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Cross-Sector Social Partnership Success: A Process Perspective on the Role of Relational Factors

Abstract

The study employs partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to examine cross-sector social partnership success in the context of Spanish business (N=102). Proposing the development of second-order models, the research identifies the role of relational factors that directly and indirectly affect partnership success. The study demonstrates that to increase partnership success it is essential for socially responsible businesses to share the same values with their nonprofit partners, thus contributing to trust and commitment and effectively enhancing relational effects. Employing relational factors for the conceptualisation of partnership success contributes an empirical quantitative process perspective that associates success with value creation processes.

1. Introduction

Business-Nonprofit (BUS-NPO) collaborations, a type of cross-sector social partnership (Selsky & Parker, 2005), have become widely adopted by both sectors as mechanisms of working together (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2004; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009) in addressing complex social issues that extend beyond organisational boundaries (Seitanidi, 2008). BUS-NPO collaborations are now employed internationally by business as a prominent way to implement CSR (Seitanidi & Crane, 2009), as is evident in the proliferation of relevant research. While in 2000 only a couple of papers had been available per year (Crane & Seitanidi, 2014), recently there have been over 90 publications annually with a focus on social partnerships (ARSP, 2015, p. 25-29).

Despite their 'explosive growth' (Austin, 2014, p.xxvii), many factors make developing and sustaining cross-sector collaborations a complex process. These factors include the diverse organisational cultures and mind-sets associated with each societal sector (Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010; Kolk, Van Dolen, & Vock, 2010). Hence, despite their widely accepted value potential (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014), a large proportion of these partnerships are unsuccessful (Galaskiewicz & Colman, 2006; Gutiérrez, Schmutzler, Márquez, & Reficco, 2012), a trend already evident in business-to-business (B2B) alliances, i.e., same-sector alliances (Sherman, 1992). Difficulties associated with developing in-depth understanding of partnership success include the highly contextualised nature of partnerships and the relational complexity that is due to the multiple factors affecting partnership relationships over long periods of time. Hence, any attribution of cause-effect relationships in the context of BUS-NPO partnerships has remained elusive (Van Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, & Brammer, 2015). The above challenges have influenced the methods employed thus far by researchers in the field, with the majority of empirical evidence deriving from qualitative studies favouring case study research. This paper responds to calls for theory development in cross-sector collaboration research (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Kourula & Laasonen, 2010; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Branzei & Le Ber, 2014; Murphy, Arenas, &

Batista, 2015) and the need for generalizable findings. It contributes to the recently developed body of quantitative studies based on large cross-sector-specific samples that measure the factors influencing the efficient development and delivery of partnership outcomes (Venn, 2012; Murphy et al., 2015; Sanzo, Álvarez, Rey, & García, 2015). Specifically, this research draws on both qualitative and quantitative research that has considered the relational factors appropriate for studying partnership success (Austin, 2000; Wymer & Samu, 2003; Berger et al., 2004; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Murphy & Arenas, 2010; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Jamali, Yianni, & Abdalla, 2011; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Sanzo et al., 2015).

As resource-intensive and long-term relationships (Austin, 2000; Seitanidi, 2010), cross-sector partnerships require considerable attention to anticipate and understand the partner's actions (Krishnan, Martin, & Noorderhaven, 2006) in order to maximise the potential of success. In particular, when partners have the potential of furthering their own interests at the expense of the other partners it becomes imperative not only to anticipate such behaviour (Khanna, Gulati, & Nohria, 1998; Park & Ungson, 2001), but also to consider its contribution to the relationship's success (Graf & Rothlauf, 2012). Concerns about behavioural uncertainty have been addressed in the literature by focusing on relational factors including trust and commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; MacMillan, Money, Money, & Downing, 2005; Krishnan et al., 2006; Lancastre & Lages, 2006; Wittmann, Hunt, & Arnett, 2009; Wu, Weng, & Huang, 2012) as the two key mediating factors that predict the attainment of partnership success (Hunt, Lambe, & Wittmann, 2002; Kauser & Shaw, 2004; Arenas & García, 2006; Palmatier, Dant, & Grewal, 2007).

We contribute to the cross-sector social partnerships literature on partnership-specific relational factors by connecting trust and commitment to relationship learning and cooperation, conceptualised as relational effects, and assess these factors' contribution to partnership success. Furthermore, we align the relational factors with the processes of co-creation of value (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014) in order to examine partnership success as an overall partnership outcome. Our model contributes an empirical, quantitative, process perspective that associates partnership success with the processes of value creation during the formation and implementation phases of partnerships. By focusing on the business partner's commitment and trust, i.e., taking the perspective of one of the partners (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) as being the most likely to show a propensity to further its own interests within the partnership (Seitanidi, 2010), we identify the role of relational factors that directly and indirectly affect partnership success in an economic sector that is associated with high levels of opportunism. Finally, we address the complexity associated with measuring relational factors (Murphy et al., 2015) by employing partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) (Ringle, Sarstedt, & Straub, 2012; Roldán, & Sánchez-Franco, 2012) in the context of one European country in order to develop a consistent understanding of cross-sector social partnership success within Spanish businesses. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirical study to demonstrate the role of relational factors in improving the success of BUS-NPO partnerships.

In the sections that follow, we discuss the value creation processes and align them with relational factors that contribute to partnership success. We present our hypotheses within each phase of value creation by drawing upon the BUS-NPO and B2B alliance and relationship marketing literature regarding the causal effects of relational factors and the extent of their contribution to partnership success. Following the literature review and presentation of hypotheses, we describe our methods and discuss our

findings within the context of the existing literature, followed by the implications for theory and practice.

2. Aligning Relational Factors with Value Creation Processes for Business-Nonprofit Partnership Success

The significance of partnerships as mechanisms for addressing complex social issues (Waddock, 1989; Seitanidi, 2008) was recently enhanced by the examination of partnership processes as value co-creation mechanisms (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012), thus providing a deep, process perspective on BUS-NPO partnerships. In this paper, we aim to combine the co-creation of value through processes with the achievement of partnership success while emphasising the causal role of relational factors. This signals the connection of process and outcome factors that can lead systematically to partnership success within, and as a result of, partnerships.

Previous BUS-NPO partnership studies have focused on the analysis of the value creation processes and micro-processes involved in the partnership (McCann, 1983; Waddell & Brown 1997; Seitanidi, 2008; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Clarke & Fuller, 2010; Seitanidi, 2010; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Austin & Seitanidi, 2014; among others), highlighting the importance of collaborative relationship attributes during the partnership's formation and implementation in improving value creation and partnership success. Collaborative relationship attributes feature in most process partnership studies. They include the role of shared values, opportunistic behaviour, trust, commitment, and relationship learning, inter alia. The collaborative attributes that favour partnership success are referred to as 'relational factors' (Hunt et al., 2002). Their presence determines the relationship's quality, differentiating productive and effective from unproductive and ineffective partnerships, and hence being indicators of partnership success.

