




## THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF VOLUNTARY ACTIONS PROMOTED BY LOCAL BUSINESSMEN IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

### O IMPACTO SOCIAL DAS AÇÕES VOLUNTÁRIAS PROMOVIDAS POR EMPRESÁRIOS LOCAIS EM COMUNIDADES VULNERÁVEIS

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#### ABSTRACT

This article investigates the social impact of voluntary actions promoted by local entrepreneurs in vulnerable communities, highlighting the potential of such initiatives to reduce inequalities and strengthen business–society relations. The research, qualitative and exploratory in nature, is based on an integrative literature review and document analysis of both Brazilian and international experiences. The findings reveal that volunteer initiatives led by local companies can generate interconnected benefits at community, organizational, and individual levels when guided by planning, active listening, and cross-sector collaboration. Case studies from Copasa and a cooperative in southern Brazil, as well as examples from Poland and Finland, demonstrate the ability of business leaders to act as agents of territorial transformation even with limited resources. The discussion supports the notion that corporate volunteering can serve as a legitimate channel for social regeneration, especially when rooted in shared objectives and ongoing impact evaluation. This study contributes to the conceptual delimitation of corporate volunteering, offers practical criteria for action, and outlines a future research agenda focused on fieldwork with small and micro enterprises.

**Keywords:** Corporate Volunteering. Social Impact. Vulnerable Communities. Local Entrepreneurs. Corporate Social Responsibility.

#### RESUMO

Este artigo investiga o impacto social das ações voluntárias promovidas por empresários locais em comunidades vulneráveis, destacando o potencial dessas iniciativas na redução de desigualdades e no fortalecimento das relações empresa-sociedade. A pesquisa, de natureza qualitativa e exploratória, fundamenta-se em revisão integrativa da literatura e análise documental de experiências brasileiras e internacionais. Os resultados revelam que ações voluntárias lideradas por empresas locais geram benefícios interdependentes nos níveis comunitário, organizacional e individual, desde que estruturadas com planejamento, escuta ativa e articulação intersetorial. As experiências da Copasa e de uma cooperativa no Sul do Brasil, bem como os casos observados na Polônia e Finlândia, evidenciam a capacidade das lideranças empresariais de operar como vetores de transformação territorial, mesmo com recursos limitados. A discussão reforça a ideia de que o voluntariado corporativo pode ser uma via legítima de regeneração do tecido social, sobretudo quando ancorado em objetivos



compartilhados e avaliação contínua de impacto. O estudo contribui para a delimitação conceitual do voluntariado empresarial, sugere critérios práticos de atuação e propõe agenda futura voltada à pesquisa de campo com micro e pequenos empresários.

**Palavras-chave:** Voluntariado Empresarial. Impacto Social. Comunidades Vulneráveis. Empresários Locais. Responsabilidade Social Corporativa.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo investiga el impacto social de las actividades de voluntariado promovidas por emprendedores locales en comunidades vulnerables, destacando el potencial de estas iniciativas para reducir las desigualdades y fortalecer las relaciones entre las empresas y la sociedad. La investigación cualitativa y exploratoria se basa en una revisión bibliográfica integradora y un análisis documental de experiencias brasileñas e internacionales. Los resultados revelan que las actividades de voluntariado lideradas por empresas locales generan beneficios interdependientes a nivel comunitario, organizacional e individual, siempre que se estructuren con planificación, escucha activa y coordinación intersectorial. Las experiencias de Copasa y una cooperativa en el sur de Brasil, así como los casos observados en Polonia y Finlandia, demuestran la capacidad de los líderes empresariales para actuar como vectores de transformación territorial, incluso con recursos limitados. El debate refuerza la idea de que el voluntariado corporativo puede ser una vía legítima para regenerar el tejido social, especialmente cuando se basa en objetivos compartidos y una evaluación continua del impacto. El estudio contribuye a la delimitación conceptual del voluntariado corporativo, sugiere criterios prácticos de acción y propone una agenda futura centrada en la investigación de campo con propietarios de micro y pequeñas empresas.

