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# Social Capital and Corporate Volunteering: A Study in a Cooperative in Southern Brazil

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**ABSTRACT:** Cooperatives are recognized for their substantial involvement in the communities where they operate, governed by principles and values that serve as guidelines for action management. The main objective of this work is to analyze corporate volunteering as an action of corporate social responsibility and its relationship with social capital and cooperative principles. The research employs a qualitative approach through a case study, combining data collection methods such as documents and interviews. Interviews and focus groups were transcribed, and MaxODA Analytics Pro 2022 software was used for information analysis. All components involved in generating social capital were identified and described according to the theoretical model, highlighting the strong presence and influence of cooperative principles, thus enhancing the generation of social capital through corporate volunteering practices. The presence of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aligned with voluntary actions was also noted, generating social capital with value for participants. Our results also demonstrate that corporate volunteering serves as a response to the challenges of COVID-19, thereby reinforcing the idea that companies with more substantial social capital have a greater capacity to respond to social challenges. As a suggestion for future research, it is recommended to explore other aspects that can strengthen social capital in cooperativism, such as values and principles in isolation and complementary projects to volunteering, also studying the generation of social capital through corporate volunteering in other organizational contexts.

KEYWORDS: Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Volunteering, Share Capital, Cooperativism.

ECONLIT DESCRIPTORS: M14, P13, Z13.

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**RESUMEN:** Las cooperativas son entidades con participación significativa en las comunidades donde operan, guiadas por principios y valores que dirigen la gestión de sus acciones. Este estudio tiene como objetivo principal analizar el voluntariado corporativo como acción de responsabilidad social corporativa y su relación con el capital social y los principios cooperativos. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo y se realiza mediante un estudio de caso, utilizando métodos de recolección de datos como documentos y entrevistas. Las entrevistas v grupos focales fueron transcritos y analizados con el software MaxODA Analytics Pro 2022. Se identificaron y describieron todos los componentes que intervienen en la generación de capital social, destacando la fuerte presencia e influencia de los principios cooperativos, lo que fortalece la generación de capital social a través de prácticas de voluntariado corporativo. Además, se observó la alineación de las acciones voluntarias con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS), generando capital social con valor para los participantes. Los resultados también muestran que el voluntariado corporativo responde a los desafíos de la COVID-19, reforzando la idea de que las empresas con mayor capital social tienen una mejor capacidad de respuesta a desafíos sociales. Como sugerencia para futuras investigaciones, se propone explorar otros factores que pueden fortalecer el capital social en cooperativas, como estudiar los valores y principios de forma aislada y proyectos complementarios al voluntariado, así como la generación de capital social a través del voluntariado corporativo en otros contextos organizacionales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Responsabilidad Social Empresarial, Voluntariado Corporativo, Capital social, Cooperativismo.

#### Resumen amplio

## Capital social y voluntariado corporativo: estudio de caso de una cooperativa del sur de Brasil

El estudio aborda una temática relevante en el campo de la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa (RSC) y su impacto en la generación de capital social. Las cooperativas, como modelos organizacionales, poseen características intrínsecas que las vinculan profundamente con las comunidades en las que operan. Este artículo investiga cómo las prácticas de voluntariado corporativo, enmarcadas dentro de la RSC, fortalecen el capital social y los principios cooperativos.

#### Contexto y objetivos del estudio

La investigación tiene como objetivo central analizar el voluntariado corporativo como una práctica de RSC y su relación con el capital social y los principios cooperativos. La cooperativa estudiada, ubicada en el sur de Brasil, sirve como un contexto empírico para examinar esta relación. Este modelo organizativo, regido por principios de solidaridad, participación y responsabilidad, busca fomentar el bienestar de las comunidades, al tiempo que genera beneficios tanto para la organización como para la sociedad.

El enfoque metodológico es cualitativo, basado en un estudio de caso que combina análisis de documentos internos, entrevistas semiestructuradas con gestores responsables del voluntariado y grupos focales con empleados que han participado en actividades de voluntariado. Además, el análisis se apoyó en el software MaxQDA para codificar y categorizar datos, permitiendo una triangulación eficaz de las fuentes de información.

#### Marco teórico: RSC, voluntariado corporativo y capital social

La RSC se presenta como un concepto integral que busca equilibrar los objetivos financieros de las empresas con las demandas sociales y ambientales de la comunidad. Estudios previos, como los de Carroll (2015), destacan que la RSC no solo legitima la posición de las empresas ante la sociedad, sino que también fortalece la relación interna con sus empleados. En este contexto, el voluntariado corporativo se convierte en una herramienta estratégica para involucrar a los empleados en iniciativas sociales, fomentando valores como la cooperación, la confianza y el sentido de comunidad.

