

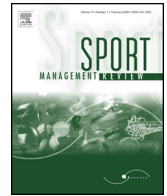


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Review

Volunteerism and volunteer management in sport

Pamela Wicker*

Department of Sport Economics and Sport Management, German Sport University Cologne, Am Sportpark Muengersdorf 6, 50933 Cologne, Germany

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on existing research examining volunteerism and volunteer management in sport from individual, institutional, multi-level, and policy perspectives. The overview reveals that a substantial body of knowledge has been generated, particularly on the individual perspective and, to a lesser extent, on the institutional perspective. Existing studies from the individual perspective have mainly examined antecedents and experiences of volunteers in sport organizations and at sport events, focusing on topics such as motivation, commitment, and satisfaction, while consequences of volunteerism have attracted less research. On the institutional perspective, research efforts have focused on topics such as recruitment and retention of volunteers and performance management. Studies taking a multi-level perspective give indications about how the institutional or community context affects volunteerism and volunteer management. From a policy perspective, research has mainly looked at challenges for volunteerism resulting from policy implementation and the monetary value of voluntary work. The overview also reveals that many studies have examined the mass of volunteers in general or volunteers in leading positions, while other groups of volunteers, such as voluntary coaches and referees, have attracted less research. After reflecting on topics examined and key findings, the article provides suggestions for future research within each perspective, ensuring that all perspectives and groups of volunteers are attended to.

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1. Introduction

Starting with the work of scholars such as [Auld \(1997\)](#) and [Cuskelly, McIntyre, and Boag \(1998\)](#), research on volunteerism and volunteer management in sport has received increased interest among sport management scholars since the late 1990s. The research focus of early studies was on non-profit sport organizations relying on voluntary work and the management of human resources within these organizations ([Doherty, 1998](#); [Inglis, 1997](#)). The non-profit sport organizations under investigation included a wide range of organizations—from national sport organizations ([Auld & Godbey, 1998](#)) to local community sport clubs ([Cuskelly et al., 1998](#)). A second stream of research examining sport event volunteers and volunteer management at sport events developed slightly later, in the new millennium (e.g., [Downward, Rumsdon, & Ralston, 2005](#)), although a few earlier studies can be found, too (e.g., [Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998](#)).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: p.wicker@dshs-koeln.de (P. Wicker).

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Today, research on volunteerism and volunteer management in the context of sport organizations and sport events can be considered one of the most prominent research topics within sport management. A keyword search using the terms *volunteer*, *volunteerism*, *volunteer management*, and *voluntary work* reveals that more than 100 articles have been published on this topic in the three leading sport management journals (*Sport Management Review*, *Journal of Sport Management*, and *European Sport Management Quarterly*) between the inception of these journals and November 2016. This area of research has been of particular interest in *Sport Management Review*, where the first article in the first issue of the first volume of the journal was about human resource management, including volunteer management (Doherty, 1998). Since the journal's first volume in 1998, 41 papers with 32 different lead authors from 11 different countries have been published on this topic.

This research interest may be explained by at least two aspects: first, the willingness of scholars to understand the phenomenon that “people work for nothing” (Freeman, 1997, p. S160) and, second, the relevance of volunteers to non-profit sport organizations (Schlesinger, Klenk, & Nagel, 2015) and sport events (Kodama, Doherty, & Popovic, 2013). The first aspect is rooted in the definition of volunteers. A volunteer is an individual who works out of free will or relatively uncoerced and receives no remuneration at all or only a relatively small reimbursement or pay (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996). This means that the standard labor supply explanations stating that pay plays a role in the selection of work can hardly be used to explain volunteer behavior (Freeman, 1997). Therefore, researchers have tried to understand the reasons why individuals voluntarily devote time and other resources to sport organizations and events.

The second reason may be the relevance of volunteers to the functioning of non-profit sport organizations and events, which is reflected in large sport volunteer numbers across countries and events. For example, approximately 1.6 million volunteers were reported for non-profit sport organizations in Canada (Volunteer Canada, 2010), 2.3 million in Australia (Volunteering Australia, 2015), 8.6 million in Germany (Breuer & Feiler, 2015), and 3.6 million in the United Kingdom (Sport

Table 1

Perspectives on sport volunteerism and volunteer management and topics considered.

Perspective	Topics considered
Individual	Decision to volunteer, time devoted to volunteerism Intention to continue volunteering, long-term volunteering Socio-demographic characteristics Motivation Commitment Active sport participation Solidarity Sense of community Satisfaction Role identity, task fit Empowerment Experiences Involvement Frustration Benefits and costs Expectations and obligations, psychological contract Personal development Training and learning Perceived support, motivational climate Online social interaction Development of social and cultural capital Labor market outcomes
Institutional	Effects on well-being, life satisfaction, and affectivity Recruitment and retention of volunteers Management and decision-making practices Transition of former players Organizational characteristics, organizational support Inspirational effect of role models Selection of volunteers Performance management Board power Board-executive relationships Board member commitment and involvement Role ambiguity Control
Multi-level	Human resource management Club characteristics and volunteerism Organizational factors and volunteer experiences
Policy	Community characteristics and volunteerism/volunteer management Challenges associated with implementation of policies Undeclared work Monetary value of voluntary work

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