < .001$. With helplessness, the correlation was neither high nor significant $\tau = -.042$, $N = 231$, $p > .05$. Therefore, H2a can be supported partially in the sense that it showed a connection between appreciation and self-efficacy but did not with helplessness or the whole construct that should represent perceived stress. It has to be noted that the negative correlation between appreciation by team members and self-efficacy was higher with $\tau = -.196$, $N = 231$, $p < .001$ than the relationship between appreciation by supervisors and self-efficacy.

Stress and Commitment

The correlation between stress and commitment was very low and insignificant, $\tau = .055$, $N = 231$, $p > .05$. This would be a reason to reject H2b. Yet, the subconstructs tell another story. Affective commitment and stress had a negative relationship $\tau = -.117$, $N = 231$, $p < .01$. Whereas, cognitive commitment was positively correlated with stress, $\tau = .138$, $N = 231$, $p < .01$

Affective commitment correlated slightly negatively with self-efficacy $\tau = -.117$, $N = 231$, $p < .05$. It also showed a negative relation between affective commitment and self-efficacy, $\tau = -.181$, $N = 231$, $p < .001$. A small negative relationship between affective commitment and helplessness was shown, $\tau = -.071$, $N = 231$, $p > .05$. However, it was insignificant. Cognitive commitment positively correlated with helplessness and cognitive commitment, $\tau = .124$, $N = 231$, $p < .001$. So, H2b can be supported partially since certain aspects are negatively correlated.

However, some aspects correlated positively. This contradiction will be assessed in the discussion.

Social support and appreciation

The relationship between social support and appreciation was highly correlated, $\tau = .540$ $N = 231$, $p < .001$. This supports H3a without any questions. Despite this, further investigation can be useful. Appreciation and instrumental support had a higher correlation, $\tau = .555$ $N = 231$, $p < .001$, than with emotional support, $\tau = .478$ $N = 231$, $p < .001$. Still, instrumental and emotional support showed high correlations with appreciation.

Social support and affective commitment

The correlation between social support and affective commitment, $\tau = .355$ $N = 231$, $p < .001$, which shows a medium effect strength. Therefore, H3b can be considered supported and must not be rejected.

Table 8*Correlation between dimensions*

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Appreciation	1											
2. Appreciation by Supervisors	.754***	1										
3. Appreciation by Colleagues	.682***	.382***	1									
4. Berliner Support Scale	.540***	.481***	.447***	1								
5. Instrumental Support	.555***	.477***	.465***	.854**	1							
6. Emotional Support	.478***	.446**	.388***	.841***	.654***	1						
7. Commitment	.152***	.122***	.142**	.152***	.144**	.149**	1					
8. Affective Commitment	.370***	.352***	.304***	.355***	.367***	.326***	.337***	1				
9. Cognitive Commitment	-0.063	-0.080	-0.046	-0.051	-0.061	-0.038	-.644***	-.075	1			
10. Perceived Stress Scale	-.083	-.055	-.096*	-.051	-.057	-.058	.055	-.117*	.138**	1		
11. Helplessness	-.042	-.043	-.035	-.005	-.010	-.014	.066	-.071	.124***	.822***	1	
12. Self-Efficacy	-.162***	-.097*	-.196**	-.143**	-.147**	-.135**	.005	-.181***	.114*	.603***	.371***	1

Notes. Kendall's rank-order correlation coefficient. Two-tailed.

* $p < .05$ represents a significant result. ** $p < .01$ shows that the result is highly significant. *** $p < .001$ is considered as extremely significant.

4.3.2 Mediation Analysis

Mediation of Self-Efficacy

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Appreciation (X), Self-Efficacy (M), and the outcome variable affective commitment (Y). Self-efficacy, which, as already explained, is a subconstruct of stress. The correlation analysis showed that self-efficacy was correlated higher than with stress. For this reason, the subconstruct was chosen instead of the whole construct, stress.

X is the independent variable that influences the dependent variable (Y). The letters a, b, and c' represent the paths shown in Figure X. This method is used to see if H2 and H3 must be rejected.