El capital social, según Adler y Kwon (2002), se define como un recurso derivado de las interacciones sociales que generan redes, confianza y normas compartidas. Estas dimensiones del capital social son fundamentales para entender cómo el voluntariado corporativo puede contribuir a su fortalecimiento. Muthuri et al. (2009) y Glinska-Newés y Górka (2020) des-

tacan que las interacciones generadas por el voluntariado corporativo no solo benefician a las comunidades atendidas, sino que también potencian las redes internas y externas de las organizaciones.

#### Resultados clave del estudio

El análisis de los datos reveló que el voluntariado corporativo en la cooperativa no solo promueve los componentes tradicionales del capital social (redes, confianza y normas), sino que también está profundamente influenciado por los principios cooperativos, como la democracia, la participación activa y la preocupación por la comunidad. Estas características distintivas del cooperativismo amplifican la capacidad del voluntariado corporativo para generar capital social.

Además, el estudio identificó tres ejes principales de acción en las prácticas de voluntariado de la cooperativa:

- 1. **Cooperativismo y emprendimiento:** Iniciativas que promueven la educación cooperativa y la cultura de la cooperación.
- 2. **Ciudadanía financiera:** Programas enfocados en la educación financiera para fomentar el ahorro y la planificación.
- Desarrollo sostenible: Actividades orientadas a fortalecer la sostenibilidad social y ambiental.

Cada uno de estos ejes está alineado con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) de las Naciones Unidas, lo que refuerza la relevancia estratégica de las acciones realizadas por la cooperativa. Estas prácticas, además, responden a demandas específicas de la comunidad, fortaleciendo la confianza mutua y la percepción positiva de la cooperativa entre los actores sociales involucrados.

#### Impacto del COVID-19 en el voluntariado corporativo

La pandemia de COVID-19 presentó desafíos significativos para las actividades de voluntariado corporativo debido a las restricciones de interacción física. Sin embargo, la cooperativa demostró agilidad y resiliencia al adaptar sus prácticas a formatos digitales, lo que permitió mantener los vínculos con la comunidad y continuar generando capital social. Algunas actividades fueron modificadas para responder a las necesidades urgentes de la crisis, como la distribución de alimentos y el apoyo financiero a hospitales locales.

Los hallazgos del estudio destacan que las organizaciones con altos niveles de capital social tienen una mayor capacidad para enfrentar crisis sociales, como lo demuestra la respuesta eficaz de la cooperativa durante la pandemia. Esta experiencia también proporcionó aprendizajes valiosos para los voluntarios, quienes adquirieron habilidades y estrategias que podrán aplicar en futuras emergencias.

#### Conclusiones y recomendaciones

Este estudio exploró cómo el voluntariado corporativo mejora el capital social y los principios cooperativos. Se encontró que los componentes del capital social en empresas tradicionales también fortalecen el capital social en cooperativas, con una influencia distintiva de los principios cooperativos. La investigación destacó que las cooperativas impactan significativamente en varios actores sociales, tanto a nivel local como global, a través de interacciones creíbles y positivas con las comunidades. La naturaleza democrática de las cooperativas mejora su relación con diversos grupos de interés, potencialmente beneficiándolos. Las acciones de voluntariado dentro de las cooperativas afectan positivamente las fuentes de capital social, dependiendo en gran medida de los niveles de confianza en estas acciones. La alta confianza permite que la cooperativa acceda de manera efectiva a diferentes capas de la comunidad, estableciendo una relación de confianza con los voluntarios que ven a la cooperativa como impactante. A los voluntarios se les confían recursos, fomentando una red participativa y confiable deseable para muchos. El estudio, realizado durante la pandemia de COVID-19, reconoce que los resultados podrían estar influenciados por este contexto. La dependencia de una sola cooperativa y métodos como entrevistas y grupos focales introduce posibles sesgos y limita la generalización. Investigaciones futuras deberían expandir metodologías y la diversidad de muestras para superar estas limitaciones. Este documento también sugiere explorar más a fondo otros elementos que fortalecen el capital social en cooperativas y las motivaciones e impactos del voluntariado en varios grupos de interés. Propone ampliar el marco de investigación para incorporar múltiples entornos cooperativos y tanto investigaciones cualitativas como cuantitativas para profundizar la comprensión del papel del voluntariado corporativo en el fortalecimiento del capital social.

#### Reflexión final

Este estudio aporta una visión enriquecedora sobre el papel del voluntariado corporativo en la generación de capital social dentro de las cooperativas. Al destacar la interacción entre los principios cooperativos, las prácticas de RSC y las necesidades de la comunidad, este trabajo ofrece un modelo que puede inspirar a otras organizaciones a adoptar enfoques similares para promover el bienestar social y fortalecer sus vínculos con la comunidad.

#### 1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility is an element that has become crucial in 21st-century companies, mainly because society has started to demand socially responsible behavior from companies (Cook & Geldenhuys, 2018). Corporate contribution and other social organizations solve global challenges, such as society's growing demands to combat poverty, reduce inequality, and stimulate sustainable social development, which is of greater importance (Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009).

