A Case Study of Strategic Event Volunteer Management

Emily Stadder, University of Windsor  
Sheldon Fetter, University of Windsor  
Jess Dixon (Advisor), University of Windsor

Management - Volunteers (Amateur Sport)  
virtual asynchronous
10-minute lightning talk (including questions)  
Abstract 2020-075  
Session: Human Resource Management

Sport and recreation organizations and events often rely heavily on volunteers to achieve their goals and missions (Doherty, 2009; Schlesinger, Klenk, & Nagel, 2015). Currently, volunteer research is heavily focused on the experiences of individual volunteers and the management of volunteers in continuous positions (Wicker, 2017). In contrast, there is little information regarding the management of volunteers at sport events; what little research there is on this topic has mostly focused on mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, even though volunteers are utilized at events of all magnitudes (e.g., Chanavat & Ferrand, 2010; Zhuang & Girginov, 2012). This research will attempt to fill this gap by examining volunteer management at an amateur provincial sport championship.

Drawn from the field of strategic human resource management (SHRM; Wright & McMahon, 1992), behavioural perspective theory (Schuler & Jackson, 1987) will be used to understand the practices sport managers put in place to elicit and influence volunteer behaviour during an athletic event. Based on a recent meta-review of SHRM literature conducted by Jiang and Messersmith (2018), behavioural perspective was the second most identified theory of those cited in previous reviews. This theory allows researchers to solely examine whether the volunteer roles are consistent with organizational strategy, rather than the specific knowledge, skills, or abilities they demonstrate in performing these roles.

A case study methodology will be utilized to examine the ‘needed’ role behaviours, the role information, and the ‘actual’ role behaviours of volunteers at an amateur provincial sport championship event taking place in Southwestern Ontario in the Winter of 2020 involving approximately 300 participants. Semi-structured interviews will take place before and after the championship with volunteers (n ~ 5) and key administrative staff (n ~ 2) involved in managing and organizing volunteers for this event. Complementing these interviews, the researchers will also conduct a document analysis of the event’s volunteer management policies and procedures, as well as any additional information that is shared with volunteers leading up to and during the event. The interviews will be transcribed verbatim and triangulated with the document analysis, which will be coded using deductive methods based on behavioural perspective theory.

This study will have theoretical implications by contributing to sport management literature on SHRM, specifically from the behavioural perspective, which to our knowledge has not been widely studied in a sporting context. From a practical perspective, this study will provide important information for event managers utilizing volunteers. Managers will be able to learn from the strategies used in this event, along with the theory, to guide future practice.