However, despite the significant role of relational factors, the extent to which each of them contributes to overall partnership success has not been studied systematically within the BUS-NPO context. In effect, the development of BUS-NPO theory remains largely based on a small number of observations that hold true in certain cases, but lack the capacity to form the foundations of generalizable hypotheses that need to be based on large samples. The paper addresses this research gap by employing a relational perspective that has been extensively discussed in the B2B collaboration and relationship marketing literatures (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; MacMillan et al., 2005; Palmatier et al., 2007; Wittmann et al., 2009). The basic principle in studies that employ a relational perspective is that long-term interactions, such as those of cross-sector social partnerships, are not characterised by a transactional mode of operation with short-term, minimal, personal and organisational interactions focused on economic exchange, but rather on long-term, encompassing, interactions focused on relationship development. This perspective captures the impact of situational variables that affect the different stages in the development of the relationship (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987).

The combination of employing a process model and presenting the variables within each value creation phase can assist in modelling partnerships that address different complex social issues in different geographical contexts, thus allowing for systematic comparisons. The study puts forward core relationship factors that function as building blocks and contribute to successful relational exchange within each phase of a BUS-NPO partnership. Specifically, we employ the Commitment-Trust view, widely acknowledged in the relationship marketing literature, in order to capture the relational content of the exchange and success in partnerships (see Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Hunt et

al., 2002; Palmatier et al., 2007; Srinivasan, Mukherjee, & Gaur, 2011; among others). The Commitment-Trust view has its origin in Morgan & Hunt's (1994) landmark paper. It proposes that commitment and trust determine both relationship and outcome performance in a partnership (Palmatier et al., 2007). Furthermore, our alignment of specific constructs with each stage of the relationship's development follows Dwyer et al.'s (1987) argument that many of the variables are active in different stages and become latent in others. Next, we identify the role of trust and commitment as well as of other key relational factors in the achievement of partnership success, and align each of them with either the formation or the implementation phase of BUS-NPO partnerships.

2.1. Relational Factors in Partnership Formation

The formation phase of partnerships, a fundamental determinant of partnership success (Austin, 2000; Seitanidi, Koufopoulos, & Palmer, 2010; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Austin & Seitanidi, 2014), is that comprising the processes in which the partners establish the initial conditions (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006) or the problems to be addressed (Gray, 1989; McCann, 1983; Waddell & Brown, 1997). Different authors have emphasised certain relational factors that can improve the formation phase, and consequently partnership success. For instance, Austin & Seitanidi (2012) suggest that values shared between partners –expressed through the initial articulation of a social problem– can facilitate communication between partners, the resolution of conflicts, or mutual trust. Similarly, other authors (Rondinelli & London, 2003; Graf & Rothlauf, 2012) highlight that opportunistic behaviour is a relational factor in the formation phase that is important for partnership success because opportunistic actions can impact negatively the relationship between businesses and NPOs. In fact, the high levels of opportunism present in B2B alliances (Rivera-Santos & Rufín, 2010), an attribute mainly associated with the profit sector, and the concern of NGOs to retain high levels of legitimacy while in partnership with businesses (Seitanidi & Crane, 2009) increase the significance of this factor since opportunistic behaviour can cause partnership termination. Below, we conceptualise these two relational factors, and propose the links that we will corroborate empirically.

2.1.1. Shared Values

The shared values construct can be conceptualized as "the degree to which the partners have beliefs in common about what behaviours, goals, and policies are important or unimportant, appropriate or inappropriate, and right or wrong" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 25). Along these lines, Arenas & García (2006) noted that shared values are norms that guide the appropriateness of actions that are undertaken. According to the strategic alliance and relationship marketing literatures (Dwyer et al., 1987; Young-Ybarra, & Wiersema, 1999; Sarkar, Echambadi, Cavusgil, & Aulakh, 2001; MacMillan et al., 2005; Ybarra & Turk, 2009), when partners perceive that their counterpart has chosen the appropriate actions, they will be willing to increase their level of trust and commitment. We therefore posit the following two hypotheses:

H1: Shared values affect trust directly and positively.
H2: Shared values affect commitment directly and positively.

2.1.2. Opportunistic Behaviour

Opportunistic behaviour can be defined as "self-interest seeking with guile" (Williamson, 1975, p.6), and it refers to the "incomplete or distorted disclosure of information, especially to calculated efforts to mislead, distort, disguise, obfuscate or otherwise confuse" (Williamson, 1985, p. 47). Empirical research in the alliance literature mentions that opportunistic behaviour has a direct effect on reducing trust, and a negative indirect effect on commitment mediated by trust (Lancastre & Lages, 2006; Cheng, Yeh, & Tu, 2008; Jena, Guin, & Dash, 2011; Vieira, Monteiro, & Veiga, 2011). If opportunistic behaviour is adopted by a partner, it will create short-term inequality, which in effect will undermine the counterpart's position within the relationship, resulting in the counterpart's reduced levels of trust towards that partner (Barnes, Leonidou, Siu, & Leonidou, 2010). We therefore posit the following hypothesis:

H3: Opportunistic behaviour affects trust directly and negatively.

The next section moves the discussion of relational factors to the phase of partnership implementation.

2.2. Relational Factors in Partnership Implementation

The partner's interactions (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Clarke & Fuller, 2010) that facilitate the day-to-day (Seitanidi, 2010) effective functioning of the relationship (Kolk et al., 2010) have been studied during the implementation phase of the partnership. Different authors have pointed out several relational factors that can improve the interactions in this phase, and consequently, partnership success. For example, Berger et al. (2004) detected that trust can improve the interactions between partners because its presence reduces covert behaviours, opportunism, and communication problems. Similarly, Glasbergen (2011) emphasised that trust can reduce perceptions of risk and vulnerability during the partnership relationship. Sanzo et al. (2015) suggested that relationship commitment can also improve the interactions between partners due to the presence of partner-shared emotional and affective bonds. Along these lines, Wilson, Bunn, & Savage (2010) pointed out that a high level of cooperation between partners is also a key factor in the partnership's implementation because it involves a strong interaction between partners, positively affecting the ability of the partnership to generate positive outcomes. Similarly, Austin (2000) and Tennyson (2003) suggested that the existence of a shared learning culture, in this phase of mature interactions, can potentially enhance the interactions between the partners by increasing opportunities for sharing key information, making sense of the shared information, and integrating the knowledge created in relationship memories.