**Palabras clave:** Voluntariado Corporativo. Impacto Social. Comunidades Vulnerables. Emprendedores Locales. Responsabilidad Social Corporativa.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Social inequalities persist at multiple scales in Brazil and configure a framework of structural vulnerability that compromises the access of millions of people to basic rights such as education, housing, food and health, especially in peripheral territories where the presence of the State is fragmented and the community fabric often depends on the action of non-state agents to maintain its cohesion and daily viability (Kubiczek, 2021).

In this context, there is the emergence of initiatives coordinated by local entrepreneurs who, based on their own resources, networks and management capacities, have been developing volunteer actions aimed at meeting latent social demands, mobilizing their employees and partners to respond to urgencies such as hunger, educational exclusion, environmental degradation and health insecurity, thus configuring a form of engagement that goes beyond the logic of philanthropy and is part of a broader field of social responsibility with implications for territorial cohesion (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

Corporate volunteering, in this sense, can be understood as a set of structured practices that integrate organizational strategies and involve the donation of time, knowledge and skills by employees linked to the company, in initiatives that aim to generate social value and, simultaneously, strengthen internal bonds, develop skills and position the organization as a legitimate agent of social transformation. this functional definition is compatible with a perspective of expanded corporate social responsibility, as proposed in the reference literature (Licandro, 2023).

By analyzing Brazilian initiatives such as the Copasa program and the cooperative's axes of action studied by Amaral *et al.*, it is found that structured volunteering under business leadership can, in fact, produce concrete results in the expansion of local social capital, in the development of skills among volunteers and in convergence with global goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals. showing that regionally-based companies have the capacity to generate measurable and relevant community impact (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

This study aims to understand to what extent and under what conditions the voluntary actions promoted by local entrepreneurs, especially in contexts of high social vulnerability, contribute to the generation of lasting social impacts in the communities in which they are developed, considering their effects in different dimensions, from the strengthening of support networks to the development of organizational capacities focused on corporate social responsibility (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).



The general objective is to investigate the social impacts of voluntary actions promoted by local entrepreneurs in vulnerable communities, identifying their action strategies, the profiles of the beneficiaries, the formats of employee involvement and the results perceived in the community, organizational and individual spheres, with the following specific objectives: to map the volunteering practices in small and medium-sized companies with territorial operations; analyze social impact indicators associated with the actions developed; compare the models adopted from the existing theoretical references; and to identify the limits and possibilities of these practices in the Brazilian context.

The justification for this investigation lies in the finding that, despite the growing mobilization of the business sector in favor of social causes, there are still few studies that examine in depth the effects of these practices when promoted by small and medium-sized companies in vulnerable territories, and it is necessary to produce empirical and conceptual evidence that allows qualifying the public debate on business engagement and its contribution to development local social policy, especially considering that such actions can operate as informal social policy mechanisms in contexts of state absence (Louzao *et al.*, 2022).

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS**

Corporate volunteering emerges as a phenomenon that differs substantially from classic philanthropy, as it shifts the focus from simple financial or material donation to a logic of direct involvement of employees in structured and intentional social actions, configuring an organized practice within the company's strategies, with outlined objectives and expected impacts for both the beneficiaries and those involved in the process. which requires a broader understanding of the nature of this modality of action (Licandro, 2023).

Its origin is linked to the transformations in the modes of business management that have occurred in recent decades, marked by the growing appreciation of social responsibility strategies as tools for generating reputational value, customer loyalty and talent attraction, but also as a response to the pressure of consumers, institutions and social movements for greater ethical commitment of companies to the contexts in which they operate. consolidating a conception of the company as an agent co-responsible for the promotion of collective well-being (Lor-Serrano; Esteban-Salvador, 2021).



Traditional philanthropy, which is still widely practiced, usually operates through the punctual transfer of resources to needy individuals or institutions, without necessarily being monitored, evaluated, or directly involved by the company or its employees, while corporate volunteering, in turn, is characterized by integration with the organizational culture, the predictability of actions, and the articulation with internal policies for people and management. corporate social responsibility, which gives the practice a more institutionalized and strategic character (Licandro, 2023).

Thus, corporate volunteering should be understood as an initiative in which an organization's employees voluntarily get involved, through structured programs and with management support, in actions of collective interest that generate benefits both for the communities served and for the employees themselves and for the company as a whole. consolidating a triad of impact that has been the subject of analysis in several recent studies that seek to map the breadth and depth of these interventions (Alinho, 2023).

