Membership Matters: Why Members Engage with Professional Associations

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Abstract Professional associations face the challenge of member engagement. This study examined the effects of members' need fulfillment and perceived organizational support on their attitude toward the professional association and engagement with the association with a survey of 13,229 members from 18 associations. More specifically, this analysis focused on members' perceptions of need fulfillment and organizational support as motivations of member engagement. Our results suggested that member perception of need fulfillment and organizational support positively influenced their attitude toward their association, which was positively related to their engagement with the association in volunteering and donating funds. In addition, members' perceived support from the association was found to motivate their engagement with the association. Moreover, we identified gaps in members' volunteering behavior between junior and senior members: career status significantly moderated the relationship between attitude toward and volunteering for the association, with junior members showing a stronger effect. The theoretical and practical implications of this study were discussed.

Résumé Les associations professionnelles font face à des problèmes relatifs à l'engagement de leurs membres. La présente étude se penche sur les effets qu'ont la satisfaction des besoins des membres et le soutien organisationnel perçu par eux sur leur attitude et leur engagement envers leur association professionnelle. Pour ce

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faire, nous avons questionné 13,229 membres de 18 associations. Cette analyse porte plus précisément sur la perception des membres quant à l'importance qu'ont la satisfaction des besoins et le soutien organisationnel en tant que facteurs d'incitation à l'engagement. Nos résultats suggèrent que la perception des membres sur la satisfaction des besoins et le soutien organisationnel a une influence positive sur leur attitude envers leur association, ce qui se traduit par des résultats positifs en termes de bénévolat et de dons. De plus, le soutien que les membres pensent recevoir de leur association les incite à s'engager. Qui plus est, nous avons identifié des écarts dans les comportements des membres bénévoles jeunes et plus vieux: l'état professionnel modère largement la relation entre l'attitude envers l'association et le bénévolat fait en son nom, et les jeunes membres sont plus fortement touchés. Nous discutons des implications théoriques et pratiques de ladite étude.

Zusammenfassung Professionelle Verbände stehen vor der Herausforderung, Mitglieder zu engagieren. Diese Studie untersuchte anhand einer Befragung von 13.229 Mitgliedern von 18 Verbänden, wie sich die Erfüllung von Mitglieder-bedürfnissen und die empfundene Unterstützung seitens der Organisation auf die Haltung der Mitglieder gegenüber des professionellen Verbandes und ihr Engagement bei dem Verband auswirkten. Insbesondere konzentrierte sich die Analyse darauf, wie die Wahrnehmung der Mitglieder mit Hinblick auf die Erfüllung ihrer Bedürfnisse und die Unterstützung seitens der Organisation das Mitglieder-Engagement motivierte. Die Ergebnisse deuteten darauf hin, dass sich die Wahrnehmung der Mitglieder hinsichtlich der Erfüllung ihrer Bedürfnisse und der Unterstützung seitens der Organisation positiv auf ihre Haltung gegenüber des Verbands auswirkte, was wiederum in einem positiven Verhältnis zu einem ehrenamtlichen Engagement und geleisteten Geldspenden für den Verband stand. Des Weiteren zeigte sich, dass die von den Mitgliedern wahrgenommene Unterstützung seitens des Verbands sie motivierte, sich für den Verband zu engagieren. Darüber hinaus sah man Unterschiede zwischen dem ehrenamtlichen Engagement von neuen und langjährigen Mitgliedern: Der Karriere-Status hatte einen bedeutend moderierenden Effekt auf die Beziehung zwischen der Haltung gegenüber des Verbands und einer ehrenamtlichen Tätigkeit bei dem Verband, wobei der Effekt bei neuen Mitgliedern stärker war. Die theoretischen und praktischen Implikationen dieser Studie werden diskutiert.

Resumen Las asociaciones profesionales se enfrentan al desafío del compromiso de sus miembros. El presente estudio examinó los efectos de la satisfacción de las necesidades de los miembros y el apoyo de la organización percibido sobre su actitud hacia la asociación profesional y el compromiso con la asociación mediante una encuesta de 13.229 miembros de 18 asociaciones. En concreto, este análisis se centró en las percepciones por parte de los miembros de la satisfacción de las necesidades y el apoyo de la organización como motivaciones para el compromiso de los miembros. Nuestros resultados sugirieron que la percepción por parte de los miembros de la satisfacción de las necesidades y el apoyo de la organización influyeron positivamente en su actitud hacia su asociación, que estaba relacionada de manera positiva con su compromiso con la asociación en el voluntariado y en la

donación de fondos. Asimismo, se encontró que el apoyo de la asociación percibido por los miembros motivaba su compromiso con la asociación. Igualmente, identificamos diferencias en el comportamiento con respecto al voluntario de los miembros entre miembros jóvenes y mayores: el estatus de la carrera moderaba de manera significativa la relación entre la actitud hacia la asociación y la realización de voluntariado para la asociación, mostrando un efecto más fuerte los miembros jóvenes. Se tratan tas implicaciones teóricas y prácticas del presente estudio.

