



SPORT MANAGEMENT STUDENTS' VOLUNTEERING MOTIVATION IN SPORT EVENTS: THE CASE OF THE SPORT MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT IN SPARTA, GREECE

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Abstract:

This research aimed to examine the motivations of students and graduates for volunteering in various events and to determine whether these motivations differ according to specific social and demographic characteristics. The sample comprised 102 students and graduates from the Department of Sports Organization and Management at the University of the Peloponnese, including 53 women (52%) and 49 men (48%). The Volunteer Motivation Questionnaire by Strigas (2001) was employed, consisting of 30 questions grouped into five factors: Social/Recreational (11 questions), Egoistic (5 questions), Materialistic (7 questions), Expediency (4 questions), and External (3 questions). Independent variables included gender, education level (student or graduate), family income, place of residence until adulthood, employment status, type of employment, involvement in sports, participation in other voluntary activities, and parental education levels. The findings indicate that women and individuals engaged in voluntary activities are more strongly motivated by social, recreational, and egoistic factors. Students, non-workers, part-time workers, and those with lower incomes are more influenced by the Materialistic factor, whereas Purposefulness is a primary motivator for full-time workers. The External factor is particularly significant for those involved exclusively in sports and voluntary activities. These results may inform strategies to encourage greater student participation in sports volunteer activities by leveraging relevant incentives.

Keywords: volunteer, athletic activity, motivations

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1. Introduction

Volunteering represents a significant source of social capital, fostering solidarity among individuals. It cultivates values such as empathy and respect for others, irrespective of gender, religion, culture, or diversity, and contributes to both personal development and improved quality of life for volunteers (European Youth Forum, 2012, p. 7). The term 'volunteering' is derived from the ancient Greek word "ἑθελῶ" meaning 'I am willing', which emphasizes consent rather than preference (Dictionary of the Ancient Greek Language – A, B, C, High School).

Contemporary volunteering encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, including social action for the rehabilitation of marginalized groups, international aid, environmental protection, and cultural initiatives such as concerts. Notably, the organization and implementation of sports activities—both global and local—has become an increasingly prominent domain for volunteer engagement, reflecting the growing number and scale of sports events worldwide.

Volunteers provide substantial benefits to organizations of all sizes. They contribute to financial sustainability by reducing operational costs and enhance organizational value through collaboration with paid staff, thereby improving both the quality and quantity of services. Volunteers often introduce innovative ideas and transfer expertise that may not have been previously available, leading to improved organizational performance. Additionally, they serve as a vital link between the organization and the broader community, facilitating information exchange and enhancing the organization's public image. Their enthusiasm and energy further invigorate organizational activities (Apostolidis & Papaspyropoulos, 2002).

Volunteers are a critical resource, particularly in the context of organizing sports activities. Effective human resource management in sports administration prioritizes volunteer retention, which is contingent upon volunteer satisfaction. This satisfaction is achieved by addressing the specific motivations underlying volunteer engagement (Kim et al., 2018). The successful execution of sports events is highly dependent on the recruitment and retention of volunteers (Sharififar, Ganjouie et al., 2011; Sharififar, Jamalian et al., 2011).

Volunteers have many motivations, with their initial interest perhaps to mobilize or become more active. The most important motivations for volunteers are the need to join a group where through it they will be able to offer things they desire such as help or dedication to the community, change the quality of life, make the lives of some people easier, manage to use their free time creatively and effectively and put some thoughts into practice or even create relationships with people of the same interest and the same values (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Recognition for skills, knowledge, and achievements is also a significant motivator for volunteers. Such acknowledgement reinforces a sense of accomplishment and highlights the value of the knowledge and experience gained, fostering feelings of usefulness and belonging. Additional motivations may include the desire to demonstrate

influence or expertise. Social factors such as companionship, enjoyment, and opportunities for socialization and friendship formation are also important motivators for volunteering (Forbes & Zampelli, 2014).

Volunteers report a range of benefits, including a sense of societal contribution, enhanced self-image, fulfillment, and increased self-confidence. Participation in voluntary activities provides opportunities to apply and develop skills, gain experience, and advance career prospects. Additional benefits include maintaining psychological well-being, personal satisfaction, a sense of belonging, socialization, recreation, and relief from daily routines, often within a multicultural environment (Widjaja, 2010).