For employees, involvement in volunteer activities provides the development of interpersonal skills, strengthening of social bonds, increased personal satisfaction and a sense of belonging to an organization committed to social causes, which contributes to the construction of professional trajectories more aligned with ethical and collaborative values and to the increase of self-esteem and engagement within the work environment (Alinho, 2023).

For companies, corporate volunteer programs generate gains in institutional image, expand the capacity to retain talent, improve the organizational climate and demonstrate commitment to the territories in which they operate, aspects that directly impact their legitimacy before customers, investors and society in general, configuring themselves as a strategy that integrates social return and competitive advantage (Alinho, 2023).

For communities, corporate volunteering represents a form of access to technical knowledge, qualified labor, infrastructure and support networks that would hardly be available by other means, in addition to promoting the strengthening of social capital, the expansion of opportunities and the dynamization of spaces for social participation, fundamental elements for the construction of contexts less marked by exclusion and inequality (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

The integration between corporate volunteering, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further expands the strategic



reach of these practices, since it inserts local actions into a global sustainable development agenda, enabling initiatives to be guided by clear, measurable and internationally recognized goals, such as those related to quality education, gender equality, decent work, conscious consumption, reduction of inequalities and social justice (Lor-Serrano; Esteban-Salvador, 2021).

This alignment between voluntary corporate action and the SDGs reinforces the idea that even small or medium-sized companies, by developing projects articulated with the real needs of their communities, can contribute significantly to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, as long as they adopt planning, monitoring, and evaluation methodologies that make their impacts visible and comparable. thus strengthening the culture of shared responsibility between different social agents (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

The consolidation of corporate volunteering as a structuring practice of CSR depends, therefore, on the recognition that its value transcends the limits of the institutional image, requiring the company to be genuinely involved with the territories where it operates, actively listen to local demands, and be willing to build horizontal partnerships with civil society organizations, community leaders, and public institutions, in a logic of multisectoral cooperation aimed at generating sustainable and effective social transformations (Louzao *et al.*, 2022).

## 2.2 SOCIAL IMPACT MODELS AND STRATEGIES

The analysis of the social impact resulting from volunteer initiatives promoted by companies, including smaller ones with strong territorial insertion, requires the adoption of theoretical frameworks that allow understanding the effects of these actions beyond immediate results or isolated indicators, with the Theory of Change being one of the most effective instruments for this purpose. by allowing the mapping of causal relationships between voluntary actions, their contexts, the audiences involved, and the results obtained at different scales, whether individual, organizational, or societal (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

At the individual level, the impacts are manifested in the acquisition of new technical and socio-emotional skills by the volunteers, in the expansion of their social networks and in the construction of a sense of usefulness and belonging, promoting subjective transformations that have repercussions on both the self-esteem and the professional trajectory of those involved, especially when engagement takes place



regularly and in actions consistent with their personal capacities and motivations (Millora, 2022).

At the organizational level, structured volunteering practices have repercussions on several internal dimensions of the company, from strengthening the institutional culture based on values of cooperation and solidarity to increasing employee motivation and improving the work environment, in addition to contributing to the repositioning of the organization before its stakeholders, with effects on its public image and social legitimacy, especially in contexts of growing demand for ethical and socially responsible positions (Alinho, 2023).

In the societal sphere, the impact of corporate volunteering is expressed in the form of expanded support networks, strengthening of local social capital, generation of opportunities and dynamization of community development processes, especially when the actions undertaken are built from the effective demands of the population served, in articulation with other institutions and with a focus on sustainable and collective results, as indicated in studies that analyze the co-creation of value between companies and social organizations (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

This perspective of multiple levels of impact contributes to overcoming reductionist analyses based on short-term metrics, making room for more complex and systemic approaches, in which social impact is conceived as a progressive and relational construction, the result of the interaction between the different actors involved, their contexts of action, and the links that are established over time, with the possibility of feedback between the individual, organizational, and societal spheres (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

