PROFESSIONALIZATION OF NONPROFITS ORGANISATIONS,
WHAT IMPACT ON NONPROFIT WORK
CASE STUDY OF AMAS

PROFESSIONLISATION DES ASSOCIATIONS QUEL IMPACT SUR L'ACTION ASSOCIATIVE
ÉTUDE DU CAS AMAS

LAHYA Sarah
Doctorant
Ecole Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion
Université Ibn Tofail
Laboratoire de recherche en sciences de gestion des organisations
Maroc

BENNIS Laila
Enseignant chercheur
Ecole Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion
Université Ibn Tofail
Laboratoire de recherche en sciences de gestion des organisations
Maroc

Abstract

The evolution of contemporary societies is inherently intertwined with the pivotal role played by associations in promoting local development. As key actors, they possess the capacity to catalyze positive changes within communities and contribute to enhancing the quality of life for their members.

In recent decades, nonprofit organizations have undergone significant transformations that have altered their interactions with local actors, steering them towards professionalization to enhance their performance. While this evolution presents advantages, it may also impact the fundamental nature of social work and philanthropy.

This article delves into a case study to understand and explore the challenges these organizations face as they seek to professionalize while preserving the essence of their existence. AMAS, a burgeoning association, has been prompted to reevaluate the role and significance of management in its associative project in order to professionalize.

The approach adopted for this article is action research. The findings have facilitated an understanding of the professionalization logics and led to the formulation of recommendations to guide the professionalization of nonprofit activities.

Keywords:

Nonprofit organizations; professionalization; management; empowerment; performance.

Résumé

L'évolution des sociétés contemporaines est indissociable du rôle primordial que jouent les associations dans la promotion du développement local. En tant qu'acteurs clés, elles ont la capacité de catalyser des changements positifs à l'échelle des communautés et de contribuer à l'amélioration de la qualité de vie de leurs membres.

Les associations connaissent, ces dernières décennies, d'intenses transformations qui modifient leurs rapports avec les acteurs locaux, ce qui les orientent vers une professionnalisation en vue d'accroître leurs performances. Si cette évolution a ses avantages, elle peut néanmoins affecter le caractère essentiel de la philanthropie sociale.

Dans cet article, nous scruterons un cas d'étude dans le but de comprendre et d'examiner les défis auxquels ces organisations sont confrontées lorsqu'elles cherchent à se professionnaliser tout en préservant l'essence de leur existence. L'AMAS, une association en pleine croissance, a été amené à reconsidérer le rôle et l'importance du management dans son projet associatif afin de se professionnaliser.

La démarche employée pour cette réflexion est la recherche-action. Les résultats de l'analyse ont permis une compréhension des logiques de professionnalisation et une formulation des recommandations pour guider la professionnalisation de l'action associative.

Mots clés :

Associations ; professionnalisation ; renforcement; management ; performance.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, Moroccan nonprofit organizations have experienced significant changes, leading to profound transformations in their role within society and their internal operations. Originally classified as nongovernmental organizations, they were characterized by their independence from public authorities and their focus on nonprofit objectives. Volunteering and philanthropy have been the cornerstone of their creation. (Akesby, 2004)

Over the years, the relationship between nonprofits and public institutions has deteriorated, and the withdrawal of the state has led to the privatization of nonprofit resources. Furthermore, a lack of subsidies has hindered their capacity for social innovation, resulting in their subcontracting to public institutions in need of their services.

Today, they increasingly establish relationships with the for-profit sector. Indeed, the easing of institutional funding has resulted in a convergence with the commercial sector, further supported by public authorities.

In accordance, this revolution has been marked by a shift in the nonprofit field towards professionalism. It has prompted nonprofit organizations to adopt managerial strategies that were previously reserved for private enterprises in response to evolving societal demands. However, while this evolution is generally seen as positive, it can also distance nonprofits from their philanthropic roots, leading to conflicting pressures. Nonprofits are caught between the desire to professionalize and the need to remain true to their values.

