

## What is Old is New Again: Achieving Effectiveness with Volunteer Programs in Kazakhstan

Jeffrey L. Brudney<sup>1</sup> and Tamara G. Nezhina<sup>1,2</sup>

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*This study based on Kazakhstan nonprofit organizations (NPOs) is the first to address the important issue of the relationship between volunteer management and volunteer program effectiveness in an international setting. Our inquiry is informed by findings of US scholars that show that the adoption of a recommended set of volunteer management practices is related to the level of effectiveness achieved with volunteer involvement in NPOs. The paper advances a path model to explain volunteer program effectiveness, with volunteer management practices the crucial intermediate variable. Based on data collected in a survey of Almaty (Kazakhstan) NPOs in 2004, the empirical analysis yields considerable support for a path model that focuses on both the adoption of these practices and the attainment of program effectiveness. Given the heterogeneity of NPOs, not every organization can be expected to benefit from the adoption of the recommended practices. Nevertheless, results suggest that they offer one workable means for successfully integrating volunteers.*

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**KEY WORDS:** Kazakhstan; volunteer management; effectiveness; NGOs.

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### INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan is a young nation, which became independent in 1991 after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan has experienced substantial social, political, and economic changes, to which its population is adapting with difficulty: "Numerous Soviet-era institutions which took care of many needs of

<sup>1</sup>School of Public and International Affairs, Department of Public Administration and Policy, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA.

<sup>2</sup>Correspondence should be directed to Jeffrey L. Brudney, School of Public and International Affairs, Department of Public Administration and Policy, 204 Baldwin Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-1615, USA; e-mail: jbrudney@uga.edu

the population have disappeared or been severely weakened, making the situation of vulnerable groups even more precarious” (UNDP, 2002). Under these conditions, the importance of the nonprofit sector, and especially the involvement of the population in socially valuable activities of nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), cannot be overestimated. Equally important is managing the participation of citizen volunteers in these organizations, a factor crucial to the performance of most nonprofit agencies.

Among the problems that the nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan has encountered is the effective involvement and management of volunteers. Several studies, undertaken by the Kazakhstan Center of Public Development Accord, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) office in Kazakhstan, and the United Nations Volunteer program (UNV), have described the development of the nongovernmental sector and volunteering in Kazakhstan. Although these studies did not specifically address the managerial aspects of NGOs, the above research identified poor management of volunteer work as one of the major obstacles to the development of a strong volunteer base in Kazakhstan (Hansen *et al.*, 2002; Oliferov *et al.*, 2001; UNDP, 2002).

Researchers in the United States have recommended a set of management practices for volunteer programs based on findings that indicated a positive relationship between these practices and program effectiveness. The purpose of the present research is to evaluate whether management practices found effective in the United States have the same influence on the effectiveness of volunteer programs in a very different country. Previous research showed that some Kazakhstan NGOs have introduced recommended volunteer management practices in their work. Although several studies in the United States demonstrate that these practices are related to effectiveness (Brudney, 1999; Brudney and Kellough, 2000; Grossman and Furano, 1999; Hager and Brudney, 2004a; Hager and Brudney, 2004b), the practices have not been tested outside the United States. We undertook this study to address the question of the generalizability of the recommended volunteer management techniques in a cross-cultural context.

## KAZAKHSTAN: A NEW NATION

Kazakhstan's new history started in 1991 after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The country made its political choice for democracy and a market economy (Nazarbayev, 1999). The government in the haste for reforms has dismantled the old social protection institutions without establishing any adequate social assistance network (Olcott, 1998), thus leaving many people jobless and unprotected. This development induced some people to unite to help themselves and each other. First grassroots organizations were formed in 1992–1993 following painful reforms, which caused daycare centers to close, municipal housing programs to end, and pensions to reduce to subsistence levels.