Despite these benefits, volunteers encounter several challenges, such as interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, adapting to organizational changes, and managing evolving roles. These factors can result in misunderstandings or incomplete information regarding organizational processes, and require effective management of diversity within volunteer teams (Lindsey et al., 2017). Voluntary activities are driven by different motivations; there are also disincentives that limit individuals' need and willingness to contribute. Lack of interest in participation or inadequate and incomplete information regarding voluntary contribution, increased family, professional or other obligations that significantly limit free time, reduced self-confidence and the feeling of lack of ability to succeed in the action in which they will participate, offering only with corresponding financial reward, some personal problems, or even ignorance about volunteering issues or lack of interest in them by the organizers, are some of the disincentives that are put forward as important by individuals who do not engage in volunteering.

The Department of Sports Organization and Management (DSOMA) is part of the School of Human Movement and Quality of Life at the University of the Peloponnese and began operations in the academic year 2003-2004. It serves the scientific field of sports administration, as it is the only and purely economic department specializing in the organization and administration of sports organizations and businesses. Among its interests, and perhaps the most important, is human resources management, particularly volunteer management. This is because volunteers are currently an integral and particularly important part of organizing sports activities, as they, through their contributions, determine to a large extent the success of a sports event. It also has three modern and fully equipped laboratories, including the Laboratory "*Volunteering in sports and social services*".

The department actively promotes voluntary engagement through student participation in both small- and large-scale sports events. The establishment of the Volunteering in Sports and Social Services Laboratory further supports theoretical and applied research in volunteering. Beyond academic study, students' involvement in organizing sports activities offers practical experience, enabling them to apply acquired knowledge in real-world contexts and develop informed perspectives on volunteering.

To facilitate student engagement, the department must identify effective strategies to encourage voluntary participation, emphasizing the importance of non-mandatory

involvement in sports events. Understanding students' motivations for volunteering is essential. Accordingly, this study investigates the factors influencing students' decisions to participate as volunteers in sports events.

The department's voluntary participation in sports events through its students dates back quite a while and officially began in 2019. To date, the department's official participation, based on the announcements on the department's website, has included seven (7) events (IRONMAN 70.3 Greece Race, Costa Navarino, Miraggio International Balloon Fiesta, Cronwell Olympus Trophy, Athens Half Marathon, Beautiful Helen Road Race, Sparta MTB XCO Races), while several of the students have participated to date as volunteers in organized or unorganized events such as the Authentic Athens Marathon and other large or smaller and local sporting events.

This research aimed to examine the motivations driving students to volunteer in various events and to assess whether these motivations differ according to specific social and demographic characteristics. Sub-objectives included analyzing motivational factors in relation to demographic variables, identifying the most significant motivations for student participation in sports events, and elucidating the dimensions and significance of these motivations within the broader context of volunteering.

2. Materials and Methods

Participants in this study were students and graduates of the Department of Sports Organization and Management (DSOMM) who had volunteered in at least one sporting event organized by the department during their studies.

The Strigas' (2001) Volunteer Motivation Questionnaire was used as a research tool. This questionnaire was designed and implemented based on different theoretical approaches and concerns the motivations of volunteering in a marathon organization. It consists of 30 questions, which are divided into five (5) factors. The first is referred to as Social/Recreational and includes eleven (11) questions, related to meeting the individual's personal needs for social interaction and the development of interpersonal relationships within the activity as a choice for recreation. The second factor includes five (5) questions and is referred to as Egoistic. This specific factor activates and motivates the individual by providing a sense of satisfaction that increases personal activity, improves self-esteem, and enables achievement, satisfying their personal needs. The third factor includes seven (7) questions and is referred to as Materialistic, reflecting a rational calculation of the expected material gain from voluntary participation. The gain can be translated into material goods and/or services that may have monetary value, as well as a positive impact on individuals' social status, which also has some corresponding material value. The fourth factor includes four (4) questions and is referred to as Purposefulness and is related to values, including the individual's desire to contribute as much as possible to the achievement of the goals of the sports organization, the sports event, and society in general. Finally, the fifth factor includes three (3) questions and is referred to as External,

covering external traditions, influences on motivations from the close family environment and significant others, and the habits or traditions they have (Strigas, 2001). This questionnaire is a shortened version of the Strigas and Jackson (2003) questionnaire, which consists of the same five (5) factors but 40 questions. The questionnaire wording was modified to refer to voluntary participation in sporting events in general.

The research instrument was converted into an electronic format to maximize participant reach via email, which would not have been feasible through in-person distribution. With assistance from the department's secretariat, both distribution and collection of responses were conducted anonymously, ensuring that the researcher had no access to participants' personal data. Responses were returned in a coded Excel file, prepared for statistical analysis.

