Motivation, Satisfaction, and Retention of Undergraduate Sport Management Volunteers

Chrysostomos Giannoulakis, Ball State University
James Johnson, Ball State University
Nathan Felver, Ball State University
Lawrence Judge, Ball State University

Management/leadership
Friday, June 5, 2015
20-minute oral presentation
(including questions)
(Frontenac)

Abstract 2015-097
10:35 AM
(Frontenac)

Introduction
Sport management programs often partner with athletic departments or community sport organizations to provide volunteer experiences for their students. Undergraduate volunteers have the opportunity to assist with community-based events, be involved in game-day operations with college athletics, or help organize events for their academic programs. This reciprocal partnership is often beneficial for students, programs, and the organizations with whom they volunteer. Students gain practical experiences, while the athletic department or community organization gains much-needed volunteers. These volunteer experiences also provide sport management students with an opportunity to explore interests in their chosen major (Bodey & Schaumleffel, 2008). Determining what motivates undergraduate sport management students to contribute their time to volunteer could be essential to increased student development and program-community volunteer partnerships. Furthermore, understanding these motives could lead to an overall satisfying experience for students, which could lead to sustained volunteerism.

Review of Literature
Volunteers are an important element since they provide sport administrators with the ability to offer, sustain, or expand the quantity, quality, and diversity of sport organizations’ services (Strigas & Jackson, 2003). In the academic setting, students’ learning experience can be supported by their level of involvement in extracurricular and volunteer activities. Student involvement refers to the “quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 297). Astin (1984) found a positive correlation between students’ co-curricular involvement and their success in college. In the sole academic study that has examined sport management students’ volunteer motivation, Pierce, Johnson, Felver, Wanless, and Judge (2014) found Love of Sport, Career, and Understanding as the three highest rated motivation factors. Additionally, Career and Understanding motives indicated that sport management students were also motivated by an opportunity to enhance their career, gain learning experiences, and share knowledge, skills, and abilities. The authors stressed the need for further examination of sport management student volunteers’ psychometric characteristics.

Purpose
Previous research has examined motivation, satisfaction, and retention of volunteers in a variety of different age groups and sport contexts. However, student volunteers within a sport management program have been overlooked with the exception of Pierce et al. (2014). The current study was a partial replication of the aforementioned project, as it investigated motivation and satisfaction using a similar research design. We expanded on the Pierce et al. (2014) study by examining retention and gender differences in relation to motivation and satisfaction. Additionally, participants from multiple institutions were recruited in order to increase external validity that is often low when investigating participants from one homogeneous group (i.e., students from one institution). Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between motivation, satisfaction, retention, and gender among undergraduate student volunteers from multiple sport management academic programs.

Method
The sample consisted of 322 undergraduate students from five Midwestern institutions, who were sport management majors or pre-majors who volunteered as a result of being a student in a sport management program. Participants completed a 46-item survey that required them to rate their motivation for volunteering, satisfaction with volunteering, and intention to continue volunteering. The survey instrument was adapted from Clary et al. (1998) and Bang and Ross (2009). The demographic variables of gender, age, ethnicity, and year in school were analyzed via
descriptive statistics. The seven motivation factors (i.e., Values, Understanding, Social, Career, Protective, Enhancement, and Love of Sport) were analyzed using measures of central tendency. Least squares multiple regression analysis was used to predict the satisfaction and retention levels of participants based on motives. Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze differences between the independent variable (i.e., gender) and multiple dependent variables (i.e., motivational factors, satisfaction, and retention). SPSS (version 20) was used for all subsequent statistical analyses.

**Results**

Love of Sport and Career were rated as the highest motivation factors among participants. For the Love of Sport variable, results confirmed that sport management students were primarily motivated to volunteer by the value one placed upon sport or identification with a particular sport (Bang & Ross, 2009). Results also indicated that sport management students were highly motivated to volunteer for career-related benefits; individuals who volunteer can prepare for a new career or maintain career-relevant skills (Clary et al., 1998). Students appeared to be motivated by acquiring hands-on experiences that improved their resume, allowed networking opportunities, and benefited their future career. In terms of satisfaction, outcomes illustrated that approximately 51% of the variance for satisfaction could be predicted using the seven motivation factors in this study. Moreover, Career, Social, Understanding, and Enhancement significantly aided in predicting satisfaction. Results indicated that approximately 45% of the variance for retention could be predicted using the seven motivation factors, with Career and Social motives significantly aiding in the prediction of retention. Significant differences between males and females were found among Values, Understanding, and Love of Sport motivation factors. For Love of Sport, males were significantly higher than females, whereas females rated Values and Understanding significantly higher than males.

**Discussion**

Motivating, satisfying, and retaining volunteers can be a challenge for undergraduate sport management programs that often partner with intercollegiate athletic departments or community sport organizations to provide student volunteers. Study participants were highly motivated by career-related benefits and a love of sport. For the participating academic institutions, sport management faculty and volunteer managers are encouraged to recruit volunteers based on these motivation factors. However, this study suggested that motives that drove students to participate were not the same motives that contributed most to a satisfying volunteer experience. Career benefits, social needs, knowledge, and personal growth best predicted satisfaction of sport management students. Satisfaction was also accomplished by fulfilling the Career, Social, Understanding, and Enhancement motives. Finally, satisfaction largely predicted retention. Thus, sport management faculty and volunteer managers should certainly strive to enhance students’ satisfaction with their volunteer experience. Three of the motivation factors (i.e., Values, Understanding, and Love of Sport) indicated a significant gender difference. Different volunteer placement strategies should take into account these gender differences. Ultimately, well-placed student volunteers lead to satisfied volunteers, which may ideally lead to retention. The connection between satisfaction and retention is critical for sport management faculty and partnering organizations to comprehend, as they attempt to provide meaningful experiences for sport management student volunteers.