A second wave of establishing nonprofits was stimulated by international NPOs that rushed to help newly established charitable sectors in former Soviet countries. International organizations provided grants to support the new social initiatives, and arranged training for NGO leaders in management, including the volunteer program management, which was supported by knowledge accumulated by western societies—where the nonprofit sector had a far longer history and had developed considerable expertise in management. A distinct feature of this period was the growth of local NGOs in Kazakhstan (Franz *et al.*, 2002).<sup>3</sup>

The third (and current) period, from 1999 onwards, is characterized by the gradual withdrawal of international financial support, and as a consequence, the closure of many weaker NGOs. The lack of funds also induced many strong, popular, and productive nonprofits to engage in profit-making activities, such as education, consultancy, and research. A decrease from high levels of volunteerism also marks this period. According to UNDP data, 68% of surveyed organizations said that they would like to involve more volunteers. But the UNDP report found that the need for volunteers exceeded the number of volunteers available (UNDP, 2002).

Several factors challenge nonprofit leaders and volunteer coordinators in the management of volunteers. First is the limited supply of volunteers (Nowicki, 2000; Zlotnikov, 1997); second is the question of scarce resources; and third is the lack of government support (UNDP, 2002). The UNDP and International NGO Training and Research Center (INTRAC) reports on the development of nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan maintain that the status of volunteers is not yet defined or legalized; the lack of professional and skilled managers in civil society organizations reduces the effectiveness of human resources management and performance; and that, “the public and the Government do not see volunteer activity as a strong, skilled resource, which is essential for the resolution of many socially significant problems and for getting people involved in civil society” (Heap *et al.*, 2003; UNDP, 2002). Thus, under conditions of fiscal and human capital strain, the need for skillful management is becoming a rescue strategy for many NGOs. Good volunteer management techniques may help bring more volunteers to the advantage of the organization and of its clients, and may help to increase individual and corporate donations.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This study sought to determine whether a relationship exists between the implementation of volunteer management practices in Kazakhstan NGOs and

<sup>3</sup>The annual growth of the nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan is given in publications produced by the Institute for Development Cooperation (IDC), the nonprofit research and support center; see Franz *et al.* (2002).

the perception of effectiveness of volunteer programs. This research question was derived from the research literature that finds a connection between volunteer management practices and program effectiveness in the United States (Brudney, 1999; Brudney and Kellough, 2000; Grossman and Furano, 1999; Hager and Brudney, 2004a,b). The literature describing the experience of United States nonprofit and government organizations that use and manage volunteers demonstrates a positive relationship between the rate of adoption of so-called “best practices” and the effectiveness of volunteer programs, or the benefits derived from the participation of volunteers in government and NPOs. Following this logic we expected to find a relationship between the rate of adoption of best practices in Kazakhstan NGOs and the perceived effectiveness of these programs.

To address this question, we develop a path model to explain both the implementation of recommended volunteer management practices in Kazakhstan NGOs and their consequent impact on volunteer program effectiveness. To our knowledge, previous research has not before attempted to understand such issues in a comprehensive model. We begin by examining the roots of the implementation of volunteer management practices in NPOs. We then turn to the relationship between adoption of these volunteer management practices and the effectiveness attained by volunteer programs.

### **Explaining Volunteer Management Practices**

The research literature suggests that the number and variety of tasks performed by volunteers in host organizations is related to higher rates of adoption of volunteer management practices (Hager and Brudney, 2004a). Hager and Brudney (2004a) categorize the variety of assignments performed by volunteers into four distinct clusters of tasks: direct, indirect, internal, and external. Based on the findings of their research, we hypothesize that a relationship exists between the number and variety of tasks performed by volunteers and the rate of adoption of managerial practices in Kazakhstan NGOs. In short, the greater the number and variety of tasks performed, the greater the need for management practices to support, administer, and coordinate these human resources. Hence

*Hypothesis 1:* The greater the number and variety of tasks that volunteers perform in an organization, the higher the implementation rate of volunteer management practices.

Hager and Brudney (2004b) and Brudney and Kellough (2000) demonstrate that nonprofits with more involvement of volunteers make greater investments in the organizational capacity to manage them. As more volunteers are involved in the organization, personal and face-to-face means of supervision and management give way to the implementation of standard practices to cope with large numbers of unpaid personnel. In some research, the number of volunteers and the hours

they contributed to the organization are combined to form a measurement of the “scope” of volunteer involvement (Hager and Brudney, 2004b), which is found to increase the adoption of recommended managerial practices. These findings led us to consider the number of volunteers participating in an organization as a predictor of adoption of volunteer management practices. Thus:

*Hypothesis 2:* The larger the number of volunteers involved in an organization, the higher the rate of adoption of volunteer management practices.