While the BUS-NPO literature has made clear reference to the importance of relational factors during a partnership's implementation, the distinctive role of each of them within this phase has not yet been identified (Seitanidi, 2010). Hence, the connections among relational factors remain elusive, and it is uncertain how each contributes to partnership success. In our paper, following Rivera-Santos & Rufín's (2010) suggestion that governance mechanisms influence the partners' behaviour, we suggest that trust and commitment are informal governance mechanisms functioning as pre-conditions for cooperation and relationship learning, which we conceptualise as relational effects (RE) in the course of the partnership. Below, we discuss each of these relational factors, and propose the links that we will validate empirically.

2.2.1. Pre-conditions of RE: Trust and Commitment

Trust and commitment are key variables during the BUS-NPO partnership implementation as they can either drive or improve the interaction between partners. According to Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman's conception (1993, p. 82), trust can be defined as "a willingness to rely on a partner in whom one has security". This definition is parallel to that proposed by Morgan & Hunt (1994, p. 23) that "trust exists when one party has security in the reliability and integrity of its partner in the exchange". Following Dwyer et al. (1987, p. 19) and Morgan & Hunt (1994, p. 23), we understand relationship commitment as "the implicit or explicit sign of the relationship's continuity between the partners" due to the "the belief … that an ongoing relationship with the other is so important as to ensure that every effort will be made to maintain it, i.e., the committed party believes the relationship is of value, and will work to ensure that it lasts indefinitely". Most alliance research has found that, with respect to the relationship between trust and commitment, trust is the main determinant of commitment because, without trust, neither partner would take the risk of committing to the relationship (Rodríguez & Wilson, 2002; Lancastre & Lages, 2006; Palmatier et al., 2007; Barnes et al., 2010; Vieira et al., 2011; Salciuviene, Reardon, & Auruskeviciene, 2011; Wu et al., 2012). Consistent with these findings in B2B collaboration and relationship marketing studies, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Trust affects commitment directly and positively.

2.2.2. Relational Effects: Cooperation and Relationship Learning

As mentioned above, additional key factors in the partnership implementation are cooperation and relationship learning. Below, we discuss the role of trust and commitment as pre-conditions for the development of these relational effects.

Relationship learning is conceptualised as an important relational effect for the partner organizations due to its inherent value creation processes of exchange of information, common interpretation, and integration of knowledge (Selnes & Sallis, 2003) that indicate the roadmap in achieving partnership success. The body of empirical research in the alliance literature offers strong evidence that the trust and commitment constructs directly improve the development of a learning culture in the relationship. First, with respect to trust, Morgan & Hunt (1994) have demonstrated that the partners in an exchange will be more likely to share information when they believe that they will not be exploited or put at risk by the actions of the other. Different authors (Selnes & Sallis, 2003; Jean, Sinkovics, & Kim, 2010; Yang & Lai, 2012) have proposed and empirically validated that the existence of trust facilitates relationship learning in partnerships between businesses. In particular, its presence makes the partners more likely to share information they consider sensitive and to maintain a constructive and creative dialogue aimed at adding meaning to that information. Accordingly, we posit the following hypothesis:

H5: Trust affects relationship learning directly and positively.

Second, with respect to commitment, Selnes & Sallis (2003) for example have shown that the stronger the partners' commitment to the goals of a relationship, the greater will be their exchange of information. More specifically, different authors have postulated and empirically corroborated that commitment influences relationship

learning directly and positively (Ling-Yee, 2006; Chang & Gotcher, 2008). Consequently, we expect that commitment will also foster relationship learning in BUS-NPO partnerships; hence we posit the following hypothesis:

H6: Commitment affects relationship learning directly and positively.

Cooperation, another important relational effect, can be defined as a set of similar or complementary coordinated actions aim at attaining common or individual goals (Anderson & Narus, 1990). Different studies of alliances have demonstrated that trust and commitment are two clear antecedents of the generation of cooperative behaviours between partners. First, trust is a major facilitator of cooperation because partners will only take high risks in cooperation when they have confidence in their counterparts (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Lancastre & Lages, 2006; Pimentel, Borin, & Hagelaar, 2006; Payan & Svensson, 2007; Ha, 2010). Hence, trust fosters a sense of security in the reliability and integrity of the other partner (Hunt et al., 2002). And second, commitment is also an important determinant of cooperation because a committed partner, wanting the relationship to work, will always cooperate with their counterpart (Pesämaa, & Franklin, 2007; Duhan & Sandvik, 2009; Ha, 2010; Vieira et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2012). Accordingly, we posit the following two hypotheses:

H7: Trust affects cooperation directly and positively.
H8: Commitment affects cooperation directly and positively.

In the next section, we discuss the direct effects of the relational factors that are part of the implementation phase on overall partnership success.

2.3. Contribution of Relational Factors to Partnership Success

Most of the literature on BUS-NPO partnerships employs interchangeably the terms 'success' and 'value creation' (Perez-Aleman & Sandilands, 2008; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; McDaniel & Malone, 2012; Murphy et al., 2015; Sanzo et al., 2015; among others). Value creation refers to the achievement of positive organisational and societal outcomes as a result of the collaboration (Seitanidi, 2010; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). Moving beyond the outcomes or benefits achieved, the BUS-NPO literature emphasises that ultimately each partner organization must determine for itself the extent to which the partnership process achieved its performance expectations (Austin, 2000; Tennyson, 2003). The joint evaluation of outcomes and expectations is a common practice in the field of B2B relationships. Thus, many authors (Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Kauser & Shaw, 2004; Arenas & Garcia, 2006) evaluate partnership success by distinguishing two dimensions: the achievement of the expected outcomes as a result of the collaboration, and the level of satisfaction of the partners with the achievement of these outcomes. Hence, a BUS-NPO partnership process will be considered successful when it achieves the first dimension of expected collaboration outcomes, and the second dimension of partner satisfaction. We propose that relational factors that are part of the implementation phase directly improve the success of partnership processes between businesses and NPOs.

Firstly, regarding the mediating constructs –trust and commitment– most of the empirical research in the alliance literature indicates that trust only indirectly influences partnership success through commitment. Commitment, however, has a direct and positive impact on the achievement of greater partnership success (Mohr & Spekman,

1994; Monckza, Petersen, Handfield, & Ragatz, 1998; Hunt et al., 2002; Arenas & García, 2006; Palmatier et al., 2007; Salciuviene et al., 2011). This is because only when partners are committed to their relationship will they work hard for the partnership's success. Following these studies, we posit the following hypothesis:

H9: Commitment affects partnership success directly and positively.