Introduction

Professional associations represent an important subset of nonprofit organizations (Tschirhart and Gazley 2014) and have a substantial impact on society and on their individual members. For example, they can promote democratic processes, regulate members' behaviors, and represent special interests (Tschirhart 2006). In addition, professional association members engaged in professional activities are able to obtain access to more professional knowledge and opportunities for career advancement (Markova et al. 2013). The relationship between such associations and their members has drawn growing attention from scholars in the last several decades (Masterson and Stamper 2003). However, little is known about the effects of members' need fulfillment and perceived organizational support (POS) on their engagement, especially in the professional association context.

A major challenge faced by professional associations is member engagement (Kolar 2015), specifically recruiting and motivating volunteers and identifying members who can serve as volunteers (Halley 2015). According to a 2016 study incorporating feedback from 357 managers and directors working in the membership and association sector (MemberWise 2016), member engagement was the greatest challenge for membership associations, and improving member engagement was considered the top goal for 2016. Thus, it is important to gain understanding of the patterns and motivations of member engagement.

Beyond the challenge of member engagement, the relationships between professional associations and members require enhancement. When an individual becomes a member of an organization, he/she wants "to be in a relationship with that organization and other members of the organization, and a formalized bond or linkage is established at a specific point" (Gruen 2000, p. 356). Though membership organizations have provided a rich source of research topics for scholars (Gruen 2000), few studies have focused on the organization–member relationship (OMR). Furthermore, strategic communication managers in nonprofit membership organizations require an effective model to guide their work (Gruen 2000). Thus, it would be invaluable for professional associations to explore mechanisms to better engage members.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impacts of members' need fulfillment and POS on their attitude toward the professional associations and

engagement with the association (see Fig. 1). To examine the effects of members' perception of need fulfillment and organizational support on their attitude toward, and engagement with, their professional associations, this study used a survey dataset of 13,299 members from 18 associations sponsored from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). Career status was tested as a moderator of the relationship between members' attitude and engagement. This study can potentially advance the understanding of member engagement and nonprofit membership organizations. Moreover, this study could provide some practical implications by identifying strategies that professional associations might utilize to engage their members.

Literature Review

Professional Associations

A professional association is defined as "an organization consisting of mission, objectives, structures, and processes centered about the education and development of a voluntary membership situated in the intersecting contexts of specific fields of knowledge and practices, clientele, and values" (Rusaw 1995, p. 217). Professional associations have represented nearly every occupation and industry (Nesbit and Gazley 2012) and have organized and served various social, political, cultural, and professional groups (Tschirhart and Gazley 2014). Professional organizations are established to apply professional values and expertise to resolving various problems (Freidson 1994) and can help to educate and train individuals in occupational fields including medicine, engineering, accounting, and education, while offering various services to their members (e.g., publications) (Nesbit and Gazley 2012) and opportunities for public advocacy. Such organizations have some unique characteristics, such as professional members setting their own roles, spontaneous internal distinction based on work interests, and competition for resources within their organizations (Bucher and Stelling 1969).

Professional associations are collective groups of individuals who are not financially remunerated for their engagement (Knoke 1986). Members play an important role in professional associations. They serve a variety of formal and informal functions, such as recruiting new members, providing mentoring, coaching, or tutoring other members, serving on boards and committees, and reviewing papers or proposals for a publication (Gazley 2013; Gazley and Dignam 2008).

Member Engagement

Member engagement is often motivated by public incentives offered by professional associations, such as promoting greater appreciation of field among practitioners (Hager 2014). Member engagement in professional associations can be categorized into volunteering, donation, and commitment to associations (Hager 2014). Members can engage with professional associations in various ways, such as

providing mentoring and advice for other members, and serving on a committee or a board. This study specifically focused on two patterns of member engagement: volunteering and donation behavior.

Volunteering Behavior

Volunteers play an important role in modern professional associations in recruiting new members and supporting young professionals (Nesbit and Gazley 2012). Studies have identified predictors of volunteering behaviors. For example, Haddad (2004) documented that practices promoted by government and social institutions influenced volunteer engagement in Japan. Webb and Abzug (2008) found that employees in professional, managerial, and military professions were more likely to volunteer than those in other occupations. Socioeconomic status and education level were found to be the most significant factors of volunteering for organizations (Webb and Abzug 2008). Smith (1999) found that employment status was associated with youthful volunteering in that part-time young workers were more likely to volunteer than full-time workers. Professional association members tended to volunteer time with their association if tasks were related to their motives for joining the association (Hager 2014).

