

Volunteers' Service Network In Nonprofit Institutions: A Case Study of Tzu Chi

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the factors determining the closeness of the network in a nonprofit organization. Using Tzu Chi as a case study, we examined how nonprofits mobilize volunteers and strengthen their networks.

In recent years, nonprofit organizations are gaining sophistication. Their ability to motivate and mobilize a large number of people in a cohesive manner is incredible considering nonprofits do not pay their volunteers. As a result, for-profit organizations sometimes look to nonprofits as a source of inspiration in how to build team cohesion and strong community within the organization. The concept of mobilization is especially useful for enterprises as companies seek to enhance their staff's motivation and participation.

Nonprofits are driven mainly by a central idea while for-profit companies must take revenue and profits into considerations. This study focuses on understanding nonprofits' ability to mobilize, how organizations build tight networks, and the factors that influence the mobilization capacity of nonprofits. This study uses Tzu Chi as a case study and gathers participant observation and in-depth interviews. These qualitative data depicts how Tzu Chi mobilizes volunteers in activities, Tzu Chi's volunteer network, and how the volunteers communicate with each other.

The observation and interviews found that Tzu Chi main goals are to serve the public and save the society. Volunteers are given the opportunity to get involved and believe they can change the world for the better. Tzu Chi's effective mobilization of volunteers' stems from the effective organizational structure that facilitates information transfer and innovation. Tzu Chi's management culture and organizational culture has a profound impact on the volunteers, and the closeness of volunteers network allows the organization to continuously expand.

Keywords: Nonprofit, Volunteer, Service, Network

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Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared (Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism, 563-483 B.C.).

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, nonprofit organization has long been a subject of research by psychologists and organizational behaviorist. However, most studies tend to focus either on individual personality trait or the overall structure of the nonprofit. Nonprofit organizations have the following features: (a) To provide the function of services. (b) To make up the shortage of governmental services. (c) To bringing together communities. (d) To provide Supervisory function. (e) To provide innovation and flexibility. In general the capacity to mobilize can be categorized in four ways: 1. Nonprofit organization's emergency rescue service; 2. For-profit organization's promotion for new services; 3. Intra-corporate human resource utilization; and 4. Governmental organization's recruitment of the public. In this paper, we discuss the source of mobilization through the examination of real cases.

Nonprofit organization generally refers to an organization that uses surplus revenues to achieve their goals, rather than distributing them as profit. Another major difference between a profit and nonprofit business deals with the treatment of the profits. While a for-profit organization are generally funded by investors and motivated to maximize shareholders' value, foundations with the explicit goal of providing services to the community fund nonprofits. Thus the central concerns of a nonprofit are about their accomplishments and how to get the results they anticipated. In a nonprofit plan, what you do is paramount, and you rarely find nonprofits that change their mission once they're underway. The examination of nonprofits is particularly relevant, due to the emergence of purpose and mission statement driven enterprises that are shifting the focus of companies beyond revenue. This shift in the enterprises' organizational focus puts the spotlight on how nonprofit organizations organize, inspire, and recruit passion driven members.

During the past 30 years, Tzu Chi Foundation is the largest charity organization in the Republic of China (Taiwan) in terms of funds spent to help

people in need (see Brummans and Hwang, 2008) with thousands of trained volunteers across the globe (Huang, 2009) and numerous paid employees who act with incredible effectiveness and efficiency (Brummans and Hwang, 2008). Tzu Chi's volunteers are organized by cities and further divided at the community level. The nature of the Tzu Chi is determined by the qualities of these communities. News travel through the network of Tzu Chi's strongly knitted community. The speed at which the news travels gives Tzu Chi the capacity to mobilize with speed and efficacy during times of disasters. Specifically, among Tzu Chi's volunteers, combination of close collaboration and effective communication is the core of Tzu Chi's power.