Research conducted on a large, representative sample of 2,993 nonprofit charitable organizations in the United States by Hager and Brudney (2004a) in 2003 found that charities adopt different volunteer management practices depending on their specific needs and characteristics, such as size (measured by annual expenditures), level of volunteer involvement (number of volunteers), predominant role for volunteers (direct service, indirect service, etc.), and subsector or industry (education, health care, arts and culture, and human services). The study demonstrated that the policy area in which a charitable organization operates influenced the adoption of volunteer management practices. For example, charities operating in health and human services fields generally have adopted volunteer management practices to a larger degree than charities operating in education or the arts and culture field (Hager and Brudney, 2004a). Based on these findings we hypothesize that the policy area of the organizations under study in Kazakhstan, or the types of organization, should affect the level of adoption of volunteer management practices:

*Hypothesis 3:* The type of organization affects the implementation of volunteer management practices.

### **Explaining the Perceived Effectiveness of Volunteer Programs**

The US literature strongly suggests a relationship between the adoption of recommended practices for volunteer management and the perceived effectiveness of these programs in NPOs (Brudney, 1999; Brudney and Kellough, 2000; Grossman and Furano, 1999; Hager and Brudney, 2004b). Here, the best practices that lead to higher effectiveness include: written policies to govern the volunteer program; job descriptions for volunteers; outreach activities to recruit volunteers; orientation of volunteers; basic and on-going training of volunteers; empowerment of volunteers to manage other volunteers; recognition activities; evaluation of volunteers; training for paid employees to work with volunteers; sufficient resources for volunteer programs; and liability insurance for volunteers (Ellis, 1996; Fisher and Cole, 1993; Grossman and Furano, 1999; McCurley and Lynch, 1996; UPS Foundation, 2002). Studies in the United States vary considerably with respect to the number of volunteer management practices they examine for empirical testing.

The UPS (2002) study, for example, lists 23 practices, whereas most other studies focus on substantially fewer, from 8 to 12 practices.

Accordingly, the listing of recommended best practices based on the US literature was adapted in the present research for examination of the Kazakhstan nonprofit sector. Certain practices were excluded because they were found irrelevant in the context of Kazakhstan volunteering practices. Given the limited experience of NGOs in Kazakhstan in working with volunteers, we excluded the empowerment of volunteers to manage other volunteers as an advanced volunteer management technique. The evaluation of volunteers was also excluded from the list of best practices. By contrast, invitation to luncheons is consistent with local traditions of Kazakhstan to honor guests and family members; thus, we separated this item from ceremonies and added it to our listing of best practices (further discussed below).

In this context, we propose our central hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4:* The higher the rate of implementation of recommended volunteer management practices, the higher the perceived effectiveness of the volunteer program.

The final element in our model is the amount of time devoted by the volunteer program coordinator to management of this responsibility. Ellis (1996) recognized the availability of the volunteer manager or coordinator, and the large proportion of time dedicated to managing volunteers, as especially important among other recommended practices. Further research has shown, however, that it is unrealistic to expect the largest proportion of working time to be allocated to volunteer programs because volunteer coordinators had additional work responsibilities that limited the time they could devote to volunteer program management (Brudney *et al.*, 1994.) Nevertheless, several studies confirm that the amount of time the volunteer coordinator dedicates to the volunteer program positively affects the benefits the organization derives from the involvement of volunteers, i.e., more time and attention is associated with the attainment of greater benefits. We thus hypothesize that the amount of time devoted to management of volunteers is an important predictor of volunteer program effectiveness (Brudney, 1999; Hager and Brudney, 2004a,b):

*Hypothesis 5:* The more time volunteer coordinators dedicate to volunteer program management, the higher is the perception of volunteer program effectiveness.

Altogether, a review of research conducted in the American context leads to the construction of a model for investigating volunteer program effectiveness in Kazakhstan. The model proposes, first, that the adoption of recommended practices for the management of volunteers is based on the number and variety of tasks that volunteers perform in an organization, the number of volunteers involved in organizational activities, and the type of organization. It is anticipated that as the number of volunteers in an organization increases, and the tasks assigned to

them become more numerous and varied, organizations will face greater needs and pressures to standardize and coordinate their activities through implementation of volunteer management practices. The second part of the model proposes that the adoption of volunteer management practices, as well as the percent of time that volunteer coordinators dedicate to managing the program, positively affect the perception of volunteer program effectiveness. These hypotheses have garnered substantial support in the US literature, in which both the practices and the time dimension are consistently related to perceived effectiveness.