How can nonprofits be professionalized while preserving the essence of nonprofit action?

To address this issue, we will begin with a contextual exploration. We will follow the interpretivist paradigm, which posits that situational analysis involves a detailed exploration of the knowledge and information available in a specific situation, which is effectively requiring a process of understanding.

The research methodology adopted, the choice of the empirical epistemological stream, is not arbitrary. The issue at hand, to our knowledge, has never been the subject of studies, thus necessitating an approach through empirical experiences. According to this perspective, science advances by accumulating observations through laws derived from inductive or abductive reasoning. This approach is therefore common in exploratory studies.

First, the exploration process will allow us to reflect on the role of associations. Also, exploration is the most appropriate way to study the actions aimed at the professionalization of associations and their impact on the performance of social action.

Our article will primarily focus on "service provider" associations that work to optimize the social circumstances of individuals through socioeconomic initiatives

The volume of associations precludes conducting a large-scale quantitative study, as state services recorded the existence of over 240,000 associations in 2022. For these reasons, we will proceed with an analysis within the framework of abductive reasoning, as well as a research strategy, namely the qualitative approach based on an unprecedented documentary review.

We have undertaken a comprehensive state-of-the-art review of the concepts studied to address this issue.

After explaining our methodology, we describe the results of our analysis, including a longitudinal case study of three years from the Moroccan Association of Social Workers spanning from 2019 to 2022.

Our assessment indicates that the professionalization of social organizations leads to a significant improvement in their performance, rather than being deterrent or meaningless. Our findings potentially lead to suggestions for guiding nonprofits in their professionalization efforts.

1. Literature review on the use of management and professionalization in nonprofit organizations.

The narrative literature review enabled us to have a holistic view of our topic, aiming to highlight those issues usually overlooked and to encourage further research. The theoretical framework employed revolves around three notions: the management, the professionalization and the social work, with an attempt to establish a correlation between the two concepts.

1.1. Litterature revue of management in nonprofit organisation

The usage and popularity of this concept have grown exponentially. A search for "Associative Management" on Google Scholar today returns more than 6.5 million results, the majority of which were published in the decades (1990-2010). Nonetheless, this concept has created several tensions between proponents and detractors.

In this regard, Peter F. Drucker once said, "*For years, most Nonprofit Organizations believed that being driven by good intentions was sufficient. However, today, we understand that*

because we do not have a 'bottom line', we must be managed better than profit-oriented organizations. We must manage our limited human and financial resources with utmost efficiency." (Drucker, 1990)

Moreover, according to Cécile Robert's analysis in 2007, the phenomenon of managerial practices in political organizations such as parties, unions, nonprofits, and governments is considered a kind of infiltration. These practices were previously seen as foreign to their framework. (Robert, 2007)

For us, we believe that, once nonprofit organizations reach a certain size, they must incorporate practices-like organizational, managerial, and operational protocols. Management, often regarded as an art form, cannot function without a systematic approach and cannot operate without a structured strategy. A meticulous approach is crucial for ensuring managerial effectiveness and simplifying organizational progress

To ensure effective nonprofit management, it is imperative to take various steps that enhance the work's structure and organization without harming its values. Thus, to initiate this process, the first step would be to establish a coordinated and effective management project. Once the organization's foundations are in place, the next step would be to streamline the management of the structure in a unified manner.

Nonprofit management cannot be approached with a one-size-fits-all attitude. Instead, it must be tailored to the structure of the organization it serves. By doing so, it empowers the association and its members to achieve the goals for which they advocate. Indeed, to grasp the intricacies of nonprofit management, it is crucial to recognize the specificities that differentiate it from traditional management, as well as their distinct values.

Even if nonprofit governance is unique, we should not be caricatural. There are similarities between nonprofits and the for-profit sector that cannot be ignored. These specific managerial practices conceal an overarching process of professionalization. In the following subsection, we will delve deeper into this concept for clearer understanding.