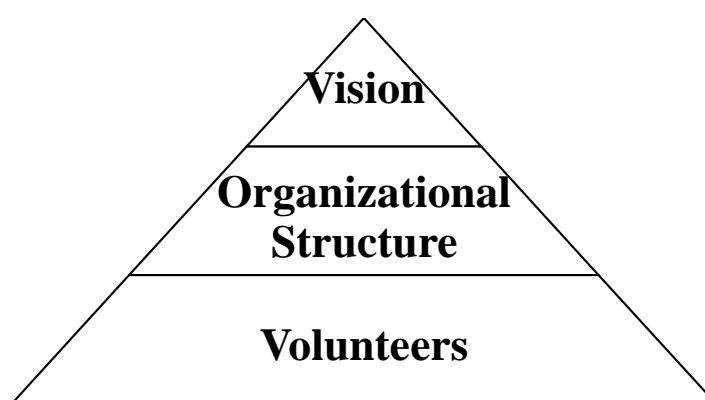


Figure 1 Tzu Chi

This paper looks at the reasons that appeal to the people that join the nonprofit and examines the factors determining the closeness of the network in a non-profit organization. Using Tzu Chi as a case firm, we examine how non-profit mobilize volunteers and strengthen their networks. Tzu Chi volunteer recruitment network overlaps in a large extent with its core members. The overlaps give Tzu Chi the power to recruit extensively through the network of their members. The major issues studied in this paper are: What is the relationship between individual personality traits and organizational network? How does leadership style affect organizational network? What kind of traits do volunteers from Tzu Chi have? The goal of this paper is to connect the two bodies of research by examining the interaction between individual trait and the structure of the organization. Specifically, this paper aims to explore the individual and organizational traits that

successfully give nonprofit organizations the ability to recruit, retain, and motivate their members to participate despite the lack of external motivation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Define Nonprofit Organizations

As Hasenfeld and Gidron (2005) argued, research on third sector organizations has been segmented into three distinct theoretical perspectives that can be roughly labeled 'civil society', 'social movement', and 'non-profit sector'. These organizations are characterized by four interrelated attributes:

(a) They set out as their mission to uphold and promote cultural values that are typically at variant with dominant and institutionalized values; (b) they offer services to members and the public that express their distinct values, using the services as a model and catalyst for social change; (c) in addition to their instrumental goals, they aim to meet the expressive and social identity needs of their members by promoting a collective identity; and (d) they evolve into hybrid organizations by having multiple purposes combining to various degrees goals of value change, service provision and mutual-aid. Because they deliberately combine features of volunteer run associations, social movements and non-profit service organizations (see Y. Hasenfeld & B. Gidron, 2005).

According to Rosenbaum (1984) the evolution of non-profit organization after the United States' independence is divided into four stages: 1. Citizen self-organization model. 2. Charity sponsorship model. 3. Fundamental rights model. 4. Market competition model: A charitable organization must improve its economic models and update its traditional operational philosophy, revamp its management system, and specialize in its missions. Unlike business enterprises, nonprofit organizations center on a mission beyond revenue generation. When the mission resonates with the need of society, the nonprofit organization enjoys the support of the greater society. This support is essential to the capacity of nonprofits as volunteers are the cores of these organizations.

2.2 Volunteers' Personality Traits and Organizational Service Network

In the past 20 years, there has been a renaissance of interest in personality and motivational concepts in personality and social psychology. Personality traits and motives can be conceptualized as representing different levels of personality

functioning (McAdams and West, 1997). There are plenty of researches focusing on personality or psychology, but this paper concentrates on the relationship between individual and organizational elements.

In view of this paper using Tzu Chi as a case firm, we investigated what kind of traits of the volunteers have. According to Smith and Nelson (1975), volunteers are more happy-go-lucky, outgoing, sociable and venturesome than non-volunteers. Another, as Howarth (1976) said "the volunteers are more trusting of others" and that they view themselves as more pleasant (Cowen, Zax, and Laird, 1966). Benson et al. (1980) found direct evidence that self-reported satisfaction with one's own life, and positive self-esteem, are correlated with a variety of volunteering and helping behaviors (see Allen & Rushton, 1983). These traits are especially interesting in light of the ever-growing concern in the corporate sector regarding employee satisfaction.

