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Motivation and commitment of volunteers at parkrun events

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Effective organisation and delivery of parkrun events are entirely reliant on the services provided by volunteers. We explore the motivations and commitment of volunteers who provide these services to further our understanding of volunteers at sport events.

Research design: This study explores motivations and commitment to volunteer at weekly parkrun events in Worcester, UK. Data was collected from 92 participants using the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) and a motivation survey.

Findings: Results demonstrate a high commitment to volunteering at parkrun whilst also demonstrating high levels of intrinsic and overall motivation. Differences were also found between males and females motivations to volunteer.

Practical Implications: Potential mechanisms explaining these differences are discussed to identify future research priorities that may help to develop sustainable strategies to retain and recruit volunteers to parkrun events.

Research Contribution: This study identifies demographic differences in sport volunteers at parkrun and suggests that volunteering may not be perceived as leisure.

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Volunteering in sport has been a focus for researchers within the sport management field since the late 1990s, and is related to aspects of human resources, non-profit sport organisations, sport events, and volunteer management (Wicker, 2017). There is a need to understand the importance placed on volunteers by non-profit organisations and events, and more importantly to understand “why” individuals will work for nothing (Kodama et al., 2013; MacLean & Hamm, 2007; Schlesinger et al., 2015; Wicker, 2017). Sport event volunteering research has focussed on a

variety of factors ranging from socio-demographic, motivational, sport participation to identity and covers many types of events, such as annual or biannual events, those on a 2 or 4-year cycle and one-off events. Examples are Rugby World Cups, Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, and the FIFA World Cup (e.g. Alexander et al., 2015; Hallmann et al., 2018; Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Koutrou et al., 2016; Kristiansen et al., 2015; MacLean & Hamm, 2007; Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016). Other studies focus on volunteering within grassroots clubs and explore motivation,

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commitment, and experiences of volunteers (Renfree & Kohe, 2019; Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016; Wicker, 2017). However, many of these volunteers tend to already have formal or acknowledged hierarchical positions within a club environment such as club chair, secretary, treasurer, or welfare officer.

Events such as parkrun (www.parkrun.com) are a particularly interesting sporting phenomenon as they occur at the same time every week, all year, every year around the world and do not fit the mould of the “typical” sport event nor the “typical” sport volunteer mould. The concept of parkrun was initially conceived and implemented in Bushy Park, London in 2004 based on the simple principles of “weekly, free, 5 km, for everyone, forever (parkrun, 2020a)” and is wholly reliant on volunteers to organise, promote, and staff the event. The phenomenon and ethos of parkrun have spread around the world with new events being introduced in locations such as Japan in 2019 and the Netherlands in 2020. As of January 2021, there were 1400 weekly events occurring in 22 countries around the world (parkrun, 2020b). All the recurring 5 km running events are created, organised, and supported by volunteers, who are central to the ethos of parkrun and, with the support of partners, ensure the events are free to access (parkrun, 2020c). Interestingly, despite the reliance on volunteering, there is no formal requirement for a registered volunteer to show-up every week. Instead, there is an “opt in or opt out” option which provides a flexible approach ensuring parkrun has lots of registered volunteers. This flexible approach differentiates this event from other in that there are no formal roles for one individual and most roles tend to change on a weekly or rotational basis to ensure that no one individual feels obliged to show-up every week. Key roles include marshalling, timing, and result recording. The concept of parkrun has therefore built its foundation on a less formal and systematic involvement of volunteering and as such does

not require the same level of commitment as other fixed sport events or roles such as club coaching or officiating where a formal membership or fees are required. This simple principle of a free, weekly timed running event in a local community space has attracted such attention that parkrun has initiated a partnership with World Athletics to offer a legacy programme in relation to happier and healthier communities in the host countries of World Athletics Series events (parkrun, 2020d; Sport Business, 2020; World Athletics, 2020). Consequently, there is a requirement to understand the motivations of individuals who engage in such voluntary work to ensure that the events continue to run and be successful in their delivery as part of a thriving community.