The coefficient for path (a) was $-.091$ ($SE = .0264$, $p < .001$). SE is the standard error. It measures the accuracy with which a sample represents a population (Heimisch et al., 2018). The coefficient that represents path (b) was $-.197$ ($SE = .0846$, $p < .01$). The coefficient reveals how much the outcome variable changes (on average) for a one-unit increase in the predictor (Hayes, 2022). The constant term (iM) was 15.010 ($SE = 1.382$, $p < .001$). A constant term is the value of a dependent variable in a regression equation when its associated predictor or independent variables equal zero (Hayes, 2022). The direct path between appreciation and affective commitment is represented by c' with $.254$ ($SE = .0312$, $p < .001$). The constant term (yM) was 19.368 ($SE = 1.92$, $p < .001$).

The multiple R-squared value of $R^2=.0468$ signifies that 4.48% of the variance in commitment can be attributed to self-efficacy and appreciation, which collectively explained 24.47% of the variance in commitment with $R^2=.24$.

The indirect effect, or mediation effect, was estimated to be $.017$ and insignificant ($p > 0.05$). The direct effect was $.254$ and was highly significant with ($p < .001$). The total effect was 0.272 and highly significant ($p < .001$).

Because the indirect effect was insignificant and small, showing that self-efficacy does not mediate between appreciation. This means that H2 has to be rejected. However, the direct effect cannot be denied; appreciation influences affective commitment. Table 9 shows the important results. Figure 2 shows the mediation analysis graphically.

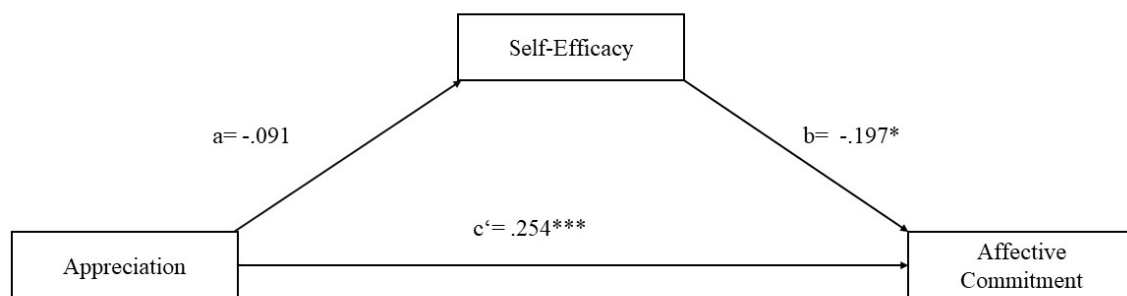
Table 9

Regression Analysis

Antecedent		Consequent						
		M			Y			
		B	SE	p	B	SE	p	
X (Appreciation)	a	-.091	.0264	<.001	c'	.254	.0312	<.001
M (Self-Efficacy)		-	-	-	b	-.197	.0846	<.01
Constant	iM	15.010	1.382	<.001	iY	19.368	1.996	<.001
				$R^2 = .0468, p < .001$		$R^2 = .245, p < .001$		

Figure 2

Mediation Analysis with Self-Efficacy as Mediator



Total Effect: .272, $p < .001$
 Direct Effect: .254, $p < .001$
 Indirect Effect: .017, $p > 0.05$
Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed)

Mediation of Social Support

The coefficient representing path (a) was .678 (SE = .0444, $p < .001$). The coefficient for path (b) was .112 (SE = .0437, $p < .05$). The constant term was 12.013 (SE = 2.343, $p < .001$). The direct path c' between appreciation and affective commitment is denoted by c' with a coefficient of (B = .186, SE = .0444, $p < .001$). The constant term was 15.580 (SE = 1.701, $p < .001$).

The multiple R-squared value of $R^2 = .395$ shows that appreciation can account for approximately 39.5% of the variance in Social Support. Appreciation and social support explained the variance of affective commitment by 25.1% with $R^2 = .251$.