1.2. Professionalism and professionalization: clarifying confusions

The constructs of professionalization, professionalism, and professional identity have been recurrently invoked by non-profit staff to characterize the restructuring procedures their organizations have undergone since the 1980s.

According to G. Le Boterf, the concept of professionalization is predicated on the delineation of professionalism and professional identity as essential prerequisites.

Professionalism represents the culmination of a structured aggregate of resources and personal capabilities that are honed through education and experiential learning.

It equips practitioners with strategies and resources to manage a variety of scenarios effectively, thereby broadening their competencies beyond mere cognitive knowledge or interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, professional identity—or the capacity to act as a professional—transcends the mere possession of a skill set and knowledge base. It involves actively crafting a distinctive approach to one's vocation, the development of a professional identity, adherence to ethical standards, and engagement in introspection and critical analysis of one's learning and actions.

The process of professionalization, in turn, consists of providing professionals with various opportunities to scrutinize their abilities, practices, and the resources at their disposal. This enables them to cultivate an objective perspective and self-awareness.

Cultivating a genuine sense of professionalism necessitates profound self-reflection and analytical thought. Such an approach stands in stark contrast to a commercial management paradigm, which often overlooks the quintessence of non-profit associations. Conversely, it promotes a form of professionalism grounded in activism that is taking shape in a gradual yet resolute manner.

In summary, the professionalization process involves a training apparatus aimed at conferring professional identity, which is a condition of expertise that fosters a sense of identity and professionalism in individuals.

The goal is to attain professionalism, which is facilitated by professionalization and enhances the capacity to perform with distinction. Its fundamental objective is to improve the ability to "act better" and to elevate performance.

1.3. The professionalization processes and their repercussions on nonprofit organizations.

After exploring the topic of professionalization in the previous section, it naturally prompts an inquiry into its effects on associations. This process encompasses three interdependent components, as defined by Chauvière in 2009. To understand how these elements are integrated, it is crucial to analyze how each organization approaches them. Every nonprofit organization has its own methods for breaking down processes. Understanding these methods aids in identifying their specific impact on the association. (Chauvière, 2009)

Table N°1: Professionalization process and its impact on Social Action

Institutionalization	The process of institutionalization begins with the quest for recognition and legitimacy. This search for legitimacy leads to various pressures on associations, which may acknowledge the volunteer activities and actions they undertake. However, it can also result in the partial or complete incorporation of the associative project within institutional frameworks, thereby raising concerns about the potential instrumentalization of volunteer action by public authorities. (Laville and Saintsaulieu, 2013) and (Simonet, 2010).
Professionalization by engagement of employees	The engagement of employees leads to the creation of new expertise within associations. This enables specialized work and high levels of competence. Although this can have a positive impact on the organization's performances by providing structure and incentives. But, it can also lead to complex dynamics, tensions among members, and a deviation from the organization's initial objectives.
Managérial logic	The "managerial logic" driving modern associations emphasizes a close relationship with community, as well as the integration of management tools and practices. This trend is manifested by an increasing number of associations seeking the assistance of consulting firms to professionalize their operations. The adoption of managerial techniques aims to optimize efficiency.

Source : The authors.

It is crucial to emphasize that the relation between the professionalization of associations and the effectiveness of social action depends on various factors, such as regional circumstances and the approaches used in professionalization. Therefore, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the context to understand the mechanisms driving this correlation in a specific setting.

In this regard, we reference a study published in the CCA journal focusing on SSE (Social and Solidarity Economy) training and its impact on the performance of associations. In this study, the authors conducted a field survey with 8 association leaders from the province of Safi with the aim of investigating the contribution of training and the strengthening of associations on their performance.