Donation Behavior

Researchers have identified motivations for donation behaviors. Olson (1965) suggested that an individual's "desire to win prestige, respect, friendship, and other social and psychological objectives" motivated donation behaviors (p. 60). Becker (1974) indicated that charitable behavior could be influenced by a desire to eliminate scorn or to receive social acclaim. In addition, Andreoni (1990) argued that social pressure, guilt, and sympathy could prompt donation behavior. Furthermore, contributors are more likely to make larger donations if their contributions are announced, which provides contributors with prestige and signals their wealth (Andreoni 1990; Magat 1989).

Need Fulfillment

Maslow (1954) proposed the hierarchy of needs consisting of a five-stage model of human needs, which is a motivational theory in psychology. The five-stage model of needs includes biological and physiological needs, safety needs, love and belong-ingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (Maslow 1954). Higher-order needs can be fulfilled after lower-level needs are satisfied (Maslow 1954).

Individuals' perceptions of need fulfillment could be reflected by psychological contract, which Rousseau (1989) defined as "an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party" (p. 23). Need fulfillment was considered as a predictor of subjective well-being (Diener and Lucas 2000). McMillan and Chavis (1986) stated that need fulfillment was a major function of a strong community. When individuals with shared values gather together, they notice that they have similar needs and

goals, which therefore strengthen their belief that they might be able to satisfy these needs better through joining together in a group (McMillan and Chavis 1986). Individuals may join or renew their membership to fulfill their diverse needs (Masterson and Stamper 2003). Professionals could be motivated to perceive themselves as members of an organization if the organization fulfills a variety of important needs (Masterson and Stamper 2003), such as access to career information and networking with other professionals.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

POS is defined as the extent to which employees recognize that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1986). The major relational tie concept involved with employees' perceptions of themselves as mattering to the organization is POS (Eisenberger et al. 1986). Organizational actions perceived as being supportive by employees can motivate employees to perceive themselves as being valued (Eisenberger et al. 1997). Previous research has found that perceived favorable treatment received from the organization (i.e., fairness, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and job conditions) is positively related to POS (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002).

The outcomes of POS have drawn attention from scholars. POS was believed to satisfy needs for approval, esteem, and social identity, enhance affective commitment to the organization, and improve efforts made on its behalf (Eisenberger et al. 1986, 1997; Shore and Shore 1995). POS could also generate various work-related outcomes, which include effort–reward expectancies (Eisenberger et al. 1990), assisting given coworkers (Shore and Wayne 1993; Wayne et al. 1997; Witt 1991), offering constructive advice for improving organizational operations (Eisenberger et al. 1990), and influencing employees' strategies to make their supervisors aware of their contributions and achievements (Shore and Wayne 1993). On the other hand, POS was documented to be negatively associated with absenteeism (Eisenberger et al. 1986, 1990) and turnover intention (Guzzo et al. 1994; Wayne et al. 1997).

Increasingly, members in voluntary associations have been willing to volunteer and donate (Jackson et al. 1995). Association members engaged in professional activities are better able to access professional knowledge and gain exposure to career opportunities (Markova et al. 2013). Masterson and Stamper (2003) predicted that need fulfillment might predict employees' working behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors. Hager (2014) found that members' satisfaction with the leadership experiences offered by engineering associations was positively related to their volunteering and donation behaviors. Previous researchers also found that individuals who were given appropriate organizational support tended to volunteer for their organization (Brudney 1990; Wilson 2000). If members perceived that their needs were satisfied and they received great support from the association, they were more likely to engage with the association in various ways such as volunteering and donation funds. Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1 Members' perception of need fulfillment influences their volunteering (3a) and donation (3b) behaviors within the association.

H2 Members' perception of organizational support influences their volunteering (4a) and donation (4b) behaviors within the association.

Attitude

Attitude was often explained as "predispositions to respond in a particular way toward a specified class of objects" (Rosenberg and Hovland 1963, p. 1). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) offered its famous definition as "a function of his/her salient beliefs at a given point in time" (p. 222). Lindenmann (2002) echoed this by stating that a public's attitudes can predict the public's feelings and future behaviors. In keeping with this observation, public relations scholars have gauged publics' attitude as a measure of public relations effectiveness (Ki and Hon 2007). Park and Reber (2011) found that individuals' attitudes toward an organization in crisis were influenced by their relationships with that organization. Ki and Hon (2007) also demonstrated that a public's perceived relationships with an organization predicted the public's attitude toward the organization.