As Podolny and Baron (1997) described in their paper, given the general preference people have for social interaction with others similar to themselves, there arise opportunities for those who bridge across social divides. People, whose network connections allow them to act as go-betweens in organizations, connecting otherwise disconnected individuals and groups, tend to garner many benefits, including faster promotions.

Tapp and Spanier (1973) report that volunteers are more self-disclosing than non-volunteers; that is, they are more likely to discuss their own feelings and thoughts with others (Allen & Rushton, 1983). They also found that these individuals possess more self-actualizing values than non-volunteers, while Howarth (1976) found them to be less anxious (Allen & Rushton, 1983).

Nonprofit organizations are dependent upon continuing exchanges with the environments in which they operate. They are not closed systems, sealed off from their environment. They are open to and are particularly dependent upon the flow of resources from outside. Because of their central position in information flows, expertise, and full-time career commitments, nonprofit chief executives occupy a socially construed position of psychological centrality. All participants hold themselves centrally responsible for critical organizational outcomes.

2.3 Employee and volunteer engagement

Why do more and more people join nonprofits as volunteers? What benefits do these volunteers gain from joining these organizations and collaborate with others? Several studies found that volunteers have a greater sense of internal locus of control than do non-volunteers (see Allen & Rushton, 1983).

The collection of nodes of Tzu Chi volunteers in the entire world act like a neuron-network. While each individual volunteer has only limited capacity, the overall capacity formed by the numerous connections between volunteers makes Tzu Chi a sum greater than the individual parts. When a disaster occurs, information spreads through "traditional" medium such as meeting in person and calling by telephones between the volunteers. Yet the combination of rigorous pre-event training and internally motivated volunteers ensures a strong sense of familiarity among and between the members thus allowing them to work in efficient and harmonious coordination.

As Smith and Nelson (1975) argued, volunteers see themselves as having a greater control over their own lives and circumstances than do non-volunteers. Furthermore, compared to non-volunteers, volunteers are more self-sufficient, more self-controlled (Fretz, 1979; Hersch, Kulik, and Scheibe, 1969), more persistent (Howarth, 1976) and more problem-oriented (Allen & Rushton, 1983). Social vision may expect volunteers to be somewhat happier and self-accepting than non-volunteers. To the extent that one has a positive attitude toward oneself, volunteers are more able to relate well to others (Allen & Rushton, 1983). Especially, both Smith and Nelson (1975) and Howarth (1976) found that volunteers had greater superego strength (conscientiousness) than non-volunteers (see Allen & Rushton, 1983).

More importantly, do the volunteers join to be changed by the organization or do likeminded people join the organization to find companionship? Research indicates that volunteerism may be jointly determined by whether there is a match between the personality traits associated with volunteerism and the motives that are most salient (see Carlo, Allen, & Buhman, 1999; Clary & Snyder, 1999). The volunteerism often requires extensive social interactions; scholars have linked it to extraversion. Hence, the present study has made predictions regarding the relations of personality traits that are clearly conceptually related to a social behavior. However, one facet of agreeableness involves being compliant with requests from

others. Volunteer behavior is often triggered by requests from others for assistance (Murk & Stephan, 1991).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Framework

Figure 2 shows this paper's methodological structure. This paper attempts to investigate the overall vision of Tzu Chi through qualitative research methodology employing participant observation and in-depth interview. The participant observation takes the form of story recording. Also, in-depth interview is employed to record every volunteer's stories. The participant observation takes the form of story recording.