For the purposes of this research study, volunteers are defined as individuals who work or spend time, free from forceful persuasion, unpaid or in receipt of a relatively small reimbursement, for the benefit of other individuals or groups (Welty Peachey et al., 2014; Wicker, 2017). Wiltshire and Stevinson (2018) found that those who participate within the 5 km run to benefit from and invest in the local parkrun community and receive both practical and emotional support. This suggests there is potential for more volunteer-led community-based sport events thereby helping to increase an individual’s social capital. This links strongly to the new partnership between parkrun and World Athletics to utilise the running event to demonstrate its key role and value to local communities in relation to health and wellbeing. It has also been suggested the role of social capital depends on the organisation in which the individuals routinely participate (Nast & Blokland, 2014; Small, 2009; Tacon, 2019) Indeed, Morris and Scott (2019) found that sense of belonging, identity and purpose were key to parkruns apparent success and volunteering is at the heart of this. Hindley (2020) suggests that “casual sociability” is key to continued volunteering with incidental and casual social interactions helping to create an inviting atmosphere and

therefore, the social aspect for some becomes their core purpose for attending.

It has been highlighted in many studies which focus on parkrun (Grunseit et al., 2018; Stevinson et al., 2015; Wiltshire & Stevinson, 2018) that concepts of belonging and community are recurrent themes. In particular, the work of Hindley (2020) indicates that parkrun is a “social world” and provides a sense of identity that belongs to notions of family. Renfree and Kohe (2019) also discuss this notion in connection with love for the sport and community but also emphasise a loyalty and a commitment from those who provide time to volunteer. It should be emphasised that the non-committal, non-traditional approach taken by parkrun from the outset has encouraged an investment by volunteers from the communities in which they sit. Individuals have found their own reason for becoming involved and committed, and indeed it could be suggested that volunteering at the event has become established as a leisure habit. This supports the conclusions of Stevinson et al. (2015) and Hindley (2020) whose work indicates that the autonomous, pressure-free component of volunteering at parkrun has contributed to its continued growth and success.

The work of Kristiansen et al. (2015) proposed that communal commitment to volunteering is an immense resource for local event managers. Motivation is a key construct when attempting to understand an individual’s decision to become a volunteer (Alexander et al., 2015) and it has been suggested that individuals volunteer for altruistic reasons. However, according to Welty Peachey et al. (2014) volunteers are presenting their motives as values based on a socially accepted reasons when in reality their motives are not as altruistic. Wicker et al. (2018) suggest that a willingness to volunteer indicates that those who contribute a lot of voluntary work already are willing to contribute even more. The achievement of more self-determined forms of motivation has

further positive consequences for individual’s mental health and wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Additionally, a concept around an enhanced quality of motivation can explain strong relationships with positive outcomes for volunteers (Güntert et al., 2016).

The commitment of sport volunteers is crucial to parkrun success as it simply cannot exist without it. Mowday et al. (1982) defined commitment as the strength of an individual identification with and involvement in a particular activity or organisation and therefore defining what this is for a parkrun volunteer is key to their future growth and success. Furthermore, Mowday et al. (1982) developed a specific measure Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) to explore what defines commitment for a sport event volunteer and the underlying motivational commitment to sport event volunteering. In particular, the work of Strigas and Jackson (2003) formed a list of sport event motivations for sport settings that remain in a stagnant location which is key for this research due to the fixed locations. Their research indicated that there were five factors that influenced sport volunteers’ motivations and they were (a) egoistic, (b) purposive, (c) leisure, (d) external influences, and (e) material. The egoistic factor focuses on motives that relate to social interaction, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and achievement and therefore the volunteer is focused on their own needs. Purposive focuses on the need to contribute to the event and the community. Leisure regards the need for a variety of choices within the leisure time. External influences are related to those influences outside of their control such as family, community groups, sports clubs, etc. Material is focused on those items that are viewed as gains or rewards (MacLean & Hamm, 2007).

This study centres around parkrun in the Worcester city area (currently there are two events); one hosted at Worcester Woods country park (<https://www.parkrun.org.uk/worcester/>) which has approximately 400 participants and 50

volunteers every week and one hosted at Worcester Pitchcroft (<https://www.parkrun.org.uk/worcesterpitchcroft/>) which has approximately 250 participants and 20 volunteers every week. Worcester is a relatively small city boasting highly competitive sports teams in cricket, rugby, basketball, and netball and is unique in that it has two parkruns within such a small city catchment (1 event for approx. 50,000 people). As parkruns take place within a community setting there were no financial and geographical barriers for the research team to overcome. This research paper intends to identify the practices, goals, values, and motivations that affect an individual's decision to volunteer further helping to provide an understanding of the role that community plays within parkrun events in Worcester. Understanding these factors and being aware of the external environment that encourages volunteering at events on such a regular basis has potential implications for leisure management, sport development and sport management, and volunteer and event management at a local level. This research therefore aims to:

1. Identify factors that influence the motivation and commitment of volunteers at parkrun in Worcester.
2. Determine the nature of the relationship between commitment and motivational factors in Worcester parkrun's volunteers.
3. Identify the differences between demographics of the volunteers and their motivation and commitment.