Masterson and Stamper (2003) indicated that need fulfillment might predict employees' work attitudes associated with their overall relationship with the organization, such as organizational commitment (e.g., Allen and Meyer 1990). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) claimed that employees' perceived organizational support fostered their overall job satisfaction and positive mood by fulfilling their socioemotional needs. Therefore, this study specifically expected that members' perceived need fulfillment and organizational support would be positively related to their attitude toward the association. Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3 Members' perception of need fulfillment influences their attitude toward the association.

H4 Members' perception of organizational support influences their attitude toward the association.

Hierarchy of Effects

The theory of a hierarchy of effects asserts that communication occurs through a series of processes including cognition, affect, and behavior (Lavidge and Steiner 1961; McGuire 1986; Ray 1973; Severin and Tankard 2001). Cognitive reaction can have impacts on attitude, which may prompt a behavioral reaction (Ray 1973). The hierarchy of effects theory focuses on cognitive and affective dimensions, as well as behavioral outcomes (Murray and Vogel 1997). Thus, this theory can be used to explain the big picture of the model proposed in this study (see Fig. 1), which examines the effects of members' perceived need fulfillment and organizational support (cognition) on attitude toward their association (attitude), and its further impacts on member engagement (behavior).

The hierarchy of effects theory has been featured as a theoretical framework in communication fields such as public relations (Ki and Hon 2007) and advertising (Barry and Howard 1990). According to Ki and Hon (2012), this theory could be
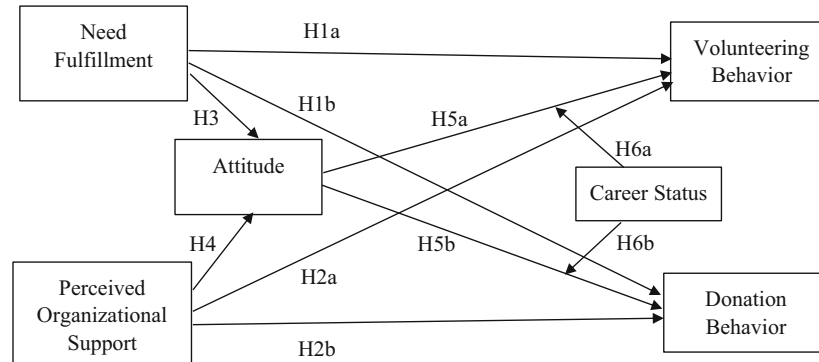
Fig. 1 Hypothesized model

used to measure the effectiveness of public relations. Based on previous literature (i.e., Ki and Hon 2007; Murray and Vogel 1997), this study proposed a hierarchy of effects model to explore the relationships among members' need fulfillment, POS, attitudes, and engagement with their associations (see Fig. 1).

Moreover, the theory of reasoned action illustrates an individual's intention to perform a specific behavior, which is often determined by attitude toward that behavior and subjective norms (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Therefore, we assumed that members' attitudes toward their association were linked to their engagement with that association. As such, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5 Members' attitude toward their association influences their volunteering (5a) and donation (5b) behaviors within that association.

Career Status as a Moderator

Career status of members in professional associations was demonstrated to be associated with their volunteering behavior (Nesbit and Gazley 2012), which was considered as one dimension of member engagement (Masterson and Stamper 2003). The motivations of an individual's professional behaviors change based on their stage in life and practical experience (Kanfer and Ackerman 2004). In particular, volunteering motivations have been documented to change across the life course (Sundeen and Raskoff 1995), more specifically, to decrease along with age (Musick and Wilson 2008). Young volunteers prefer sports and recreation volunteering, the middle-aged focus on political, youth development, and school-related volunteering, while older volunteers pay more attention to religious, hobby, and social service interests (Musick and Wilson 2008). Penner and Finkelstein (1998) also found that tenure was associated with volunteers' satisfaction with an organization in that long-time volunteers were more satisfied with an organization. According to Kahn (1990), many junior, low-status organizational members lack self-confidence, which might hinder their engagement. Similarly, junior members'

favorable attitude toward the association might be more likely to influence their engagement. Thus, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H6 Members' career status moderates the relationship between attitude toward the association and (6a) volunteering and (6b) donation behaviors within an association, with junior members showing a stronger relationship than senior counterparts.

Method

This study focused on the relationships among members' need fulfillment, POS, attitude toward the organization, and engagement behaviors with the organization. The study utilized a secondary dataset which the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) collected from October to December 2011. ASAE consists of over 21,000 association executives and industry partners from 10,000 organizations in approximately 50 countries throughout the world (ASAE 2015). The population of this study was comprised of members from 18 associations[1] whose executives are ASAE members.

