



HRM Role in corporate social responsibility: Employee volunteering programs

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Abstract

Purpose: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is considered to be one of the most important dimensions of organisational identity, and Human Resource Management (HRM) has a major role to play in the implementation of the same. Employee Volunteering Programs (EVPs) are considered to be one of the most effective ways of demonstrating organisational social responsibility, at the same time enhancing organisational capacity. The main purpose of the current paper is to investigate the role and importance of HRM in the implementation of EVPs.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A survey was conducted among 300 HR practitioners of 50 organisations in the Tamil Nadu region of India, using structured questionnaires to collect data, and statistical tests and regression analysis to check the relationship between HR-driven EVPs and their outcomes.

Findings: The study found that organisations with well-planned EVPs driven by HR tend to have higher employee engagement and lower employee turnover rates. EVPs based on skills are considered to be the most effective EVPs for talent management.

Keywords: Employee volunteering, HRM, corporate social responsibility, employee engagement, talent development, csr strategy

Introduction

In the current business environment, characterised by unprecedented levels of competitiveness and social responsibility, organisations are increasingly called upon to demonstrate their commitment to the communities in which they operate. As such, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is no longer seen as a peripheral activity, but rather as a key business driver. Of all the mechanisms employed by organisations to demonstrate their commitment to their Corporate Social Responsibility, Employee Volunteering Programs (EVPs) have arguably proven to be one of the most effective and popular means to date. EVPs enable organisations to utilise their most valuable asset, human capital, to deliver positive outcomes for communities and society at large, as well as for the organisation and employees themselves.

Human Resource Management (HRM) is arguably one of the most pivotal functions in the EVP space, given its role not only in the logistical administration of EVPs but also in their strategic integration and effectiveness. As such, the inclusion of EVPs as part of the broader Human Resource Management space encompassing talent management, training and development, performance management, and employee engagement has arguably elevated volunteering as a welfare initiative to one that is arguably more potent as a means to develop the organisation.

Though there is an increased interest in EVPs in corporations, there is a scarcity of empirical research done to ascertain the role of HRM in EVPs and the impact of HRM volunteering programs. This research gap has been filled in the current study, in which the emphasis was to ascertain the role of HR in managing EVPs in organisations in Tamil Nadu and the impact.

Significance of the Study

The increased focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors, along with the rising aspirations of employees, particularly millennials and gen Z employees, to work in purpose-driven organisations, has increased the strategic significance of EVPs. For HR practitioners, creating robust EVPs in terms of volunteering programs is no longer a choice but a necessity. This study attempts to contribute to the limited literature on HRM-CSR integration in a developing economy context.

Review of Literature

Bhattacharya *et al.*, (2008) ^[1], investigated the role of corporate social responsibility as a talent management practice and discovered that “employees' knowledge about the company's CSR activities is a strong predictor for their desire to work for and remain in that company.” In comparison to their rivals, firms with genuine CSR policies, which embrace EVPs, had lower turnover rates and better-quality applicants. Throughout the employment life cycle, the significance of HRM in communicating CSR ideals was emphasised.

Glavas & Kelley (2014) ^[2], examined the correlation between employees' perceptions of CSR and their workplace engagement, revealing a significant positive relationship. The study indicated that employees rated their jobs as more important and their connection to the firm as stronger when they volunteered for activities organized by their employer. The study found that HR departments should make official ways for employees to get involved in CSR in order to get the most out of it.

Rodell (2013) ^[5], has developed a theoretical model of employee volunteering, which differentiates between work-

motivated and leisure-motivated employee volunteering. The results revealed that individuals whose motivation to volunteer was based on meaning and growth experienced a spillover effect, i.e., an improvement in work performance as a result of engaging in a volunteer activity. The role of HR in channelling such motivation through programs was considered key to achieving optimal results.

Jones (2010) [3], investigated skills-based volunteering as a talent development mechanism, demonstrating that employees who engaged in professional volunteering applying their workplace expertise to nonprofit challenges developed measurably improved leadership, communication, and problem-solving capabilities. The study advocated for HR-curated skills-matching systems to connect employee competencies with community needs effectively.

Pelozo & Shang (2011) [4], found that EVPs had a significant impact on employer branding, customer loyalty, and company reputation in a meta-analysis of correlations between CSR and firm performance. What is more, they found that HR-managed programs outperformed ad hoc volunteering programs by a huge margin. This is because HR-managed programs have governance, measurement, and employee recognition in place.

