



Motivation, Commitment, and Intention of Olympic Volunteers

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Abstract

This study examines whether volunteer motivation and commitment influence a volunteer's intention to continue volunteering for future Olympics among the volunteers for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Since this event occurred amid the pandemic, we expect this study will provide unique insights into the dynamics of volunteerism. In our study which follows the Olympic Volunteer Motivation Questionnaire (OVMQ), states that volunteer motivation includes four factors: organization attachment, volunteer attachment, internal benefits, and external benefits. In addition, volunteer commitment includes three factors: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. We collected data on volunteers' demographic characteristics, volunteer motivation, volunteer commitment, and future intentions of volunteers. A total of 127 questionnaires were utilized for the data analysis. The results show that volunteers with volunteer attachment, internal and external benefit are more likely to volunteer for future Olympic events. Moreover, volunteers with continuance commitment are less likely to volunteer for future Olympic games. Given the value of volunteerism in the Olympic games, organizers are recommended to maximize volunteer motivations by promoting concerns for others or society and emphasizing potential benefits, such as personal growth and other tangible benefits. In addition, organizers may want to minimize the perception of continuance commitment among volunteers.

Key words: volunteer motivation, volunteer commitment, future intention to volunteer, 2020 Tokyo Olympics

Introduction

The success of nonprofit organizations relies heavily on volunteers who render free service for the benefit of others (Usadolo, Brunetto, Nelson, & Gillett, 2022). Likewise, volunteers play a crucial role in the overall success of the Olympics, organized by one of the major nonprofit organizations. Volunteering is defined as activities performed during free time to benefit other people, groups, or organizations (Wilson, 2000). Volunteering is not supposed to be a one-time activity but a type of serious leisure (Carter, 1975)

where people continuously perform skill- and knowledge-based activities in a special social field (Stebbins, 1982). Moreover, volunteering does not only benefit others but also volunteers, themselves, in terms of building networks or personal experiences. Thus, organizers should pay attention in attracting qualified volunteers and retaining them for future games to fulfill and sustain the wide range of goals for the Olympics.

In this study, we explore two research questions. The first question addresses the drivers for volunteers' motivation and commitment to the Olympic games. The second question addresses critical factors leading to the intention to volunteer for future events. To answer these questions, organizers must understand why people sacrifice their free time to benefit others. Some may volunteer because they support the value of the mission and culture of an organization or because they care about others. Others may volunteer because there are potential benefits associated with volunteering. Despite numerous studies of volunteer motivation based on a multi-contextual approach (e.g., Bang and Chelladurai, 2003; Caldwell & Andereck, 1994; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Farrell, Johnson, and Twynam, 1998; Morrow-Howell & Mui, 1989), we incorporate the volunteer motivation scale developed by Han, Ji & Park (2019), which addresses two major aspects of motivation: altruism and egoism.

Moreover, it is critical to understand why volunteers are committed to the Olympic games. Volunteers may exhibit similar behaviors, but they may have different reasons for behaving in such a way. For example, some may be committed because they love to do so, while others are obliged to do so or have no choice but to do so. Volunteer commitment begins with expectations but strengthens through experiences (Green & Chalip, 2004). From the role identity theory perspective (Stryker, 1980), how volunteers see themselves results in how they interact with others and what actions to take. A volunteer's specific role may create a sense of identity, and they will behave based on that role identity (Callero, Howard, & Piliavin, 1987). In other words, a particular role that volunteers perceive at sporting events may gradually be incorporated into their self-concept over time (Van Dyne & Farmer, 2005), resulting in future behaviors in similar settings. This role identity will directly influence volunteer activities, such as donations of time and resources (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). The extant literature shows that volunteer commitment has a positive impact on various performance measures, such as job performance and the intention to stay (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Park, 2010; Stephens, Dawley, & Stephens, 2004).

Thus, organizers should understand how volunteers are motivated, why they are committed to the Olympics, and whether they would volunteer for future events. In other words, volunteer programs should focus on attracting, motivating, rewarding, and retaining volunteers because it may result in a cohort of committed volunteers who are essential for providing quality services (Kim, Jones, & Rodriguez, 2008).