Initial statistical analysis involved descriptive statistics, including means, medians, standard deviations, ranges, maximums, and minimums. The structural validity and reliability of the questionnaire were then assessed, and sample normality was evaluated to determine the appropriate statistical tests. Analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.

3. Results and Discussion

The study sample comprised 102 students and graduates from the Department of Athletics who had participated in at least one voluntary sporting activity. Among participants, 53 (52%) were women, and 49 (48%) were men; 77 (75.5%) were current students, and 25 (24.5%) were graduates. Employment status indicated that 50 (49%) were employed, with 31 (62%) working full-time and 19 (38%) part-time, while 52 (51%) were not employed. Regarding annual family income, 41 (40.2%) reported up to 20,000, 51 (50%) reported 20,001–40,000, and 10 (9.8%) reported over 40,000. Participation in non-sports volunteer activities was evenly split, with 51 (50%) indicating prior involvement and 51 (50%) indicating none.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

		F	f(%)
Gender	Woman	53	52.0
	Man	49	48.0
Student/Graduate	Student	77	75.5
	Graduate	25	24.5
Work	Yes	50	49.0
	No	52	51.0
Type of Work	Fulltime	31	62.0
	Parttime	19	38.0
Income	Up To 20,000	41	40.2
	20,001 - 40,000	51	50.0
	40,000<	10	9.8
Participation in non-athletic volunteer activities	Yes	51	50.0
	No	51	50.0

To investigate the overall reliability of the Volunteer Motivation research tool and its individual factors, a Cronbach's Alpha analysis was conducted. A check was also performed for each question to determine whether it was deleted from the entire questionnaire and from the individual factors. The validity of a scale is considered satisfactory if the value of the Alpha statistical criterion (α) is greater than .70 (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013).

The research tool is highly reliable, as the Volunteer Motivation Scale (30 questions) has a high index ($\alpha = .920$). Regarding the reliability of the individual factors, Social/Recreational (11 questions) was found to have a high reliability index ($\alpha = .866$), Egoistic (5 questions) was found to have a high reliability index ($\alpha = .881$), Materialistic (6 questions) was found to have a high reliability index ($\alpha = .822$), Purposefulness (3 questions) was found to have a satisfactory reliability index ($\alpha = .703$) after deleting question 23, while External (3 questions) was found to have a satisfactory reliability index ($\alpha = .706$).

Table 2: Reliability of the Volunteer Motivation Scale

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Questions
Volunteer Motivation Scale	,920	30
Factors		
Social/Recreational	,866	11
Selfish	,881	5
Materialistic	,822	6
Feasibility (After Deleting a Question)	,703	3
External	,706	3

The statistical significance of differences in the levels of the Gender variable on the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales was tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the total scale [men ($M = 3.52$, $n = 49$) and women ($M = 3.65$, $n = 53$), $U = 905.500$, $z = -2.632$, $p = .008$, $r = -.26$] in the Social/Recreational factor [men ($M = 3.64$, $n = 49$) and women ($M = 3.73$, $n = 53$), $U = 953.500$, $z = -2.32$, $p = .02$, $r = -.23$] and in the Egoistic factor [men ($M = 4$, $n = 49$) and women ($M = 4$, $n = 53$), $U = 956.500$, $z = -2.473$, $p = .013$, $r = -.25$]. No statistically significant differences were observed in Material, Feasibility, and External.

Table 3: Comparison of Independent Variable of Gender
Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale Factors

	Incentives	Social Recreation	Materialistic	Selfish	Purposefulness	External
Mann-Whitney U	905,500	953,500	1217,500	956,500	1024,500	1127,500
Wilcoxon W	2130,500	2178,500	2442,500	2181,500	2249,500	2352,500
Z	-2,632	-2,320	-,545	-2,473	-1,904	-1,162
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,008	,020	,586	,013	,057	,245

The statistical significance of differences in the Student/Graduate variable across the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales was assessed using the Mann-Whitney U test. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the Materialistic factor [Student (M = 3.57, n = 77) and Graduate (M = 3.29, n = 25), U = 647.500, z = -2.463, p = .014, r = -.24], while no statistically significant differences were observed in the Motivation, Social/Recreational, Egoistic, Purposeful and External scales.