Method

Ethics approval

The study received ethical approval from the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HASSREC) at the University of Worcester. Further approval was sought and obtained from the parkrun UK Research Board.

Study design

The study used single time survey design. The quantitative data were collected online for each volunteer at a time to suit them. This research focused on the two weekly parkruns within Worcester, United Kingdom. Participants were recruited via online forums and social media, specifically, Facebook pages for the Worcester parkrun and Worcester Pitchcroft parkrun rather than at the live event for three reasons. Firstly, the researchers did not want to interfere with or get in the way of the parkrun events running smoothly. Secondly, all volunteers for parkruns are recruited and contacted through online forums such as Facebook or by email normally, thereby reducing potential intrusion. Finally conducting online questionnaires would ensure that participants participate in their own time, place and without time constraints and distractions related to their volunteering work at the event itself.

Participants

Although only a total of 70 volunteers are required each week the entire registered volunteer group for both events in Worcester were invited to participate through the run directors. There was an 84% response rate ($n = 92$) based on 110 registered volunteers at the time of data collection. All participants were directed to the online survey which provided further information on the study requirements and included an informed consent form.

Instrumentation

Following the approach taken by MacLean and Hamm (2007) demographic data was collected related to gender, age range and employment status. The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday et al., 1982) was adapted to suit parkrun and the location of Worcester, UK. An example being: "I am proud to tell others that I am part of parkrun in

Worcester” or “I speak of parkrun to my friends as a great one to volunteer for”. The questionnaire comprised 45 items and measured responses on a 7-point Likert-type scale from least important (1) to most important (7). A second measure, the Strigas and Jackson (2003) motivation survey, was utilised and comprises 40 items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale from not important at all (1) to extremely important (5). Items within the survey were adapted to suit the event under investigation.

Procedure

The outline and purpose of the study, plus the quantitative survey were made available to the run directors, as gatekeepers, via email as a hyperlink to the online survey (www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk) for dissemination to volunteers. The purpose and focus of the study were placed at the beginning of the online survey documents and in the initial electronic invitation to participate which were uploaded to general social media group accounts (mainly Facebook and group volunteer email). These were accessible to all volunteers registered at the two parkruns in Worcester. Those who chose to participate were then required to provide informed consent before the questionnaire could be accessed. The survey was available to the volunteers for a 2-month period.

Limitations

A survey design does not suggest or demonstrate causality but does identify trends and patterns for further investigation. The survey window was open for a 2-month period, and participants were contacted by the run directors about the survey on two occasions. The participants could have completed the survey at any time during this period, resulting in them experiencing many different factors which could have influence their thinking. For example, injury (feeling as though they

“should” volunteer), opportunities to compete in the parkrun event as well as volunteer (these may change weekly due to weather conditions, numbers of park runners, etc.). Thus, satisfaction with volunteering may have been affected. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the large number of items comprising each questionnaire potentially limits the statistical power of these analyses.

Data analysis

Demographic data were used as grouping variables in an attempt to fully understand the effects this may have on motivations to volunteer. Overall mean data are reported for each measure used. Standard multiple regression analysis was used to test if motivational factors significantly predicted participants’ ratings of volunteering on the commitment questionnaire. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The standard multiple regression analysis was used to test if motivational factors significantly predicted participants ratings of commitment to volunteer, parkrun pride, love of sport, love of running, and community as measured by the commitment questionnaire. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the motivation and commitment scores for men and women and one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of employment status on levels of motivation and commitment of parkrun volunteers. Participants were divided into four groups according to their reported employment status (Group 1: full-time employment; Group 2: part-time employment; Group 3: Self-employed; Group 4: retired). The initial analysis violated Levine’s assumption; therefore, the Brown-Forsythe test data was used. The small and variable group sizes for age meant that a Kruskal–Wallis test was carried out to identify differences in motivation between age groups.

Results

Demographic data

There were 92 participants of whom 47 (51.1%) identified as female and 45 (48.9%) identified as male. The age groups of participants were: 6 (6.5%) 18–25 years; 5 (5.4%) 26–35 years; 16 (17.4%) 36–45 years; 36 (39.1%) 46–55 years; 21 (22.8%) 56–65 years, 7 (7.6%) 66–75 years, 1 (1.1%) 76–85 years. The employment status of participants was: 24 (26.1%) employed part time; 45 (48.9%) employed full time; 1 (1.1%) unemployed; 7 (7.6%) self-employed; 12 (13%) retired; 4 (4.3%) students.