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics were presented with an extra set of challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Olympic Games were originally predicted to have 90,000 applicants during the advertising and outreach in years preceding the Games (Kolotouchkina, 2018). The Tokyo recruitment team for the volunteer program had tried different advertising strategies to recruit volunteers for the 2020 Games. During the recruitment season, the Olympic Games volunteer program received 204,680 applications to volunteer at the Games and in the city (International Olympic Committee, 2019). The volunteers ranged from 19 years old to 91 years old, most of whom are native to Japan (International Olympic Committee, 2021). Many complications arose for these Games related to COVID-19, including the Games being postponed for a year and the amount of regulations placed on the athletes, employees, and volunteers. Over 10,000 volunteers decided not to volunteer due to COVID-19, ranging from safety concerns, lack

of vaccinations available to volunteers, and poor support from the Games administration (Park, Shibata, & Dickstein, 2021).

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Volunteer Motivation

Volunteer motivation is an individual's effort to seek out volunteer opportunities, commit to helping others voluntarily, and maintain involvement over a certain period (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, & Miene, 1998; Pearce, 1983). Volunteering is defined as "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization" (Wilson, 2000, p. 215). The extant literature explored volunteer motivation in a single sporting event such as a marathon (Strigas, 2001) or a soccer game (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003) and in the Olympic games (Bang, Alexandris & Ross, 2008; Han et al., 2019; Moreno, Moragas, & Paniagua, 1999).

Since people have different reasons to volunteer, the extant literature explores various ways of conceptualizing volunteer motivation. In sports, Farrell et al. (1998) developed four dimensions of volunteer motivation: purposive, solidary, external traditions, and commitments. Strigas (2001) developed a five-factor scale: social/leisure, material, egoistic, purposive, and external influence. Then, Bang and Chelladurai (2003) developed the Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events (VMSISE), including expression of values, patriotism, interpersonal contacts, career orientation, personal growth, and extrinsic rewards. Similarly, Bang and Ross (2009) developed seven factors: expression of values, community involvement, interpersonal contacts, career orientation, personal growth, extrinsic rewards, and love of sports. However, these studies were not conducted in the context of the Olympics.

Despite numerous studies on volunteer motivation, one of the biggest challenges with using a multiple-dimensional scale is the lack of consensus on motivation factors and complexity. Concerning Olympic volunteers, Bang et al. (2008) developed seven factors: expression of values, patriotism, interpersonal contacts, career orientation, personal growth, extrinsic rewards, and love of sports. Also, Pate, Hardin, and Hums (2017) presented four factors: expression of values, interpersonal contacts, career orientation, and personal growth. In this study, we used the modified Olympic Volunteer Motivation Questionnaire (OVMQ) that was developed based on two basic motives for volunteering: altruism and egoism because volunteering results in mutual benefits for volunteers and events.

First, from the altruistic perspective, volunteers may voluntarily engage in the self-selection process without external pressure or financial remuneration because they like supporting the Olympics. They may perceive this as an opportunity to express their altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, & Miene, 1998) and fulfill their desire to do something useful and contribute to the event (Farrell et al., 1998). According to Han et al. (2019), the OVMQ identifies two factors such as organization attachment (OA) and volunteer attachment (VA). Organization attachment represents pride in and love of the organization, allegiance to the organization, the success of the Olympics, and patriotism. Volunteer attachment represents concerns for others and society.

Second, from the egoistic perspective, volunteers may seek their own benefits in exchange for volunteering. Volunteers may enhance career-related benefits, psychological comfort, and social network (Clary et al., 1998) and link external expectations and personal skills (Farrell et al., 1998). Volunteering offers the opportunity to expand social networks, improve professional competencies, and utilize

specialized knowledge and skill sets (Stebbins, 1982). The OVMQ identifies two factors such as internal benefit (IB) and external benefit (EB) (Han et al., 2019). The internal benefit includes gaining new experience and contacts, feeling important and needed, and career development. The external benefit includes getting free uniforms, food, and admission, meeting and interacting with others, and forming friendships. Therefore, the volunteers may find it mutually beneficial for themselves (egoism) and the sporting event itself (altruism). Based on the four-factor model of motivation, we propose the following hypotheses on volunteer motivation:

Hypothesis 1: Organization attachment has a positive impact on future intention to volunteer.

Hypothesis 2: Volunteer attachment has a positive impact on future intention to volunteer.

Hypothesis 3: Internal benefit has a positive impact on future intention to volunteer.

Hypothesis 4: External benefit has a positive impact on future intention to volunteer.