Secondly, numerous authors (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Siguaw, Simpson & Baker, 1998; Morris & Carter, 2005; Arenas & García, 2006; Kim, Kim, Pae, & Yip, 2013) have shown that the development of cooperative behaviours, which are only possible when the objectives of each partner are positively related with those of the other partner, directly improves the likelihood of success in strategic alliances. The reason is that this alignment of goals improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the relationship, thereby generating greater value (Morris & Carter, 2005). Accordingly, we posit the following hypothesis:

H10: Cooperation affects partnership success directly and positively.

Thirdly, in the partnership literature, several studies have empirically validated that relationship learning directly improves the partnership success because its presence fosters the creation of value through effectiveness (greater benefits with the same costs), efficiency (the same benefits at lower costs), and/or innovation (new results from the pooling of knowledge) (e.g., Ling-Yee, 2006; Jean et al., 2010; Cheung, Myers, & Mentzer, 2011; Fang, Fang, Chou, Yang, & Tsai, 2011; among others). Considering these arguments, we therefore posit the following hypothesis:

H11: Relationship learning affects partnership success directly and positively.

Figure 1 below presents the model that we employ to validate in the BUS-NPO context the role of the relational factors within two partnership phases: shared values and opportunistic behaviour within the formation phase; trust, commitment, cooperation, and relationship learning as part of the implementation phase. As explained above, we conceptualise trust and commitment as the preconditions of the relational effects. We finally examine the contribution of the above relational factors to partnership success.
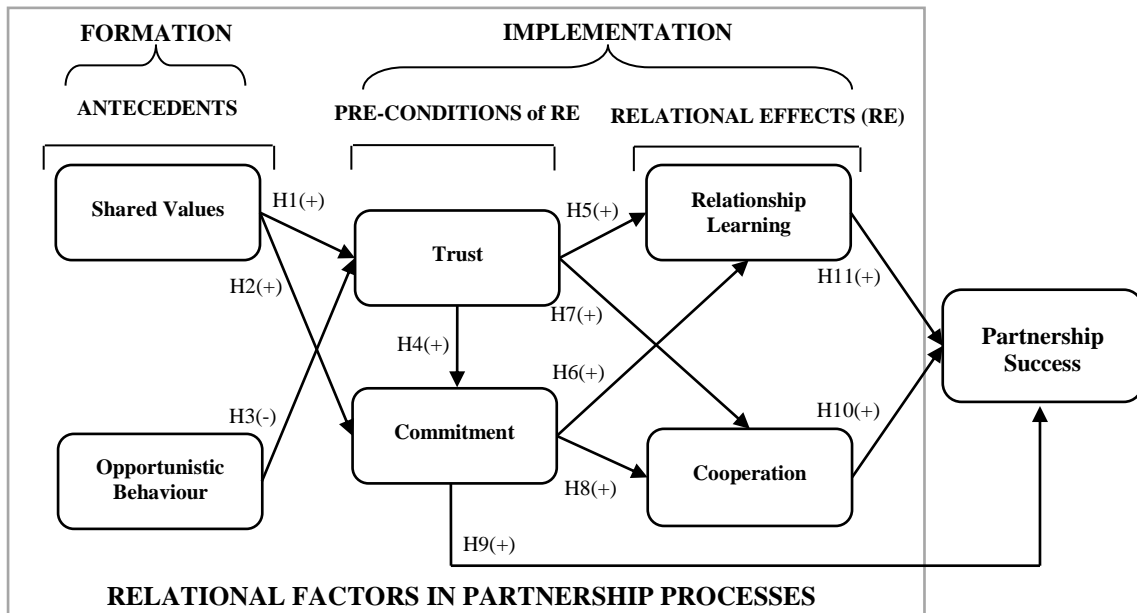
Figure 1. Model of success for BUS-NPO partnerships.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

Between August 2014 and January 2015, using a contact database created by the authors, an invitation to participate in a Web-based survey was sent via email to 657 Spanish businesses in cross-sector collaboration relationships with nonprofit organisations in recent years. After three e-mails had been sent reminding recipients of their invitation to participate in our study, a total of 102 valid responses were received, resulting in a 15.53% response rate, comparable to BUS-NPO collaborations in recent quantitative studies (see Murphy et al., 2015 or Sanzo et al., 2015). The individuals of our sample work in businesses of various sizes and sectors (see Table 1), although there is a clear predominance of large businesses (60%) -with more than 250 employees- and a strong presence of the tertiary sector (62%).

Table 1
Characteristics of the sample.

Variables	Number of businesses
N	**102**
Business size by number of employees	
SMEs (Small and medium businesses)	40%
Large businesses	60%
Businesses sectors (Major Standard Sectors Classification)	
Primary sector	16%
Secondary sector	22%
Tertiary sector	62%

Note: Following the guidelines of the Directorate-General Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission, organizations with 1-249 employees were designated as small and medium businesses, and those with 250 or more as large.

3.2. Measures

The survey consisted of a questionnaire that asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with different statements about the constructs of our study. All the variables were measured on the basis of seven-point Likert scales. With the exception of partnership success, they were measured adapting existing, pre-validated scales found in the literature, mainly in B2B collaboration relationships. The measurements of the two antecedents, shared values (SV) and opportunistic behaviour (OB), used adaptations of the scales appearing in MacMillan et al. (2005) and Lee (1998), respectively. These variables were modelled as unidimensional constructs formed by three reflective items and seven reflective items for shared values and opportunistic behaviour, respectively. The reflective indicators represent reflections, manifestations, or functions of a construct (Polites, Roberts & Thatcher, 2012).

The measurement of trust (TR) was adapted from Vázquez, Iglesias, & Álvarez-González (2005). We followed their study and identified two dimensions of TR: credibility (CRED) and benevolence (BEN). The final scale included 12 items. These dimensions were modelled as reflective first-order constructs. Reflective first-order constructs are theoretical concepts that are inferred from their observed variables (indicators) and in which changes in the constructs are reflected (manifested) by their indicators (Diamantopoulos, Riefler, & Roth, 2008). However, TR was designed as a second-order construct. Specifically, TR was modelled as a composite with a reflective measurement model (Mode A) (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). We justify this decision with the following reasons. 1) We have followed a superordinate form (Polites et al., 2012) to model this construct, in which relationships flow from the construct to its dimensions. Each dimension exemplifies a different manifestation or realization of the underlying construct (Leal-Rodríguez, Roldán, Ariza-Montes, & Leal-Millán, 2014). Therefore, these different dimensions would connect with the idea of a composite, so that "the resulting composite variable may be a proxy for a latent concept, but the dimensions do not necessarily need to be conceptually united" (Henseler et al., 2016, p. 408). 2) Since we have used a superordinate approach, we expect that the dimensions or facets will be strongly correlated with each other and will move together (Law & Wong, 1999). This implies that we have used a second-order construct with several dimensions, but all these facets are necessary to create the multidimensional construct. And finally 3) Mode A is particularly advisable for modelling TR since this is the mode of estimation that performs the best when dimensions are collinear, as is the case for the present multidimensional construct (Becker, Rai, & Rigdon, 2013).