Table 4: Comparison of Independent Variable of Education Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale Factors

	Incentives	Social Recreation	Materialistic	Selfish	Purposefulness	External
Mann-Whitney U	826,500	872,000	647,500	786,500	725,000	917,000
Wilcoxon W	1151,500	3875,000	972,500	1111,500	3728,000	1242,000
Z	-1.058	-,707	-2,463	-1,478	-1.917	-,359
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,290	,480	,014	,139	,055	,719

The statistical significance of differences in the Employment variable levels across the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales was tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the Materialistic factor [Work (M = 3.29, n = 50) and Non-Work (M = 3.57, n = 52), U = 878, z = -2.839, p = .005, r = -.28], while no statistically significant differences were observed in the Motivation, Social/Leisure, Egoistic, Purposefulness and External scales.

Table 5: Comparison of Independent Variable of Employment Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale Factors

	Incentives	Social Recreation	Materialistic	Selfish	Purposefulness	External
Mann-Whitney U	1169	1046,500	878	1290,500	1091,500	1144
Wilcoxon W	2444	2424,500	2153	2565,500	2469,500	2419
Z	-,877	-1,704	-2,839	-,069	-1,448	-1,060
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,381	,088	,005	,945	,148	,289

The statistical significance of differences in the Type of Employment variable across the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales was tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the factors Materialistic [Full (M = 3.14, n = 31) and Partial (M = 3.57, n = 19), U = 177.500, z = -2.346, p = .019, r = -.33] and Purposefulness [Full (M = 4, n = 31) and Partial (M = 3.67, n = 19), U = 165, z = -2.692, p = .007, r = -.38], while no statistically significant differences were observed in the Motivation scale, Social/Recreational, Egoistic and External.

Table 6: Comparison of Independent Variable of Type of Employment Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale Factors

	Incentives	Social Recreation	Materialistic	Selfish	Purposefulness	External
Mann-Whitney U	264,000	293,500	177,500	233,000	165,000	248,500
Wilcoxon W	760,000	483,500	673,500	423,000	355,000	744,500
Z	-,610	-,020	-2,346	-1,287	-2,692	-,932
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,542	,984	,019	,198	,007	,351

The statistical significance of differences in engagement in other voluntary activities, as measured by the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales, was tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in Social/Recreational [Participation (M = 3.73, n = 51) and Non-Participation (M = 3.64, n = 51), U = 999.500, z = -2.023, p = .043, r = -.20], in Egoistic [Participation (M = 4, n = 51) and Non-Participation (M = 4, n = 51), U = 1014.500, z = -2.066, p = .039, r = -.20] and in External [Participation (M = 3, n = 51) and Non-Participation (M = 3.33, n = 51), U = 931.500, z = -2.506, p = .012, r = -.25] factor, while no statistically significant differences were shown in the scale, the Materiality and the Feasibility factors.

Table 7: Comparison of Independent Variable of Engagement in Voluntary Activities Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale Factors

	Incentives	Social Recreation	Materialistic	Selfish	Purposefulness	External
Mann-Whitney U	1289,000	999,500	1163,000	1014,500	1227,000	931,500
Wilcoxon W	2615,000	2325,500	2489,000	2340,500	2553,000	2257,500
Z	-,077	-2,023	-,925	-2,066	-,510	-2,506
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,939	,043	,355	,039	,610	,012

The results of testing the null hypotheses regarding possible differences between the levels of the independent variable, Family Income, and the dependent variable, Motivations and its subscales, showed that statistically significant differences were present.

Table 8: Comparison of Independent Variable of Family Income Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale Factors

	Incentives	Social Recreation	Materialistic	Selfish	Purposefulness	External
Kruskal-Wallis H	7,515	2,047	16,230	,203	,762	2,656
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	,023	,359	,000	,904	,683	,265

The specific differences are found between the independent variable of income and the general scale of motivation ($\chi^2(2, 102) = 9.528, p = .009$), as well as the Materialistic subscale ($\chi^2(2, 102) = 12.091, p = .002$).

Table 9: Test of Independence of Income
Variable Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale Factors

	Incentives	Social Recreation	Materialistic	Selfish	Purposefulness	External
N	102	102	102	102	102	102
Mean	3.5688	3.6818	3.5714	4.0000	3.6667	3.0000
Chi-Square	9,528	2,115	12,091	2,134	,991	1,048
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	,009	,347	,002	,344	,609	,592

3.1 Volunteer Motivation Scale

During the statistical test with the Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis H criterion, a statistically significant difference was observed between the levels of the income variable. Motivations were higher in the lowest income scale (up to 20,000) (M = 3.64) than in the middle-income scale (20,001-40,000) (M = 3.56), and in the highest income scale (40,000<) (M = 3.31).