2. Analysis model: research problem and methodological framework

2.1. Researsh problem studied

The understanding of the framework and mechanisms of nonprofit organizations remains limited, as noted by Laville in 2008. Indeed, while sociologists and economists make significant contributions to the study of the organizational dynamics of nonprofits, Laville also pointed out that their analyses leaves Misunderstandings in term of nonprofit management. (Laville, 2008)

The study of managerial approaches within associations continues to be a subject of exploration. (Vachée & al. 2014).

More broadly, the managerial approach is characterized by the incorporation of economic notions such as profitability and return on investment into the management of associations, which can lead to improved organizational solutions and higher quality services.

However, this managerial approach can also create a conflict of values within the nonprofit sector. This tension between the practices of the commercial sector and the mission of nonprofit organizations must be carefully managed to ensure ongoing volunteer participation and support for the cause. (Valéau, 2013)

According to the studied corpus, this form of professionalization through the integration of managerial practices significantly contributes to the advancement of the association.

Indeed, nonprofit management is an essential aspect that guarantees fruitful results, as it facilitates effective coordination among members, efficient resource management, and informed collective decision-making.

Although nonprofit management can offer numerous benefits, it can also harm the foundational aspects of nonprofit existence.

What are the outcomes of this professionalization? Can professionalization inevitably lead to a loss of the essence and meaning of nonprofit activities?

With the aim of exploring the issue under study, and after reviewing the literature on the examined concepts, we propose to conduct a case study to better understand and delve deeper into the subject.

The main outlines of our research methodology will be explained in the following subsection.

2.2. Methodology adopted

We chose to conduct our study in the form of action-research centered on a case study, which is the AMAS association, of which we are simultaneously a member and a consultant. This advantageous position afforded us unrestricted access to valuable data as well as to the research field.

To ensure the success of our action research, we adhered to the principles set out by Girin in 1990 of establishing a "management comity" to oversee the researcher's involvement in the field. In this study, the governing comity consisted of four volunteer individuals: an operational staff, a facilitator, a social actor, and a leader. The research committee meticulously reviewed and approved all phases of the research. (Girin, 1990)

Initially, we conducted semi-structured interviews with key individuals involved in professionalization actions, using an interview guide as the basis for our questions. Secondly, we extensively compiled reports and internal documents, as well as confidential notes, to supplement the information gathered during the interviews. Finally, we employed participant observation as a means of discovery and verification. Our access to the field was unrestricted for both documentation and various interventions. All interviews were transcribed post-recording for in-depth analysis. Internal notes and observation of participants produced a more dynamic material to identify relevant elements for the study.

Moreover, this approach allowed us to access the emotional experiences of the actors, their perceptions, and their perspectives on the undertaken professionalization actions.

An initial intervention was carried out with the aim of investigating social actors' perceptions of professionalization. We conducted interviews and focus groups with selected individuals who could reflect on the actions.

The collected data underwent content analysis, which unfolded in three stages. Initially, we assessed each action to determine the preliminary impact of professionalization on the association.

Subsequently, we cross-referenced actions to identify intermediate outcomes, particularly in the context of our case study, the AMAS association. This allowed us to condense and categorize information to address our research problem. Finally, as a conclusion, we offer recommendations for the professionalization of associations.

2.3. The choice of AMAS as the case study

The Moroccan Association of Social Workers (AMAS) is an organization that represents over 3,000 social work professionals. It has a presence in the regional territory of Fes-Meknès, nationally and internationally through its local volunteer groups, its 12 regional cells, and its national and international partners.

The Association aims to promote excellence in social work practice and to advocate for the academic discipline's education, AMAS also strives to mobilize all stakeholders towards improving the well-being of the population.

Through its actions, the association contributes to the development of professional social work practices in Morocco. Its financial structure is based on three distinct revenue streams, primarily from member dues. Comprising volunteers, it employs professionals for specific missions. Between 2016 and 2017, AMAS experienced a critical phase that disrupted its internal balance, especially regarding volunteer mobilization.

AMAS was compelled to reconsider its organizational structure, including power distribution, on-site volunteer involvement, and the legal structure of its subsidiaries.