The measurement of commitment variable (CM) used an adaptation of the scale appearing in Wittmann et al. (2009). This variable was modelled as a unidimensional construct formed by five reflective items. Cooperation (CP) was also modelled as a unidimensional construct and measured by five reflective items adapted from Wittmann et al. (2009). The measurement of relationship learning (RL) was adapted from Selnes & Sallis (2003). Following their study, we identified three dimensions of RL: exchange of information (EI), common interpretation (CI), and integration of knowledge (IK). The final scale comprised 17 items. While these dimensions were modelled as reflective first-order constructs, RL was also modelled as a composite (Mode A).

Similarly, in view of the above arguments, partnership success (PS) was also modelled as a composite model (Mode A) and measured by two dimensions (Mohr & Spekman, 1994): achievement of expected benefits from collaboration (AB) and satisfaction (SAT). The measurement of satisfaction used an adaptation of the scale

appearing in Cambra & Polo (2008), and was modelled as a reflective construct formed by two items.

Given the significant differences between benefits accrued in B2B and BUS-NPO collaborations (Berger et al., 2004; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010) and the lack of previous studies in the literature that employ suitable scales, we created and validated a new measurement scale by following the four steps proposed by MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Jarvis (2005). 1) Conceptualisation of the construct. In our study we defined the construct 'achievement of benefits' in the following way: "achievement of different organisational and societal benefits, mutually important for both partners (businesses and NPOs), sought from cross-sector collaboration". 2) Generation of items. Through an exhaustive review of the literature, we collected different types of benefits, creating the initial items of our measurement scale. 3) Determination of the nature of the measurement model. We decided to use reflective indicators of the construct of interest as measures. And 4) Validation of the reflective measurement model. A two-step approach was used. First, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was performed. Three primary factors were extracted. After an inspection of the items' factor loadings, the factors identified were labelled in the following way: factor 1, 'achievement of organisational benefits'; factor 2, 'achievement of reputational benefits'; and factor 3, 'achievement of societal benefits'. And second, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out with the Mplus program. The results of the CFA corroborated the three-factor structure that had been found previously when using EFA.

3.3. PLS analysis

Our research model was tested using partial least squares (PLS), a variance-based method of structural equation modelling. PLS is primarily intended for causal-predictive analysis, where the problems explored are complex and prior theoretical knowledge is scarce (Castro, Roldán, & Acedo, 2015). In our study, the choice of PLS is based on the following reasons: 1) the use of composite models (TR, RL, and PS) (Henseler et al., 2016); 2) the complexity of the research model (Chin & Newsted, 1999) both in the number of variables (manifest and latent) and in the dimensionality of the constructs (first-order and second-order constructs); 3) the utilisation of latent variables' scores in the subsequent analysis (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012); and 4) the identification of key driver constructs to achieving partnership success (cf. Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). The software used for the PLS analysis was SmartPLS Version 3.0. (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015).

In PLS, the estimation of the sample size for a model requires specifying the effect size for each regression analysis and looking up the power tables provided by Cohen (1988) or Green's (1991) approximation to these tables (Chin & Newsted, 1999). In our study, none of the constructs are formative – all are reflective. The dependent latent variable that receives the greatest number of structural paths is partnership success, with three relationships. Thus, the largest regression consists of three predictors. Assuming a medium effect size as defined by Cohen (1988), we initially need a minimum sample of 76 cases with the aim of obtaining a power of 0.80 and an alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the sample size (n=102) is adequate.

Concerning the multidimensional superordinate constructs, we have followed a two-step approach (Wright, Campbell, Thatcher, & Roberts, 2012). This approach estimates the scores of the first-order constructs or dimensions in a first-stage model without the high-order constructs present, and subsequently utilises these scores as indicators for the high-order constructs in a separate second-stage analysis (Chin, 2010;

Wright et al., 2012). The literature indicates two stages in the PLS analysis (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011): first, the assessment of the measurement model, and second, the analysis of the structural model. This process ensures that valid and reliable measures of the constructs are obtained before establishing conclusions about relationships among the constructs (Barclay, Thompson, & Higgins, 1995).

4. PLS Results

4.1. Measurement Model

Constructs with reflective indicators must be evaluated regarding their reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2011). First, the indicators and dimensions satisfy the requirement of reliability since their loadings are greater than 0.7 (Carmines & Zeller, 1979) (see Table 2). In order to achieve this result, we carried out an item trimming process of some weak items of the scales of opportunistic behaviour (3 items), commitment (1 item), trust (2 items), and cooperation (2 items). One dimension of the construct 'achievement of objectives' also had a weak loading. Nevertheless, following Chin (1998), who recommends retaining loadings of 0.50 or 0.60 in initial stages of scales development, we decided not to delete it. Second, all multidimensional constructs and dimensions meet the requisite of construct reliability because their composite reliabilities (CR) are greater than 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Third, the latent variables attain convergent validity since their average variance extracted (AVE) surpasses the 0.5 level recommended by the literature (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (see Table 2). And finally, Table 3 shows that all variables achieve discriminant validity following both the Fornell-Larcker and the HTMT criterion. According to the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion, the square roots of AVE should be greater than the correlations between the constructs (given in boldface in Table 3). All our constructs meet this requirement. Regarding the HTMT criterion, it is necessary to compare it to a predefined threshold. The exact threshold of the HTMT is debatable. Some authors suggest a threshold of 0.85 whereas others propose a value of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). In our study, all our variables achieve discriminant validity following the HTMT$^{.90}$ criterion, however, the CM and CP variables may have a discriminant validity problem according to the HTMT$^{.85}$ criterion. Furthermore, the HTMT$_{inference}$ criterion was also tested by using complete bootstrapping in order to check whether HTMT is significantly different from 1.00 (Henseler et al., 2015). The analyses show that all HTMT values are significantly different from 1 (range from 0.450 to 0.963). Therefore, all the constructs also satisfy this requirement.

Table 2
Measurement model results.