According to the literature, companies have been concerned with balancing these socioeconomic issues, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a central topic of many discussions within organizations (Carroll, 2015). Zarefar and Sawarjuwono (2021) state that CSR is significant, and that profit should not be the sole focus of companies. The authors indicate that companies should pay attention to issues concerning the planet (environment), people (community), and profit (financial result). Thus, the actions will positively impact companies despite the demands imposed on companies to apply their CSR initiatives. Organizations that want to advance with maturity in CSR practices need to implement actions that integrate society's social and environmental concerns (Campillo & Igual-Anton, 2021).

CSR actions are a way to legitimize the company towards society and its employees since this legitimization also occurs from the door inwards (Cook & Geldenhuys, 2018). In this context, Corporate Volunteering emerges as a strategy for companies since it strengthens the relationship and its public image and provides the engagement of its employees with CSR activities generating value for their work and society (Mirvis, 2012; Caligiuri, Mencin, & Jiang, 2013; Pajo & Lee, 2018).

Some authors consider that a volunteer is a person who offers service to a specific organization, a service that originates benefits to himself or herself and others, without expecting monetary compensation (Magalhães & Ferreira, 2014). Specifically, corporate volunteering happens when companies allow and encourage employees to participate in volunteering activities during working hours without affecting employees' compensation. In this way, employees contribute to the company's social goals (Peterson, 2004). Therefore, corporate volunteering programs are organized actions that the company develops to involve its employees in volunteering activities, motivating them to participate (Basil, Runte, Basil, & Usher, 2011; Pajo & Lee, 2011; Licandro, 2017).

Companies increasingly use volunteer programs to strengthen community engagement, especially when the demand for social services increases, such as COVID-19 (Shurak et al., 2019; Spring, 2020). Corporate volunteering can bring benefits beyond the company level, including strengthening social capital (Saz-Gil, Cosenza, Zardoya-Alegría, & Gil-Lacruz, 2020). However, only some studies specifically address corporate volunteering to generate and strengthen social capital, thus representing a relevant research gap (Muthuri et al., 2009; Glinska-Newés & Górka, 2020).

Previous studies have pointed out that Corporate Social Responsibility actions can develop Social Capital (Gomez, 2008; Jha & Cox, 2015; Glinska-Newés & Górka, 2020). In this con-

text, Corporate Volunteering emerges as a CSR action with the potential for developing and strengthening Social Capital (Muthuri et al., 2009; Pajo & Lee, 2011; Kim & Kim, 2016; Licandro, 2011; Cook & Geldenhuys, 2018).

Muthuri et al. (2009) consider that social capital is generated through the social interactions fostered by corporate volunteering relationships. Similarly, Glinska-Newés and Górka (2020) suggest that corporate volunteering strengthens social capital through volunteers' interactions with beneficiaries. Considering the previous studies, this work strengthens the knowledge about corporate volunteering to strengthen social capital, taking cooperatives as the object of study.

Cooperatives have, by their essence, a reality of collective property and democratic management that seeks to promote solidarity, participation, and co-responsibility (Marcuello & Saz-Gil, 2008). In cooperativism, solidarity is a daily practice that represents improving life perspectives and well-being for thousands of people (Darós, 2011). McKillop, French, Quinn, Sobiech and Wilson (2020) pointed out that financial cooperatives are institutions based on local relationships and therefore have a more significant advantage over banks regarding community knowledge. For Meinen and Port (2014), cooperatives are drivers of social development, and the entity's collective objectives can be highlighted.

Cooperatives must be guided by the cooperative principles, which since the last century, have been established as guidelines to regulate excellence in the execution of social and economic actions by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). In addition, compliance with these cooperative principles allows the generation of social capital in the cooperative enterprise, constituting an intangible asset of a strategic nature that can influence the organization's competitiveness (Marcuello & Saz-Gil, 2008; Rodríguez & Hernández, 2019) Thus, considering the problematization exposed, this article is guided by the following research question: How can corporate volunteering as a CSR action strengthen social capital and cooperative principles?

#### 2. Theoretical Aspects

#### 2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility

Schwartz and Carroll (2008, p. 10) state that "perhaps CSR is the oldest framework for better understanding the relationship between business and society." Carroll (2015) affirms that over the past decades, various studies and complementary frameworks to CSR have been developed, all with similar objectives of "capturing the essence of the business-society relationship and what it 'owes' to it." In addition to the theory of Corporate Social Responsibility, studies in Business Ethics, Stakeholder Management, Corporate Citizenship, and Sustainability have emerged with similar meanings. In a recent study, Zarefar and Sawarjuwono (2021) reinforce this understanding by discussing CSR theories and practice in the workplace.