## DATA AND METHODS

The data for our research emanate from the city of Almaty, the former capital and the largest city in Kazakhstan (with a population of 1.3 million people). The number of NGOs registered in Almaty justifies this focus: almost one-third of all NGOs in Kazakhstan (32%) are based in this city, and most international organizations maintain offices there (Franz *et al.*, 2002; UNDP, 2002). Because many NGOs in Almaty interact with foreign organizations, we would expect them to be more informed about issues pertaining to volunteer involvement and management. The data were collected by using a survey instrument. The survey was conducted in the summer of 2004 among a sample of Almaty based NGOs, which were active in three policy areas: youth, women, and environment.

### Sample

Our sampling decisions for the study were guided by the fact that many NGOs in Kazakhstan do not have volunteers. Formal volunteering through NGOs to benefit clients and other people is a rather new, developing concept in Kazakhstan, and only the largest and most active organizations are able to attract many volunteers. As a result, with random sampling we risked including a considerable share of organizations that do not have volunteers. Instead, we started by seeking expert opinion about the types of NGOs in Almaty that enlist volunteers, and interviewed directors and managers of several nonprofit and government organizations for this purpose. Based on this information, we focused the research on the most visible areas of nonprofit activity, namely: youth, women's, and environmental organizations. Our elite interviews indicated that NGOs working in these sectors most often involved volunteers in their operations and programs.

We created an inventory of NGOs in Almaty based on lists provided by the UNDP, the Soros Foundation, the Central Asian Sustainable Development Information Network (CASDIN, a resource organization), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Counterpart Consortium (an international nonprofit development organization.) We targeted our survey to youth, women's, and environmental organizations in this combined listing. As Table I shows, the compiled list consisted of a total of 130 organizations. We telephoned each of these organizations to verify its existence. Those organizations that did not

Table I. Sampling Frame

Respondents	Environmental organizations	Youth organizations	Women's organizations	N	Total organizations	
					Population (%)	Sample (%)
Initial sampling/frame	48	52	30	130		
Contacted sampling frame	29	31	16	76	100	
Reported no volunteers	13	3	0	16	21	
<b>Effective sample</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>
Responses	11	23	11	45		75
Refused	2	1	0	3		5
No response	3	4	5	12		20

answer our repeated telephone calls, or answer our e-mail messages, and could not be found even with the help of a special telephone locator service, were defined as closed.

As Table I indicates, these procedures revealed that of the 130 nonprofits on our list, 54 organizations were closed or non-existent, leaving a total of 76 organizations for us to contact. Because our interest is in volunteer management practices and program effectiveness—and 16 of the 76 organizations (21%) in the listing reported no volunteers—we were left with 60 organizations as our effective population. We contacted and sent questionnaires to these organizations and after multiple follow-ups received responses from 45, giving a high response rate of 75%.<sup>4</sup> Our respondents consist of those who say that they have responsibility for the management of volunteers in their organizations.

### Respondents

The average volunteer coordinator in our sample of NGOs in Kazakhstan is a female (76%) from varied ethnic backgrounds (33% Kazakh, 33% Russian, and 34% other groups), 37–38 years of age, with a university diploma. This official usually is a full-time, salaried employee with between 4 and 5 years of service in the organization, and about four years (3.8) in their present position. The volunteer coordinator spends on average about 30% of her or his time working with volunteers (mode = 10%).<sup>5</sup>

Studies in the United States suggest a similar profile of administrators of volunteer services. One study sponsored by the Association for Volunteer Administration found that most volunteer administrators were females (83.9%),

<sup>4</sup>Three organizations refused to participate in the survey; two of the organization leaders said they did not believe in the usefulness of surveys, and one leader refused without explanation.

<sup>5</sup>Our interviews with leaders of NPOs revealed that flexible volunteer management assignments existed in some organizations. When organizations worked on specific projects that involved volunteers, the leaders assigned a project manager to work as a volunteer coordinator for the duration of the project.



white (80.5%), around 45 years of age, with almost two-thirds (64.5%) holding a bachelor's degree (and 27.7% with some graduate study). On average they were found to have worked about five and a half years as volunteer administrators (Brudney and Schmahl, 2001).