Construct/Dimension/Sub-dimension	Loading	CR	AVE
Shared values (reflective construct)	-	**0.858**	**0.669**
SV1: The values and opinions of our partner are similar to ours.	0.833	-	-
SV2: We respect the values of our partner.	0.764	-	-
SV3: We share a very similar set of values.	0.854	-	-
Opportunistic behaviour (reflective construct)	-	**0.942**	**0.803**
OB2: We have sometimes promised our partner that we would do things, even though we actually had no intention of following through.	0.710	-	-
OB3: To get the necessary support from our partner, we sometimes mask the true nature of our needs.	0.945	-	-
OB4: In order to achieve our objectives, we occasionally find it necessary to neglect some of our obligations to our partner.	0.942	-	-
OB7: On occasion, we have had to lie to our partner about certain aspects in	0.964	-	-

order to protect our interests.

Trust (SMC)	-	**0.911**	**0.836**
Credibility (reflective dimension)	0.913	0.886	0.609
TR1: Our partner does what he promises.	0.755	-	-
TR2: If our partner detects a problem he reacts in an understandable way and tries to help us.	0.808	-	-
TR3: Our partner does not make false claims.	0.736	-	-
TR4: Our partner is reliable and behaves as one would expect him to.	0.839	-	-
TR6: Our partner is competent to meet his commitments.	0.758	-	-
Benevolence (reflective dimension)	0.916	0.898	0.638
TR8: Our partner is concerned for our well-being, interests and future success.	0.867	-	-
TR9: Our partner is prepared to provide assistance and support when times are hard.	0.757	-	-
TR10: We feel that our partner is on our side.	0.868	-	-
TR11: Our partner does not generally take decisions that are prejudicial to us.	0.759	-	-
TR12: Our partner is quite honest and sincere in his relationship with us.	0.733	-	-
Commitment (reflective construct)	-	**0.936**	**0.786**
CM1: We are very committed to the relationship with our partner.	0.911	-	-
CM2: The relationship with our partner is very important to us.	0.901	-	-
CM4: We really care about the relationship with our partner.	0.901	-	-
CM5: We think the relationship with our partner deserves our maximum efforts to maintain it in the future.	0.831	-	-
Relationship learning (SMC)	-	**0.941**	**0.841**
Information sharing (reflective dimension)	0.907	0.941	0.697
RL1: We exchange information on successful and unsuccessful experiences in the implementation of different social programs.	0.829	-	-
RL2: We exchange information related to changes in the needs of the beneficiary population of the programs that we carry out together.	0.884	-	-
RL3: We exchange information related to changes in the specific environment of the programs that we carry out together.	0.863	-	-
RL4: We exchange information related to new techniques of the implementation of social programs, new methods or tools for identification and intervention.	0.814	-	-
RL5: We exchange information of any unexpected problem as soon as possible.	0.863	-	-
RL6: We exchange information on changes related to our strategies and policies.	0.834	-	-
RL7: We exchange information that is sensitive for us, such as financial information, know-how, and new developments.	0.750	-	-
Joint sense-making (reflective dimension)	0.911	0.891	0.672
RL8: In our relationship, it is common to establish joint teams to solve operational problems.	0.826	-	-
RL9: In our relationship, it is common to establish joint teams to analyse and discuss strategic issues.	0.824	-	-
RL10: The atmosphere of our relationship stimulates productive discussion, encompassing a variety of opinions.	0.836	-	-
RL11: In our relationship, it is common to establish face-to-face communication.	0.792	-	-
Knowledge integration (reflective dimension)	0.933	0.925	0.675
RL12: We frequently adjust our common understanding about the needs of the beneficiary population of the programs that we carry out together.	0.847	-	-
RL13: We frequently adjust our common understanding about new techniques of the implementation of social programs, new methods or tools for identification and intervention.	0.871	-	-
RL14: We frequently evaluate and, if needed, adjust the tasks related to the implementation of our programs.	0.914	-	-
RL15: We frequently evaluate and, if needed, update the formal contracts of our relationship.	0.779	-	-
RL16: We frequently meet face-to-face in order to refresh the personal network in our relationship.	0.746	-	-
RL17: We frequently evaluate and, if needed, update the information about our relationship stored in our databases.	0.756	-	-
Cooperation (reflective construct)	-	**0.926**	**0.807**
CP1: We are willing to cooperate.	0.886	-	-
CP2: We work together to be successful.	0.925	-	-
CP3: We try to accommodate each other when making decisions that affect mutual objectives.	0.882	-	-
Partnership success (SMC)	-	**0.859**	**0.753**
Achievement of benefits (reflective dimension)	0.890	0.810	0.591

Achievement of reputational benefits (reflective sub-dimension)	0.779	0.923	0.800
AB1: Improving our visibility in society.	0.904	-	-
AB2: Being more appreciated by the stakeholders of our organization.	0.922	-	-
AB3: Improving our public relations.	0.856	-	-
Achievement of organisational benefits (reflective sub-dimension)	0.638	0.910	0.629
AB6: Increasing the loyalty and the commitment of our customers.	0.800	-	-
AB7: Differentiating ourselves from the competition.	0.645	-	-
AB8: Getting a competitive advantage.	0.776	-	-
AB10: Acquiring resources through our partner.	0.836	-	-
AB11: Increasing our number of customers.	0.835	-	-
AB12: Improving our economic results.	0.849	-	-
Achievement of societal benefits (reflective sub-dimension)	0.872	0.890	0.801
AB4: Increasing the motivation of our employees and their identification with social issues.	0.917	-	-
AB14: Addressing a social issue.	0.873	-	-
Satisfaction (reflective dimension)	0.845	0.943	0.891
SAT1: Compared to our expectations, we are satisfied with this relationship.	0.957	-	-
SAT2: Compared to the ideal relationship, we are satisfied with the partnership outcomes.	0.931	-	-

Note: CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted; SMC: Superordinate multidimensional construct.

Table 3

Measurement model: discriminant validity.

	Fornell-Larcker Criterion							Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)						
	SV	OB	TR	CM	RL	CP	PS		SV	OB	TR	CM	RL	CP	PS
SV	**0.818**							SV							
OB	-0.087	**0.896**						OB	0.101						
TR	0.604	-0.102	**0.914**					TR	0.773	0.096					
CM	0.658	-0.117	0.665	**0.887**				CM	0.786	0.125	0.777				
RL	0.434	-0.157	0.584	0.698	**0.917**			RL	0.519	0.159	0.684	0.761			
CP	0.592	-0.122	0.695	0.800	0.663	**0.898**		CP	0.720	0.140	0.827	0.890	0.739		
PS	0.439	-0.035	0.531	0.540	0.495	0.464	**0.868**	PS	0.629	0.079	0.724	0.680	0.622	0.600	

Note: SV (Shared values); OB (Opportunistic behaviour); TR (Trust); CM (Commitment); RL (Relationship learning); CP (Cooperation); PS (Partnership success).