In the Brazilian empirical field, some initiatives analyzed have pointed to the existence of three recurrent axes of action in volunteer programs organized by companies with local operations, namely: the promotion of cooperativism and entrepreneurship, the promotion of financial citizenship and the implementation of practices aimed at sustainable development, axes that organize different social and environmental projects carried out through the mobilization of internal volunteers, and that dialogue directly with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those number 4, 8 and 10 (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

Within these axes, there are multiple formats of action, among which individualized mentoring for young people and small entrepreneurs, fundraising and redistribution





campaigns, community intervention efforts, educational workshops, environmental activities and technical training programs stand out, and these modalities of intervention are characterized by a high degree of adaptability and replicability, which makes them especially appropriate for contexts such as those marked by high vulnerability and scarcity of public policies (Millora, 2022).

The adoption of these formats allows companies to develop programs that are consistent with their internal capacities, their employee profile, and the specific demands of the territories in which they operate, while favoring the continuous involvement of participants and the construction of lasting bonds with the audiences served, a central aspect for the sustainability of actions and for the construction of effective community legacies. especially in regions where resources are limited and the presence of state agents is insufficient (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

By integrating the Theory of Change as a structuring logic and the formats adapted to local realities, entrepreneurs who promote voluntary actions become able to more accurately map the impacts produced, adjust their action strategies based on evidence and build consistent trajectories of social engagement, which contribute to the construction of a more relational economy. ethical and committed to human and territorial development (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

## 2.3 CRITICAL FACTORS AND BARRIERS

The effectiveness of corporate volunteering actions promoted by local entrepreneurs depends on multiple factors that act as intensifiers or limiters of the social impact generated, and it is essential to understand how variables such as individual motivation, degree of engagement of participants, technical training of volunteers, availability of time and age profile directly influence the results obtained in the communities served, this is especially important in contexts where resources are scarce and vulnerabilities are accentuated (Méndez, 2021).

The motivation of the participants exerts a decisive influence on the depth and continuity of involvement, and employees motivated by purposes aligned with the company's values or by feelings of belonging to the cause tend to have a greater commitment to the social results of the actions developed, while engagements motivated exclusively by external incentives or formal obligations can produce superficial and short-





lived effects. limiting the potential for individual and collective transformation of voluntary practices (Alinho, 2023).

The technical training and qualification of volunteers are also central components for the generation of consistent impact, since the inadequacy between the profile of the participants and the specific demands of the communities can generate mismatches between intention and result, with the possibility of frustration on the part of both the agents and the beneficiaries, which is why successful programs usually incorporate training stages, skills mapping and continuous monitoring of the interventions carried out (Méndez, 2021).

The availability of time, in turn, is among the most sensitive factors for the continuity of actions, especially when volunteers work outside working hours and need to reconcile engagement with their professional and family routines, and it is common for them to give up, absent or have difficulties in maintaining activities, which requires companies to build flexibility policies. symbolic recognition and integration of volunteer practices into the organizational routine (Alinho, 2023).

The age group of the participants also influences the type of contribution that can be offered, and it is observed that people between 55 and 64 years old have higher rates of adherence to corporate volunteer programs, which can be attributed to greater professional stability and availability of time, although there are still barriers related to ageism, mobility and limited perception of their capacities. which requires specific strategies for inclusion and appreciation of their experiences (Méndez, 2021).

In addition to the factors related to the engagement of individuals, it is necessary to consider the structural risks that can compromise the authenticity and effectiveness of voluntary corporate actions, among which the use of volunteering as an institutional marketing tool stands out, in which the focus shifts from social transformation to the media visibility of the company, generating distortions that empty the public meaning of the action and reduce its legitimacy before the communities involved (Méndez, 2021).

Another recurring risk is the excessive dependence on civil society organizations by companies, which can generate asymmetries in the definition of objectives, weaken the autonomy of NGOs and transfer responsibilities in an unbalanced way, creating vertical relationships that do not promote the construction of sustainable and equitable partnerships, especially in contexts where the business sector concentrates greater economic and symbolic power (Kubiczek, 2021).



Institutional communication around volunteer actions is a sensitive and decisive aspect for the construction of the public perception of corporate volunteering, because, at the same time that it can strengthen the visibility of the practice and mobilize new supporters, it can also generate distrust if it is perceived as self-promotional or disconnected from the realities faced by the beneficiaries, requiring companies to cultivate a transparent communicational posture, and centered on the impact generated, and not on the projected image (Louzao *et al.*, 2022).