The average NGO in the Kazakhstan sample is not large: with just 10 salaried employees and around 55 volunteers. Important differences are evident across the different types of organization. The youth and women's organizations involve more volunteers in their operations than do environmental organizations. On average, in 2003, the youth organizations involved 88 volunteers per organization, while women's organizations involved 21 volunteers per organization, and environmental organizations involved only 12 volunteers per organization. The volunteers in youth and women's organizations contributed on average more hours on an annual basis (132 and 146 h, respectively) than the average volunteer in environmental organizations (39 h).

### **Adoption of Volunteer Management Practices**

The survey questionnaire asked volunteer coordinators to indicate whether certain listed management practices had been implemented in their volunteer program. The items—11 in all—were culled from similar lists developed by Ellis (1996), Hager and Brudney (2004a), McCurley and Lynch (1996), and the UPS Foundation (2002). Table II lists the items as they appeared on the questionnaire, with the associated frequency of use across the three types of NGOs. The most frequently reported practices across the sample of the NGOs were recognition ceremonies for volunteers; participation of volunteers in luncheons; and formal orientation for volunteers on how to do the job. More than half of the organizations in the sample reported using these practices. Slightly less than half of the organizations implemented such practices as job descriptions for volunteers; reimbursement for the work-related expenses of volunteers; and training and professional development opportunities for volunteers to assume greater responsibility.

The results in Table II suggest that two types of organizations—youth and women's—use particular practices such as recognition ceremonies, reimbursement of expenses, orientation of volunteers and others, more often than do environmental organizations. Youth organizations reported the highest level, and environmental organizations reported the lowest level of implementation of these practices (for further discussion see Nezhina *et al.*, 2004).

### **Operationalization**

The first dependent variable in the model is an index of volunteer management practices, consisting of the number of individual practices (as given in Table II) used by each organization in the sample. To test this part of the model, the

**Table II.** Volunteer Management Practices Implemented by Types of Organization

Practices reported by respondents	All organizations (45)	Youth (23)	Women's (11)	Environmental (11)
Official rules for involvement of volunteers	26%	22%	46%	18%
Training for employees in working effectively with volunteers	18%	30%	9%	0%
Liability insurance for volunteers	2%	0%	2%	0%
Job descriptions for volunteers	38%	35%	54%	27%
Recognition for volunteers, such as award ceremonies, certificates	51%	61%	55%	27%
Participation of volunteers in luncheons	56%	61%	55%	46%
Reimbursement for the work-related expenses of volunteers	44%	48%	46%	36%
Formal record keeping for volunteer activities (hours contributed and work assignments)	11%	13%	9%	9%
Outreach efforts to recruit volunteers	20%	30%	9%	9%
Formal orientation for volunteers on how to do the job	62%	70%	64%	46%
Training and professional development opportunities for volunteers to assume greater responsibility	40%	57%	27%	18%

dependent variable index of volunteer management practices was regressed on three explanatory variables:

1. The number of volunteers involved in organizational activities.
2. An index of different tasks that volunteers perform in the organization. The index was constructed by adding up the types of tasks that may be assigned to the volunteers, grouped into the categories of direct, indirect, internal, and external. Direct services are the services that volunteers provide directly to the clients of the organization, such as mentoring or tutoring. By contrast, indirect services are defined as those that do not bring volunteers into contact with clients, such as planting trees and cleaning grounds. The third group, internal services, includes services

that volunteers perform in administrative roles, including such activities as filing, copying, or answering phones. And the fourth group includes the external services that volunteers provide to link the organization to important external stakeholders in the role of fundraisers, lobbyists, or public relations officers (Hager and Brudney, 2004a).