Reliability of instrumentations

Acceptable reliability and validity for the OCQ were established by Mowday et al. (1982) as $\alpha = 0.82$ and 0.70 , respectively. More recently the commitment scale has demonstrated good consistency with Cronbach alpha coefficient values reported as $.89$ to $.96$ in MacLean and Hamm (2007). In the current study the Cronbach alpha coefficient ranged from $.92$ to $.96$ (volunteer roles = $.92$; parkrun pride = $.920$; love for sport in general = $.95$ love for running = $.95$; community growth = $.960$). Previous research has reported the OCQ as a single mean value, whilst this has been the focus of discussion concerning the usefulness of this calculation (Mowday et al., 1982), the mean value from this study was $M = 5.13 \pm 1.35$. Porter et al.

Table 1. Factors influencing the motivation and commitment of volunteers of parkrun in Worcester.

Questionnaire	Subscale	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Occupational commitment questionnaire	Volunteer roles	90	5.14	1.21
	Parkrun pride	90	5.54	1.18
	Love for sport	88	4.87	1.51
	Love for running	91	5.23	1.48
	Community growth	86	4.73	1.51
Volunteer motivation	Egoistic	87	3.09	0.92
	Purposive	89	4.35	0.68
	Leisure	90	2.39	1.01
	External	89	2.88	0.78
	Material	86	1.85	0.74

(1974) reported OCQ values of $M = 4 \pm 1$ although this was not in a volunteer population. Lee et al. (1992) reported Military OCQ mean values of $6.24 \pm .61$ – 5.12 ± 1.03 over a period of 4 years.

The motivation to volunteer scale has previously been utilised in studies directly related to volunteers at sport events. Good consistency has been demonstrated with Cronbach alpha coefficient values reported as $\alpha = .67$ to $.90$ in MacLean and Hamm (2007), whilst Strigas and Jackson (2003) reported alpha coefficients ranging from $\alpha = .72$ to $.91$. In the current study the Cronbach alpha coefficient ranged from $\alpha = .70$ to $.89$ (Egoistic = $.89$; purposive = $.80$; leisure = $.85$; external = $.70$; material = $.87$).

1. What are the factors that influence the motivation and commitment of volunteers of parkrun in Worcester?

Table 1 provides the factors influencing the motivation and commitment of volunteers of parkrun in Worcester. Participants consider themselves committed to volunteer roles, parkrun, and love for running but overall, all the subscales were considered important. Purposive scores highly here and clearly stand out from the other mean scores.

2. What is the nature of the relationship between commitment and motivational factors of Worcester parkrun's volunteers?

Commitment to volunteering explained 38.4% of the variance ($R^2 = .384$, $F(5, 84) = 10.48$, $p < .001$). It was found that egoistic motivation significantly predicted volunteer commitment ($\beta = .644$, $p = .001$) as did leisure motivation ($\beta = -.307$, $p = .015$). parkrun pride explained 37.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .378$, $F(5, 84) = 10.21$, $p < .001$). It was found that egoistic motivation significantly predicted parkrun pride commitment ($\beta = .474$, $p = .004$) as did

purposive motivation ($\beta = .274, p = .018$). Love of sport explained 36.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .363, F(5, 84) = 9.59, p < .001$). It was found that egoistic motivation ($\beta = .475, p = .004$) significantly predicted love of sport. Love of running explained 39.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .398, F(5, 84) = 11.09, p < .001$). It was found that egoistic motivation ($\beta = .570, p = .001$) and leisure motivation ($\beta = -.331, p = .009$) significantly predicted love of running. Finally, the community subscale explained 29.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .296, F(5, 84) = 7.05, p < .001$). It was found that egoistic motivation significantly predicted community commitment ($\beta = .371, p = .030$) (Table 2).

3. What are the differences between the demographics of the volunteers and the motivation and commitment factors?

Gender differences

There were significant differences in egoistic motivation between genders (males $M = 2.87, SD = .89$ and females $M = 3.29, SD = .91, t(87.46) = 2.19, p = .032$). The magnitude of the differences in the means for egoistic motivation (mean difference = .42, 95% CI: $-.03-.79$) was relatively small (eta squared = .05). There were significant differences for leisure motivation (males $M = 2.05, SD = .85$ and females $M = 2.71, SD = 1.04; t(87.06) = 3.29, p = .001$). The magnitude of the differences in the means for leisure motivation (mean difference = .66, 95% CI: $-.26 - 1.05$) was large (eta squared = .11) (Figure 1).