The absence of clear metrics and effective methods for measuring social impact represents another critical barrier to the advancement of corporate volunteering towards more consistent and transformative practices, since without objective indicators and evaluative instruments, it becomes difficult to demonstrate the results achieved, improve the strategies adopted and justify the continuity of actions with internal and external audiences. which can compromise its sustainability and public value in the long run (Louzao *et al.*, 2022).

In view of this, entrepreneurs who wish to promote voluntary actions that transcend punctual assistance and generate relevant transformations in the territories in which they operate must be aware of these critical factors, investing in training processes, volunteer support structures, coherent communication strategies and evaluation models aligned with the complexity of the social contexts in which they are inserted, contributing to consolidating more horizontal, effective, and lasting social engagement practices (Alinho, 2023).

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The research that underlies this work adopts a qualitative approach, of an exploratory nature, guided by the need to understand in depth the meanings, scopes and social repercussions of the voluntary actions promoted by local entrepreneurs in vulnerable communities, and this type of research is the most appropriate when the objective is centered on the interpretation of the meanings attributed by the actors involved, in the analysis of processes and in the understanding of complex social phenomena in their specific contexts.

The construction was based on an integrative literature review, complemented by documentary analysis of existing case studies that describe concrete experiences of corporate volunteering with measurable social impacts, allowing the identification of



recurrent patterns and contextual particularities from validated and updated secondary sources, which offers rigorous methodological subsidies for the construction of a critical and comparative analysis based on evidence.

The criteria used for the selection of articles included thematic relevance in relation to the central objective of the research, qualified academic authorship of the selected texts, publication in vehicles recognized for their scientific credibility and, above all, the explicit presence of social impact indicators, whether in terms of beneficiaries served, organizational results or community changes observed, ensuring that the materials used contributed in a substantive way to the understanding of the proposed object.

The analysis technique adopted consisted of the thematic comparison of the cases studied, with special attention to the strategies used, the formats of action implemented, the audiences involved, the results achieved and the gaps identified by the authors themselves, seeking to recognize common elements between the experiences analyzed and, at the same time, to value the local singularities that give specificity to the initiatives, as proposed by comparative studies based on qualitative evidence.

The choice of case studies as the main source of data is due to their ability to provide an in-depth and multifaceted portrait of the realities examined, enabling access to detailed information on the motivations, dynamics, challenges and effects of corporate volunteering actions in different contexts, as well as allowing the identification of good practices and the formulation of recommendations applicable to other territorial realities with similar characteristics.

This methodological approach is also justified by the possibility of future replication in field research with local entrepreneurs from different sectors and regions of Brazil, which will allow deepening the knowledge about the forms of corporate social engagement on a local scale, validating the findings produced in this stage and contributing to the consolidation of an empirical field focused on the analysis of the social impacts of voluntary actions developed outside the large corporate conglomerates and with a strong connection to the territory.

## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the cases selected for this study allows us to identify concrete and methodologically documented experiences of corporate volunteering promoted by entrepreneurs and institutions with regional insertion in Brazil, highlighting, in this sense,



the programs developed by the Sanitation Company of Minas Gerais (Copasa) and by a financial cooperative located in the southern region of the country, which show not only the technical and organizational feasibility of volunteer action structured, as well as its tangible effects on the communities served, the employees involved, and the institutional culture of the organizations themselves (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

In the case of Copasa, the "Copasa Volunteers" program was conceived as an extension of the company's internal social and environmental responsibility policy, involving employees from different areas in actions aimed at promoting citizenship, socio-environmental education, revitalization of public spaces and encouraging reading, with emphasis on the intersectoral articulation between volunteers and schools. community associations, municipal secretariats, and non-governmental organizations, which expanded the reach of the actions and strengthened the company's social legitimacy in the interior of the state of Minas Gerais (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

