

NON-VOLUNTEERISM OF UNIVERSITY SPORT STUDENTS: A LEISURE CONSTRAINTS THEORY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that student volunteerism has declined in numerous countries. The current South African sport industry is heavily dependent on volunteers to deliver services in communities and at sporting events. A serious effort may be necessary to successfully and positively recruit and manage volunteers. The purpose of this study was to identify factors, which may constrain volunteerism amongst university sport students. Data were collected from an in-class convenience sample utilising a self-administered questionnaire to students (N=279) enrolled in a sport curriculum at two universities in the Gauteng Province. The volunteer questionnaire of Auld and Cuskelly was used to gather data. Of the returned questionnaires, 153 students classified themselves into the category of "never volunteered before" and completed that specific section of the questionnaire. These responses were included in the study. An Exploratory factor analysis using Principal Components Analysis was conducted to identify constraining volunteer factors for sport students. Five factors emerged, namely 'organisation environment perception', 'perceived workload', 'psychological aspects', 'perceived lack of skills' and 'time constraints'. This study provides a promising contribution in identifying factors constraining volunteering amongst university sport students.

Key words: Volunteerism; University sport students; Leisure constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Volunteers have played an important role in the enduring operations of numerous public and private agencies throughout the years (Liao-Troth & Diunn, 1999). The success of many profit and non-profit organisations would have been diminished had it not been for voluntary and personal hours dedicated to a cause without fiscal compensation (Gage & Thapa, 2012). According to results from the first Volunteers Activity Survey (VAS) conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2010, 1.2 million people over the age of 15 years participated in volunteer activities for that year (Statistics South Africa, 2010). These volunteers contributed a total of 379 million hours at an average of 6.1 hours per week of volunteer activities with an estimated value of R7.5 billion had they been remunerated. In particular, women contributed 256 million hours at an average of 6.4 hours per week, amounting to R4.4 billion. In the same time frame, men contributed 123 million hours at an average of 5.6 hours per week, estimated at a value of R3.1 billion (Statistics South Africa, 2010). The overall financial benefit of 'free

labour' to organisations through volunteerism is immense and, at the same time they increasingly depend on services provided by volunteers (Cravens, 2006).

Volunteering by university students

Volunteer recruitment programs often target university students due to their apparent enthusiasm for involvement in major sporting events, their tendency to engage positively in community work related in-service learning and their attitude of volunteer involvement with benefits of a future job in sight (Auld, 2004; Handy *et al.*, 2010; Gage & Thapa, 2012). Behavioural characteristics of students regarding volunteerism have been well investigated (Auld, 2004), with several studies indicating that student volunteer activities have declined (Gaskin, 2004; Cruce & Moore, 2007). The national statistics of volunteer rate by age indicate that the age category of 15 to 24 years have a volunteer rate of 1.2% (Statistics South Africa, 2010). This is the lowest of all the age categories in the country, which suggests that the student-aged population are the least involved in volunteer activities (Statistics South Africa, 2010).

The South African sport industry is heavily dependent on volunteers to deliver services in communities and at sporting events. In this regard, organisations could focus more on the recruitment of sport students to fulfil this need (Goslin *et al.*, 2004; Goslin, 2006). Francis (2011) also posit that university students are an under-researched population related to volunteerism with the majority of research focused on student motivations and characteristics to successfully volunteer. However, there is a need for identification and clarification of constraining factors to volunteerism for university students (Cruce & Moore, 2007; Smith *et al.*, 2010). The focus of this study was to identify factors constraining university sport students from engaging in volunteer activities.

Leisure constraints framework

The hierarchical leisure constraints model first presented by Crawford and Godbey (1987) and expanded by Jackson *et al.* (1993), has been widely accepted as an important lens through which to view leisure behaviour, including volunteerism (Green & Chalip, 1998). Crawford *et al.* (1991) classified constraints into three categories, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural. Intrapersonal constraints are individual psychological states and attributes that affect preference and lead to non-participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Examples of intrapersonal constraints include lack of interest, stress, attitude, anxiety and perceived lack of skill (Godbey *et al.*, 2010; Gage & Thapa, 2012). Interpersonal constraints occur because of the unavailability of other people and which co-participants perceive prevents them from participation (Gage & Thapa, 2012). This could include an aspect, such as "not knowing who one will work with" (Cleave & Doherty, 2005) and unlike intrapersonal constraints, interpersonal constraints relate to both preferences and participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Structural constraints are the intervening factors between leisure preference and participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987) and include factors such as lack of time, money, opportunity, information and access (Cleave & Doherty, 2005; Gage & Thapa, 2012).