Pretest

A pretest was conducted to ensure the face validity of the measurement items. The original questionnaire was first reviewed by some experts in the field of organizational communication. Then, two members of a professional association were asked to participate in the pretest in order to test the efficacy and clarity of measurement items. Finally, the survey questionnaire was revised based on feedback from the experts and participants.

Sampling Procedure

Each of the eighteen associations randomly selected 2000 to 8600 members and provided a list of contact information. A total of 120,540 members were invited to participate in the survey. One organization preferred to receive posted mail questionnaires, while the others chose to receive e-mails containing a link to the survey site. Two follow-up reminders, executed through letters, postcards, or e-mails, were sent to non-participants from the lists. Among 16,994 responses, researchers removed 3695 due to incomplete or inappropriate responses. Ultimately, a total of 13,299 members constituted the sample of this study which generated an overall response rate of 11%.

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[1] The eighteen associations were: American Chemical Society, American College of Healthcare Executives, American Geophysical Union, American Health Information Management Association, American Society for Quality, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Society of Mechanical Engineers, College of American Pathologists, Credit Union Executives Society, Emergency Nurses Association, IEEE, Institute of Food Technologies, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Athletic Trainers Association, National Court Reporters Association, National Society of Accountants, Project Management Institute, and School Nutrition Association.

Such a low response rate might influence the sample's representativeness of the population and cause low power and incorrect estimation of effect size (Sivo et al. 2006). To test for potential nonresponse bias, the dataset was ordered based on the response time and then divided it into four equal-sized groups. Subsequently, we used t test to compare the mean scores of six key variables tested in this study between the first-quarter group and the fourth-quarter group. No statistically significant differences were found in the mean scores of need fulfillment and attitude between these two groups. However, there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of POS, volunteering, donation, and career status between these two groups. More specifically, these four variables in the first-quarter group showed significantly lower mean scores than those in the fourth-quarter group. It indicated that junior members with less POS and engagement seemed to complete the survey earlier than the other counterparts. So it seemed that nonresponse bias might partially significantly influence the results of our study.

Measurements

Need Fulfillment

Members of professional associations have various needs that can be satisfied by their organizations, such as social needs (e.g., networking with other professionals) and self-actualization needs (Porter 1962). Drawing from previous research (e.g., Porter 1962; Piccoli et al. 2004), four items answered on a five-point Likert scale were used to measure members' perceived need fulfillment: "opportunities for you to network with other professionals in your field," "access to career information and employment opportunities," "access to products, services and suppliers," and "access to the most up-to-date information in your field." The measurement scales used in this study were additive scales. The Cronbach's alpha for need fulfillment was .82, and the λ_2 was also .82.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

This variable was defined as the extent to which members perceived that the association "valued their contributions and cared about their well-being" (Lynch et al. 1999, p. 470). Though the scales measuring the POS were adopted from Eisenberger et al. (1986), they were modified to fit the context of this study. Four items ranked on a five-point Likert scale were used: "professional development or educational program offerings," "supporting student education and entry into the field," "member discounts," and "opportunities to gain leadership experience." The Cronbach's alpha for POS was .78, and the λ_2 was also .78.

Attitude

Attitude toward the association is conceptualized as the members' overall evaluation of the association (Ki and Hon 2012). To measure attitude, the participants were asked to rate the level of their overall attitude toward associations

($M = 4.16$, $SD = .93$), adopted from previous research (Albirini 2006). This measurement item was evaluated according to a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*very unfavorable*) to 5 (*very favorable*).

Member Engagement

This study referred to member engagement as the degree to which individual members participate in their professional associations. Adopted from Hager (2014), member engagement was conceptualized in this study with two dimensions: volunteering and donation behavior. Volunteering behavior was measured employing three items: "providing mentoring, coaching, or tutoring for members and students within their association," "serving on the board for a local chapter or section," and "serving on a committee for a local chapter or section." To measure donation behavior, the respondents were asked whether they had raised or donated funds for their association during the past 12 months. The engagement variable was measured according to two options—zero (absence) to one (presence).

Career Status

Career status can be indicated by pay grade and position (Mein 2002). To measure career status, the participants were asked, "Which best describes your current career situation: entry level, middle level, senior level, or chief executive or owner/partner?"

Demographic Profiles

Several demographic questions were included such as gender, age, and ethnic identification. Among the 13,299 participants, 53% ($n = 6995$) were female and 47% ($n = 6304$) were male. The average age of the respondents was 48, ranging from 19 to 101 ($SD = 12.77$). A majority of respondents were born between 1963 and 1976 (31.2%) and between 1955 and 1962 (23.2%). Caucasians were dominant among all the participants in the survey ($n = 8273$, 90.1%), followed by African-Americans ($n = 348$, 2.8%), Asians ($n = 341$, 3.7%), multiracial participants ($n = 175$, 1.9%), and others ($n = 49$, .5%).

