Determinants of Volunteer Motives and Future Behavior in Community Sporting Events

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Understanding motives of volunteers is a pivotal key to know an individual’s decision to become involved in volunteering (Kim, Zhang, & Connaughton, 2010). One challenge event managers face is that because of the lack of financial rewards, it has been difficult to recruit individuals to participate as volunteers. According to Bang and Ross (2009), the decline in volunteering is a concern for sport managers since sporting events rely on volunteers. Community sport organizations, in particular, have suffered from a lack of volunteers; the dearth of volunteers is noticeable not only in the United States, but also in Europe and Asia. To date, researchers have focused on examining volunteer motivation and retention in mega-sporting events (e.g., Warner et al., 2011; Kim, Kim, & Odio, 2010; Bang, Ross, & Reio, 2012; Lee, Reisinger, Kim, & Yoon, 2014), and very little research has been conducted that includes an assessment of why volunteers work with community sporting events. Given the different characteristics of community sporting events compared to mega-sporting events (e.g., event duration and type of volunteers), there may be different motives that drive individuals to volunteer working with community sporting events.

Moreover, examining volunteer motives is also an important task for sporting organizations to maximize the volunteer workforce. Even though volunteer turnover may not exceed or be as expensive as turnover among paid-employees, retaining volunteers is still much more cost effective than recruiting and training new volunteers (Kim, Trail, Lim, & Kim, 2009). Therefore, attention should be given to assess whether the motives of volunteers at community sporting events differ from motives to volunteer at mega-sporting events. This study is framed through Self-Determination Theory (SDT) that different types of motives affect different behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which is applicable to volunteers. The purpose of this study was to (1) identify the motives that are most and least important to those who volunteer at community sporting events, and (2) assess whether the particular motives influence intention to continue volunteering in the future.

A researcher of this study visited on-site where community sporting events (e.g., community tennis tournaments and road race) took place to collect data. In addition, an online survey program (i.e., Qualtrics.com) was utilized to collect data from volunteers who had experience volunteering with community sporting events in the United States. A total 152 usable surveys were collected from volunteers. To assess the volunteer motives, a total of 18 items were adapted from Kim et al.’s (2010) Modified Volunteer Functions Inventory (MVFI) that modified the original VFI consisting of six motives (Value, Understanding, Protective, Social, Career, and Enhancement) to measure the motives of volunteers in a sport context. To assess the Intention to Continue Volunteering (ICV), five items that Kim, Trail, and Kim (2009) used were included.

The data satisfied the assumption for normality (skewness ranging from .32 to .129; kurtosis ranging from .01 to 1.89) and multicollinearity (VIF ranging from 1.51 to 5.16; Tolerance ranging from .19 to .66). The measurement model was tested to assess evidence of validity for the scales through an examination of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Mplus 7.0. To examine internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients and item-to-total correlations were assessed. Based on the results of assessment of reliability, the original factors were revised and five volunteer motives (Value, Protective, Social, Career, and Enhancement) and two dependent variables (e.g., ICV-I and ICV-II) were created. The ICV-I deals with overall intention to continue volunteering in general, and the ICV-II deals with intention to continue volunteering as influenced by family members or friends. Based on the mean scores of volunteer motives, Value (M=5.89) was the most important motive for volunteering. The remaining factors in order of importance for volunteering were Social (M=5.37), Career (M=5.21), Enhancement (M=5.02), and Protective (M=4.25).
All reliability coefficients were larger than .70, ranging from .72 to .93 except for Social (.68), which was retained considering the scores was close to the cutoff point. All item-to-total correlation scores were over .50, ranging from .52 to .88, and all of the average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than .50, ranging from .59 to .99. The measurement model fit the data well (S-B $\chi^2$/df =157.11/98 = 1.60, CFI = .96, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06). To test hypotheses of relationships between volunteer motivations and intention to continue volunteering, the overall structural model was assessed using four model fit indices (S-B $\chi^2$/df =143.23/98 = 1.46, CFI = .96, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06). The results of this study were as follows. Value did not have a significant impact on ICV-I ($\beta$ = .249, $p > .05$) and ICV-II ($\beta$ = -.003, $p > .05$). The influence of Protective on ICV-I ($\beta$ = -.317, $p < .05$) and ICV-II ($\beta$ = -.328, $p < .01$) were negative and significant. The effect of Social on ICV-I ($\beta$ = .217, $p < .05$) was positive and significant. However, Social did not have a significant impact with ICV-II ($\beta$ = .113, $p > .05$). The influence of Career on ICV-I ($\beta$ = -.444, $p < .001$) was negative and significant, but did not have a significant path to ICV-II ($\beta$ = -.085, $p > .05$). Enhancement had a positive and significant path to ICV-I ($\beta$ = .541, $p < .01$) and ICV-II ($\beta$ = .306, $p < .05$).

In summary, the most important motive influencing initial volunteering in the current study was Value. On the other hand, volunteers were less likely to continue volunteering in the future if they were motivated by Value. This result may be caused by social response bias. When filling out a survey, individuals may think they are “supposed to” help others, and so they rate the items accordingly. The lack of a significant relationship with future intentions lends some credence to this idea. Another possibility is that volunteers may decide to participate in volunteer work because they do have concerns for altruistic and humanitarian activities. However, after evaluating the volunteer experience, individuals may not be satisfied with the experience, and their altruistic or humanitarian feelings may be minimized. A consequence may be that individuals are less likely to continue volunteering. One implication for future researchers is that an effort should be made to assess whether volunteers are satisfied with their experience, if they have the sense of doing something good to help others. Social and Enhancement were pivotal factors influencing overall intention to continue volunteering. In addition, Enhancement was the only factor influencing intention to continue volunteering with influence by family or friends. Therefore, volunteers may regard self-benefits (e.g., creating social relationships and increasing self-esteem) as the primary and important factors when they consider intention to continue volunteering, rather than helping others.