There were no statistically significant differences between gender and commitment across any of the commitment subscales (Figure 2).

Employment status differences

There was a statistically significant difference in volunteer commitment for the employment groups: Brown-Forsythe statistic $F(3, 23.09) = 3.17, p = .03$. The actual difference in mean scores between the groups was at a medium level. The effect size, calculated using eta

Table 2. Standard multiple regression analysis for motivation variables predicting commitment for a parkrun event.

	Commitment to volunteer			parkrun pride			Love of sport			Love of running			Community		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Egoistic Motivation	.85	.21	.64**	.61	.20	.48**	.76	.26	.48**	.93	.26	.57**	.61	.28	.37*
Purposive Motivation	.23	.20	.15	.48	.20	.28*	.36	.25	.16	.35	.25	.16	.24	.27	.11
Leisure motivation	-.37	.15	-.31*	-.19	.15	-.17	-.32	.19	-.21	-.50	.19	-.33**	-.39	.20	-.26
External motivation	-.04	.19	-.02	.01	.19	.01	.43	.24	.23	.18	.24	.09	.31	.26	.16
Material motivation	.16	.20	.10	.12	.20	.08	-.11	.25	-.05	.23	.25	.11	.36	.27	.18
R ²															
F		10.48**		10.21**		9.59**		11.09**		7.05**					

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

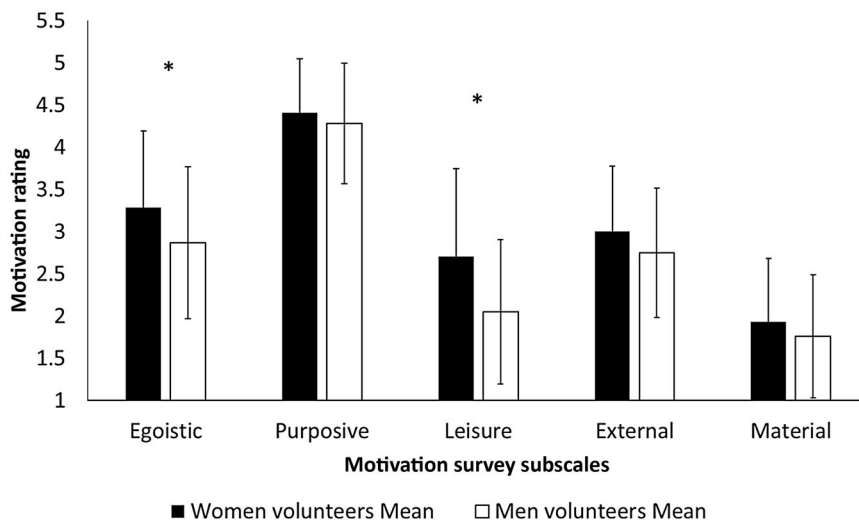


Figure 1. Motivation rating of volunteers by Gender.

squared, was .09. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.18$) and group 2 ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.17$) were significantly different from group 3 ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.11$). There were no significant differences from group 4 (Figure 3).

There were no statistically significant differences between employment status and motivation across any of the subscales for parkrun volunteers (Figure 4).

Age group differences

There were statistically significant differences in Material motivation scores across the different age groups (Group 1, $n = 6$: 18–25 years, Group 2, $n = 5$: 26–35 years, Group 3, $n = 16$: 36–45 years, Group 4, $n = 36$: 46–55 years, Group 5 $n = 20$: 56–65 years, Group 6, $n = 7$: 66–75 years), $\chi^2(5, 90) = 17.85$, $p = .003$. The youngest age group reported a higher median score ($Md = 3.32$) than the other 5 age groups