Data Analysis

To test the proposed six hypotheses, this study conducted both regression (hypothesis 1 through 5) and path analyses (hypotheses 6 and 1 through 5). The first regression tested the effects of need fulfillment (H1) and POS (H2) on attitude. The second regression tested the effects of need fulfillment (H3a), POS (H4a), and attitude (H5a) on members' volunteering behavior. The third regression tested the effects of need fulfillment (H3b), POS (H4b), and attitude (H5b) on members' donation behavior. Subsequently, path analysis was conducted because the regression analysis could not test the effect of moderating variables. In this study, H6 tested the effect of moderating variables.

Results

The results of descriptive statistical analysis are displayed in Table 1 and show that the sampled participants perceived a high level of need fulfillment ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .78$) and POS ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .77$). On the whole, these participants showed a favorable attitude toward their associations ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .93$).

Correlation Analysis

As shown in Table 1, the correlation matrix indicated both perceived need fulfillment ($r = .30$, $p < .01$) and POS ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) were significantly positively related to attitude. The two independent variables, need fulfillment and POS, were also strongly and significantly correlated ($r = .83$, $p < .01$).

Regression Analyses

The results of regression analyses were shown in Table 2. The first regression analysis was performed to test the effects of need fulfillment (H1a), POS (H2a), and attitude (H5a) on members' volunteering behavior. The regression model was statistically significant [$F(3, 4506) = 26.509$, $p < .001$], which explained 1.7% of the variance in the volunteering behavior. While the explanatory power is relatively small, POS was a significant predictor of volunteering behavior ($\beta = .14$, $p < .001$ for H2a), followed by attitude ($\beta = .05$, $p < .001$ for H5a). However, need fulfillment (H1a) was not a significant predictor of volunteering behavior. Therefore, H2a and H5a were supported, but H1a was not.

The second regression analysis tested the effects of need fulfillment (H3) and POS (H4) on attitude. The regression analysis documented that these variables significantly predicted attitude [$F(2, 6550) = 391.676$, $p < .001$]. In particular, POS was an important predictor of attitude ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$ for H4), followed by need fulfillment ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$, for H3). The adjusted R^2 is .107, which indicated that 10.7% of the variance in the attitude could be explained by this model. Therefore, H4 and H3 were supported.

Table 1 Correlation matrix for observed variables

	Range	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Need fulfillment	[1–5]	3.77	.78	1.00					
2. POS	[1–5]	3.71	.77	.83**	1.00				
3. Attitude	[1–5]	4.16	.93	.30**	.31**	1.00			
4. Volunteering	[0 or 1]	.37	.72	.10**	.12**	.09**	1.00		
5. Donation	[0 or 1]	.09	.29	.08**	.10**	.08**	.33**	1.00	
6. Career status	[1–4]	2.63	.80	−.04**	−.06**	.02**	.08**	.07**	1.00

POS perceived organizational support

** Correlation is significant at $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Table 2 Regression analyses

Hypotheses	β	t Value	Results
Need fulfillment → volunteering behavior	−.03	−1.37	H1a (*not supported*)
Need fulfillment → donation behavior	−.03	−1.32	H1b (*not supported*)
POS → volunteering behavior	.14***	5.21	H2a (*supported*)
POS → donation behavior	.11***	4.79	H2b (*supported*)
Need fulfillment → attitude	.15***	7.26	H3 (*supported*)
POS → attitude	.19***	9.30	H4 (*supported*)
Attitude → volunteering behavior	.05***	3.13	H5a (*supported*)
Attitude → donation behavior	.06***	4.45	H5b (*supported*)

POS perceived organizational support

*** $p < .001$

The third regression analysis was conducted to test the effects of need fulfillment (H1b), POS (H2b), and attitude (H5b) on members' donation behavior. This regression analysis revealed several significant findings [$F(3, 6068) = 28.991$, $p < .001$]. First, POS was the primary significant predictor of donation behavior ($\beta = .11$, $p < .001$ for H2b), followed by attitude ($\beta = .06$, $p < .001$, for H5b). Second, need fulfillment (H1b) was not a statistically significant predictor of donation behavior. The R^2 was .014, which indicated that 1.4% of the variance in the donation behavior could be explained by this model. Therefore, H2b and H5b were supported, but H1b was not.

Path Analysis

The proposed hypotheses were tested through path analysis. In this path model, need fulfillment and POS predicted attitude, and need fulfillment, POS, and attitude were assumed to affect volunteering and donation behavior. Moreover, the moderating effects of career status on the relationship between attitude and volunteering and donation behavior were also tested. In order to test the goodness-of-fit of the path model, we used the following indices: standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), and comparative fit index (CFI).[2] Table 3 shows that the model indicated generally satisfactory fit with the data according to all the fit indices except SRMR.