4.2. Structural Model

Structural model assessment implies carrying out the following steps: 1) analysis of the predictive power of the model; 2) study of the predictive relevance of the endogenous constructs with a reflective measurement model; 3) analysis of the path coefficients' significance; and 4) examination of the goodness of fit of the model. Predictive power assessment is carried out by analysing the R^2 values (variance explained) of the endogenous constructs (Chin, 2010). Chin (1998) considers R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. Table 4 presents the variance explained in dependent constructs that ranges from 0.31 (weak-moderate) to 0.68 (substantial). Predictive relevance of the endogenous constructs with a reflective measurement model is assessed through the Stone-Geisser test (Q^2). In our study, we offer the cross-validated redundancy Q^2 to examine the predictive relevance of the theoretical/structural model (Chin, 1998). A Q^2 greater than 0 implies that the model has predictive relevance, whereas a Q^2 less than 0 suggests that the model lacks predictive relevance (Chin, 2010; Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). All the endogenous constructs of our model presented predictive relevance (see Table 4).

Table 4

Effects on endogenous variables.

	R²	Q²	Direct effect	Correlation	Variance explained
TRUST	0.367	0.296	-	-	**36.60%**
H1: Shared values			0.599	0.604	36.09%
H3: Opportunistic behaviour			-0.050	-0.102	0.51%
COMMITMENT	0.546	0.416	-	-	**54.60%**
H2: Shared values			0.403	0.658	26.54%
H4: Trust			0.422	0.665	28.06%
RELATIONSHIP LEARNING	0.513	0.421	-	-	**51.30%**
H5: Trust			0.214	0.584	12.50%
H6: Commitment			0.556	0.698	38.80%
COOPERATION	0.687	0.543	-	-	**68.70%**
H7: Trust			0.291	0.695	20.22%
H8: Commitment			0.606	0.800	48.48%
PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS	0.319	0.184	-	-	**31.90%**
H9: Commitment			0.365	0.540	19.75%
H10: Cooperation			0.023	0.464	1.06%
H11: Relationship learning			0.224	0.495	11.09%

Note: Each endogenous construct's variance explained in terms of another latent variable is given by multiplying the β coefficient (direct effect) by the correlation of the two variables.

In order to evaluate the statistical significance of the path coefficients, we applied bootstrapping to generate a 95% confidence interval (CI) using 5000 resamples (Hair et al., 2011). "If a confidence interval for an estimated path coefficient w does not include zero, the hypothesis that w equals zero is rejected" (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009, p. 306). Nine of the eleven direct effects hypothesised in Figure 1 (the hypotheses) were significant as shown by the bias-corrected 95% bootstrap CI's (Table 5). In particular, H3 and H10 are not supported because their confidence intervals include zero.

Table 5

Structural model results.

Hypothesis	Suggested effect	B	Bias corrected bootstrap 95% CI	Support
H1: Shared values → Trust	+	0.599	[0.475;0.704]Sig.	Yes
H2: Shared values → Commitment	+	0.403	[0.242;0.558]Sig.	Yes
H3: Opportunistic behaviour → Trust	-	-0.050	[-0.269;0.107]Nsig.	No
H4: Trust → Commitment	+	0.422	[0.273;0.556]Sig.	Yes
H5: Trust → Relationship learning	+	0.214	[0.021;0.401]Sig.	Yes
H6: Commitment → Relationship learning	+	0.556	[0.410;0.719]Sig.	Yes
H7: Trust → Cooperation	+	0.291	[0.124;0.452]Sig.	Yes
H8: Commitment → Cooperation	+	0.606	[0.440;0.762]Sig.	Yes
H9: Commitment → Partnership success	+	0.365	[0.083;0.603]Sig.	Yes
H10: Cooperation → Partnership success	+	0.023	[-0.200;0.272]Nsig.	No
H11: Relationship learning → Partnership success	+	0.224	[0.055;0.419]Sig.	Yes
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual): 0.053				

Note: Sig. denotes a significant direct effect at 0.05; Nsig. denotes a non-significant direct effect at 0.05. Bootstrapping based on n = 5000 subsamples.

And finally, overall fit of the model is assessed by analysing the value of the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) as the root mean square discrepancy between the observed correlations and the model-implied correlations (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Following Henseler, Dijkstra, Sarstedt, Ringle, Diamantopoulos, Straub, Ketchen, Hair, Hult, & Calantone (2014), we determined the SRMR for a composite factor model. As can be observed in Table 5, the model achieves an SRMR of 0.05, which means an appropriate fit assuming the usual cut-off of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

5. Discussion

In large part, the findings from the survey analysis lend support to our hypotheses. Below, the results for each hypothesis are discussed and related to previous literature results.

As already mentioned, H1 and H2 are supported by our findings emphasising the influence of shared values on trust and commitment, respectively. Shared values explain 36.09 percent of the variance of trust (R^2=36.60%), and 26.54 percent of the variance of commitment (R^2=54.60%). This fact justifies why values shared between partners can be considered to be a significant antecedent to explain both relational factors, especially trust. According to these results, we conclude that organizations from different sectors that do not hold shared values might be unable to enjoy a high quality relationship at the next phase, i.e., in the partnership implementation in terms of trust and commitment. Therefore, as opposed to Murphy et al., (2015), our data suggest that it is essential for businesses to share in the partnership formation phase similar values and beliefs with their potential partners.

Contrary to our expectations, H3 is not supported. Opportunistic behaviour only predicts 0.51 percent of the variance of trust, which is the reason why this construct cannot be considered to be an important determinant to explain this relational factor. This result is opposed to the suggestions offered by Rivera-Santos & Rufín (2010) on the existence of a relationship between trust and opportunistic behaviour in a BUS-NPO context. Following Arenas & García (2006), who also rejected this relationship in their study about strategic alliances, we think that this result can be attributed to the use of sampling with a certain bias. They used non-probability sampling, where the businesses with troubled partnership processes would not generally have been very willing to respond to their questionnaire, and therefore to be part of their sample.

H4 is supported by our findings, highlighting the positive impact of trust on commitment, which explains 28.06 percent of its variance (R^2=54.60%). This result confirms the key idea supported by different authors (Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Sanzo et al., 2015) according to which, without trust, neither partner would take the risk of committing to the partnership. The existing link between trust and commitment allows us to detect that the central structure of the commitment-trust perspective also exists in a BUS-NPO context, which helps strengthen the approach of our work.