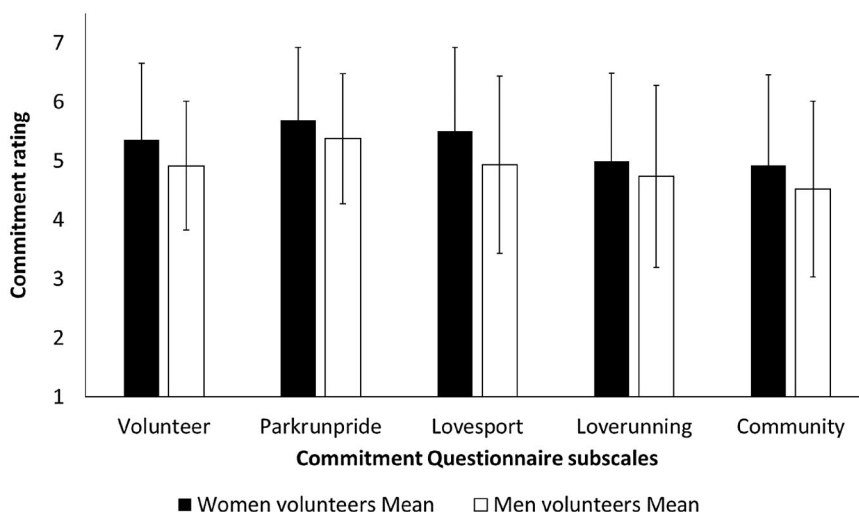


Figure 2. Commitment rating of volunteers by Gender.

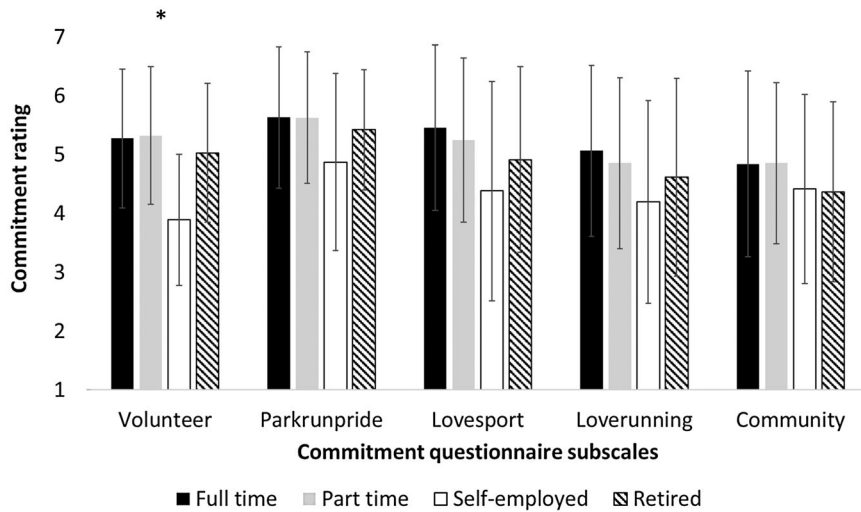


Figure 3. Commitment rating of volunteers by Employment Status.

(Gp2, $Md = 2.20$, Gp3, $Md = 1.60$, Gp4, $Md = 1.73$, Gp5, $Md = 1.50$, Gp6, $Md = 1.18$).

Selected post-hoc Mann–Whitney U tests were also carried out between groups 1 and 2, and between groups 2 and 3. There were significant differences in material motivation between group 1 (18–25 years, $Md = 3.32$, $n = 6$) and group 2 (26–35 years, $Md = 2.20$, $n = 5$), $U = 2.50$, $z = -2.29$, $p = .022$. and this was

considered a large effect. There were no significant differences in material motivation between group 2 (26–35 years, $Md = 2.20$, $n = 5$) and group 3 (36–45 years, $Md = 1.60$, $n = 16$), $U = 26.50$, $z = -1.12$, $p = .263$ (Figure 5).

There were no statistically significant differences between age and commitment across any of the subscales for parkrun volunteers (Figure 6).

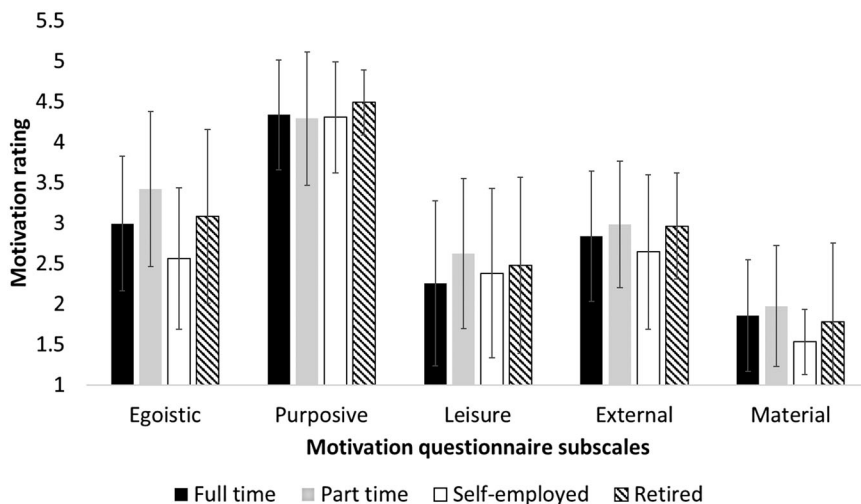


Figure 4. Motivation rating of volunteers by Employment Status.