The strategic approach of CSR as a means of creating value for companies has been a concept studied and refined so that CSR becomes a source of opportunities, innovation, and competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Husted & Allen, 2007). The authors explain that social activities differ from market activities and argue that companies practicing social activities capture competitive advantage. In other words, CSR generates new spaces of opportunity through the constant pursuit of value creation, which is inevitably linked to social demands (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Husted & Allen, 2007).

Campillo and Igual (2021) explain that companies that have achieved strategic CSR are companies with a high level of CSR maturity. The authors state that CSR becomes strategic through the consideration of stakeholders in identifying issues that directly affect them and through reporting actions through various communication channels. However, for the authors, the highest level of corporate CSR maturity is institutionalization, with the adaptation of the business model to address the sector's sustainability challenges.

The institutionalization of CSR can come through the integration of the organization's management systems with relevant issues derived from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the United Nations, and the fulfillment of associated targets (Campillo & Igual, 2021). Carroll (2015) stated that the coming decades already have themes for a new social contract, such as the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015, where companies are expected to play a significant role in global efforts to achieve the SDGs.

The increased interest in CSR was one of the responses generated in the period after World War II, given the needs of the time driven by social changes, especially civil rights, feminist, environmental, and consumer movements. Today, CSR evolves particularly in its integration between theory and practice. Globalization has brought about a more dynamic and competitive market, and as a result, companies have needed to do more than just generate profits and comply with the law (Carroll, 2015).

Zarefar and Sawarjuwono (2021) state that CSR is very important but should be implemented voluntarily through programs where companies prepare actions to engage the community. Thus, organizations that wish to advance the maturity of their CSR need to implement actions that integrate social and environmental concerns of society (Campillo & Igual, 2021).

#### 2.2. Corporate Volunteering

For many researchers, corporate volunteering is defined by programs or actions through which the company organizes and supports opportunities for employees to donate their time and skills for community service (Basil et al., 2011; Pajo & Lee, 2011; Licandro, 2017).

The concept of volunteering has existed for centuries, but it was in 1986 that the connection between volunteering and the company was made, stating that in addition to donations, "companies are developing more programs that link their own contributions to the volunteer efforts of their employees" (Burke et al., p. 124, 1986). The theme has developed, and the main drivers have been trends in changing expectations regarding corporate responsibility towards stakeholders, increased awareness of the economic benefits related to volunteering, as well as

the pressure of legislation converging with economic, social, and political factors (Paço & Nave, 2013; Dreesbach-Bundy, 2017; Scheck, 2017).

This contemporary political, economic, and social context demands reflection on the role of companies in society, and corporate volunteering emerges to encourage and involve employees in social activities. As a result, the company begins to contribute to certain causes, helping to address some of the existing problems in society (Paço & Nave, 2013; Dreesbach-Bundy, 2017; Scheck, 2017).

Corporate volunteering has the main characteristics of having a formal structure managed by the company or employees (Licandro, 2017), receiving resources from the company such as monetary donations, or working hours, infrastructure funding, hiring personnel for management, and relational capital (Gallado et al., 2010; Ruizalba & Vallespín; González, 2014), and being carried out voluntarily by employees without remuneration for their participation (Voluntare, 2013).

The scope and intensity of actions can vary from company to company, and it is common for companies to allocate a certain number of hours to ensure employees feel comfortable participating in the action. Teams are often encouraged to participate in volunteer activities together, facilitating team building (Plewa et al., 2014).

Employees participating in volunteer activities are typically employed individuals who dedicate time during a planned activity for a nonprofit or charitable organization or group (Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Clary et al., 1998; Wilson, 2000; Penner, 2002; Rodell et al., 2015). According to Clary et al. (1998), volunteers are individuals who have an active attitude in seeking opportunities to help others. They also have the freedom to decide when they will participate in activities and the level of involvement. Volunteers donate their time to planned actions and often act as a group, engaging in helping activities. The author justifies that, unlike spontaneous help, such as helping an elderly lady carry groceries, which requires quick decision-making, volunteers are typically proactive rather than reactive and commit their time and effort (Wilson, 2000; Penner, 2002).

#### 2.3. Social Capital

Adler and Kwon (2002) proposed a conceptual framework for social capital, identifying its sources, benefits, risks, and contingencies, to help evaluate its usefulness for organizational theory. The authors explain that the proposed conceptual model aims to structure the value of social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002), addressing sources, benefits, risks, and contingencies that influence its value (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Adler and Kwon (2002) detailed the stages of the conceptual model in their work. They explain that it is a basic consensus that social capital is derived from social relationships, but there are various methodological currents that explain these relationships in different ways (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

The authors explain these relationships through the sources of social capital: opportunity, motivation, and ability. Adler and Kwon (2002) identified opportunity as a source of social

capital, explaining that an actor's social networks create opportunities, and these opportunities increase transactions of social capital. Motivation refers to the reasons why volunteers or donors help recipients in the absence of an immediate return (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The authors explain that motivation transforms selfish individuals into members of a community with shared interests (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Adler and Kwon's (2002) model, despite addressing important aspects of social capital, overlooks significant dimensions proposed by Putnam (1993) that have already been established and utilized by researchers in the field. Thus, Muthuri, Mattew, Moon (2009) expanded the understanding of social capital proposed by Adler and Kwon (2002) by incorporating the dimensions proposed by Putnam (1995), as shown in Figure 1.