Volunteer Commitment

Organizational commitment is the extent to which individuals identify themselves with and become involved with a particular organization (Porter, Steer, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). The extant literature found a positive impact of organizational commitment on various outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Costa, Chalip, Green, & Simes, 2006), willingness to be trained (Kim & Chelladurai, 2008), job performance (Stephens et al., 2004), turnover intention (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001), and intention for retention (Park, 2010). In sports management, organizational commitment is equivalent to volunteer commitment because it is interpreted as a volunteer's commitment to the organizing party of major sporting events. More recently, Mykletun and Himanen (2016) found that job satisfaction and recognition increase volunteer commitment, resulting in a higher intention to volunteer for future events.

Following Meyer and Allen (1991), we adopted the three-component commitment model to assess the influence of affective, normative, and continuance commitment's impact on future intention to volunteer. According to Meyer & Allen (1991), affective commitment (AC) refers to the extent that employees are emotionally attached to, identify themselves with, and involved in the organization. Most volunteers choose an organization based on its values and missions without considering financial reimbursement (Park & Kim, 2013), so they are more likely to accept and believe in organizational goals and objectives. They tend to be intrinsically motivated (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004), follow self-selected ethical principles, and become less egocentric (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Thus, affective commitment is found to be positively associated with a feeling of pride and respect (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008), organizational support (Bang, 2011), and future intention (Park, 2010).

Normative commitment refers to the extent to which employees feel obligated to remain in the organization because of the feeling of social responsibility against leaving. Since the main drivers of normative commitment are contractual and legalistic agreement, employees with normative commitment perform because it is the right thing to do based on internalized normative pressure (Allen & Meyer, 1990). However, unlike paid employees, volunteers, who are not bound to a legal or written agreement, may possess a perceived set of expectations and obligations (Taylor, Darcy, Hoye, & Cuskelly, 2006). Thus, volunteers with normative commitment are expected to perform better and stay in an organization because it mutually benefits all parties (Kim, Trail, Lim, & Kim, 2009).

Continuance commitment (CC) refers to the extent to which employees remain in the organization after evaluating the costs associated with leaving the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Continuance commitment corresponds to the egoistic and exchange orientation (Kohlberg, 1969). From the social exchange theory perspective (Homans, 1958), volunteers are more likely to engage in activities if they find benefits (e.g., making new friends or learning new skills) outweighing the costs (e.g., time and resources required for volunteering). Most individuals with continuance commitment tend to be marginal volunteers, such as college students volunteering for school credits, continuance commitment is not expected to be positively associated with volunteering outcomes, although volunteers with continuance commitment may still show future intention when they are satisfied with volunteering experience (Park & Kim, 2013). Therefore, we develop hypotheses on volunteer commitment as follows:

Hypothesis 5: Affective commitment has a positive impact on future intention to volunteer.

Hypothesis 6: Normative commitment has a positive impact on future intention to volunteer.

Hypothesis 7: Continuance commitment has a negative impact on future intention to volunteer.

METHODS

Sample

We used a non-experimental cross-sectional descriptive study and the survey method due to its quick turnaround for data collection. Also, in utilizing the survey, we adopted a non-probability sampling method and a convenience sampling technique because we targeted the 2021 Tokyo Olympics volunteers who were fluent in English to respond to the survey. A five-point unipolar semantic differential scale was used to measure each factor (motivation, commitment, and future intention) and a total of 127 questionnaires were utilized for the data analysis.

Measurement

The instrument of this study consists of four parts: demographic characteristics, volunteer motivation, volunteer commitment, and future intention to volunteer. The demographic characteristics questions include basic personal data such as nationality, gender, marital status, income, education level, employment status, and age (Table 1). In this study, we modified Han et al.'s (2019) Olympic Volunteer Motivation Questionnaire (OVMQ) to measure volunteer motivation. This instrument includes four factors of volunteer motivation such as organization attachment (OA), volunteer attachment (VA), internal benefits (IB), and external benefits (EB). To measure volunteer commitment, we used the three dimensions of organizational commitment: affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC). Finally, we assessed the future intention to volunteer (FI). All variables were computed by adding up the response scores of the three questionnaire items.

Data Analysis

We used the Statistical Package for the Social Science (IBM SPSS STATISTICS 23) and SAS (SAS 12.1) to analyze the data. Our conjecture is that a volunteer's future intention to participate in sporting events would be significantly influenced by their demographic factors. Thus, we included volunteer demographic characteristics, such as residence status, gender, marital status, income, education, employment status, and age. All the volunteer demographic variables except for age are characterized

as categorical, representing a finite number of distinct groups. The definitions of the other volunteer characteristic variables are provided in Table 1.