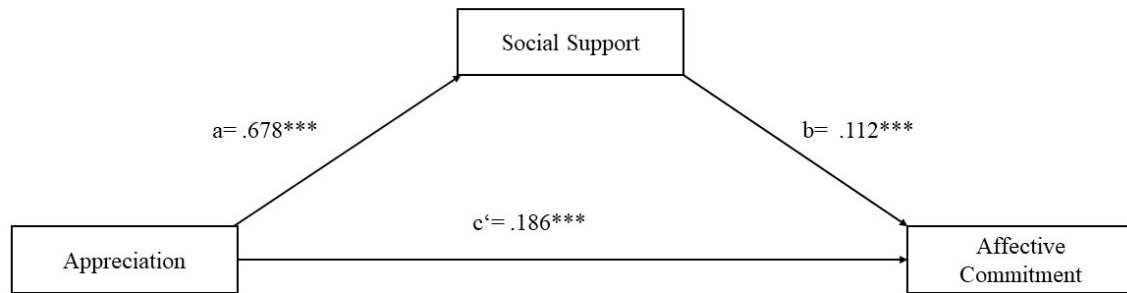
This research estimates the indirect effect, or mediation effect, to be 0.077 with statistical significance at ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, the direct effect was estimated to be 0.186 with a significance of ($p < 0.001$). The total effect was .263 with a significance of ($p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that since both the direct effect and the indirect effect are significant and relevant in the context of the study, H3 can be supported. Social support mediates the relationship between appreciation and commitment. Table 9 shows the important results, and Figure 3 shows the mediation model.

Table 10*Regression Analysis*

Antecedent		Consequent						
		M			Y			
		B	SE	p	B	SE	p	
X (Appreciation)	a	0.678	0.0444	<.001	c'	.186	.0444	<.001
M (Social Support)		-	-	-	b	.112	.0437	<.05
Constant		12.013	2.343	<.001		15.580	1.701	<.001
$R^2 = .395$				$R^2 = .251$				

Figure 3

Mediation Analysis of Social Support



Total Effect: .263, $p < .001$
Direct Effect: .186, $p < .001$
Indirect Effect: .077, $p > 0.05$
Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

5 Discussion

5.1 Interpretation

So, does it matter if an organisation values their volunteers? This is not the actual research question, yet this question still can be answered by answering the research questions and rejecting or accepting the hypothesis. This has already been partially done, but now the results will be discussed more thoroughly.

H1

H1 stated that there should be a positive link between appreciation and affective commitment. The reasoning was that valuing others reduced the resentment of the organisation they volunteered for. Moreover, because they do not feel threatened but comfortable, they are more willing to stay; this could allow the organisational context to shape one's identity, making it easier to identify with the organisation (Glazer & Kruse, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2017).

These findings, based on data from the volunteers, reveal a strong correlation between affective commitment and appreciation. This does not necessarily imply that appreciation directly influences affective commitment. It could be that a stronger identification with the volunteering organisation and a more comfortable environment leads to better performance, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of appreciation. However, this research is among the first in the German-speaking world to clearly demonstrate a highly significant relationship between appreciation and affective commitment. As it will be discussed later, this has significant implications for further research and practical applications. Importantly, regression analysis suggests a causal interpretation, indicating that appreciation does influence affective commitment.

H2

The second hypothesis, H2, was that stress mediates the relationship between appreciation and affective commitment. Unfortunately, H2 has to be rejected. It seems that self-efficacy did not mediate this relationship. The indirect effect of the mediation analysis was very weak, and the effect was not even significant. The effect of appreciation on the commitment of volunteers cannot be attributed to reducing stress or threat to one's self. Rather, it is through creating a sense of comfort directly and reducing resentment towards the organisation that appreciation increases volunteer commitment.