H5, H6, H7, and H8 are also supported by our results, demonstrating that the better the relationship in terms of trust and commitment, the greater the extent to which businesses and NPOs learn together and cooperate. On the one hand, trust explains 12.50 percent of the variance of relationship learning (R^2=51.30%) and 20.22 percent of the variance of cooperation (R^2=68.70%), and, on the other hand, commitment predicts 38.80 percent of the variance of relationship learning and 48.48 percent of the variance of cooperation. Therefore, although trust and commitment are good predictors of both constructs, commitment exerts a greater impact on these relational effects. The results of our study coincide, in a certain way, with the suggestions offered by several authors in a BUS-NPO partnership context. Firstly, Arenas, Arenas, Sánchez & Murphy (2009) highlighted the importance of creating a climate of commitment and trust in the relationship in order to favour the collaboration between the partners. And secondly, Sanzo et al. (2015) mentioned that the better the relationship in terms of trust and commitment, the greater the extent to which partners exchange information and knowledge. Therefore, our data confirm that without trust and commitment functioning as informal governance mechanisms (Rivera-Santos & Rufín, 2010) cooperation and relationship learning will remain complex relational processes for the partners.

Unpacking the complexity of these processes can provide a more structured understanding of how partners should prioritise their resources for partnership success.

And finally, H9 and H11 are supported in our study, emphasising the influence of commitment and relationship learning on partnership success, respectively. These findings are consistent with the suggestions provided by Austin (2000), Berger et al., (2004) or Seitanidi & Crane (2009), according to which both relational factors are fundamental for improving partnership success. More specifically, while commitment explains 19.75 percent of the variance of partnership success (R^2=31.90%), relationship learning predicts 11.09 percent of the variance of this construct. Thus, commitment of the business partner exerts a greater impact on partnership success. Contrary to our expectations, H10 is not supported. Cooperation only predicts 1.06 percent of the variance of partnership success, which is the reason why this construct cannot be considered to be a relevant determinant to explain overall partnership success. This contrasts with the arguments presented by Wilson et al. (2010), according to which the development of cooperative behaviours is a key enabler for the success of social alliances. While this result is surprising, it is not unexplainable. Firstly, the study context presents organisations with work environments that are very different. Barnes, Yen & Zhou (2011) have demonstrated that the differences existing between partners make the cooperation-performance relationship difficult. And secondly, following Siguaw et al. (1998) we can speculate from this finding that the cooperation-success relationship is non-monotonic: some degree of adherence to cooperative norms has a positive effect on partnership success, but partnership success might be adversely affected when too much importance is placed on cooperation over achieving the expected social-economic outcomes from the partnership.

5.1. Conclusion and Contributions

This research applies a relational perspective within the BUS-NPO literature in order to open up new research avenues by providing a relational process quantitative perspective in a literature where the majority of the research is qualitative and case-study based. Specifically, by introducing insights originating in the huge body of research on alliances, this study offers empirical evidence on the role of different key relational factors and the extent of their contribution to the success of such BUS-NPO partnership processes.

Therefore, the results of our study have relevance for both academics and practitioners. From a theoretical perspective, our study makes several contributions to existing knowledge. First, this study responds to previous calls for theory development in BUS-NPO collaboration research (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Branzei & Le Ber, 2014; Murphy et al., 2015) by contributing a quantitative process perspective associating partnership success with the value creation processes by focusing on one party's perspective, i.e. the profit sector. Second, our study also contributes to the literature by testing theory proposed by existing research on the suitability of the relational factors for studying the success of BUS-NPO partnerships (Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Murphy & Arenas, 2010; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Jamali et al., 2011; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Sanzo et al., 2015). And third, the findings of this paper contribute rare generalizable results in BUS-NPO research adding to the recently developed body of quantitative studies employing cross-sector-specific large samples that measure the factors influencing partnership outcomes (Murphy et al., 2015; Sanzo et al., 2015).

In addition to the above relevant implications, this study generates several recommendations to those business managers who are responsible for the development

of collaborative relationships with non-profit organisations. First, we recommend that business managers who wish to enjoy a high quality relationship in the partnership implementation –in terms of trust and commitment– need to pay close attention to the process of selection of their non-profit partners. Managers should thus explore the range of options available either by building on existing and proven contacts or by seeking new ones (Tennyson, 2003), and selecting those partners which they perceive to share a larger set of common values and beliefs. These common beliefs can be expressed, for instance, through the initial articulation of the social problems affecting the two partners, ethical behaviours in daily management, or basic principles in staff management.

Similarly, we suggest that business managers who wish to improve relationship learning and cooperation ought to dedicate more resources (time and effort) to strengthening the development of trust and commitment during the partnership implementation. To do this, they could establish work teams in which members from both organizations work together to implement the partnership (Rivera-Santos & Rufín, 2010), encourage the physical proximity of team members, ensure team member stability (Sanzo et al., 2015), and use training and seminar sessions to increase the mutual understanding, the empathy, and the interest of the teams in jointly achieving the objectives of the partnership.

And finally, we recommend that business managers in collaborative relationships with non-profit organisations need to maintain a high level of commitment to the partnership, by devoting their greatest efforts to the relationship, while promoting the development of a culture of mutual learning within their collaboration. To that end, managers ought to stimulate information sharing, even information sensitive for them, such as financial information, know-how, and new developments, favour the joint interpretation of this information by stimulating productive discussion and establishing face-to-face communication, and promote the integration of the knowledge created into a shared relationship-domain-specific memory, so that both businesses and NPOs can have access to it regardless of their location (Johnson, Sohi, & Grewal, 2004; Selnes & Sallis, 2003).

We hope that this work will encourage and facilitate practitioners to create more effective social partnerships by developing cooperation agreements with appropriate partners and establishing relationship management routines that let partners enjoy frequent and higher quality interactions.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The findings and implications of this study should be considered in the light of its limitations, which also open several avenues for further research. Firstly, in our study, the questionnaire was conducted among Spanish businesses in cross-sector collaboration relationships with non-profit organisations. Similar questionnaires conducted in other countries, although they may provide different results, can be used to compare systematically the role of relational factors in different contexts. Secondly, since the sample comprises companies that responded to our questionnaire, it is possible that its representation may be affected by including companies that have more positive relations with their partners. Future studies could increase the sample size in order to analyse a potentially greater range of variations in the results. And thirdly, our paper has empirically validated the role of certain relational factors in BUS-NPO research and the extent of their contribution to partnership success. Future studies can explore additional relational factors such as power (Berger et al., 2004; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007) or the

presence of conflict between partners (Sanzo et al., 2015), and examine their contribution to partnership success.

6. References

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