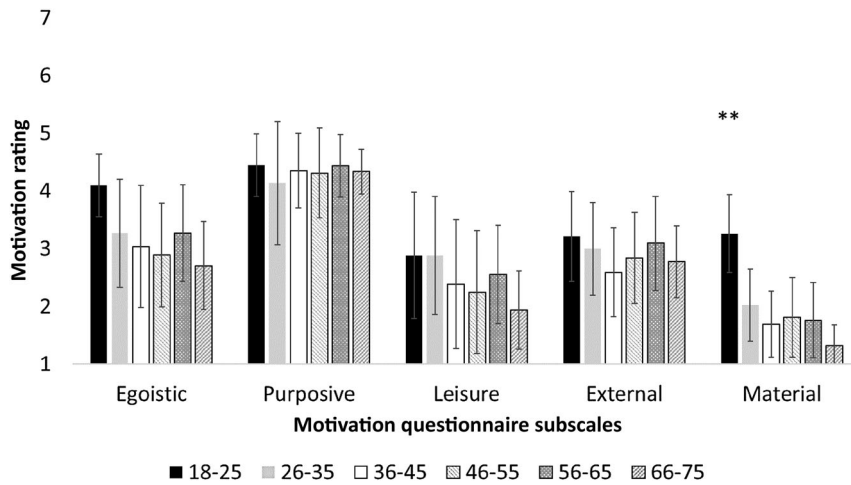


Figure 5. Motivation rating of volunteers by Age.

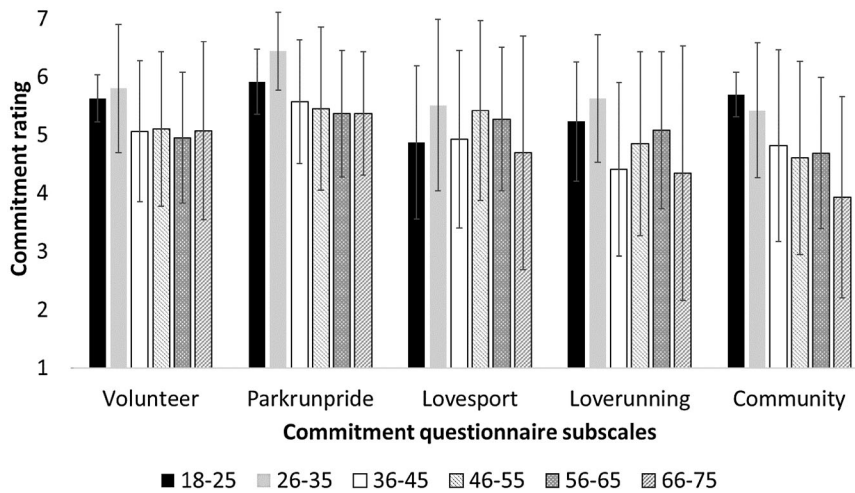


Figure 6. Commitment rating of volunteers by Age.

Discussion

This research aims were to; (1) identify factors that influence the motivation and commitment of volunteers at parkrun in Worcester; (2) determine the nature of the relationship between commitment and motivational factors in Worcester parkrun’s volunteers and (3) identify the differences between demographics of the volunteers and their motivation and commitment. The levels of commitment from the participants

were high across all subscales. However, the volunteer’s motivations demonstrate high levels of overall motivation for the more intrinsically valued motives (e.g. purposive; $n = 89, M = 4.35, SD = .68$) as opposed to extrinsic types of motivation (e.g. material; $n = 86, M = 1.85, SD = .74$). This supports the findings from Strigas and Jackson (2003) who suggested that purposive motivations represent the greatest motivators for sport volunteers. This study has

revealed that the volunteers at Worcester parkruns want to invest their time and effort for the event itself, the community and society at large. This finding differs from that of MacLean and Hamm (2007) who suggest that volunteering is more of a leisure motivation and therefore the experience of volunteering forms part of their leisure time. This could be an indication that there has been a shift in perceptions of leisure or is indicative of parkrun volunteers, and this is something that needs to be investigated further.

