



# The Impact of Commitment and Burnout on Continuance Intention Among Sport Volunteers

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the effects of affective and continuance commitment, along with burnout, on the intention to continue volunteering among sport volunteers, aiming to provide strategies for improving volunteer retention. Self-reported questionnaires were distributed, and data from a total of 153 volunteers were used for analysis. Using a structural equation model, the analysis highlighted key relationships: affective commitment was negatively related to burnout and positively related to continuance intention, indicating emotionally attached volunteers are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to continue volunteering. Conversely, continuance commitment was positively related to burnout, suggesting those who volunteer out of personal benefits are more prone to burnout. Burnout had a negative impact on continuance intention, while the relationship between continuance commitment and continuance intention was not statistically significant. These findings reveal the complex interplay between different types of commitment and their effects on burnout and continuance intention among sport volunteers. The study underscores the need for future research to explore these dynamics further and for organizations to develop strategies to enhance affective commitment and manage burnout effectively, particularly in high-demand volunteer roles like sport events.

**Keywords:** sport volunteers, commitment, burnout, continuance intention

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## **1. Introduction**

Volunteering extends beyond merely contributing positively to society; it is a powerful avenue for personal and professional growth, and for enhancing physical and mental well-being. Volunteers provide crucial support services, enhance participant experiences, and foster community engagement. According to the US Census Bureau (2023), 51% of Americans, equating to 124.7 million people, informally assisted their neighbors, while 23%, or 60.7 million people, formally volunteered with organizations. These figures underscore the diverse benefits of volunteering, including personal growth and professional enhancement.

Volunteers dedicate vast amounts of time and service to their communities, supporting nonprofits in delivering vital services to various groups and individuals. In the realm of sports, volunteer contributions are particularly crucial. Sporting organizations rely heavily on volunteers to provide participation opportunities, yet they have faced persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers (Casey et al., 2023).

The successful management of volunteers is essential for the success of most sports events, regardless of whether they are organized by non-profit or for-profit entities. Despite this, retaining volunteers remains a significant challenge for sports organizations and the industry at large (Han et al., 2013; Ringuet, 2012). Enhancing volunteers' continuance intention, recognized as a critical predictor of volunteering behavior (Ajzen, 1991), is therefore essential. It is important to explore the mechanisms underlying this behavior to secure a stable volunteer base for future events.

Volunteering should not be viewed as a one-time activity but as a form of serious leisure, where individuals continuously engage in skill- and knowledge-based activities within a special social context (Stebbins, 1982). Securing volunteers for future events is a key strategy for ensuring the success of these sport events. Understanding the concepts of commitment and burnout among sport volunteers is significant to increasing the number of continuance volunteers. Event managers must focus on attracting qualified volunteers and retaining them for future events to meet and sustain the wide-ranging goals of sports events.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of affective commitment, continuance commitment and burnout on the continuance intention among sport volunteers. By examining these factors, insights and strategies for improving volunteer retention are sought, thereby supporting the long-term success of sporting events and organizations.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Commitment and Burnout**

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), affective commitment (AC) describes the degree to which employees are emotionally attached to, identify with, and are engaged in their organization. For example, volunteers who are deeply engaged in social responsibility, closely connected with sports organizations, or emotionally invested in the success of sport events (e.g., volunteering at the Olympics out of patriotism or at a school event for school pride and community success) demonstrate commitment driven by affective factors. Burnout arises as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors in the workplace and one of the most crucial issues dealing by

organization (Chowdhury, 2018). Burnout is characterized by three main dimensions: overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Studies indicate that burnout in volunteerism can be attributed to various factors, such as a mismatch between volunteers' goals and those of their organization, insufficient support and resources, and challenges in coping with organizational demands and difficulties (Demerouti et al, 2001; Paulo et al, 2023).