Social structure Task and symbolic contingencies Market relations Opportunity Dimensions of Social Social Capital capital: Networks Value Social relations Motivation benefits and Trust risks Norms Hierarchical Ability relations Complementary capabilities

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Social Capital for Volunteering

Source: Muthuri, Mattew, Moon (2009, p. 77).

Both Muthuri, Mattew, Moon (2009) and Glinska-Newes, Gorka (2020) used the conceptual model of social capital in Figure 1 to analyze corporate volunteering, identifying the sources of social capital (opportunity, motivation, and ability), the dimensions of social capital (networks, trust, and norms), the benefits and risks of social capital, and its creation within corporate volunteering relationships.

Networks represent formal and informal interactions that connect individuals and groups, creating opportunities to work together and leverage each other's resources. Social capital is affected by the quality of interactions within the network (Muthuri & Mattew & Moon, 2009). Trust is considered the essential fabric of society and refers to people's expectations of each other, organizations, and their means (Muthuri & Mattew & Moon, 2009; Glinska-Newes & Gorka, 2020). Norms primarily relate to cooperation and define what is acceptable and un-

acceptable based on shared understandings and informal rules (Muthuri & Mattew & Moon, 2009; Glinska-Newes & Gorka, 2020).

Through Muthuri, Mattew, and Moon's (2009) conceptual model of social capital, we will evaluate corporate volunteering within the cooperative, which is based on cooperative principles at its core.

#### 3. Methodology

This research seeks to analyze and understand a social phenomenon that is still little researched, corporate volunteering to generate and strengthen the social capital in a credit union, thus representing a research gap (Muthuri et al., 2009; Glinska-Newés & Górka, 2020).

As this exploratory study seeks to understand the implications of corporate volunteering in the generation of social capital, a qualitative approach was chosen, with focus groups, interviews with managers, and document analysis.

The research object is a credit cooperative that operates in the southern region of Brazil and is a national reference for credit cooperativism. Thus, this research presents as the object of study the Cooperative's Corporate Volunteer Institute, created in 2004 to spread the collaborative culture and promote sustainable community development. Primary and secondary data were used.

The research stages were divided into three phases: 1) document analysis, 2) application of a focus group with the volunteers, and 3) semi-structured interviews with the managers. The information from the documents was collected to help understand the volunteering practices and to support the characterization of the researched cooperative and the cooperative principles; the cooperative's institutional website and internal documents about the corporate volunteering institute were used. Volunteer practices carried out by the cooperative were also mapped in this analysis.

The primary data collection stages were divided into focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The focus group was conducted with the volunteers of the volunteer institute. It was chosen to seek the integration of the volunteers in the different environments and types of volunteering practices. Moreover, the research focused not on the perception of a single person involved but on the volunteering program. We selected volunteers who had already participated in some volunteering practice in the program for the focus group. The focus group was conducted online for health security reasons due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two focus group sessions were conducted (Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2).

In both sessions, the participants were volunteers from the institute who had participated in some volunteer action. The selection of participants in both sessions was intentional (Creswell, 2010). The interviews with corporate volunteering managers were carried out to deepen information about corporate volunteering practices and their implications on social capital. Managers of the volunteering institute were selected for the interviews: Supervisor and Analyst responsible for action guidelines.

The content analysis was performed with the following chronology proposed by Bardin (2011): a) pre-analysis; b) exploration of the material; c) treatments of the results, inference, and interpretation—the pre-analysis aimed at organizing the research. Data were coded and categorized to explore the material. Coding corresponded to the transformation, utilizing precise rules, of the raw data of the text, making it possible to achieve a representation of the content or its expression. The categorization consisted in the classification of the elements constituted by differentiation and regrouping with previously defined criteria (Chart 5) in: actors involved (Social Relationships); opportunity, motivation, and ability (Sources of Social Capital); networks, trust, and norms (Dimensions of Social Capital); and internal and external (Benefits and Risks of Social Capital). The data treatment, inference, and interpretation were made by writing and discussing the results found in the focus group sessions, interviews with managers, and document analysis.

The data analysis software MaxQDA Analytics Pro 2022 assisted in this information analysis process. The MaxQDA Analytics Pro 2022 software created folders for each data source: document analysis, interviews, and focus groups. After the content was systematized in the software, the research proceeded to the complete reading and coding of the information and verbalizations according to the categories previously programmed in the software. After that, we proceeded with the exportation of all codifications through the software to Excel spread-sheets, allowing the triangulation of the data for interpretation and description of the results.