The actions of the cooperative analyzed by Amaral *et al.* were also structured around a corporate volunteering policy articulated with the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on three priority axes: promotion of financial citizenship, environmental education and encouragement of locally-based entrepreneurship, and these actions were implemented through joint efforts, workshops, mentoring and educational campaigns carried out by employees of the institution in alternating working hours, which made it possible to reconcile social engagement with employees' formal work commitments (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

In the area of citizenship and financial education, initiatives such as lectures in public schools on conscious consumption, home planning workshops and training for small entrepreneurs stand out, actions that contributed to the expansion of the autonomy of the participants, the strengthening of practical skills and the dissemination of more sustainable habits of personal and family management, in addition to promoting the public recognition of the cooperative as an institution committed to economic inclusion and territorial development (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

In relation to the environmental axis, projects were carried out to plant trees, clean springs, selective collection and ecological education with children and adolescents, actions that, in addition to promoting direct benefits to the local environment, stimulated the formation of critical awareness about the rational use of natural resources and strengthened the bonds between volunteers and the community. reinforcing the idea that



companies are not entities outside the space in which they operate, but an integral part of the socio-ecological systems in which they are inserted (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

Income generation and the stimulation of social entrepreneurship were another relevant axis, with the offer of mentoring to small producers, technical support in the formalization of businesses and encouragement of the creation of local networks of exchanges and collaborations, actions that contributed to the strengthening of local economies, the development of productive skills and the valorization of community knowledge, especially in regions with high informality and low presence of public policies to promote microentrepreneurship (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

These experiences dialogue directly with the conceptual framework proposed by Licandro, which structures corporate volunteering as a modality of social action based on four interdependent pillars: internal engagement, community connection, strategic alignment with the institutional mission and production of shared value, these elements being observable in the two cases analyzed, although with different emphases and varying degrees of institutionalization, which reveals the flexibility of the model and its applicability in organizations of different sizes and legal natures (Licandro, 2023).

The structuring of actions focused on well-defined thematic axes, the construction of partnerships with local actors and the direct involvement of employees in the activities carried out allowed both Copasa and the cooperative studied to promote impacts that go beyond conventional indicators of corporate performance, reaching subjective and social dimensions of relevance, such as the strengthening of social capital, the reconstruction of bonds of trust and the creation of collective spaces for the construction of citizenship and belonging (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

Finally, when critically analyzing these initiatives in the light of the specialized literature, it is observed that structured corporate volunteer programs with territorial ties have greater potential to produce lasting effects when they articulate their actions with global sustainable development frameworks, mobilize the knowledge and commitment of employees, and establish effective channels of listening and dialogue with the beneficiary communities. configuring themselves as concrete alternatives for the promotion of social justice in contexts of vulnerability (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

The analysis of the social benefits resulting from the voluntary actions conducted by local entrepreneurs shows that such initiatives have effective potential for collective transformation when structured with intentionality, continuity and connection with the real



demands of the territories served, and it is possible to observe, from the case studies analyzed, the direct reach of thousands of people through workshops, mentoring, campaigns, training, educational and environmental activities, which translates into expanded access to information, development of practical skills and strengthening of community response capacity in situations of prolonged vulnerability (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

The constant presence of volunteers in the communities served allowed the construction of lasting bonds, the creation of collective spaces for listening and participation, and the strengthening of local solidarity networks, fundamental elements for confronting historical situations of social and institutional exclusion, especially in regions where public services are fragmented or non-existent, demonstrating that the performance of companies inserted in the territory, even without large structures, it can function as a vector of stability, mediation, and concrete hope for socially marginalized groups (Amaral *et al.*, 2023).

The organizational effects of volunteering practices were also consistent and multifaceted, with significant improvements in the internal climate of the institutions, especially with regard to the sense of belonging, symbolic recognition and motivation of the employees involved, in addition to the generalized perception that the organization positions itself in an ethical and purposeful way in the face of the social problems of its surroundings, which contributes to consolidating organizational cultures that are more horizontal, empathetic and connected to external realities (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

The link of these actions to *Environmental, Social and Governance* (ESG) indicators was also highlighted in the studies analyzed, being understood as a strategy for valuing the company before investors, consumers and institutional partners, in addition to constituting a differentiating element in highly competitive sectors, such as financial services, the manufacturing industry and the basic sanitation area. where the ability to generate social added value can directly influence economic sustainability and institutional reputation in the long term (Louzao *et al.*, 2022).