Understanding the interplay between commitment and burnout is essential for developing effective strategies to enhance volunteer retention. The majority of burnout research has concentrated on paid employees, with only a limited number of studies investigating the relationship between volunteer motivation and burnout (Cho et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2016). Commitment and burnout are interrelated; high levels of commitment can buffer against burnout, while burnout can erode commitment. For instance, volunteers who have a strong emotional attachment to their organization, known as affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), may experience lower levels of burnout. This is because their positive feelings toward the organization help to reduce stress (Liu, Cao, Zhang, & Wu, 2020). Studies have suggested that fostering a strong sense of affective commitment can serve as a protective factor against burnout. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that volunteers with high affective commitment were less likely to experience burnout, as their emotional connection to the organization provided resilience against stress. Similarly, volunteers who feel valued and recognized by their organization are less likely to burn out, as their commitment to the organization reinforces their motivation and engagement (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004).

In the context of organizational behavior, continuance commitment reflects a self-centered and reciprocal approach, where individuals remain committed based on personal gains and the perceived costs of leaving (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Kohlberg, 1969). Continuance commitment also plays an important role in the relationship between commitment and burnout. Volunteers with high continuance commitment may feel compelled to stay due to the high costs associated with leaving, such as loss of benefits, social connections, or personal investment. For instance, when individuals volunteer to receive free tickets to sporting events, earn school credits, obtain giveaways, or expand their networks, their commitment is driven by continuance factors. Therefore, this type of commitment can sometimes be a double-edged sword. While continuance commitment can keep volunteers engaged despite experiencing burnout, it may also lead to increased feelings of entrapment and stress if the primary motivation for staying is fear of loss rather than genuine attachment or satisfaction. This can exacerbate burnout, as volunteers may continue their involvement out of personal benefits rather than passion, leading to higher emotional exhaustion and decreased overall well-being. For example, studies by Meyer et al. (2002) indicate that high levels of continuance commitment are associated with increased stress and burnout, as the pressure to remain due to perceived costs can overshadow the intrinsic motivations for volunteering.

Conversely, volunteers with lower levels of continuance commitment who are motivated by affective or normative reasons are less likely to experience burnout because their engagement is driven by positive factors rather than avoidance of negative consequences.

*Hypothesis 1: Affective commitment is negatively related to burnout among volunteers at sport events.*

*Hypothesis 2: Continuance commitment is positively related to burnout among volunteers at sport events.*

## **2.2 Commitment and Continuance Intention**

Commitment in the context of volunteerism can be understood through the lens of organizational commitment theory, which posits that individuals' commitment to an organization significantly influences their willingness to continue volunteering (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Several studies have highlighted the importance of commitment in continuance intention of volunteers. For example, Forner et al. (2022) mentioned that volunteers with higher levels of affective commitment were found to negatively predict volunteer turnover, suggesting they are more likely to return to volunteering in the future. Similarly, Han, Park, and Ji (2022) found that Olympic volunteers who exhibit high levels of affective commitment tend to have more positive future intentions. This is because their involvement is driven by genuine attachment and a sense of moral duty. Enhancing volunteers' sense of belonging and satisfaction with their roles could strengthen their commitment and reduce turnover rates. These volunteers are not only more likely to continue their engagement but also to do so with higher levels of satisfaction and motivation (Bang et al. 2013).

On the other hand, continuance commitment is intricately linked to future volunteering intentions. Volunteers with high continuance commitment are likely to continue their involvement due to the perceived costs associated with leaving. This type of commitment, while ensuring ongoing participation, may not always be associated with positive experiences or satisfaction. Volunteers who stay primarily because of continuance commitment may do so out of a sense of necessity rather than genuine enthusiasm or fulfillment, which can influence their future intentions (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Studies have shown that while continuance commitment can predict sustained volunteer involvement, it does not necessarily lead to higher satisfaction or positive future intentions. For example, Stukas et al. (2016) found that volunteers who reported high continuance commitment were more likely to continue volunteering, but their future intentions were often accompanied by mixed feelings of obligation and lack of alternative options.

*Hypothesis 3: Affective commitment is positively related to continuance intention among volunteers at sport events.*

*Hypothesis 4: Continuance commitment is negatively related to continuance intention among volunteers at sport events.*

## **2.2 Burnout and Continuance Intention**

Volunteers frequently encounter job burnout (Kulik, 2006). Burnout, characterized by emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion due to prolonged stress, poses a significant threat to the continuance intention of volunteers. In the context of volunteering, burnout can result from excessive demands, insufficient support, and lack of recognition, leading to decreased motivation

and eventual withdrawal (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Studies have shown that burnout negatively impacts volunteers' willingness to continue their involvement. For example, previous studies found that high levels of burnout among volunteers were associated with lower levels of commitment and higher intentions to quit (Allen & Mueller, 2013; Carson et al. 2000).