Data triangulation is looking at a phenomenon, or research question, from more than one data source and multiple perspectives (Stake, 2010). Furthermore, triangulation can be seen from two perspectives: one is a strategy that contributes to the validity of a research study, and the other is an alternative for obtaining new knowledge through new points of view (Vergara, 2005). This work seeks to broaden new knowledge about the subject of study, which is why the triangulation of the data obtained through the three data collection techniques (document analysis, interviews, and focus group) was carried out.

#### 4. Results

### 4.1. Generating social capital – Corporate Volunteering as an action of Corporate Social Responsibility

There is consensus among researchers on the subject that the generation of social capital occurs with the interactions exposed in the framework. Therefore, actions that impact a more significant number of framework constructs have tremendous potential to generate social capital.

The analysis of the data collected, and the triangulation of the data allowed us to generate the map (figure 1) with the identification of all the components present in the cooperative's

volunteer action. Identifying the presence of the framework constructs in all data collection sources as possible. The interactions caused by the cooperative principles and the volunteering practices stand out. These components are present due to the types of practices developed by the cooperative.

**Figure 1** shows some connection with the cooperative principles in all phases of volunteering, reinforcing our idea that corporate volunteering in a cooperative has aspects beyond traditional volunteering. The types of practices carried out by volunteers are also connected to society's principles and demands, thus placing the cooperative as an active player in promoting the development of the community where it operates.

Types of Practices

Trust

COVID 19

Opportunity

Network

Actors Involved

Motivation

Internal Benefits and Risks

Value Generation

Standards

Ability

Figure 2. Social Capital in Co-operative Volunteering Connection Map

Source: The author.

The generation of social capital is linked to the interactions caused by practical actions. Pizzorno (2003) reinforced that corporate volunteering is an excellent practice for generating social capital. The more significant the ability to perform practical actions, the greater the organization's ability to generate social capital.

The set of practical actions adopted by the cooperative through corporate volunteering was analyzed. We identified that the set of practices adopted by the cooperative is based on three axes of action: Cooperativism and Entrepreneurship, Financial Citizenship, and Sustainable Development. According to Table 1, we analyze that all three axes of action are related to the performance of the cooperative, in this case, credit, as well as to the strategic agenda of regulatory bodies, particularly concerning the Financial Education Strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promoted by the United Nations (UN).

**Table 1**. Axes of Action for Corporate Volunteering in the Cooperative

Axes of Action	Description	SDG
Cooperativism and Entrepreneurship	It brings together initiatives that focus on cooperative education and the dissemination of the culture of cooperation for children, teenagers, and young people.	1 Eradication of Poverty; 4 Quality Education; 5 Gender Equality; 8 Decent
Financial Citizenship	It aims to disseminate healthy concepts and practices regarding money, stimulating citizens to self-discipline and the habit of planning and saving, for the improvement of citizens' quality of life.	Work and Economic Growth; 10 Reduction of Inequalities; 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; 13 Action Against Global Climate
Sustainable Development	These are programs that stimulate and foster the development of a sustainable society through education, training, cooperation, and the active participation of various social actors.	Change; 16 Peace Justice and Effective Institutions; 17 Partnerships and Means of Implementation

Source: The author.

The cooperative's adequate emphasis on the strategic agenda of the regulatory agencies and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reinforces the understanding of the relevance of the relationships between the types of practices adopted and the network. We interpret it as a performance that, in addition to considering the cooperative's strategies, also promotes a partnership agenda considering the interests of society. Molero (2016) concluded that the relationships maintained by cohesive groups, whose members are connected intensely and durably, and that makes their solidarity action predictable, have the potential to generate social capital.

We have analyzed the actions of each one of the action axes (Table 2), and we understand that there is a cooperative relationship between the cooperative and the community. These relationships are composed of knowledge, reputation, and resources, whether financial or material.

The involvement of volunteers with other players in the social structure generates a more significant interaction with the public that receives the action, thus transacting resources such as knowledge, culture, trust, and financial resources. It is possible to identify that these actors join the cooperative to carry out the actions together due to their great trust in the community it is inserted.

We analyze that the Cooperativism and Entrepreneurship Axis programs aim to disseminate the principles and values of cooperativism and strengthen the cooperative movement as a means of democratic, collective, fair, and entrepreneurial social participation to promote local development.

**Table 2**. Practices Adopted in Corporate Volunteering at the Cooperative

Actuation Axis	Adopted Practices	
	Cultural Contest	
Cooperativism and Entrepreneurship	Cooperativism Week	
	Cooperation Day (C Day)	
	Financial Clinics	
	Connect with Finance	
Cincurcial Citizanahia	"Financinhas" Program	
Financial Citizenship	Financial Education Lectures	
	ENEF Week	
	Global Money Week	
Sustainable Development	Transforming Volunteers Program	

Source: The author.

Muthuri et al. (2009) argued that actions taken by volunteers from companies that are recognized by communities are more respected because they take into consideration the social issues of these communities, and then in these interactions, cooperative behavior is cultivated, existing social structure is exploited, and new social capital is created.