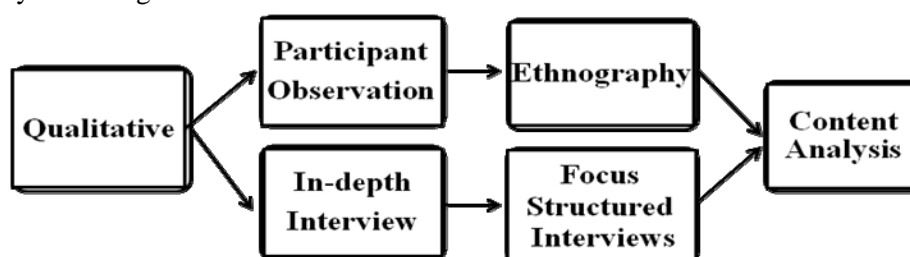


Figure 2 Research Method

Figure 3 shows the fourth aspects in this study: individual, circles, groups, and organization. The individual aspect first tries to find what kind of individual traits volunteers have. Also, using volunteers' motivation to find what the connection between the organizations is, the organization is thus divided into different groups, and any groups divided into different circles based on the relationship between the teams dynamic. Then, the third parts of groups draw pm network analysis to figure out the connections between these fourth parts.

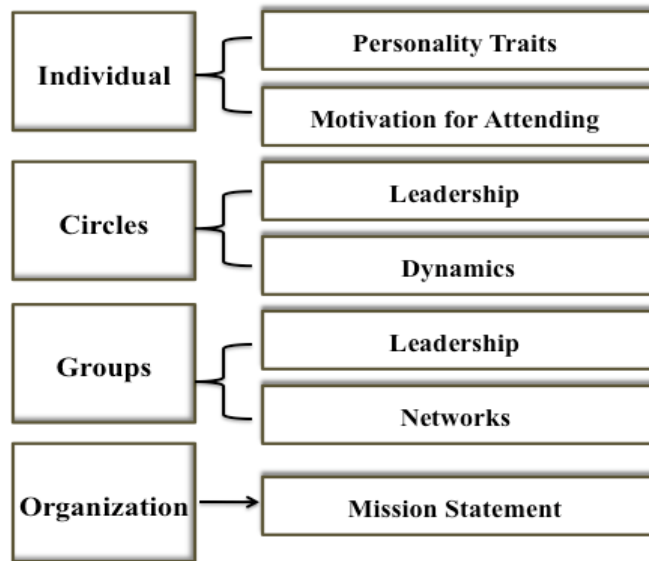


Figure 3. The aspects of this study

3.2 Data Collection

To begin with, we randomly selected groups within Tzu Chi; then we conducted research on the volunteers of those groups. For the volunteers, we employed personal interview to understand their individual story, and through personal interview mentioned, it revealed the motivations of the volunteers for joining the organization. Together, these build a picture of how the volunteers as individuals interact with the organization and the social network around them. Finally, a random of three of volunteers will be chosen for interviews to further analyze their motivations. Using in-depth interviews and participant observation, this paper examined whether the network tightness correlate with the volunteers sense of connectedness.

The data collected includes volunteer interviews and participant observation of the field study that occurred between November 2011 and May 2011, interviews with three senior members of Tzu Chi commissioners, one of the Tzu Chi collegiate association, and individual in-depth interviews.

There were six individual in-depth interviews, and each interview lasted up to two to three hours. Furthermore, the authors of the paper participated in Tzu Chi's book club with a large number of volunteer-based activities to conduct interviews and field observation to understand Tzu Chi volunteers and volunteers' mobilization. Finally, this paper refers to history and literature in order to

understand the background and management system of Tzu Chi and explore this non-profit organization's innovative management methods and how it achieves a close network of volunteers and quickly mobilize them in large-scale emergency responses.

IV. CASE STUDY

4.1 Tzu Chi's Organizational Innovation Framework

This paper argues that the efficiency of organizational framework lies in its bureaucratic formation. It's about the hierarchy of its offices. The more equal an organization is formed, the more effective it can mobilize. Overall, there is an optimal distribution of power and an optimal amount of control members have over the organization. However, the organizational leader should have power of control over all things. The most effective organizations tend to be democratic while retaining a strong amount of control over its members.