Addressing burnout involves creating a supportive environment that alleviates stressors and enhances volunteers' experiences. Strategies such as providing adequate training, recognizing volunteers' efforts, and fostering a sense of community can mitigate burnout and promote sustained engagement.

*Hypothesis 5: Burnout is negatively related to continuance intention among volunteers at sport events.*

### **3. METHODS**

#### **3.1. Participants**

A non-probability sampling method and a convenience sampling technique were employed to collect data for this study. Participants were volunteers who had participated in sport events at least once over the past two years. More than 500 questionnaires were distributed online, and 153 of these were completed and deemed usable for analysis. This robust dataset enabled a thorough examination of the relationships among key factors in volunteers' commitment, burnout, and continuance intention in sport events, thereby deriving the study's findings.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study consists of four parts: demographic characteristics, commitment, burnout, and continuance intention to volunteer. The demographic characteristics questions include basic personal data such as race, gender, marital status, income, education level, employment status, and age. Self-reported questionnaires were distributed, utilizing a five-point unipolar semantic differential scale to measure each factor.

The survey instrument to measure volunteer commitment, burnout, and continuance intention was slightly modified to enhance inadequacies of the existing scales. The existing scales didn't fit the context for this study. Thus, appropriate modifications from existing scales were significant step. A panel of experts, including three professors from sport management programs and two volunteer coordinators who had experienced in previous sport events, was asked to thoroughly exam the questionnaires to determine the content validity. To measure volunteer commitment, two dimensions, including affective commitment (AC) and continuance commitment (CC), were used by adapting an existing questionnaire from Han et al. (2022). The burnout scale by Li et al. (2023) was modified to measure the level of volunteers' burnout. Finally, we assessed the continuance intention to volunteer (CI) using an adapted scale by Wu et al. (2016).

#### **3.3. Data Analysis**

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 28.0) and the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS 28.0) were utilized to analyze the data. Structure equation modeling was performed to

examine the influence of volunteer commitment (i.e., AC and CC) and burnout on the continuance intention to volunteer (CI) in sport events. Prior to hypothesis tests by structure equation modeling, the correlation value between all variables was estimated with the use of Pearson correlation coefficient analysis to identify if there existed multicollinearity between all variables. In addition, reliability analysis through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was estimated to determine the internal consistency of the items for each variable.

#### 4. Results

Table 1 presents correlation values and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of each variable. The correlation values among all variables were examined. All correlation values ranging from .377 to .571 were significantly correlated yet distinct, indicating that there did not exist significant levels of multicollinearity because the correlation values among all variables were less than .85 (Kline, 2023). The reliability of each variable was measured with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of all variables were larger than cut-off value of .70, ranging from .786 to .884 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The results of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients were revealed that the items of each variable were internally consistent.

**Table 1:** Correlation Values and Cronbach's  $\alpha$

Factor	1	2	3	$\alpha$
1. Affective Commitment				.884
2. Continuance Commitment	.571**			.786
3. Burnout	.429**	.451**		.811
4. Continuance Intention	.377**	.336**	.463**	.858

\*\* $p < .01$

The hypothesis tests conducted in this study utilized a structural equation model to explore the relationships among commitment, burnout, and the continuance intention to volunteer in sport events. The detailed outcomes of these tests are presented in Table 2, which showcases the path coefficient values between all latent variables within the proposed model. The analysis revealed several significant findings. Affective commitment exhibited a strong negative relationship with burnout, indicated by a path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of -0.636 and a t-value of 10.201, suggesting that higher levels of affective commitment are associated with lower levels of burnout. Additionally, affective commitment was found to be positively related to continuance intention, with a path coefficient of 0.179 and a t-value of 3.558, indicating that volunteers with higher affective commitment are more likely to continue their volunteer activities. Conversely, continuance commitment demonstrated a positive relationship with burnout, as evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.311 and a t-value of 3.083. This suggests that volunteers who feel compelled to continue their involvement due to personal benefits are more likely to experience burnout. Burnout itself was found to negatively influence continuance intention, with a path coefficient of -0.512 and a t-value of 6.301, indicating that higher