Another aspect frequently pointed out in organizational reports concerns the retention of talent and the attraction of new professional profiles interested in working in socially committed companies, which proved to be particularly relevant among younger employees with high technical qualifications, who tend to value work spaces that favor engagement in social causes. the expression of personal values and the possibility of



contributing directly to processes of social transformation outside the traditional scope of their productive functions (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

On a personal level, the benefits perceived by volunteers encompass dimensions ranging from the development of technical and socio-emotional skills to the expansion of their critical awareness, through the construction of new social bonds, the strengthening of self-confidence and the resignification of their own place in the organizational structure, and these changes are often described by the participants as transformative milestones in their trajectories. capable of influencing their professional decisions, their daily practices, and their vision of the collective (Alhinho, 2023).

The mentoring, training and coexistence actions in community contexts allowed the volunteers to develop skills such as active listening, empathy, conflict mediation, applied didactics, nonviolent communication and teamwork, skills that prove to be valuable both for the performance of their functions in companies and for the expansion of their civic action, contributing to form individuals more attentive to social inequalities and more prepared to interact in a different way. collaborative and ethical in diverse and challenging environments (Millora, 2022).

In addition, the reports analyzed indicate that many volunteers started to work in other spaces of public and social life after their initial experience in business programs, including neighborhood associations, cultural collectives, school councils and independent projects, suggesting that corporate volunteering can function as a gateway to broader processes of engagement and politicization of daily life, which further expands its potential to contribute to the construction of more resilient, democratic, and cohesive communities (Alhinho, 2023).

The subjective effects reported by the participants also include the strengthening of self-esteem, the reduction of psychological suffering related to isolation and demotivation in the workplace, and internal recognition by the leadership, which, added to the coexistence with social realities different from their own, favors the construction of new repertoires of meaning, the redirection of individual purposes and the deepening of the understanding of the impact of one's own actions on the lives of others (Millora, 2022).

In view of this, it is possible to affirm that corporate volunteering practices articulated from local strategies and conducted with intentionality, active listening and ethical alignment produce multiple and intertwined effects, simultaneously benefiting the territories served, the subjects who live in them and the institutions that engage in a





purposeful way with the processes of community development, these dynamics are supported by networks of trust, continuous training processes, and institutional openness to rethink the relationship between economic activity and social commitment (Passos *et al.*, 2024).

The practices of corporate volunteering carried out outside Brazil offer valuable comparative elements to understand the potentiality of local actions led by entrepreneurs committed to the social transformation of their territories, with the cases documented in Poland and Finland being particularly illustrative, where the intersectoral articulation between private companies, civil society organizations, public institutions and community groups demonstrated a high capacity for response to complex social problems, even in environments marked by regional asymmetries and recent histories of institutional transition (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

In Finland, medium-sized companies in the technology and services sector mobilized their staff in structured actions in partnership with public schools and immigrant reception centers, offering digital training workshops, intercultural mediation and support for insertion in the labor market, actions developed from dialogical processes of listening and collective agreement on goals, with a strong emphasis on equity of access and respect for the cultural specificities of the groups served, which shows that corporate volunteering models can incorporate structuring dimensions of inclusion and diversity even in societies with a high degree of formal organization (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

In Poland, the studies conducted by Brzustewicz *et al.* demonstrate how family businesses and local business networks acted in coordination with educational institutions, NGOs and municipal governments to promote urban revitalization actions, professional training of young people in vulnerable situations and strengthening of the solidarity economy, practices that stand out for combining the technical knowledge of entrepreneurs with the mobilizing capacity of organizations generating synergies that resulted in measurable positive impacts on employability, access to education, and community cohesion indicators in different regions of the country (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

Among the most emblematic examples presented in these studies is the experience of a Polish sports club that, during the most critical period of the Covid-19 pandemic, became the epicenter of a solidarity network involving local business leaders, religious representatives, community agents, and health professionals, and this informal



structure is coordinated based on principles of self-management, transparency and horizontal division of responsibilities, allowing direct care to hundreds of families through the delivery of food, medicine, and emotional support in semi-urban communities deeply affected by economic downturn and social isolation (Kubiczek, 2021).