H2a

H2a stated that there is a relationship between appreciation and stress. There is still a weak, significant link between appreciation and self-efficacy. However, no significant relationship was shown between appreciation and stress as whole constructs or appreciation and helplessness. This could be because this research did not necessarily measure stress in the volunteering context, but rather, it was general stress. So, besides appreciation, too many other factors could have influenced the results that were not accounted for, like private situations. So, despite appreciation and self-efficacy being correlated slightly, other things might relate to stress as well. It still somehow shows that stress could indeed be a threat to one's self, or at least the convincing to overcome challenges. This would mean other more important factors could predict stress as an outcome if one would do a regression analysis. It also reports research that showed similar results (Pfister et al., 2020; Stocker et al., 2019). So, H2a can be partially supported if one accounts for the correlation of self-efficacy, which can be seen as a subconstruct of stress.

H2b

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that stress and affective commitment were not significantly related. This contradicts H2b, which proposed a relationship between affective commitment and stress. Interestingly, affective commitment was found to have a negative correlation with self-efficacy. This suggests that if individuals believe they can overcome challenges, they are less likely to feel negatively about the organisation in which they are volunteering.

The research findings suggest that while appreciation, self-efficacy, and affective commitment are correlated, self-efficacy does not mediate the direct path between appreciation and affective commitment. This implies that if individuals feel appreciated by their fellow volunteers and supervisors, it fosters a sense of identification with the organisation and a generally positive attitude towards it. In essence, volunteering in an organisation becomes a positive aspect of their identity. This aligns with the findings of (Pfister et al., 2020), where appreciation was found to enhance job satisfaction. Moreover, their research indicated that feelings of resentment mediated the effect between appreciation and satisfaction. Similarly, this study demonstrates that appreciation can cultivate a positive attitude among volunteers towards their organisation. This answers the question of how stress, or at least self-efficacy, mediates the role between appreciation and affective commitment. It also answers the question of how appreciation is related to commitment.

H3

The next hypothesis suggested that appreciation could improve how social support is received, making it easier for them to stay and identify with the organisation where they are volunteering (Glazer & Kruse, 2008; Semmer et al., 2019; Wong & Wong, 2017). So, H3 was that social support mediates the relationship between appreciation and affective commitment. The results did not show enough support to reject the hypothesis. Appreciation had a significant effect on affective commitment and a significant indirect effect on affective commitment, meaning that social support plays a mediating role between appreciation and social support. It seems that appreciation somehow might strengthen the quality of how social support is received. This could improve how they feel about their role in the organisation where they are working. This then allows the goals, vision and work of the organisation they are working with to become a part of themselves or their identity. This part of their identity is shaped and perceived positively in their organisational setting. This again shows that role identity is shaped by social interactions and context (Blankenship & Stewart, 2017; Grube & Piliavin, 2000). In simple words, appreciation enables one to identify with the organisation where they are volunteering, and they are more likely to want to stay. Identifying and wanting to stay in an organisation is core to affective commitment. This does not only support H3 but also answers how appreciation is related to commitment and how social support mediates the role between appreciation and affective commitment.

H3a and H3b

Additionally, every facet of appreciation is correlated with every facet of social support. The correlation between that facet was also always highly significant. This was the same case with social support and affective commitment. So, H3a and H3b can be supported as well. H3a stated a relationship between appreciation and social support, and H3b a relationship between social support and affective commitment.

5.2 Limitations and Outlook

Mediation analysis uses regressions, interpreted as causal relationships (Agler & De Boeck, 2017). However, it is still controversial. Since it is possible that not only $X \rightarrow Y$ but somehow $Y \rightarrow X$. This is also known as inverse regression (Danner et al., 2015; Tchetgen Tchetgen, 2013). Researchers generally work with a theory-derived mediation hypothesis and retrieve data that allows them to check whether the hypothesis has to be rejected (Agler & De

Boeck, 2017). So, a future study should also test an inverse mediation model after deriving hypotheses based on theory. It is important to see if affective commitment influences appreciation and whether social support mediates this relationship.

Another way to see if there are causal effects is through experiments or interventions. This will not only address the question of whether appreciation improves affective commitment but also explore how appreciation can be enhanced to improve affective commitment. One experiment could be that researchers would team up with some individuals for a certain amount of time when carrying out any task or programme. Then, give one group introductions on how to appreciate each other and teach them why appreciation is important. The other group should work as a control group. Later, it could be measured if there is a difference in affective commitment between those groups.