Joining AMAS was incredibly seamless; my vision of contribution aligned with its motivations and action plans, addressing an internally significant issue. Aware of the role of professionalization of practices and associative management, it was very receptive and collaborative.

The professionalization through the integration of managerial logic unfolded through several key actions:

➢ Training and support
➢ Sharing experiences
➢ Exchange stays
➢ Partnerships
➢ Skill-based
➢ sponsorship

Our study aims to examine how the professionalization of an association affects its performance and volunteer action. Through this analysis, we hope to better understand effective managerial practices and develop a guide outlining best practices.

3. Results and discussions

This section will delve deeper into the examination of the study's findings, viewed through the collected data. Through our investigations, we have managed to highlight how professionalization initiatives have influenced the meaning of the actions undertaken by AMAS, while identifying the fundamental elements and key aspects of the management of associative organizations.

3.1. Key dimensions of associative managerial professionalism at AMAS

After conducting analyses of semi-structured interviews (textual analysis and content analysis) through the NVIVO software and thorough examination of various documents provided by the association, five key dimensions constitutive of associative professionalism emerged. These elements significantly impact associative action.

Communication:

Mot	Longueur	Nombre	Pourcentage pondéré (%)
communication	13	74	0,72

The NVIVO analysis reveals that communication accounts for 0.72% in the weighted percentage of the 100 most used words during the interviews.

Indeed, the analysis of the speeches and observations made on-site demonstrates that associative professionalism relies heavily on communication, which can manifest in various forms such as newsletters, meetings, social networks, and public relations campaigns.

It is imperative for associations to effectively articulate their mission, objectives, and impact on their target audiences. Communication also helps to promote a professional image of the association, allowing members and partners to clearly understand and adhere to the norms and practices of the association.

Clear and consistent communication is essential for building an association's reputation and enhancing its credibility, while attracting new members and partners, and increasing public support and engagement.

In this regard, managing communication well is essential for associations to achieve their goals and establish themselves as actors in development.

BD[1] : *"Communication is a continuous and evolving process... It allows us to stay up-to-date with the needs of the beneficiaries and to adapt our approach accordingly."*

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[1] - Bénévole dirigeant.

BO[2] : *"Communication is a crucial means to mobilize and engage our community by sharing relevant information and creating opportunities for participation and collaboration."*

Project management:

The project management process involves a series of tasks such as setting objectives, creating action plans, coordinating resources, implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and communicating outcomes.

These activities often rely on specialized skills, including time management, risk management, human resources management, budgeting, and accounting. By employing project management techniques, organizations can enhance their productivity and efficiency, while measuring and reporting their impact. Thanks to proficient project management, AMAS has succeeded in meeting deadlines, managing uncertainties, and adhering to budgets.

BO: "Project management is a key element of our professionalism as an association. It helps us maintain a high level of quality in our activities and services, while adhering to the standards and practices of the nonprofit sector."

BD: "Professionalization provides us with the necessary tools to make a difference. It enables us to manage our projects more effectively, optimize our resources, and increase our impact on the ground."

BO: "It's an essential skill for any volunteer or nonprofit professional."

That statement succinctly captures the essence of professionalization in enhancing organizational capacity and effectiveness. It emphasizes the transformative power of adopting professional standards and practices in achieving greater impact and efficiency in project management and resource utilization.

Management of external relations:

To establish and maintain productive relationships with external stakeholders, it is crucial for associations to possess skills in external relationship management. Representing the interests of members to funders, regulatory authorities, international NGOs is vital for associations. Also, maintaining regular communication with members and addressing their concerns is necessary to build a lasting and credible reputation and ensure the long-term success of the association.

BD: "It is essential for us at AMAS to develop a deep understanding of the needs, expectations, and interests of our stakeholders. This involves establishing strong relationships

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² - Bénévole opérationnel.

and working towards building an open and honest dialogue, based on trust, transparency, and commitment."