levels of burnout reduce the likelihood of volunteers continuing their service. Interestingly, the relationship between continuance commitment and continuance intention was not statistically significant, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.057 and a t-value of 0.713. This finding suggests that the sense of personal benefits or the perceived cost of leaving does not significantly impact volunteers' intentions to continue their involvement.

**Table 2:** Results of Hypothesis Tests

	Path	$\beta$	SE	<i>t</i>	
H1	AC → Burnout	-.636**	.071	10.201	Accept
H2	CC → Burnout	.311**	.083	5.319	Accept
H3	AC → CI	.179*	.069	3.558	Accept
H4	CC → CI	.057	.067	.713	Reject
H5	Burnout → CI	-.512**	.069	6.301	Accept

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

## 5.

### Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the dynamics between commitment, burnout, and continuance intention among volunteers in sport events. The structural model reveals several significant relationships that can inform both theory and practice in volunteer management.

Firstly, the study found a strong negative relationship between affective commitment and burnout ( $\beta = -.636$ ,  $t = 10.201$ ). This indicates that volunteers who are emotionally attached and committed to their roles are less likely to experience burnout. This finding suggests that fostering an emotional connection and a sense of belonging among volunteers can be a protective factor against burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Volunteers who feel passionate and dedicated to their roles are likely to derive satisfaction and energy from their involvement, which can buffer against feelings of exhaustion and stress.

Second, the study revealed a positive relationship between continuance commitment and burnout ( $\beta = .311$ ,  $t = 3.083$ ). This suggests that volunteers who remain in their roles due to a sense of obligation or perceived costs of leaving are more likely to experience burnout (Meyer et al, 2002). Continuance commitment, which is driven by necessity rather than passion, can lead to increased stress and exhaustion as volunteers may feel trapped or obligated to continue despite a lack of intrinsic motivation.

Third, affective commitment was positively related to continuance intent ( $\beta = .179$ ,  $t = 3.558$ ). This suggests that volunteers who have a strong emotional bond with their volunteering roles are more likely to continue volunteering (Bang et al., 2013). This finding emphasizes the importance of creating an environment that enhances emotional attachment, as it can lead to sustained volunteer engagement. Organizations should focus on recognizing and valuing the contributions of volunteers to strengthen their affective commitment.

Fourth, burnout was found to negatively contribute to continuance intent ( $\beta = -.512$ ,  $t = 6.301$ ). This indicates that higher levels of burnout decrease the likelihood of volunteers continuing in their roles. This finding aligns with the expectation that burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of accomplishment, can lead to withdrawal and a decreased intention to continue volunteering (Allen & Mueller, 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). It underscores the importance of addressing burnout to maintain volunteer retention.

Lastly, there was no statistically significant relationship between continuance commitment and continuance intent ( $\beta = .057$ ,  $t = .713$ ). This implies that personal benefits or the perceived cost of leaving do not significantly influence volunteers' intentions to continue. This suggests that while continuance commitment may contribute to burnout, it does not necessarily translate into a stronger intention to remain a volunteer. Other factors, such as affective commitment and burnout levels, play a more critical role in determining continuance intent to volunteer.

The findings of this study highlight the intricate nature of volunteer behaviors at sport events, highlighting the nuanced interplay between different types of commitment (affective and continuance) and their distinct impacts on burnout and continuance intent. This complexity calls for future research to delve deeper into these dynamics and consider additional factors like personal values and organizational culture that may influence volunteer behavior. Differentiating between types of commitment is crucial for a more refined understanding of volunteer burnout and retention. Additionally, the negative relationship between burnout and continuance intent emphasizes the importance of addressing burnout to maintain volunteer retention, suggesting that future studies should focus on developing effective strategies to prevent and manage burnout, particularly in the context of sport events and other high-demand volunteer roles.

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