An intervention study could first do a teambuilding event about appreciation after taking an appreciation scale similar to Jacobshagen et al. (2008). Then, after three months, they could take a test again and then see if there are any changes, have a second teambuilding event, and repeat the process to see how appreciation increases after a total of six months.

Another limitation was the measurement of appreciation. Like the other scales, this scale demonstrated robust internal consistency and was well-accounted for. However, the operationalisation of the scale was not as clear compared to the others. This begs the question of how appreciation can be measured and maybe even what appreciation exactly is.

This is why creating a new appreciation scale would not be bad. One aspect should be unconditional appreciation, and one should be earned appreciation. This could be done by theoretically creating items and testing if there are latent variables that relate to a construct called appreciation.

Another way would be conducting interviews, where interviewees are asked how they want to be appreciated, not due to their efforts and performance but because they are human. Moreover, it could be asked how they want to be appreciated for their performance and efforts. It could also be interesting to ask how they do not want to be appreciated. This could help to identify behaviours that should be avoided when appreciating others. Then, the qualitative data can be evaluated to construct new items. Those new items can also be tested to see if any latent variables relate to a construct called appreciation.

Furthermore, human dignity or unconditional appreciation is interesting and could be investigated more. It would be interesting to see how and why people are appreciated unconditionally.

Concerning appreciation, it appeared that there was a variance restriction. Therefore, the data was not normally distributed. This could have been because many of those who completed the questionnaire came from a Christian background. Some research suggested that religious people who are internally motivated by their beliefs or have an inner conviction about them showed more prosocial support than others (Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2017; Messay et al., 2012). This could explain the variance restriction and the high levels of appreciation across all groups. Interestingly, the volunteers of BESJ had higher levels of appreciation than other groups. Some other groups were still not necessarily tied to any Christian belief systems. So, a Christian belief might contribute to appreciation as well. Interestingly, unconditionally appreciating others or showing dignity is a Jewish-Christian belief (Harper, 2016). However, these are assumptions that need to be tested. One simple way would be to see if Christian beliefs correlate with appreciating others or if people with a Christian worldview show more appreciation towards others. This does not mean that Christians are better people. Maybe other belief systems, like humanism, could influence appreciation as well. The problem there would then be that one has not only to measure perceived appreciation but also appreciation as an activity. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to find out how religious beliefs or other beliefs influence how appreciation is practised. More experimental studies that require rigorous preselecting of people who hold certain Christian or humanistic values and those who do not would be needed.

The PSS-10 may not be the right construct to measure in a volunteering population. It measured general stress and did not measure it for any specific context, like the ILO-WHO stress scale or a shorter version specified for volunteering (Torvisco et al., 2022). A better-suited measurement could have shown different results regarding the relationship between appreciation and stress. Maybe then it could have been clearer if stress has a mediation role between appreciation and commitment, and maybe the overall relation between stress and appreciation would be stronger.

Gender did not influence appreciation. However, age seemed to do. Nevertheless, the fact that age and belief systems influenced the results shows that it would have been important to get data from a wider range of volunteering groups. This has been tried, but it failed. Maybe it would have been better if this project had cooperated directly with non-Christian groups like the Scouts and with BESJ, a Christian group.

This research might have closed some research gaps by showing how appreciation relates to affective commitment. However, there are still some open questions. Additionally, more research is required to understand appreciation better as a whole. So, it can be said that this research has generated more questions than answers and has opened up many possibilities for further research.

5.3 Practical Implications

So, again, appreciation enables one to identify with the organisation in which they are volunteering and want to stay; appreciation might be of high importance for organisations that work with volunteers. If people identify with their organisation, the work and the organisation's value become part of the role identity. Research has shown that appreciation enhances affective commitment, and affective commitment leads to or is correlated with job performance (Sharma & Dhar, 2016). So, if organisations want their volunteers to stay and want them to identify with their organisation, they need appreciation to be a part of their daily routine. Furthermore, appreciation seems negatively related to stress, even if the evidence is slim. If organisations truly value the well-being of their volunteers, expressing appreciation becomes vital. Moreover, because they need to be aware of the overjustification effect, they should not rely too much on these external recognition programs (Boggiano & Ruble, 1979; Jang et al., 2023; Mills, 2021).