A path analysis with maximum likelihood estimation showed that need fulfillment ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$ for H3) and POS ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$ for H4) significantly predicted attitude. Also, POS ($\beta = .14$, $p < .001$ for H2a) and attitude

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[2] SRMR is an index of the standardized difference between the observed and the predicted covariance matrices (Chen 2007). GFI assesses whether the hypothesized model fits with the observed covariance matrix (Baumgartner and Homburg 1996). NFI assesses the discrepancy between the Chi-squared value of the hypothesized model and that of the null model (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). CFI is an index of the extent to which the tested model is better than an alternative model in reproducing the observed covariance matrix (Bentler 1990).

Table 3 Model fit index and criteria

Model fit index and criteria	Fit statistics
Chi-square > 0.05	1389.507 ($p < .001$; $df = 1$)
Chi-square/degree of freedom < 3	66.167
SRMR $< .06$	.079
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) > 0.9	.962
Normed fit index (NFI) > 0.9	.930
Comparative fit index (CFI) > 0.9	.930

($\beta = .04$, $p < .001$ for H5a) showed significant impact on volunteering behavior. Similarly, POS ($\beta = .05$, $p < .001$ for H2b) and attitude ($\beta = .02$, $p < .001$ for H5b) significantly influenced donation behavior. However, need fulfillment was not a significant predictor of volunteering or donation behavior. As predicted by H6a, career status was a significantly negative moderator of the relationship between attitude and volunteering behavior. This negative moderated relationship indicates that the effect of attitude on volunteering behavior is contingent on career status, with junior members showing stronger effects. However, career status did not significantly moderate the relationship between attitude and donation behavior (H6b). In sum, all of the proposed hypotheses were supported except H3 and H6b (see Table 4).

Discussion

Utilizing a survey of 13,299 members from 18 professional associations, this study examined the impacts of need fulfillment, members' perceived organizational support, and attitude toward the professional association on their engagement with their professional associations. We found that members' perceived need fulfillment and organizational support influenced their attitudes toward, and in turn inspired their engagement with, their associations. This study could advance the knowledge of organization–member relationship and member engagement and provide guidance for professional associations to better engage their members.

One major finding of this study was that member's perception of need fulfillment and organizational support positively influenced their attitude toward the association. If members recognized that their needs were fulfilled by the organization and that they obtained sufficient support from the association, they were more likely to generate a favorable attitude toward their professional association. This finding also supported previous research which indicated that individuals' perceived organizational support might facilitate a positive attitude toward their organization (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). The current findings could contribute to an understanding of the underlying mechanisms of the factors influencing members' attitudes and behaviors. Need fulfillment and POS were considered to reflect individuals' perceptions of their overall relationship with their organizations (Masterson and

Table 4 Path analysis

Path	Standardized coefficient	Hypotheses
Need fulfillment → volunteering behavior	–	H1a (*not supported*)
Need fulfillment → donation behavior	–	H1b (*not supported*)
POS → volunteering behavior	.14 (.01)***	H2a (*supported*)
POS → donation behavior	.05 (.01)***	H2b (*supported*)
Need fulfillment → attitude	.17 (.02)***	H3 (*supported*)
POS → attitude	.22 (.02)***	H4 (*supported*)
Attitude → volunteering behavior	.04 (.01)***	H5a (*supported*)
Attitude → donation behavior	.02 (.01)***	H5b (*supported*)
Career: attitude → volunteering behavior	.02 (.01)***	H6a (*supported*)
Career: attitude → donation behavior	–	H6b (*not supported*)

POS perceived organizational support

*** $p < .001$

Stamper 2003). Thus, we may further assume that members' perceived relationship with their association drives supportive attitudes toward the organization, which is also consistent with previous relationship management literature (i.e., Grunig et al. 2002; Ki and Hon 2007).

Another important finding was that members' attitude toward their professional association was positively related to their engagement with the association in volunteering and donation. This finding was also consistent with previous research which documented that a public's attitude toward the organization affected behavioral intentions (Ki and Hon 2007). If members perceive a favorable attitude toward their professional association, they might be more willing to engage the association in a variety of ways, such as volunteering and donating funds. Thus, professional associations might need to make efforts to establish strategies for improving members' favorable attitudes in order to engage them. For example, they could provide more tangible benefits and better customer service for members, both of which were demonstrated to positively influence members' satisfaction with their association (Markova et al. 2013).