Volunteerism constraints of university students

Astin and Sax (1998) posit that students often avoid volunteering since it consumes time and energy, which they could have devoted to their academic pursuits or paid work to support their time studying. When students perceive their time spent on volunteering as affecting themselves negatively, they may be less motivated to volunteer. Students have a tendency to strive towards fulfilling their own needs before serving others and in this regard students identified "a lack of time" as the most common constraint preventing them from volunteering (Auld, 2004; Hyde & Knowles, 2013). Lack of time is an understandable constraint with students having separate or coinciding study and work commitments that leaves little time for other obligations such as volunteering (Auld, 2004; Hyde & Knowles, 2013). Various studies have been conducted to identify barriers to volunteering and "a lack of time", "no interest", "health problems", "don't know how to get involved" and "too many other commitments" have been some of the most prominent factors (Cleave & Doherty, 2005).

Several studies investigated barriers and constraining factors of leisure behaviour (Cleave & Doherty, 2005; Gage & Thapa, 2012). Intrapersonal constraints identified by young people included low self-esteem (Raymore *et al.*, 1994), gender roles, lack of self-confidence (Culp, 1998), lack of skills (Jackson & Rucks, 1995) and lack of motivation (Caldwell *et al.*, 1999). Family, other adults (programme leaders and coaches) and peers influenced interpersonal leisure constraints (Shannon, 2006; Gage & Thapa, 2012), while young people identified structural constraints that included lack of time (Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Gage & Thapa, 2012; Van den Berg & Cuskelly, 2014), perceived lack of opportunity (Hendry *et al.*, 2002; Auld, 2004) and lack of accessible opportunities (McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995). These constraints varied by population (Whyte & Shaw, 1994), age (Scott & Jackson, 1996), ethnicity (Stodolska & Yi-Kook, 2005) and socio-economic status (Scott & Munson, 1994). In this regard, individuals from different social, cultural and historical contexts do not perceive the constraints similarly and of equal importance (Godbey *et al.*, 2010).

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to identify constraining factors of university sport students to volunteer, using the Leisure Constraints Model of Godbey *et al.* (2010) as a theoretical framework.

METHODOLOGY

Design

University sport students have a propensity to volunteer in sport events and activities mainly in order to gain valuable work-related experience (Friedland & Morimoto, 2005; Gage & Thapa, 2012). Hence, a purposive sampling method was utilised in the light of appropriateness of a sample of university students to investigate the constraining factors contributing to avoiding volunteering by sport students. Data were collected from an in-class convenience sample utilising a self-administered questionnaire.

Sample

First, second and third year students in three different sport curriculum programmes at two universities within the Gauteng Province completed the questionnaire.

Procedure

One of the researchers scheduled time with lecturers of the sport programmes to administer the questionnaire during regularly scheduled class times. The researcher clarified the definition of a volunteer according to the definition by Statistics SA (2010:online) as "A person who actively and willingly performed for little or no payment, to provide assistance or promote a cause, either through an organisation or directly for someone outside one's own household or immediate family". The researcher briefly explained the existence of different types of volunteer organisations, such as profit or non-profit, government or non-government. After the short introduction and explanation on volunteerism, students were asked to complete the questionnaire.

Ethical administrative procedures

The relevant authorities from both respective universities granted permission for the study. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants and students were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous and that results would be used for research purposes only. Since the study focussed on a specific student target group, in order to maintain anonymity, institutions requested to remain anonymous.

Instrument

The questionnaire was based on an instrument originally developed by Auld and Cuskelly (1999). The questionnaire contains 5 sections. Section 1 referred to demographic information and in section 2, the respondents categorised themselves into 1 of 3 categories of volunteering:

- never volunteered for a community based organisation (section 3),
- used to volunteer for a community based organisation but stopped (section 4); or
- currently volunteering for a community-based organisation (section 5).