Statement of the Problem

In principle, EVPs have a lot of strategic potential, but in fact, many organisations, especially in India, don't take advantage of this potential. Some of the problems that companies often have in this area are low rates of employee participation in EVPs, uneven distribution of volunteering opportunities in these programs, not measuring the effects of these programs, and the fact that these programs are not very deep in terms of business strategy or community needs. This study examines the design and management of Employee Value Propositions (EVPs) within organisations,

the associated challenges, and the outcomes achieved, particularly in Tamil Nadu.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine HR-managed Employee Volunteering Programs in Tamil Nadu organisations' structure and governance.
2. To study EVP contribution and employee engagement, talent retention and skill development.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: Organisational differences in EVP participation and engagement scores are not statistically significant.

H₀₂: The quality of an EVP's design has no significance on the rate of staff retention.

Research Methodology

A descriptive and analytical research design has been employed for the study. The sample group of 300 human resource specialists from randomly selected 50 companies in the manufacturing industry, IT services industry, banking industry, and retail industry of Tamil Nadu was asked to fill out the questionnaires that formed the primary source of data collection for the study. The structure of the EVP, measures of involvement, systems of governance, HR functions, and results were all part of the study. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and descriptive and percentage analysis were employed to decipher the results.

Sample Design

A stratified random sampling approach was employed. The organisations were first stratified by sector, and then HR professionals directly involved in CSR or employee engagement programs were selected as respondents. A total of 300 valid responses were obtained from the following organisations and sectors:

S.No	Sector	No. of Organisations	No. of Respondents
1	Manufacturing	15	90
2	Information Technology & Services	15	90
3	Banking, Financial Services & Insurance	10	60
4	Retail & FMCG	10	60
Total		50	300

Based on Primary Data

Statistical Tools

Human Resource Management's Impact on CSR in Tamil Nadu's Employee Volunteering Programs has been studied using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Descriptive Statistics and Simple Percentage Analysis.

From Table 1, it is evident that 36 per cent of the

organisations offer Skills-Based Volunteering as their primary EVP model, followed by 24 per cent of organisations that offer Traditional hands-on volunteering. Virtual Volunteering is 20 per cent, while Board/Committee and Youth Mentoring Programs make up 12 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively.

Table 1: Type of Employee Volunteering Programs Offered

S.No	Type of Volunteering Program	No. of Organisations	Percentage
1	Traditional/Hands-on Volunteering	12	24
2	Skills-Based Volunteering	18	36
3	Virtual Volunteering	10	20
4	Board/Committee Placements	6	12
5	Youth Mentoring Programs	4	8
Total		50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: Paid Volunteer Leave Offered per Employee (Annually)

S.No	Volunteer Leave Offered	No. of Organisations	Percentage
1	No formal paid leave policy	8	16
2	1 - 2 Days	14	28
3	3 - 5 Days	21	42
4	More than 5 Days	7	14
Total		50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 indicates that the majority of organisations provide 3 to 5 days of paid volunteer leaves per year at 42 per cent, followed by 28 per cent that provide 1 to 2 days of paid leaves. While only 14 per cent of organisations provide more than 5 days of leaves, 16 per cent of organisations do not provide any formal paid leaves for volunteering activities.

Table 3 indicates that, among the five identified roles of HR in managing the EVP, employee awareness and communication scored the highest level of agreement, with 45 per cent of the sample strongly agreeing that this role of HR is effective. Programme design and governance scored the second highest level of agreement with 37 per cent, while impact measurement and reporting scored the lowest level of agreement, namely 22 per cent.

Table 3: HR Roles in EVP Management and their Perceived Effectiveness

S.No	HR Role in EVP	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Total
1	Programme design and governance	112	89	42	36	21	300
2	Community partnership identification	98	102	55	30	15	300
3	Employee awareness and communication	135	87	38	25	15	300
4	Integrating EVP into L&D frameworks	78	95	67	40	20	300
5	Impact measurement and reporting	65	88	72	48	27	300

Source: Primary Data

Table 4: ANOVA test of EVP Participation Levels and Employee Engagement Scores

Variables	EVP Participation	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
Sense of purpose and work meaningfulness	Non-participant	60	2.81	0.62	6.312	0.001*
	Occasional (1-2 days/year)	90	3.56	0.74		
	Regular (3-5 days/year)	105	4.23	0.51		
	High (>5 days/year)	45	4.78	0.39		
	Total	300	3.97	0.81		
Organisational identification and loyalty	Non-participant	60	2.94	0.71	5.879	0.002*
	Occasional (1-2 days/year)	90	3.42	0.63		
	Regular (3-5 days/year)	105	4.15	0.58		
	High (>5 days/year)	45	4.61	0.44		
	Total	300	3.89	0.77		
Intention to remain with organisation	Non-participant	60	2.65	0.88	7.214	0.000*
	Occasional (1-2 days/year)	90	3.38	0.72		
	Regular (3-5 days/year)	105	4.09	0.61		
	High (>5 days/year)	45	4.72	0.33		
	Total	300	3.85	0.89		

Based on Primary Data * Sig.@5%

The calculated F-values at 6.312, 5.879 and 7.214 are significant at the level. These F-values shows that there is a significant difference in employee engagement scores based on the level of participation in EVP. Therefore, the null

hypothesis H01 is rejected. The results clearly indicate that higher levels of participation in EVP are associated with a greater sense of purpose, identification with the organisation, and intention to remain with the organisation.