EN1 The example is Cooperative X, where before we partnered with the state CIEE, Cooperative X had already partnered with the local CIEE. So, they went there and made a partnership with the local CIEE. Another example is with the schools, and the cooperatives go to the schools to take the financinhas collection, they talk to the schools and take the financinhas collection for financial education.

EN2 Each cooperative has local partners, but there are national partners and state partners.

It is possible to recognize companies with a high level of social capital generation through their actions, the density of these actions, and the involvement of people in these actions. That is why it is common for corporate volunteering to be a source of social capital due to its model of people's involvement and the density of its actions (Saz-Gil et al. 2020).

Cooperatives are also considered organizations with a very similar nature to these types of voluntary associations, sharing common principles and values, which is emphasized in the case studied by EN2:

EN2 We are in the middle of a crisis and will meet the demand of what the community needs today. They cannot even think about education. They think that they are going to eat, they need clothes. They are in need. They believe there is no place to receive them or bed in the ICU when they get to the hospital. Let us get moving and make something happen. So, we started to collect food. We started to mobilize our partners to make donations to send money to the hospitals to be destined for the community. Moreover, more than 500 thousand reais were donated to the communities through the Volunteer Institute.

It is possible to interpret that a region with a significant presence of associative, cooperativism, and volunteerism can strengthen social capital, and, in this respect, there is an effect on cultural elements and aspects related to the quality of life of a region, legitimized by the way these organizations act. Consequently, the associative culture of a place, manifested by a greater density of cooperatives, favors the creation of cooperation thanks to the externalities of the actors moved in this ecosystem with great potential for generating social capital (Saz-Gil, Bretos, & Foncea, 2021).

The more community-oriented the actions are, the more results they generate in the lives of the people impacted and opportunities for the cooperative and the volunteers:

GF 2.7 – With each action in the community, new Associates arrive. Because then neighbors and relatives are always taking knowledge from other people, new names are reached, and new relationships are expanded.

GF 1.2 - With this, we started to enter the community more. And then we also managed to do a food donation campaign, and it was easier to talk because they already knew about the cooperative. They had already heard about it, and then, as we already had someone, we would destine for the community, right?

The opportunities generated in the internal and external social ties favor everyone. The cooperative relates more to the community through volunteering, and the community learns more about the cooperative. In some cases, the opportunities are to present the benefits of cooperativism to a place where the cooperative is new. The social relationships established by cooperatives stem from an organization designed to meet members' needs rather than generate profits for investors—volunteerism in a cooperative complement one of the principles of a cooperative that is interested in the community. The social insertion of the cooperative with volunteer actions increases the effectiveness of the interactions with its members. Alternatively, in other words, the more social capital members share, the greater the individual well-being of each member.

GF 1.6 The collaborative culture is consolidated in some places. Especially here in the West. You see it a lot more, but this proximity and when we start looking at other parts of the state here, we start seeing that sometimes it needs to be consolidated, so the bigger the cooperative, the more difficult it becomes.

The more rooted cooperativism is in the community, the greater the acceptance of volunteer actions will be. This fact is due to the community's trust in the local cooperative. Trust creates the basis for "reciprocity" among the players.

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*Social capital* is a resource that grows the more it is used. Therefore, the more actions performed, the greater the actors' trust in volunteering. Furthermore, this results in balance manifesting in a high level of cooperation, expanding trust and reciprocity, and generating collective well-being.

It is possible to identify in the research data that corporate volunteering in a cooperative allows the leveraging of resources and institutional capacity building and enhances staff skills and knowledge. Exposure to the 'real world' increases your ability to attract even more people and increase your influence:

EN1 We are bringing this to the community, this look of peace! We are helping. We are contributing so that the person is no longer desperate! We made some collections and delivered them to the association of the needy community, and the little we thought we had collected was a lot for the community.

EN2 t is a question of reciprocity, you know, of who does the volunteer work and who receives it. Everyone benefits somehow. One ends up helping the other, so there is this exchange.

Corporate volunteering improves the lives of those who carry out the actions and those who benefit from the action.

#### 4.2. Corporate Volunteering – In reply to COVID-19

Social capital offers several benefits during crisis scenarios, and places with high social capital respond more effectively than those with low social capital (Pitas & Ehmer, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic represents the most significant global challenge today. While the adverse effects of COVID-19 vary substantially between countries, the ramifications of the pandemic vary at least as much internally in different communities (Makridis & Wu, 2021).

Some volunteer practices could have been improved due to the need for prolonged physical distance. Nevertheless, we also identified that the cooperative showed agility, adapted actions, and created actions to support the communities at the critical moment of the pandemic.