It has been argued by Hindley (2020) that “casual sociability” is key to continued volunteering and participation at parkrun and this notion is supported by the finding that egoistic factors are highly significant in ensuring their needs are met. This supports Wiltshire and Stevinson (2018) who argue that parkrun requires personal investment to receive a perceived benefit. However, due to the “egoistic” category in the OCQ being rather broad in its definition, it has been difficult to ascertain the intricacies of what really are the volunteer’s egoistic needs and therefore further investigation is required.

However, it is not until the demographic data is taken into account that this is considered in the wider context. As proposed by Doherty and Patil (2019) there is a requirement for further investigation into subgroups of volunteers grouped by age, gender, or other demographics to provide a valuable insight into sport event volunteer legacy. As the size and scale of parkrun continues to increase across the world and with the events running every week plus the level of commitment required of volunteers, we feel that this study has contributed to this requirement. This study has found that the role of community, family and ideas of belonging are more significant and therefore social aspects are a core purpose for attending and hence the significance of purposive motivations.

This study has found that motivation to volunteer at parkrun differs between males and

females. It has been highlighted previously (e.g. Grunseit et al., 2018; Stevinson et al., 2015; Wiltshire & Stevinson, 2018) that concepts of belonging and community are recurrent themes for those involved in parkrun and this study supports that conclusion with a high purposive motivation from both males and females. However, it has been found that females have higher egoistic and leisure motivations than men. Interestingly, although significant differences were found for the leisure motivation, it was rated low by both males and females in comparison to all other subscales apart from material. This further raises the question as to whether participants view their motivation to volunteer at parkrun as leisure at all.

As earlier discussed, the definition for volunteering for this study was based on the work of Welty Peachey et al., (2014) and Wicker (2017) who defined a volunteer as an individual who works or spends time, free from forceful persuasion, unpaid or provided with a relatively small reimbursement for the benefit of other individuals or groups. Although the questionnaires were not designed to suggest or demonstrate causality, the findings identify trends and patterns for further investigation. As such, it is unclear as to whether this definition of volunteering and notions of leisure can be used in conjunction with parkrun. Arguably, the data from this study suggest that participants place greater emphasis on their egoistic motivations of love for the sport and community than they do leisure. Therefore, from this population sample for this sport event, it is possible that the role of volunteering has changed. Indeed, the participants seem to have become so used to viewing parkrun through a volunteer lens that they fail to see its importance to them as an individual and its impact upon “free time”. The data suggests that this may change with age, however, this study alone is insufficient to ascertain any generational differences in definitions of leisure and volunteering.

Conclusion

The volunteering role at parkrun requires no specialist skills, knowledge or experience as parkrun wishes all ages to be included and requires no formal contract or obligation. The roles undertaken by volunteers at parkrun events can be time-consuming and more onerous than initially thought. There are certain jobs which need to be covered each week including the accurate reporting of individual times for the 5 K run, marshalling runners along the route in public spaces whilst avoiding undue hold-ups for the general public and ensuring that any undue litter is dealt with upon completion of the event. For most of the runners completing a 5 km parkrun event may only take up a couple of hours including transport, warm-up, and cooldown. However, for the volunteers, a good part of the day is spent ensuring the above tasks have been completed. There may also be additional planning time on other days of the week which further impinges upon an individual's "free time". It is this concept of free time which may well change as participants age, for example, a younger parent with a family may well have less free time than an older adult with a grown-up family.

As expected, intrinsic motives were more prominent for parkrun volunteers than extrinsic motives leading to a better quality of motivation despite earlier literature suggesting that volunteer motives are defined as leisure motivation (MacLean & Hamm, 2007). However, there may well have been a shift in current notions of leisure since 2007 and this is reflected in the types of motivations reported from participants in this study. Social influences on motivation have been found to be varied and complex which is reflected in this study. Despite breaking down the data by demographic groupings, the underlying social motivations for why volunteers work at parkrun events are rather elusive. The events are characterised by a

strong community-based feel and this is reflected in the high purposive subscale rating which focuses on the need to contribute to the event and the community. There is some basis for the suggestion that volunteer motives are more egoistically motivated, but this would "fit" with the ethos of parkrun which embraces the love for the sport alongside increasing social interaction and creating interpersonal relationships which in turn provides the parkrun volunteers with improved self-esteem and a sense of achievement. Indeed, as the volunteers are focused on their own needs the leisure motivation from all participants is particularly low. The authors suggest that further research is required into the role of leisure through the generations and in particular the role of parkrun within a community setting and its influence on developing social capital. This will be a particularly important consideration moving forward due to the new partnership with World Athletics and the role out of a legacy programme. It will be interesting to see whether non-runners and non-running community groups become involved in creating parkrun opportunities.

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