Those students who had categorised themselves as 'never volunteered before' completed only that section (section 3) of the questionnaire. The results of the responses of these students were investigated and reported on in this study. In the category of 'never volunteered before', the students responded to a series of statements pertaining to the nature of their non-participation in volunteering. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the options, *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neither disagree nor agree*, *agree* and *strongly agree*.

Analysis of data

Data were analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS – version 21) (StatSoft, 2014). Descriptive statistics were computed to profile the participants regarding gender, age group and ethnic group. Secondly, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted

to identify the factors that constrained university sport students from volunteering. Cronbach's alpha values were computed for each factor to ascertain inter-item reliability. Internal consistency for the factors 1 to 5 scored 0.75, 0.68, 0.68, 0.65 and 0.65 respectively. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggests that values of 0.7 or above may be considered good and 0.6 or above considered adequate for any factor with a small number of items. Hence, it may be implied that the reliability of the factors identified in this study ranged from adequate to good and may be applied in similar settings in future research.

RESULTS

Demographics

Of the 359 enrolled students within a sport curriculum program at two universities, 279 (77.7%) students completed the volunteer questionnaire. Of the 279 completed and returned questionnaires, 153 students classified themselves into the category of 'never volunteered before'. Hence, the data analysis for this study was conducted on the responses of 153 students yielding a figure of 54.8% of the respondent sport students who never volunteered before.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Demographic information	%	n
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	66.4%	101
Female	33.6%	52
<i>Age group</i>		
18-19 years	23.7%	36
20-21 years	45.4%	69
22-23 years	23.0%	35
24 years and older	7.9%	12
<i>Ethnic group</i>		
Black	82.9%	126
White	15.1%	23
Coloured	1.3%	2
Other	0.7%	1

Of the 153 participants, 66.6% were male and 33.6% were female. The majority of the participants (45.4%) were in the 20 to 21 years old age category, followed by the 18 to 19 years category (23.7%) and the 22 to 23 years category (23%). Only 7.9% of the participants were 24 years or older. More than three-quarters of the participants (82.9%) were categorised as black/African, 15.1% as white, 1.3% as coloured and 0.7% as other, such as Indian/Asian.

Exploratory factor analysis

All 29 volunteer constraint items were entered into the first PCA and resulted in 10 factors accounting for 64.3% of the overall variance being identified (KMO=0.776; Bartlett's Test of

Sphericity=1140.030; $df=210$; $p=0.000$). An examination of the items revealed that 8 items did not load cleanly (within 0.3 of each other), which were discarded for the subsequent factor analysis. A second PCA was conducted on the remaining 21 items (KMO=0.788; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity=796.152; $df=210$; $p=0.000$), which resulted in 6 factors that accounted for 58.3% of the total variance extracted. Three items did not load cleanly on a factor and subsequently they were removed to reduce ambiguity in the interpretation of the factors (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2001). The third PCA (KMO=0.804; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity=700.358; $df=153$; $p=0.000$), extracted 5 factors which accounted for 58.4% of the total scale variance. The final factor structure is provided in Table 2.