3. Type of organization: youth, women's, and environmental.

The second dependent variable in the model consists of the perceived effectiveness of volunteer programs in Kazakhstan NGOs. Rather than a single summary rating of "effectiveness," this variable was constructed as an index based on the evaluation of the volunteer coordinators in seven key areas of program effectiveness. The answers were scaled from one to five, from *not at all effective* (1) to *very highly effective* (5). The questions tapped volunteer program effectiveness ("How effective is your volunteer program?") across a variety of important domains: (1) recruiting volunteers; (2) retaining volunteers; (3) creating high satisfaction among volunteers; (4) creating high satisfaction among paid staff with volunteers; (5) volunteers assisting paid staff in performing their job duties; (6) meeting the needs of individuals or groups served by the organization; and (7) meeting the goals of the organization through volunteer involvement. The index is the sum of all responses for each organization. Forty-two cases are available for analysis.<sup>6</sup> The independent variables hypothesized to affect the index of volunteer program effectiveness are the index of volunteer management practices, and the percent of the work time of the volunteer coordinator that is devoted to management of the volunteer program.

### Path Model

Based on the theory and research findings presented in earlier literature, we hypothesized that the scope of involvement of volunteers, the assignment of various tasks to volunteers, and the type of organization in which they contribute their time are related to the rate of implementation of volunteer management practices. In its turn, the rate of implementation of volunteer management practices, together with the amount of time dedicated to the program by the volunteer coordinator, were posited to raise effectiveness. To explore these relationships we constructed a path model with two dependent variables: the adoption of recommended volunteer management practices, and the perceived effectiveness of the volunteer program. The model is tested using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. The estimated coefficients are standardized regression slopes or beta weights. In the next section, we present the results of our statistical estimation.

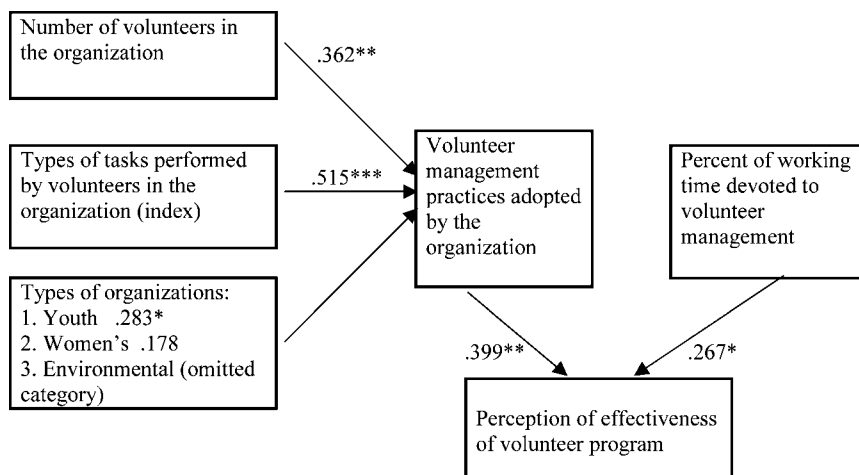
<sup>6</sup>Three cases were excluded from the analysis because the respondents answered fewer than half of the seven questions.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Figure 1 presents the path model with the associated standardized regression coefficients (beta weights). The first path (equation) proposes that the variety of tasks performed by volunteers and the number of volunteers involved in the organization would lead to an increase in the number of recommended practices adopted for volunteer management. In addition, we hypothesized that the type of organization (youth, women's, environmental) would affect the rate of adoption. Table III presents the estimation of this regression equation, depicted also in Fig. 1.

The results in Table III show that all three explanatory variables are related to the volunteer management practice index. The tasks index has the largest effect (beta weight = 0.515, statistically significant at  $p < 0.000$ ), followed by the number of volunteers (beta weight = 0.362,  $p < 0.004$ ). As hypothesized, the more tasks performed by volunteers, and the more volunteers involved in the organization, the greater the adoption of recommended practices for administration of these human resources. Apparently, these factors create demands for the application of more management techniques, as reflected in the positive relationships with the volunteer management practice index.

In addition, organization type also matters, even when controlling for these other variables. The results show that youth organizations adopt more volunteer management practices, perhaps because volunteers in these organizations have



N = 42 organizations

\* Coefficient is statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$

\*\* Coefficient is statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

\*\*\* Coefficient is statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$

**Fig. 1.** Path model of volunteer program effectiveness.

**Table III.** Path Model: Dependent Variable—Volunteer Management Practices Index

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>
	<i>B</i>	SE	Beta weight	
Constant	−0.523	0.837	—	−0.625
Tasks index	1.547	0.348	0.515	4.447***
Number of volunteers in 2003	0.006	0.002	0.362	3.035***
Youth organizations <sup>a</sup>	1.347	0.689	0.283	1.956*
Women's organizations <sup>a</sup>	0.979	0.779	0.178	1.257

Note.  $R^2 = 0.487$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.434$ .