This case clearly reveals how business leaders rooted in the territory can operate as catalysts for emergency social solutions, especially when they act in an articulated manner with other local actors, recognizing that their function goes beyond the limits of economic production and involves ethical responsibilities towards the community that sustains and consumes their services, and this posture is especially relevant in times of institutional collapse or insufficient policies in which the active and coordinated presence of the business community can make the difference between social stagnation and the collective reorganization of local life (Kubiczek, 2021).

The analysis of these international experiences supports the argument that local entrepreneurs, even operating with reduced budgets, lean structures and limited territorial reach, can produce relevant and sustainable social impacts when their actions are guided by strategic planning, territorial awareness, intersectoral articulation and clarity of purpose, these four elements being the main determinants of the effectiveness and continuity of the initiatives. regardless of organizational scale or business segment (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

In contrast to social responsibility models traditionally based on one-off donations and disjointed actions, the practices observed in both Poland and Finland demonstrate that corporate engagement in social causes can achieve greater depth and relevance when conceived as an integral part of the company's institutional identity, not being treated as a philanthropic appendage or reputation strategy. but rather as an active vector of co-responsibility in the construction of more inclusive, resilient, and collaborative community ecosystems (Kubiczek, 2021).

In addition, these experiences reinforce the idea that social impact is not necessarily conditioned by the quantity of resources mobilized, but by the quality of the listening carried out, the legitimacy of the interlocutors involved and the relevance of the strategies adopted in the face of the cultural, economic and institutional specificities of the territory, and it is precisely this dimension of local rooting that gives density and durability to the actions, especially when led by entrepreneurs who understand their



performance as an extension of civic commitments and not just business commitments (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

These findings point to the need to value, including in the Brazilian reality, experiences led by small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who, although operating with material limitations, demonstrate the capacity for social mobilization, strategic articulation and commitment to the common good, characteristics that, when enhanced by public incentive policies, technical support networks and institutional visibility, can generate significant multiplier effects on the social indicators of communities historically neglected by conventional development programs (Kubiczek, 2021).

By considering these international examples in the debate on Brazilian corporate volunteering, the horizon of possibilities for local entrepreneurs who wish to act with purpose is broadened, strengthening the hypothesis that the relevant social impact depends less on the magnitude of the investments and more on the intentionality of the practices, the consistency of the strategies and the construction of solid partnerships with actors who share values. objectives and commitments to improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations (Brzustewicz *et al.*, 2022).

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study demonstrated that corporate volunteering promoted by entrepreneurs with local operations represents a relevant practice of social transformation in contexts of vulnerability. The analysis of Brazilian and international cases revealed that these actions can strengthen communities, expand opportunities and reposition companies as agents committed to the territories in which they operate.

Documented experiences have shown that, when well planned and articulated with the Sustainable Development Goals, voluntary initiatives have the potential to produce lasting effects at different levels: community, organizational, and individual. At the community level, it was observed the strengthening of social networks, the creation of bonds and the encouragement of autonomous actions. At the organizational level, there were improvements in the internal environment of the companies and greater connection with social responsibility practices. At the individual level, the volunteers reported personal learning, skill development, and significant transformations in their trajectories.

In addition to the empirical results, the work contributed to the conceptual deepening of corporate volunteering, differentiating it from isolated philanthropic actions



and positioning it as a strategy linked to organizational culture. Practical parameters were also indicated for the structuring of programs by local entrepreneurs, with emphasis on the importance of active listening, transparent communication, the choice of coherent thematic axes and the systematic measurement of the impacts generated.

However, the research has limitations, since it was based exclusively on literature review and documentary analysis. It is recommended that future studies move on to field investigations, especially with micro and small entrepreneurs who work in informal or poorly documented contexts.

As a future agenda, it is proposed to carry out longitudinal studies, investigations with a territorial focus and participatory methodologies that directly involve the beneficiaries of the actions. This can generate more accurate diagnoses and allow for continuous adjustments in volunteering strategies.

In summary, this work reinforces the relevance of corporate volunteering as a tool for transformation, especially when led by local actors aware of their social function and willing to build sustainable alliances with different segments of society.



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