Organisations could first make a team diagnosis by looking at how their teams show and perceive appreciation. This could be done with qualitative interviews or with a questionnaire about appreciation. However, as mentioned before, a newer appreciation scale should be created. Alternatively, the diagnosis could be a workshop itself. Then, after they assess the potential for further growth in organisations, they can discuss in a workshop how appreciation should be shown and what is expected of team members and supervisors. Then, they can develop the next steps, strategies, and goals before they implement the steps that they have developed. After a while, they looked at the successful strategies they implemented. This teambuilding approach is called team reflexivity and is quite successful (Konradt et al., 2016). Overall, such and other teambuilding activities can have a lot of different positive outcomes (Hastings et al., 2018). So, the BESJ and other organisations should incentivise team leaders to engage in teambuilding activities, and a team reflexivity approach should be encouraged.

In their leadership courses, the BESJ or other organisations should explain why appreciation is important to future leaders and, above all, main leaders. In addition, such courses should teach how appreciation is perceived and how people wish to be appreciated. However, as explained in Chapter 5.2, how people wish to be appreciated should be studied more. One approach is already called the "Five Languages of Appreciation" but is not based on scientific research. It is based on a famous book called "The Language of Love" (Chapman & White, 2019).

Nevertheless, leaders should regularly reflect on why appreciation of others is important for their group or organisation, and they should lead by example. It has already been known that attitudes only allow a prediction of spontaneous behaviour if they are very accessible. So, reflecting on a regular basis is very important to show appreciation or to have an appreciative attitude (Descheemaeker et al., 2017; Fazio, 2007; Phipps et al., 2021). It is also known that leaders should lead by example if they want to convey the company's goals and values (Yaffe & Kark, 2011).

The analysis of the items showed that some measures already depicted are especially important for groups associated with BESJ. Then, there is still room for improvement. Supervisors and leaders should praise their subordinates more or give them more compliments. Those are specific behaviours that could be discussed in leadership courses. Also, they should try to ask their subordinates more for advice. So, any form of participatory leadership should be key in any form of training BESJ has. Besides appreciation, participative leadership is important for many other aspects, especially commitment (Miao et al., 2014; Q. Wang et al., 2022). It is also important that team members appreciate and recognise their colleagues' opinions. Again, leaders should be taught in leadership courses and model this behaviour in meetings. Maybe leaders should also start any meeting with their colleagues by stressing that it is important to value other opinions.

There are different possibilities, and more ways can be extracted with more research. More and better research is necessary to enhance practical applications, not only for volunteers but also for for-profit industries, as explained in Chapter 5.2.

However, every team of any organisation or association can train, sensitise, make team diagnoses, and make team reflexivity as teambuilding. Team reflexivity can especially be useful since it can be used in different contexts and, therefore, will have different ways suited for a specific team.

The last research question was how BESJ, other associations, and NGOs can improve appreciation in their teams. The practical implications of this research are how the BESJ and other associations and NGOs can improve the appreciation of their teams.

5.4 Conclusion

King's (1964) profound words during his Noble Peace Prize acceptance speech: "I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits," serve as a guiding principle for this research's result and conclusion.

This research concludes that this is true for an individual and any organisation. Appreciation for others is giving dignity to the human spirit and the organisation or team they are associated with. Appreciation enables others that their organisation, with its values and the goals they are working with, becomes a part of their identity. Volunteers are also more willing to stay, and if the SOS is true, they will defend this part of their identity (Semmer et al., 2019). They would defend the values and the goals of their team, organisation, or association. Any organisation should strive for this. This not only enhances the individual's sense of self but also contributes to the overall strength of the organisation (Sharma & Dhar, 2016). So, if team members appreciate each other and supervisors appreciate their volunteers, they give dignity to their organisation. Given that volunteering plays a crucial role in shaping Swiss society for the better, appreciating others should be of high importance. This is why appreciation matters.

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