<sup>a</sup>Environmental organizations are the omitted category of organization type in the regression analysis.

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.10$ .

less workplace experience, and their life circumstances such as school and work can change very rapidly, thus, affecting their connection to host organizations (beta weight = 0.283,  $p < 0.058$ ). In all, the three explanatory variables can account for a substantial portion of the variation in the adoption of volunteer management practices ( $R^2 = 0.487$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .434$ ,  $p < .000$ ).

The second path (equation) of the model is concerned with explaining volunteer program effectiveness. As predicted, the more time allocated to the volunteer program by the coordinator, the greater the perception of effectiveness (beta weight = 0.267,  $p < 0.094$ ). More importantly, the results confirm our major hypothesis: as organizations adopt more recommended practices for the management of volunteers, effectiveness likewise increases (beta weight = 0.399,  $p < 0.015$ ). Table IV provides the equation. Together, these variables can account for about one-quarter of the variance in program effectiveness ( $R^2 = 0.288$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.244$ ,  $p < 0.004$ ).

To test the final path model depicted in Fig. 1, we examined several alternative equations as well as the “full” regression model for each dependent variable, that is, the model that included all independent variables. This examination confirmed that the results shown in Fig. 1 present all direct paths or linkages between the

**Table IV.** Path Model: Dependent Variable—Volunteer Program Effectiveness Index

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>
	<i>B</i>	SE	Beta weight	
Constant	19.495	1.428	—	13.648
Practice index	0.767	0.298	0.399	2.575**
Percent of working time devoted to vol. man.	0.049	0.029	0.267	1.727*

Note.  $R^2 = 0.288$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.244$ .

\*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.10$ .

explanatory variables and each dependent variable. Where no path (arrow) appears in Fig. 1, the relationship is not remotely close to achieving statistical significance.

## CONCLUSION

This research paper is the first to test the US-centered explanation of volunteer program effectiveness outside the West, and the first to provide a more complete explanation of this concept in a path model. The results show that, as hypothesized, the adoption of volunteer management practices is the strongest predictor of program effectiveness. As other research has also determined (in the United States), the amount of time devoted by the volunteer manager to the program is also important. In its place, the volunteer program management practice index is related to the number and diversity of tasks performed by volunteers, the number of volunteers in the organization, and the type of nonprofit organization.

A question for further research emanating from this study is how practices recommended in the United States for volunteer administration find their way to NGOs in a new country such as Kazakhstan. We cannot answer this question with the data at hand, but we can speculate that the knowledge transmission may occur through training. Roughly half of the sample of Kazakhstan volunteer administrators had attended training in volunteer administration; some had attended multiple trainings. Moreover, some 64% of those who had attended training said that the training had been provided by a foreign source. Although our survey did not ascertain the identity of this source, in our interviews with both the elites who helped us to assemble the population of organizations for the study and the respondents we learned that American influence in these organizations was manifest not only in volunteer administration but also in other areas, such as grant-seeking and development. This influence merits further inquiry.

This study has several limitations. The sample of NGOs in Kazakhstan is relatively small, and the measure of volunteer program effectiveness is perceptual. Second, the variables tapping the adoption of volunteer program management practices lack gradations of extent. We can improve on the measurement, yet to our knowledge, the organizations we contacted represent the population of these types in Almaty so that a larger sample is not immediately feasible.

Not all NPOs outside the United States (and even in the United States) can be expected to find success with the recommended practices for volunteer program management examined in this study. Meijs and Hoogstad (2001) and Rochester (1999) describe different models of volunteer programs operative in some NPOs across Europe. Since much of the variation in volunteer program effectiveness in our model remains to be explained, supplementary and alternative factors need to be explored. Volunteering in NGOs to benefit client populations is still a developing concept in Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, although what is old or established by way of US practice may be new to the fledgling Kazakhstan

nonprofit sector, the evidence presented here suggests that it offers one workable option for effective volunteer program implementation.

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