Everyone is the outer-most layer of the organization when a natural disaster strikes, and everyone is ready to be mobilized. Tzu Chi will organize community-based small volunteer groups to strengthen each other in a close community. Tzu Chi's organizational structures resemble a three-dimensional sphere (a place of cultivation): during mobilization, everyone works as equal. For example, each region has a community organizational structure with a total of 81 organizations in each region each with about 200-300 people, depending on the size of the community and the amount of the Tzu Chi members.

Tzu Chi categorizes their members by the extent of their participation and the length of participation time with a different name classification. As shown in Figure 4, Tzu Chi's structure is represented as a three-dimensional sphere (Tzu Chi called a place of cultivation); this is a community-based organization, with the number of Tzu Chi units determined by the size of the community and the number of members in the community. In Taipei, for example: Daan District has two three-dimensional sphere organizations. Each sphere needs to undertake the mission conveyed by the Tzu Chi headquarters and participate in regional activities and cooperation. Organizational effectiveness therefore depends strongly on

maximizing efficiency, support, cohesion, and adaptability. Religious organizations have different key factors for organizational effectiveness compared to for profit organizations. For a religious organization to stay effective, they must focus on efficiency, support, cohesion, and adaptability.

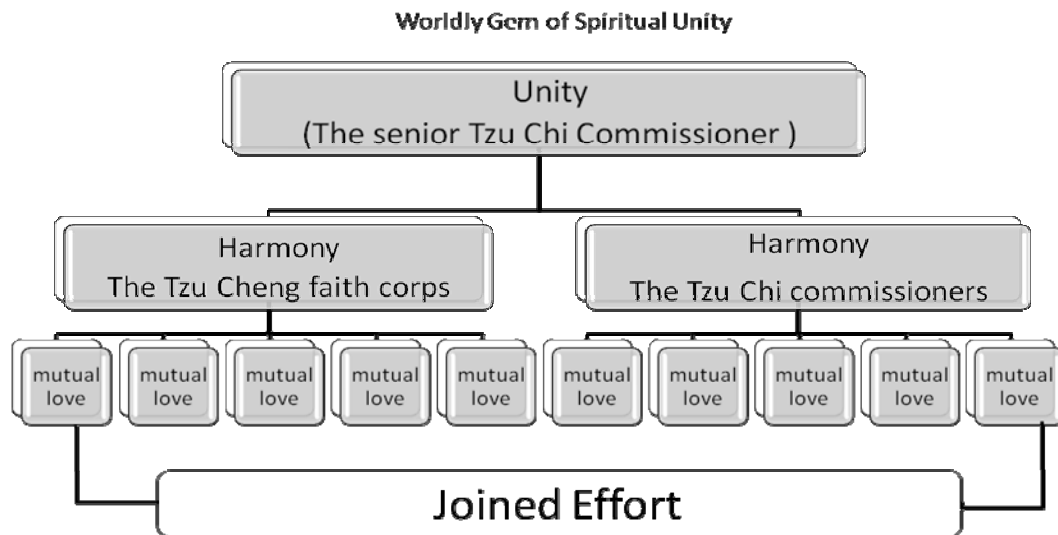


Figure 4 Information passes from the top to the bottle

Figure 4 shows Tzu Chi's organizational chart called "Worldly Gem of Spiritual Unity." The unit lacks ranks and hierarchy when working—even though the Unity members conduct the planning, they too participate in the voluntary work in the same manner as the rest of the organization. There are 81 units in Taipei, with the maximum of 200 members per unit. The numbers of units in an area is dependent on the numbers of Tzu Chi members in the area and the size of the community; i.e. The XingYi district has 3 Unities. The senior Tzu Chi Commissioners are community leaders who receive and transfer information from the Tzu Chi leadership. They are a member of the emergency response board, which engineers the planning during emergencies. In the Harmony sections, there are 81 units in Taipei with 200 to 300 people per unit; the unit is area and functional dependent; Subunit -- female group (The Tzu Chi commissioners); Subunit -- male group (The Tzu Cheng faith corps). The units cooperate and break down into twenty functions. Each harmony level consists of 10 mutual-love units;

then each mutual love comprises ten members. In joined effort, every member is part of the same team performing the same tasks.