Table 5: ANOVA Test for EVP Design Quality and Employee Retention Outcomes

Variables	EVP Design Quality	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
Annual attrition rate reduction	No formal EVP	8	1.12	0.38	8.562	0.000*
	Basic EVP (low structure)	14	2.34	0.56		
	Structured EVP (HR-managed)	21	3.89	0.42		
	Strategic EVP (L&D integrated)	7	4.62	0.31		
	Total	50	3.24	1.04		
Employer brand rating improvement	No formal EVP	8	1.34	0.52	6.915	0.001*
	Basic EVP (low structure)	14	2.56	0.61		
	Structured EVP (HR-managed)	21	3.78	0.48		

	Strategic EVP (L&D integrated)	7	4.51	0.29		
	Total	50	3.12	1.11		
Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)	No formal EVP	8	1.45	0.63	9.103	0.000*
	Basic EVP (low structure)	14	2.78	0.72		
	Structured EVP (HR-managed)	21	4.01	0.55		
	Strategic EVP (L&D integrated)	7	4.83	0.22		
	Total	50	3.45	1.18		

Based on Primary Data * Sig.@5%

The F values of 8.562, 6.915, and 9.103 are significant at this level. These results underscore the importance of EVP design quality in impacting employee retention results, employer branding results, and employee net promoter score results. Thus, the null hypothesis H02 is rejected. Organisations that incorporate Strategic EVP into their L&D strategies outperform organisations that do not have a formal EVP or unstructured EVP programs on all three employee retention measures.

Findings of the Study

1. The study found that 36 per cent of organisations employ Skills-Based Volunteering as their primary EVP format, making it the most widely adopted approach ahead of traditional hands-on volunteering (24 per cent).
2. The study found that only 14 per cent of organisations offer more than 5 days of paid volunteer leave annually, while 16 per cent have no formal paid leave policy — indicating a significant formalisation gap across the sector.
3. The study revealed that HR's role in employee awareness and communication is perceived as the most effective EVP function (45 per cent strong agreement), while impact measurement and reporting remains the weakest dimension.
4. The ANOVA analysis confirms that EVP participation levels are significantly associated with employee engagement outcomes ($F = 6.312, 5.879, 7.214; p < 0.05$). Higher participation consistently produces greater work meaningfulness, organisational identification, and retention intent. The null hypothesis H01 is rejected.
5. The ANOVA analysis confirms that EVP design quality significantly predicts retention outcomes, employer brand ratings, and eNPS scores ($F = 8.562, 6.915, 9.103; p < 0.05$). Organisations with strategically integrated EVPs achieve the strongest outcomes across all measures. The null hypothesis H02 is rejected.

Suggestions

1. HR departments should formalise EVP governance by establishing written policies covering paid volunteer leave entitlements, eligible activities, approval workflows, and expense reimbursement procedures to ensure equity and clarity across all employee levels.
2. Organisations should prioritise skills-based volunteering partnerships rather than hands-on volunteering, as the former offers greater talent development value and more meaningful outcomes for the community.
3. HR groups should ensure that EVP participation is included within Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and competency frameworks, which formally recognise

volunteering as a legitimate learning/leadership development pathway.

4. A strong EVP impact measurement framework that measures participation rates, skills learned, community outcomes, and correlation with engagement and retention metrics needs to be developed and integrated into the annual CSR reports.
5. To address equity gaps, HR should design virtual volunteering options and schedule protected volunteer time during work hours to ensure frontline workers, remote employees, and part-time staff can participate equally.

Conclusion

The role of HRM in Employee Volunteering Programs far exceeds the simple coordination of activities. Indeed, by effectively designing and managing EVPs as part of the wider organizational agenda, volunteering can be harnessed as an important driver for organizational development, leadership development, employee engagement, employer branding, and social impact. This research has clearly illustrated the predictive role of the structure and quality of HR-led EVPs in determining employee engagement and retention in organizations within Tamil Nadu. This adds weight to the argument for EVP to be considered an important part of the wider HR agenda, as opposed to an activity peripheral to CSR. As the role and purpose of business in society continues to evolve, organizations that are able to leverage the potential of their HR functions to deliver genuine and rigorous volunteering programs are likely to be those that are best placed to attract, develop, and retain the human capital required for long-term organizational success.

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