The association must also preserve and establish partnerships and collaborations with local development actors.

BD*: "Thanks to networking, we have been able to share resources, ideas, and even strategies, which has strengthened our impact."*

Mot	Longueur	Nombre	Pourcentage pondéré (%)
collaboration	13	22	0,21
coordination	12	14	0,14
partenariats	12	31	0,30
réseautage	10	8	0,08
partager	8	20	0,19
mobiliser	9	15	0,15
réseaux	7	8	0,08

Human resources management:

Human Resources Management (HRM) encompasses a series of processes and procedures related to personnel management, including recruitment, selection, training, evaluation, compensation, and performance management. These processes and practices are essential to ensure that the employees or volunteers of the association are competent, motivated, engaged, and dedicated to their work. (Simonet, 2010)

Fair and equitable practices in accordance with legal and ethical standards are crucial for establishing a high level of professionalism in associative human resource management. Moreover, clear communication of expectations and objectives, as well as opportunities for training and professional development, are vital to help employees or volunteers reach their full potential.

BD*: "The performance of an association largely depends on the quality of its human resource management. Associations must invest in HRM practices and policies... This includes the recruitment and selection of the best candidates, training and professional development of employees and volunteers, as well as the implementation of compensation and performance management systems to encourage and reward individual and collective contributions and achievements..."*

HR management in non-profit organizations must be founded on a set of values and ethics unique to the associative sector.

BD: *"The associatif work is about work and pleasure. Without cohesion and commitment, it doesn't work."*

BO: *"It's the key for the association to endure. Members enjoy and stay."*

Mot	Longueur	Nombre	Pourcentage pondéré (%)
cohésion	8	15	0,15
engagement	10	27	0,26
valeurs	7	5	0,05
philanthropie	16	3	0,03
altruiste	9	3	0,03

Management of limited financial resources:

Non-profit organizations and associations often face the challenge of managing limited financial resources, with donations, grants, and member contributions being their primary sources of funding. Financing is considered one of the most significant challenges. It appears in totality (0.29% as a weighted percentage of all the words in the interviews).

Mot	Longueur	Nombre	Pourcentage pondéré (%)
financement	11	14	0,14
budget	6	2	0,02
budgets	7	2	0,02
sources	7	3	0,03
financières	10	8	0,08

To maintain professionalism in their management, these organizations must implement effective strategies that optimize the use of their financial resources. This includes the application of strict policies and procedures in budgeting, cost control, and cash management, ensuring responsible and efficient use of funds. (Tchernonog, 2012)

Moreover, aligning expenditures with the organization's goals and priorities is crucial to maximize the impact of financial resources.

BD : *"Managing limited financial resources is a reality for our association. We are compelled to provide regular and accurate financial reports, comply with applicable tax and accounting laws and regulations. By demonstrating transparency and accountability, we can strengthen our credibility and reputation..."*

3.2. Perceptions of AMAS volunteers on professionalization

Table N°2: Professionalization process and its impact on social action

	Verbatims
Training	*BD: « For me, training is essential to ensure a life within the association and for the association itself»* *BO: « The role of training is of utmost importance; it was an opportunity to explore new areas and discover different perspectives for us and our association.»*
Experience Sharing	*BD: « Sharing experiences is crucial for building a culture of continuous learning within an organization. By sharing our experiences and reflecting together on what we've learned, we've been able to identify best practices and areas for improvement to continue making progress.. »* *BO « It was an opportunity to meet new people and work as a team. It helped me improve my communication skills and develop strong professional relationships.»*
Exchange Stays	*BO: «It was an opportunity to meet new people and work as a team.. »* *BD : « Exchange stays are very important to me because they allow me to learn from others and gain knowledge. It's a way to discover new perspectives and understand issues from a different angle»*
Partnership	*BD: « Partnership is a way for an association to pool resources and skills with other regional, national, and international actors to successfully carry out projects that would be difficult or impossible to do alone. »* *BO: « Partnership is an opportunity for us to develop new skills and strengthen our organizational capacity. Working with partners with different expertise allows us to acquire new knowledge and skills that can benefit AMAS... Working with partner organizations was an occasion to benefit from additional financial resources to fund our programs and activities»*
Skill-Based Sponsorship	*BD: « It's a way for us to surround ourselves with competent and committed individuals, who share the same values and goals, and who can bring real added value to our association's project»* *BO: « It's a golden solution for us to meet specific or occasional needs, such as developing a communication strategy or executing the current action plan»*

Source : Authors.