TABLE 2. ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Factor and variable description	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Factor 1: Organisation environment perception ($\alpha=0.75$)</i>					
I don't think my work would be recognised or rewarded	0.753	-0.011	0.036	0.190	0.201
I don't like the ways most voluntary community organisations are run	0.559	0.385	0.239	0.226	-0.056
I would not enjoy working with paid staff	0.685	0.236	0.122	0.104	-0.145
I might be taken advantage of by the organisation	0.514	0.491	0.059	0.078	0.201
I don't want to be bossed around	0.517	0.222	0.223	-0.039	0.204
<i>Factor 2: Perceived work load ($\alpha=0.68$)</i>					
I might feel obligated to put in an unreasonable number of hours	0.281	0.743	-0.040	-0.007	-0.034
Volunteers have poorer working conditions than paid staff	0.321	0.749	0.017	0.063	0.108
Volunteers work too hard	-0.143	0.667	0.357	0.241	0.231
<i>Factor 3: Psychological aspects ($\alpha=0.68$)</i>					
I wouldn't have fun	0.116	0.286	0.693	0.105	0.173
I have an illness or disability that prevents me	0.050	-0.034	0.750	0.033	-0.088
I don't think volunteering is very important	0.313	-0.076	0.674	0.071	0.072
Volunteers get too stressed	0.004	0.224	0.519	0.319	0.360
<i>Factor 4: Perceived lack of skills ($\alpha=0.65$)</i>					
I don't have the skills required	0.382	0.123	0.007	0.631	-0.031
I am not organised enough	0.058	0.127	0.117	0.786	-0.032
I don't have enough confidence	0.056	-0.026	0.116	0.764	0.008
<i>Factor 5: Time constraints ($\alpha=0.65$)</i>					
I have too many responsibilities	-0.014	0.048	0.049	-0.027	0.690
I have too many other commitments	0.032	0.162	-0.002	-0.133	0.736
I don't have enough time	0.196	-0.027	0.115	0.119	0.693
Eigenvalues	4.70	1.81	1.67	1.20	1.13
% of Variance	26.13	10.04	9.30	6.65	6.28
Cumulative variance	26.13	36.17	45.46	52.11	58.38

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to identify constraining factors for university sport students to volunteer in community-based organisations. Five factors, labelled *organisation environment perception*, *perceived workload*, *psychological aspects*, *perceived lack of skills* and *time constraints* were identified through an exploratory factor analysis. The study identified two structural and three intrapersonal constraints with very little evidence of interpersonal constraining factors. This could be a function of the measurement instrument not specifically designed with the Leisure Constraints Model in mind or that interpersonal constraints are of less importance for this specific student population.

Organisation environment perception

The first factor, *organisation environment perception*, accounted for 26.1% of the variance and had an Eigenvalue of 4.70. This factor possibly is indicative of preconceived perceptions of the university sport students that volunteer organisations are not favourable places to spend energy and effort. This belief is illustrated through their response that 'their work would not be recognised or rewarded'. Students indicated further negative perceptions regarding 'working with paid staff' at volunteer organisations or feared 'being bossed around or taken advantage of'. This negative organisation perception illustrated by the first factor is similar to the findings by Hyde and Knowles (2013) that identified a lack of awareness and/or knowledge about volunteering as a primary factor constraining students from volunteering. Their study indicated the deficit in knowledge of students to identify and engage in suitable organisations, as well as a lack of understanding the volunteer process and activities (Hyde & Knowles, 2013).

The deliberate choice of the students not to volunteer may possibly be assigned to the inefficiency of organisations to communicate the possible favourable benefits of volunteering to students (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). This suggests that measures could be taken to ensure that students are less likely to perceive volunteer activities and organisations as controlling (Gage & Thapa, 2012). This factor could also be classified as a structural constraint since these refer to factors, such as a lack of opportunity of volunteering in a positive environment and lack of information on participation and accurate experiences (Cleave & Doherty, 2005; Gage & Thapa, 2012).

Perceived workload

The second factor accounted for 10.0% of the variance with an Eigenvalue of 1.80. Within this factor, students identified 'they might feel obligated to put in an unreasonable number of hours' and they perceived 'volunteers work too hard'. This factor is similar to constraining factor of emotional cost of volunteering reported by Hyde and Knowles (2013), where students indicated that they felt emotionally drained from community work and would rather focus on their own well-being. Volunteer organisations could endeavour to improve the perception that volunteering 'costs' too much in developing positive attitudes in considering how volunteering could benefit their current situation (Auld, 2004; Hyde & Knowles, 2013). Benefits of personal relevance, such as spending time with friends or family while volunteering, or volunteering at a work-related organisation for future job opportunities (Auld, 2004; Hyde & Knowles, 2013), should be encouraged to overcome this constraining

factor. This factor can be classified as a structural constraining factor in the context of the Leisure Constraints Model (Crawford & Godbey, 1987).