Table 10: Comparison of Independent Variable of
Family Income Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale

N	102
Test Statistics	7,515 ^a
Degrees of Freedom	2
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	,023
^a . The test statistic is adjusted for ties.	

To test for differences between income levels, a pairwise comparison was performed. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences between the levels 40,000< and 20,001-40,000, and between the levels 40,000< and up to 20,000, while no statistically significant difference was found between the levels 20,001-40,000 and up to 20,000.

Table 11: Pairwise Comparison Differences Between
Income Levels to the Volunteer Motivation Scale

Sample 1 - Sample 2	Test Statistics	Standard Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig. ^a
40,000 <- 20,001 - 40,000	26,408	10,233	2,581	,010	,030
40,000 <- Up To 20,000	27,605	10,435	2,645	,008	,024
20,001 - 40,000- Up To 20,000	1,197	6,206	,193	,847	1,000

3.2 Material Factor

During the statistical test with the Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis H criterion, a statistically significant difference was observed between the levels of the income variable.

Table 12: Comparison of Independent Variable of Family Income Levels to the Material Factor

Total N	102
Test Statistics	16,230 ^a
Degrees of Freedom	2
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	,000
^a . The test statistic is adjusted for ties.	

To test for differences between income levels, a pairwise comparison was performed. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences between the 40,000< and 20,001-40,000 level and the 40,000< and up to 20,000 level, while no statistically significant difference was found between the 20,001-40,000 level and up to 20,000 level (Table 51) (Figure 2). The Materialistic as a motivation subscale was higher in the lowest income range (up to 20,000) (M = 3.71), than in the middle income range (20,001-40,000) (M = 3.57), than in the highest income range (40,000<) (M = 2.86).

Table 13: Pairwise Comparison Differences Between Income Levels to the Material Factor

Sample 1 - Sample 2	Test Statistics	Standard Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig. ^a
40,000<- 20,001 - 40,000	33,769	10,183	3,316	,001	,003
40,000<- Up To 20,000	41,834	10,384	4,029	,000	,000
20,001 - 40,000- Up To 20,000	8,066	6,176	1,306	,192	,575

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate which socio-demographic characteristics and factors influence students' and graduates' motivations to volunteer in various events. Regarding the independent variable Gender and the dependent variables of the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales, statistically significant differences are observed between the two levels of Gender for the Social/Recreational and Egoistic subscales. More specifically, female participants have higher motivation to participate in sports volunteer activities, while in women, the Social/Recreational and Egoistic factors operate in parallel and are stronger motivations than in men.

Regarding the independent variable of Student/Graduate in relation to the dependent variables of the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales, a statistically significant difference is presented between the two levels of the independent variable student/graduate in relation to the Material factor, as this specific factor functions more as a motivator for students than for graduates.

Regarding the independent variable of Work in relation to the dependent variables of the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales, a statistically significant difference is presented in relation to the Materialistic factor, as for non-workers, this specific factor appears to be particularly important for their participation in voluntary sports activities, in contrast to employees, who do not appear to be a motivating factor.

Regarding the independent variable of Type of Work in relation to the dependent variables of the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales, statistically significant differences are presented between the two levels of the independent variable in relation to the Material and the Expediency factor, as the Material factor appears to constitute a higher motivation for part-time workers compared to full-time workers, while conversely the Expediency factor constitutes a greater motivation for participation for full-time workers than for part-time workers.

Regarding the independent variable of income, statistically significant differences are observed across its levels in the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales. More specifically, the lowest and middle-income groups appear to have higher motivations, including the Materialistic factor as a main motivation, in contrast to the high-income group.

Finally, regarding the independent variable of participation in other types of voluntary activity, and the dependent variables of the Volunteer Motivation Scale and its subscales, statistically significant differences are observed across the independent variable's levels for the factors Social/Recreational, Egoistic, and External. More specifically, for those who are involved and participate in other voluntary activities, the Social/Recreational and Egoistic factors function more strongly as motivators, compared to those who do not have any other voluntary activity, while for those who do not have any other voluntary activity, the External factor functions as a motivator, in contrast to those who are also active in other areas of volunteering.

Identifying the social and demographic characteristics that serve as motivational factors enables the department and volunteer coordinators to develop targeted recruitment programs. The ultimate objective is to facilitate the practical application of theoretical knowledge by students, foster a culture of volunteerism within the curriculum, enhance experience in organizing sports activities, and expand departmental engagement in sports events by offering incentives that align with students' perceived motivations.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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