We performed the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to examine the influence of volunteer motivation (i.e., OA, VA, IB, and EB) and volunteer commitment (i.e., AC, NC, and CC) on the future intention to volunteer (i.e., FI). The regression model suffers from a multicollinearity problem associated with voluntary commitment variables ($VIF > 10$); thus, we ran a separate regression by including each one of the volunteer commitment variables instead of including all three variables simultaneously.

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of the variables used for the regression analysis. In general, volunteers at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics have a strong intention to volunteer for future Olympic games (mean=11.98). Concerning volunteer motivation, volunteer attachment (VA) seems to be the strongest motivation factor (mean=12.20), while external benefit (EB) seems to be relatively weak among other factors (mean=9.68). Concerning volunteer commitment, volunteers are strongly committed to the organization in terms of affective commitment (AC, mean=11.31), normative commitment (NC, mean=10.91), and continuance commitment (CC, mean=9.62). The results show that volunteers at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics were least likely to be motivated through external benefits such as getting uniforms or goodies or forming friendships. In addition, volunteers are less likely to feel that they would be at a disadvantage for not showing commitment to volunteering. Concerning demographic variables, while the majority of respondents were Japanese (mean=.79), they were not severely disproportionate in terms of gender (mean=.47), marital status (mean=.43), and employment status (mean=.551). Also, the respondents consist of various age groups ranging from 17 to 71 (mean=39.11, St. Dev. =14.86).

Table 2 presents the results from the ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions. Concerning the altruistic aspect of volunteer motivation, the results show that all volunteer motivation variables, except for organization attachment (OA), positively impact volunteers' future intentions. In addition, volunteer attachment (VA) is the only variable that is significantly associated with future intention regardless of volunteer commitment factors (Model 1, $\beta=1.12$, $p<.01$; Model 2, $\beta=1.08$, $p<.01$; Model 3, $\beta=1.01$, $p<.01$). These findings fail to support hypothesis 1 (OA) but support hypotheses 2 (VA). In short, volunteer attachment derived from concerns for others and society is the most significant driver for continuing their voluntary service in future sporting events.

In addition, concerning the egoistic aspect of volunteer motivation, volunteers appear to seek volunteering for future events because of potential benefits, but they focus more on internal benefits than external. The results show that the internal benefit (IB) is at least marginally associated with future intentions after controlling for each type of volunteer commitment (Model 1, $\beta=.11$, $p<.10$; Model 2, $\beta=.11$, $p<.10$; Model 3, $\beta=.13$, $p<.05$). On the other hand, external benefit (EB) was found to be significantly related to future intention after controlling for continuance commitment (Model 3, $\beta=.192$, $p<.05$). These findings marginally support hypothesis 3 (IB) and 4 (EB). Therefore, although the evidence is not fully persuasive, it is still plausible that internal benefits are more likely to result in a higher degree of future intention.

Concerning volunteer commitment, volunteers are less likely to volunteer for future events in fear of losing benefits derived from volunteering. The regression results with the volunteer commitment variables show that only continuance commitment (CC) is negatively associated with future intentions

(Model 3, $\beta = -.219$, $p < .05$). However, no evidence supports the impact of affective and normative commitment on future intention. It implies that a volunteer's personal innate preference or value system to social norms does not necessarily result in future intention. Thus, the results support hypothesis 7 (CC), but fail to support hypotheses 5 (AC) and 6 (NC).

Conclusion and Discussion

This study found that volunteers with volunteer attachment, internal benefit, and external benefit are more likely to volunteer for future Olympics. Moreover, volunteers with continuance commitment are less likely to volunteer for future Olympic games. According to Allen and Meyer (1990) continuance commitment (CC) was about the costs associated with leaving the organization and corresponds to the egoistic and exchange orientation (Kohlberg, 1969). Therefore, the results of this study reflect the concept of continuance commitment previously developed. In other words, the egoistic reasons are not good indicators for future volunteer service during the Olympics.