Psychological aspects

The third factor, *psychological aspects*, accounted for 9.3% of the variance with an Eigenvalue of 1.67. This factor is classified as an intrapersonal constraining factor since it depicts the attitude and psychological state of mind of the specific group that could refer to aspects, such as lack of interest, stress, attitude, anxiety and perceived non-enjoyment (Godbey *et al.*, 2010; Gage & Thapa, 2012). Shannon *et al.* (2009) identified the lack of enjoyment as a constraining factor for volunteering by youths, which associates with an item in the current study identified as 'I wouldn't have fun' within this factor. Students enjoy the company of their friends and experiences where they were not able to socialise with them during volunteer events affect their enjoyment of the volunteer activity (Shannon *et al.*, 2009).

A lack in knowledge, relating to opportunities for socialising and enjoyment that can be achieved through volunteer activities, can also be linked to this psychological state of mind and could be overcome by organisations through proper communication during the recruitment phase (Auld, 2004). The item of 'volunteers get too stressed' is another cognitive perception, which influences the decision of sport students not to volunteer. This relates to the identified factor of emotional cost of volunteering by Hyde and Knowles (2013). Students experience stress due to their studies and will not eagerly become involved for the benefit of the community or the cause itself, especially if it will be at their own personal and emotional cost (Shannon *et al.*, 2009; Handy *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, the item 'I don't think volunteering is very important' also correlates with the second constraining factor of lack of motivation and interest for volunteering reported by Hyde and Knowles (2013). Many students portray a lazy or unbothered attitude towards volunteering, which is why, according to Goslin *et al.* (2004), a serious effort, has to be made to address the negative culture of volunteering in the country.

Perceived lack of skills

The fourth factor, *perceived lack of skills*, accounted for 6.7% of the variance with an Eigenvalue of 1.20. The items of 'I don't have the skills required', 'I am not organised enough' and 'I don't have enough confidence', portrays perceived lack in skills of the sport students in order to engage successfully in volunteer activities. This factor relates to the findings of Hyde and Knowles (2013), whereby students indicated a lack of belief in their own capacity to contribute successfully to a volunteer organisation, of which very little further research exists that explains this identified factor (Jackson & Rucks, 1995). The lack of perceived efficacy will directly influence a student's inclination to volunteer (Hyde & Knowles, 2013). Respondents in the current study seem to hold the perception that volunteering requires significant skills and knowledge. In this regard, this factor of *perceived lack of skills* can be classified as an intrapersonal constraining factor.

Time constraints

The fifth factor, namely *time constraints*, accounted for 6.3% of the variance with an Eigenvalue of 1.13. Time constraints have been identified as a major constraining factor for many university students within many different countries (Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Hyde & Knowles, 2013; Van den Berg & Cuskelly, 2014). Students reported separate or simultaneous work and study commitments (Gage & Thapa, 2012; Hyde & Knowles, 2013), together with the current economic environment, which necessitates them to pursue part-time work to supplement their study and living expenses (Manthei & Gilmore, 2005). This could explain the lack of time to volunteer. Students also reported family and other responsibilities they need to fulfil as a time constraint (Gage & Thapa, 2012; Van den Berg & Cuskelly, 2014). This factor is classified as an intrapersonal constraint (Crawford *et al.*, 1991), that often is an indicator of a lack in the priority given to volunteering.

CONCLUSION

This study identified five volunteer constraining factors for university sport students. Three out of the five identified factors are classified as intrapersonal constraints with two factors classified as structural in light of the Leisure Constraints Model. The absence of interpersonal constraining factors indicates a need for further research to clarify this occurrence. The possibility of utilising a different instrument, which is better designed with the Leisure Constraints Model in mind, could render evidence that is more relevant. The relatively high percentage of non-volunteerism amongst this group of sport students together with the predominance of intrapersonal and structural constraining factors may be an indication of a lack of understanding of the value of and opportunities to volunteer at community-based organisations.

Volunteer organisations could utilise the findings of the current study to communicate information more accurately that would endeavour to overcome both structural and intrapersonal constraints and encourage more sport students to engage in volunteering. Recruitment programmes of sport events and community organisations aimed at university sport students should be specific to their needs and should include information on the positive effects and outcomes that can be derived from volunteering at future work-related organisations.

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