The Impact of Engagement on Satisfaction and Intention to Remain among Volunteers at Sporting Events

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Within the sport industry, organizations often rely heavily on volunteers as a vital resource to accomplish goals and missions (Cuskelly, 2004; Doherty, 2009). Therefore, volunteers are referred to as a unique human resource (Chelladurai, 2006; Cuskelly et al., 1998; Doherty, 2006). Over the past two decades, sport scholars increasingly focused on volunteerism (Wicker, 2017) as organizations need to find ways to retain and recruit individuals to stay efficient as the need for this human resource continues to increase (Chelladurai, 2006; Cuskelly et al., 2006). One under explored avenue within the sport volunteer literature is engagement, which could allow organizations to better retain and motivate individuals.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Engagement, defined as an individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy directed towards positive organizational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), suggests individuals can positively affect an organization (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Volunteers are more likely to return and continue to volunteer if they had a satisfying experience (Green & Chalip, 2004) while it was also found that higher levels of satisfaction lead to higher enjoyment and encouragement of others to volunteer (Coyne & Coyne, 2001). Scholars discovered that previous experience along with feelings of pride and overall perceived fit predicted volunteer engagement (Ko et al., 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the mediating role of engagement and its applicability towards sport volunteers at sporting events to understand its influence on satisfaction and intention to remain.

H1: Engagement will be a significant predictor of satisfaction.
H2: Engagement will be a significant predictor of intention to remain.
H3: Meaningfulness, safety, and availability will be related to satisfaction through engagement.
H4: Meaningfulness, safety, and availability will be related to intention to remain through engagement.

Methods and Expected Results

A 41-item survey will be distributed online to volunteers from sporting events during the month of December. This research in progress focuses on how the engagement of volunteers affects outcomes of satisfaction and intention to remain. Engagement will consist of 12 items from Shuck et al.’s, (2017) Employee Engagement scale. Antecedents to engagement will be measured with five items for psychological meaningfulness, three items for psychological safety, and five items for psychological availability (May et al., 2004). Satisfaction will be measured with three items from Green and Chalip’s (2004) Satisfaction scale. Lastly, intention to remain will be assessed using three items from Price and Mueller’s (1986) scale. Upon completion of data collection, results will be analyzed through confirmatory factor analysis for data fit, and through structural equation modeling to address the proposed hypotheses in the study.

Proposed Implications for the Sport Industry

The current study explores the research gap of applying the engagement framework towards volunteers in the sport industry. Understanding engagement levels and their influences on various outcomes such as satisfaction and intention to remain will be advantageous for sport organizations to develop more effective engagement and retention interventions. Findings from this study will help position engagement as an important part of sport volunteers, underlining its relevance in the sport management literature.