The actions to face COVID-19 were highlighted in the last years, representing the most considerable number of hours donated by the volunteers and an immense value in Reais (R\$) invested by the cooperative. Individuals in the affected communities have been asked to restrict activities of daily living and therefore spend their time at home, especially on social networks and surfing the internet. Casual interactions with a mix of heterogeneous individuals that would typically occur in schools, workplaces, parks, and other public spaces have fallen victim to the pandemic (Pitas & Ehmer, 2020). The cooperative digitalized the activities that were face-to-face to be able to serve the community, as shown in Table 3.

We identified in our research that in the COVID-19 crisis, the cooperative was concerned with maintaining social ties with the community by supporting it in what was most relevant for the moment. These ties were also maintained internally with a decision by the cooperative to [...] *not lay off anyone during the crisis period and even hire new employees* [...] (EN1). It was evident in the research the relevant role that digital communication tools had during the cri-

sis for the maintenance and even realization of new activities. Although the cooperative was learning and adapting to the 'new normal' generated by the crisis, it was noticeable that they obtained reach and therefore generated social capital.

**Table 3.** Practices Adopted in Corporate Volunteering at the Cooperative During the Pandemic

Actuation Axis	Adopted practices	COVID-19
	Cultural Contest	Paused
Cooperativism and Entrepreneurship	Cooperativism Week	Modified
	Cooperation Day (Day C)	Modified
	Financial Clinics	Modified
	Connect with Finance	Modified
Single sight Sitter well in	"Financinhas" Program	Modified
Financial Citizenship	Financial Education Lectures	Modified
	ENEF Week	Modified
	Global Money Week	Modified
Sustainable Development	Transforming Volunteers Program	Criated (Philanthropic Actions)

**Source:** Based on Management Report (2021).

Finally, we understand in our research that the crisis of COVID-19 generated for the volunteers enormous learning. This learning will provide volunteers with a more remarkable ability to respond to new crises because [...] it is not a question of if they will arise, but when [...] (EN2), as well as a greater understanding of effective strategies in digital media, thus generating a more extraordinary ability to reach and impact communities.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study sought to understand how corporate volunteering can strengthen social capital and cooperative principles. All the components of social capital were described, and it was identified that the same components present in traditional companies for the generation of social capital are also present in the generation of social capital in a cooperative. A relevant finding in the research was that cooperative principles' strong presence and influence were perceived besides the standard components for generating social capital.

We conclude that the cooperative, through its actions, has a large-scale impact on various societal actors. Whether locally or globally, the cooperative demonstrates the ability to engage with various actors. We understand this phenomenon as a strength of the cooperative's credibility in its positive relationship history with the communities.

We also conclude that the principle of democracy in the cooperative principles favors the cooperative's ability to relate to various stakeholders responsibly and with the potential to add benefits to these stakeholders.

We understand that the ability to generate relationships with the volunteer actions promoted by the cooperative directly affects the sources of social capital positively. The generation of value, and therefore the generation of social capital, substantially depends on the high levels of trust in the volunteer actions that the cooperative promotes. In our conclusion, it is only possible for an organization to access several layers of a community with notoriety if there are high levels of trust between these layers. There is a relationship of trust between the organization and the volunteers, who begin to treat the cooperative as a place where they can work and impact the lives of some people in the community. The cooperative also entrusts the volunteers with resources, and its reputation as a means of accessing those who need it most is a win-win behavior. Naturally, this context generates a participative and reliable network of organizations and people to which people want to connect.

Based on the theoretical survey and all the research carried out with the cooperative, corporate volunteering actions have a high capacity to generate social capital. Based on the theory, we understand that transacting social capital demands the organization's involvement, trust, and networks, aspects that can be found in volunteer actions. We conclude that the volunteering actions strengthen the cooperative's stock of social capital and reinforce its role in the communities, thus renewing its ties with its members and other social actors.

The study was conducted amid COVID-19, so it is understood that the research results were affected by this moment. While the study provides significant insights into how corporate volunteering strengthens social capital and cooperative principles, it is essential to acknowledge some limitations and potential biases. The data collection process, primarily based on interviews and focus groups, may have been influenced by participant subjectivity and the dynamics of online interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the reliance on a single cooperative as a case study limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or organizational settings. Future research should address these limitations by incorporating diverse methodological approaches, such as longitudinal studies or comparative analyses across multiple cooperatives. Additionally, biases related to the selection of participants and their pre-existing relationships with the cooperative should be considered to enhance the robustness of the conclusions drawn.

Within the scope of social capital, we studied only one aspect that can strengthen social capital: corporate volunteering. It is therefore indicated to study other aspects that can strengthen social capital in cooperativism—also, studying corporate volunteering and other aspects

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together, inside and outside cooperativism, and applying qualitative and quantitative studies and all these contexts.

There are aspects in this paper that can be further examined by future research, such as the motivations of volunteers and the benefits of volunteering for employees and beneficiaries. It also highlights a future research avenue related to the social capital framework, which can be tested in several new contexts and research methods.

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