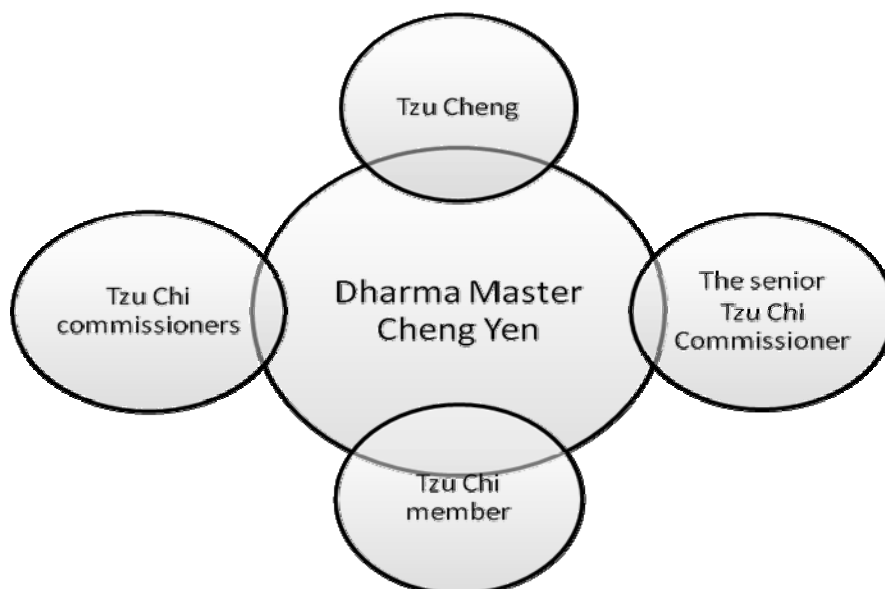


Figure. 5 A place of cultivation

4.2 Tzu Chi's Organizational Humanity Management

According to Rosenbaum (1984), non-profit organizations are currently entering an era of competition in the market with tightening government budgets, shrinking donations, and changing economics. Nonprofit organizations can no longer operate in a traditional fashion and must improve their management system. Tzu Chi uses the innovation framework to manage the organizational. This study found Tzu Chi's leadership uses two embedding mechanisms to manage the organization. Schein (2004) argued that two mechanisms could be induced when leaders transform an organization's culture: primary embedding mechanism and secondary embedding mechanism:

A. The primary embedded mechanism includes:

1. A leader to focus on certain things exerting a degree of control;
2. A leader's handling of a major incidents or organizational crisis;

3. A leader establishing a standard for determining its members' remuneration and status; and

4. Leaders taking part in members' recruitment, selection, promotion and elimination.

B. The secondary embedded mechanism includes:

1. Organizational design;
2. Structure in terms of systems and procedures;
3. Hardware space and environmental planning;
4. Major events and awards; and
5. Organization philosophy.

Also, non-profit organizations in different sectors require different leadership attributes to be effective. While Tzu Chi management methods differ from its peers, effective nonprofit chief executives need to recognize that their organizations are, in part, interdependent actors. Leadership plays a central role on non-profit organizations. The executives must gather resources for nonprofit organization to succeed. When analyzing an effective organization, the leadership style reflects the resource constraint put on the organization. Leaders who can evolve their non-profits to meet the changing demands of resource providers can ensure the long-term success of the organization. Tzu Chi, being a successful case of a non-profit warrants examination in its leadership and resource acquisition model.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen possesses a charismatic leadership that motivates the volunteers to dedicate their time to service and follow the organization's edicts. Bryman (1993) said that charismatic leaders inspire members with their unique personal qualities, as well as the ability to construct a vision and mission; in turn the members obey the command and the will of such leaders. Charismatic leadership was positively related to subordinates' positive work attitude. Perceived charismatic leadership was also positively related to coded power motivation.