Members' perceived support from the association was found to be positively associated with their engagement with the association. This finding was also consistent with previous literature which indicated that employees' perceived organizational support was associated with job involvement and performance, such as providing constructive suggestions (George and Brief 1992; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). If members perceived they received sufficient support from their associations, they were more likely to raise funds and volunteer for the association. Therefore, professional associations could strengthen their members' engagement by offering sufficient support for them. This finding might provide insights for organizational studies scholars to explore the outcomes of perceived organizational support.

Furthermore, members' perceived need fulfillment had little or no direct effect on member engagement. This finding was also consistent with previous findings that

members' satisfaction with career opportunities offered by healthcare associations was unrelated to their engagement with the association (Hager 2014), including donation and volunteering behaviors. Although this study did not find a direct effect of perceived need fulfillment on member engagement, the findings did indicate that need fulfillment influenced engagement by mediating members' attitude toward the organization. That is, when members perceived their needs were satisfied by the association, they were more likely to express a positive attitude toward the association, which might further facilitate their engagement with the association. Though Hager (2014) also identified some motivations of member engagement such as public incentives, he did not consider members' attitude toward the association as a mediator between their motivations and engagement.

This study represented a step further in the relationship between members' attitude toward their association and their volunteering behavior by documenting career status as a moderator. Career status was found to significantly moderate this relationship, with junior members exhibiting a stronger effect of attitude on volunteering behavior. This finding cautioned that the positive role of members' attitudes in facilitating their volunteering behaviors should be carefully promoted. Members in junior career stages might have different needs, expectations, and engagement behaviors than those in senior career stages. Members who were at an entry or junior level in their career were more likely to volunteer for their association if they felt favorable about the organization. It might be more effective for professional associations to inspire favorable attitudes in their junior members in order to better engage them, especially in regard to volunteering.

This study provided some theoretical implications. The proposed model might be applicable to other contexts such as employee–organization relationship and other types of organizations such as profit, other nonprofit, multinational, and governmental organizations, because this model and conceptualization of each variable incorporated scholarship pertaining to relationship management (Ki and Hon 2007) and organizational behavior (Masterson and Stamper 2003). Moreover, the findings of this study could advance scholarship on member-based nonprofit associations.

The outcomes of this study offered several practical insights. First, we recommend that management of professional associations use need fulfillment and POS to bolster efforts to engage members. Given that members' perceived organizational support and attitude toward the organization can lead to engagement with the organization, membership managers should consider strategies and tactics to encourage members to become more engaged. They could provide more tangible benefits to members (i.e., networking opportunities, member discounts, and professional development programs) (Markova et al. 2013; Ki and Wang 2016) in order to make them feel more favorable toward their associations. Professional associations need to focus attention on offering members necessary support, such as recognizing their contributions, caring about their needs and opinions, and creating mentoring programs for junior members, in order to foster their engagement in various activities. They need to periodically conduct member surveys to understand the needs and preferences of their members and invest in fulfilling their various needs. Furthermore, professional associations could harness social media (i.e., Twitter) and personalized e-mail marketing tools to promote membership benefits

and associational support in order to increase member engagement (MemberWise 2016).

Limitations

This study had some limitations. First, we employed cross-sectional data, which were insufficient to test a causal relationship. The cross-sectional analysis could not exclude the possibility of a reverse causality (Hoffman and Eveland 2010) in the relationships among members' perceived need fulfillment, organizational support, attitude, and engagement. Second, members' attitude toward the association was measured with only one item in the secondary data, which cannot test the level of reliability for the measure. Third, this study suffers from a low response rate that might lead a nonresponse bias. A nonresponse bias test revealed that the response rate partially affects the interpretation of the findings. It is possible that members who were more satisfied with the organizations tended to complete and return the survey questionnaires.

Future Research Directions

Future researchers would benefit from exploring the effects of individuals' perceived need fulfillment and organizational support on engagement in various organizations (i.e., charitable organizations and civic organizations) and contexts (i.e., employees and volunteers) (Ki and Wang 2016). Moreover, they could examine other patterns of member engagement, such as renewing membership and commitment to the association, in order to expand the patterns of member engagement. Future researchers could also collect longitudinal data to study how changes in members' need fulfillment and POS might influence their engagement with professional associations.

Conclusion

Professional associations have played a vital role in democratic processes (Tschirhart 2006). Our study shed light on members' motivations to engage with professional associations through a survey of 13,229 members in 18 associations. This study suggested that members' perceived need fulfillment and organizational support positively influenced their attitude toward the professional association, which was positively associated with their engagement with the association in volunteering and donating funds. Moreover, we found that career status significantly moderated the relationship between attitude toward and volunteering for the association, with junior members showing a stronger effect. The findings of this study could advance the growing body of literature on member engagement and nonprofit organizations. Professional associations need to take actions to fulfill members' needs and provide tangible support to them in order to facilitate member engagement.

Compliance with ethical standards

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