These findings contributed not only to an extension of the knowledge-base of volunteerism in sports but also to practical applications for volunteer coordinators on the ways in which volunteers are managed in the future Olympics. However, the findings in the extant literature could not be generalized to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics because the event occurred amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the prosperity of the worldwide COVID-19 confirmed cases, the IOC decided to postpone the Tokyo Olympics to 2021. However, despite the decreasing trend of COVID-19 cases due to the development of vaccines and social distancing policies, people were worried about the well-being of athletes, workers, volunteers, media, and other participants. Consequently, more than 10,000 out of the 80,000 volunteers stepped down from volunteering. Thus, we speculate that only those seriously committed to the Olympics might have volunteered for the Tokyo Olympics. Thus, this study aims to explore the distinctive dynamics of volunteer motivation, commitment, and future intention of volunteers at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The results obtained from this study will extend the knowledge-base of volunteerism in sports and provide practical applications for volunteer organizers on how volunteers are managed for future Olympics.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Future Intention						
<i>Future Intention (FI)</i>	127	11.976	13.000	2.677	4.000	15.000
Volunteer Motivations						
<i>Organization Attachment (OA)</i>						
<i>Volunteer Attachment (VA)</i>	127	12.205	12.000	1.920	8.000	15.000
<i>Internal Benefit (IB)</i>	127	11.551	12.000	2.762	3.000	15.000
<i>External Benefit (EB)</i>	127	9.685	9.000	3.306	3.000	15.000
Volunteer Commitments						
<i>Affective Commitment (AC)</i>	127	11.315	12.000	2.429	5.000	15.000
<i>Normative Commitment (NC)</i>	127	10.913	11.000	2.193	5.000	15.000

<i>Continuance Commitment (CC)</i>	127	9.622	10.000	2.582	3.000	14.000
Demographic Characteristics						
<i>Residence</i>	127	0.787	1.000	0.411	0.000	1.000
<i>Gender</i>	127	0.465	0.000	0.501	0.000	1.000
<i>Marital Status</i>	127	0.425	0.000	0.496	0.000	1.000
<i>Income</i>	127	3.732	4.000	1.784	1.000	6.000
<i>Education Level</i>	127	3.480	3.000	0.890	2.000	5.000
<i>Employment Status</i>	127	0.551	1.000	0.499	0.000	1.000
<i>Age</i>	127	39.110	38.000	14.864	17.000	71.000

- Residence: 1 for Japanese respondents, 0 for otherwise
- Gender: 1 for male, and 0 for female
- Marital status: 1 for married status and 0 otherwise
- Income: 1 if the income amount is less than \$20,000, 2 if it is between \$20,000 and \$35,000, 3 if it is between \$35,000 and \$50,000, 4 if it is between \$50,000 and \$75,000, 5 if it is between \$75,000 and \$100,000 and 6 if it is over \$100,000.
- Education Level: 1 if a respondent has educational background below high school education, 2 for the level of high school education, 3 for the level of bachelor degree, 4 for master degree, and 5 for doctoral degree.
- Employment Status: 1 for full-time employed status and 0 for otherwise.
- Age is a continuous variable, measured as the age of a respondent.

Table 2: OLS Regression Result

	Dependent Variable: Future Intention (FI)					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
<i>Intercept</i>	-6.482	***	-6.301	***	-4.043	**
Demographic Characteristics						
<i>Residence</i>	1.530	***	1.296	***	1.090	***
<i>Gender</i>	0.483		0.518		0.504	
<i>Marital Status</i>	-1.402	***	-1.434	***	-1.369	***
<i>Income</i>	0.118		0.193		0.137	
<i>Education Level</i>	0.404	*	0.340		0.331	*
<i>Employment Status</i>	0.474		0.282		0.500	
<i>Age</i>	0.021		0.014		0.023	
Volunteer Motivation						
<i>Organization Attachment (OA)</i>	-0.027		-0.029		-0.085	
<i>Volunteer Attachment (VA)</i>	1.122	***	1.082	***	1.011	***
<i>Internal Benefit (IB)</i>	0.109	*	0.112	*	0.134	**

<i>External Benefit (EB)</i>	0.094	0.096	0.192 **
Volunteer Commitment			
<i>Affective Commitment (AC)</i>	-0.076		
<i>Normative Commitment (NC)</i>		-0.006	
<i>Continuance Commitment (CC)</i>			-0.219 ***
No. of observations	127	127	127
Adj. R-Square	0.68	0.68	0.71
F-value	23.35 ***	23.16 ***	26.24 ***

- Significance level: *** ($p < .01$), ** ($p < .05$), and * ($p < .10$), based on t-values, using a two-tailed test.

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