3.3. The influence of integrating managerial logic on associative action

These conclusions emerge from the study and analysis of four professionalization actions undertaken within AMAS. Training and support can significantly impact associative performance by helping individuals to develop more effective associative skills.

Furthermore, this professionalization action can contribute to improving the motivation and commitment of individuals, thereby enhancing associative performance. Members who are trained may feel more confident in their ability to perform associative tasks and may be more likely to seek to improve their performance over time.

The second action, experiences-sharing, leads to a better symbiosis of volunteers. Sharing experiences is crucial for associations as it allows them to better understand the challenges they face and find more effective solutions. Moreover, it enables association members to connect and learn from one another.

Regarding the third action, which involves forming partnerships with various national and international organizations, it allows for the combination of resources, skills, and expertise from different entities to achieve common objectives. This can be beneficial for all parties involved, as it can lead to greater efficiency, and more significant influence.

Organizing exchange stays enables experienced members to share their expertise with newer members. Concerning the last action, skill-based sponsorship, involving specialized skills and expert advice, can improve the association's internal management, strengthen its development strategy, and increase its operational performance. This leads to a more effective use of the association's resources, better planning, and more efficient implementation of its projects and programs.

The action-by-action analysis concluded that the professionalization of AMAS has a very significant impact on its productivity and performance. However, if poorly conducted or unstructured, it could lead to a loss of the social essence and identity of volunteers in their committed and selfless action.

Conclusion

The AMAS case study highlights the need to steer the professionalization of associations to maintain their associative essence. To promote associative work while inspiring volunteer engagement, several recommendations can be considered, including:

- ✓ Clarifying the roles of all actors involved in the "professionalized" association project and ensuring effective communication of these roles;
- ✓ Involving association members in decision-making and management processes;
- ✓ Assembling and integrating all individuals involved in the association's project and expanding decision-making opportunities to operations managers;
- ✓ Ensuring symbiosis, establishing connections, and animating the network of social actors;
- ✓ Facilitating the efforts of associations by developing projects aligned with their activist and philanthropic objectives;

- ✓ Encouraging and strengthening the practice of volunteering while valuing its underlying principles;

- ✓ Enhancing skills and engaging in continuous development;

- ✓ Honoring the original calling and fundamental principles of the association;

- ✓ Operations managers should work closely with members to understand their needs and expectations and to ensure that actions taken align with the association's associative values.

- ✓ It was recognized that all forms of professionalization, especially managerial logic, might jointly signify and represent a factor that alters the sense of volunteer action.

Managerial implications of our work include:

- ➢ Questioning both traditional practices in the non-profit sector and the assertion that professionalization fundamentally contradicts the associative essence.

Scientific implications include:

- ➢ Contributing to the understanding of the stakes of professionalization in non-profit organizations and associations.

- ➢ Identifying new research areas on social development and capacity building in non-profit organizations and associations.

While our study is limited to a singular case and the intricacies of the examined association, it seeks to explore and understand the phenomenon as a primary objective. However, despite the research's main goal is exploration and understanding, it presents several limitations. These include the focus on a single case study, which could affect the generalization of the results. Despite these limitations, there are lessons that can be applied to any association undergoing professionalization.

The results could potentially inspire alternative approaches for future interventions, such as expanding the sample of participants for better generalization of results and comparing outcomes with similar studies conducted in other contexts.

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