The tendency to use power in a morally responsible way was differentially related to charismatic leadership for CEOs of profit and voluntary organizations. Such leaders articulate an attractive vision for the organization and behave in ways that reinforce the values inherent in that vision. Followers become highly committed to the goal of the collective and perform beyond expectation. If charismatic leadership is held constant, the power motive may lead to a somewhat

less positive work attitude. Leaders high on both power motivation and responsibility were rated more charismatic in voluntary organizations than in profit organizations. In non-profit organizations, moral responsibility is more important than power for charismatic leaders. Charismatic leaders help organizations achieve more only when the leaders behave responsibly (Annebel, Deanne, Paul, Henk, 2005).

4.3 Tzu Chi's Volunteers' Service Network

The Tzu Chi network integrates deeply into the members' daily lives, and the members in turn become an important node in the network for the discovery and recruitment of new members. Tzu Chi publishes a variety of media which, combined with the network of face-to-face interaction, becomes an integral aspect of member's life. In moving toward this more balanced consideration of the network form, it is important to recognize that the network form represents one of the three alternative forms of governance, not one of the two. Sociologists have typically made pair wise comparisons when evaluating network organizations (see Podolny and Page, 1998). Tzu Chi has neither a hierarchical system nor a scattered and disorganized community. Rather, through community activities, mutual understanding, Tzu Chi builds its community as a network of connection.

Studying volunteer patterns in the United States, scholars found that recruitment went through mostly friends, colleagues, and family members. Social networks play a central role in the process of recruitment according studies on social movements and collective action. As Stark and Bainbridge showed that when it comes to social network model: "faith, in fact, is an obedience of individuals on its side close to those who know the religious views, religious groups, membership growth, through social networks" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980:1377).

Tzu Chi has the ability to mobilize quickly and execute efficiency during emergencies. However Tzu Chi has no particular set of emergency mobilization and organizational structure. Rather, its three-dimensional glass concentric circles organizational structure allows them to mobilize efficiently. The general coordination by the senior members (Unity) occurs at the emergency centers. Yet

on the ground, regardless of level, all Tzu Chi members can take the initiative to assist people; everyone is on the front line and does not wait for the headquarters' orders that give Tzu Chi the unprecedented ability to move swiftly, an ability not found in top-down organizations. When Tzu Chi gets news of a disaster and needs manpower scheduling, Tzu Chi volunteers will seek volunteers and at the same time return to headquarters to provide support. Volunteers are familiar with this mobilization model, and rigorously apply the same framework to all emergency rescues. Thus regardless the type of emergency, Tzu Chi volunteers mobilize quickly and efficiently.

From this study's observation, the nature of Tzu Chi's participants is the passion to mobilize people around them to join Tzu Chi activities. Every volunteer has the ability to mobilize and motivate others. Consistent self-reflection on the words and behaviors deepen the organization's mission to execute the leadership's vision. Every volunteer believes she is an important member of the organization. Tzu Chi trains and builds its organizational culture by community activities, book Clubs, morning meditation, monthly activity and education and training programs etc.

Observation reveals that the Tzu Chi volunteers are a cohesive and concentrated force. Through a variety of activities Tzu Chi builds a bridge of trust with its volunteers. Tzu Chi shows a high level of care for all of its volunteers. Respondents believe that Tzu Chi is an organization, which provides them with family-like mutual help and love. Volunteers believe that Tzu Chi will not cause harm for its members in any way. Volunteers join activities to serve the public. Through activities such as the weekly book club, the morning meetings, and the monthly fundraisers Tzu Chi learns about its members and induce closer cooperation among the volunteers. In turn, Tzu Chi volunteers organize activities in their community to recruit new volunteers.

V. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Studies found that the mobilization capability of Tzu Chi is built upon its operation and implementation efficiency. These capabilities were originally built in the organization's management model and organizational structure. Interviews indicated that members feel a strong sense of ownership to the organization. The

culture is one that emphasizes equality instead of class distinction. Previous researches and observations indicated that Tzu Chi's leader - Dharma Master Cheng Yen's charismatic personal qualities attract Tzu Chi volunteers to participate in the organization in long term. Volunteers define their own roles and work with all different units within the organization. Volunteers go beyond a single function and service with the intention to provide help to the public. The volunteers follow the organization's management model and have a high loyalty. This paper interviews four Tzu Chi volunteers through long-term engagement for research. Tzu Chi provides its volunteer with positive energy and deep recognition of the organization by giving the volunteers an opportunity to serve others.

According to the survey, the volunteers consistently think of Tzu Chi as home. They are willing to dedicate their time to the organization and thus have a close and strong network. Every volunteer is the front line, and that Tzu Chi will be at the vanguard of servicing others with joy and compassion. The organization's innovative structure allows the volunteers to effectively communicate and coordinate with each other. Everyone in the organization are eager to dedicate their full strength to Tzu Chi. Tzu Chi volunteers strengthen their network through various activities and build mutual understanding among the group. Through institutional entrepreneurship Tzu Chi alters the embeddedness of the institution social dynamic. Tzu Chi motivates their volunteers to serve the public and empower them to change the social situation. The organization imbeds new culture concepts in its members making each of them proud to do service and promote Tzu Chi publicly. Tzu Chi is an innovative "new system" organization: The number of participants increases every year across a range of regions and language barriers and all linked together by the core values of the organization.

This study suggests that non-profit organizations looking to strengthen their organization's volunteer network must pay attention to the following conditions: (1) Organizational structure: In a circular organizational structure, each volunteer is at the front-line of every operation and actively provide services. (2) Humanity Management: The organization is governed like a family, and the volunteers get a sense of participation in serving the community. (3) Routine Activity: All volunteers contribute their services through the activities of the Organization.

When each volunteer has the capacity to coordinate, it removes the sense of hierarchy. Volunteers' work, share, and exchange through the organization's activities. (4) Volunteers network: Keep the number of people in a community below 250 people. This study found that non-profit organizations, such as Tzu Chi, with the ability to mobilize quickly and effectively, build close networks of volunteers and through the volunteer network, can effectively, rapidly, and accurately expand the organization to serve the community.

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探討非營利組織的志工網絡：以慈濟為例

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摘要

近年來，非營利組織日漸趨升。非營利組織在志工服務上的動員能力的成效驚人。營利組織試圖學習非營利組織如何有效的提供社會服務，以及如何建立志工的凝聚力與忠誠度。營利組織可以將非營利組織的動員概念轉向將企業內部作為提升員工積極參與企業活動的參考典範。非營利組織一向以組織目標為中心思想；不同於營利組織為公司營收為最大考量。本研究將以探討非營利組織動員能力的根源，分析哪些因素構成非營利組織的志工網絡串聯。

本研究將以非營利組織慈濟基金會作為個案分析。透過質性研究的參與觀察與深度訪談進行探討，敘述慈濟如何動員志工參與活動；再者，觀察慈濟的志工網絡，彼此如何溝通聯繫。研究期間的觀察與訪談發現慈濟將服務大眾，拯救社會，變成任何志工都能參與的活動，每一位參與慈濟的志工，都相信自己可以改變世界，慈濟人把每一個服務做到盡善盡美。慈濟有效動員志工，建立在完善的資訊傳遞與創新的組織架構，透過慈濟的人文管理，與組織文化，深刻影響了慈濟志工，使得慈濟的志工網絡緊密，影響組織日漸擴大。

關鍵字：非營利組織(Nonprofit)、志工(Volunteer)、服務(Service)、網絡(Network)

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