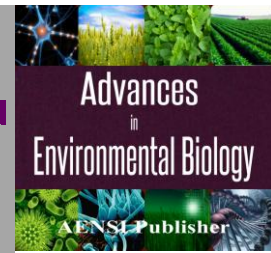




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# Investigation of the Factors Influencing Volunteering Continuance for Selected Professional Sports in Mazandaran Province, Iran

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to investigate those factors which influence volunteering for a set of selected professional sports in Mazandaran province, Iran. It is an applicable research from the purpose point of view, and is a descriptive survey in the essence of method. The statistical population size is 389 people, including all the volunteers of sport associations of Mazandaran province. Out of this number, there were 196 people chosen according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), employing a random-quota sampling with confidence level of 95% and 5% of measurement error. For data collection, the Andam *et al* (2009) modified questionnaire of volunteering continuance was employed in five dimensions of (career, material, social, supportive, and progress) and with 29 questions. Experts confirmed both content and face validity of the research instrument and its reliability was  $\alpha=0.88$  significant- applying the Cronbach's alpha test. For data analysis, frequency table, frequency percentage, charts, average and standard deviation were used in descriptive statistics part, and one sample T-test and the Friedman test were applied in the inferential statistics part. Results show that the factors career, material, social, supportive, and progress have significant influence on continuance of volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran province. It also concluded that the prioritization of influential factors on volunteering continuance in selected professional sports of Mazandaran province varies. As the career factors rank first with a mean rank of 3.85 and material factors rank last with a mean rank of 2.51.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every year, important sport events are executed throughout the world. What attract everyone's attention, besides the execution attractions, are the volunteer forces who dedicate themselves to the event with no expectations. What factors truly cause these people to help the event held as good as possible?

Human resources play a pivotal role in the establishment process of organizations and societies; therefore human resource is to be known one of the requirements. Volunteers form a part of the human resource. They are often acting in different countries as the non-governmental organizations (NGO) and are able to be of effectiveness in making progress toward meeting goals of societies and organizations. Volunteers are also an important part of human resource in many sport and entertainment organizations all over the world [4]. Wilson defines volunteering as an action of helping others with no expectations and completely freely.

Since production and delivery of sport services that are managed by budget, requires a number of obligated people, volunteers are considered the most important resource in non-business context. No sport field (sport society) would survive without support of volunteers. Movement of volunteering and serving society is a contemporary phenomenon which stems from the social traditions of people all around the world. Volunteer actions have mutual benefits which both the society and the volunteer enjoy. Volunteers act in order to achieve common goals and increase the social capital. They turn the society into a better environment for everyone. In form of the three groups of human resource (official clerks, volunteers and customers/clients), volunteers have claimed a peculiar position in the structure of both not-for-profit and public organizations, specially the sport organizations. Perrino believes that volunteers do their actions well and help organizations to accomplish their missions; thereupon they are regarded as a potential worthy capital.

As one of the primary service providing components in sport organizations, research implicate that the use of volunteers plays an important role in successfulness of many professional sport competitions and events.

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Employing volunteers have lots of financial benefits for sport organizations, as in some of the countries the economic value of the volunteer section is estimated as 7 to 14 percent of GDP (Cuskelly, Hoye & Auld).

Chelladurai argues that since volunteers have no financial dependency to the organization, then they are able to evaluate sport organizations accurately and tangibly. This role of volunteers helps organizations to adopt the right path and survive.

Absence or presence of volunteers in organizations may either cause a disorder in recruitment and retaining of the employees and or develop an environment of communion and cooperation. Sport management has also been thinking of suitable and optimal use of available human resources from many years ago. For this purpose and with utilization of the unsatisfied emotions and requirements of people, it has encouraged people to get involved with sport volunteer service, as well as for benefit of society and the volunteer themselves. Recruitment and continuance of volunteer forces are one of the most fundamental actions in holding sport events as well as sport tourism extension. Volunteer activities have mutual benefits for both the volunteer and the organization/society of which are social, personality-related, economic and political benefits.

Recruitment and training of a volunteer force is one of the main marketing challenges. On the other hand, identification of the effective factors on volunteering and free serving of sport organizations –especially the professional sport organizations- is of notable assistance in marketing. Volunteering and the identification of its effective factors, is a multidimensional phenomenon which demands to be studied and investigated. Research works indicate that the economic variables like job size, income, and human capital are certain for volunteering. Findings on job size are of two directions: On one hand, lower job size does not lead to higher volunteering obligation. On the other hand, it obstructs the obligatory hours of work in volunteering. Income leads to volunteering continuance. Numerous studies approve that with more educated people (more good human capital) there would be more volunteers and they acquire official positions in sport field. It has turned to a prime managerial subject how to effectively retain volunteers in sport scope. Since many of the exclusive variables of a volunteer are not modifiable by their manager, it is of high significance to identify those decisive factors which are available for adjustment. A clear understanding of what causes volunteering to survive and supports it, allows sport areas to effectively overcome their problems.

Volunteers are not only the most significant and powerful human resource for societies, but also able to play as the basis of success in most of affairs.

To overcome the shortage of human resource in holding competitions and other executive sectors, and also for reducing operational costs especially in hosting sport competitions, managers often request society for help, always looking for volunteers who cope with different activities. Hence, volunteers provide managers with the opportunity to render normal services with minimum cost and in different forms with desirable quality [4] since recruitment, assignment, and retaining volunteer forces is a costly process. For this reason, organizations select people who have more potential of continuance. This is not accomplished unless the effective factors on continuance of volunteering are investigated and adapted with the organization and its services.

It is crucial to recognize the factors influencing continuance of volunteering in professional sport, because volunteers are considered as one of the primary serving foundations of sport organizations, they have a major role in successfulness of many sport competitions and events, volunteering leads to strengthened social capital, and is one of the most critical factors of social capital development.

Given that the continuance of volunteering in professional sports could cause sport organizations to succeed; therefore it could hopefully provide a background for these organizations to make progress.

So, for facilitated inclination of people toward volunteer activities and more progressed sport organizations, and considering the aforementioned discussions, the primary question of this research is: What are the factors which influence continuance of volunteering in the selected professional sports of Mazandaran province?"

#### *Methodology:*

This research is an applicable study in purpose, and a descriptive survey in essence. The statistical population encompasses all the volunteers of sport associations (volleyball, football, futsal, basketball, wrestling, and taekwondo) of Mazandaran province (including managers and members of sport associations as well as sport volunteers) that are according to the Mazandaran General Authority of Physical Education and the Office of Sport Associations a number is 389 people. Out of this number, 196 people were chosen according to Krejcie and Morgan, with confidence level of 95% and 5% measurement error.

The sampling method is random quota. Table 1 presents the sample based on the sport and gender.

Data gathering tool is the modified Andam *et al* [1] questionnaire of volunteering continuance in five aspects of (career, material, social, supportive, and progress) developed in form of 29 questions with Likert 5-point scale answers (total agreement, agreement, no idea, disagreement, total disagreement). Rating is as 5 is associated with a total agreement and 1 to a total disagreement.

**Table 1:** Statistical sample analyzed by gender.

Sport	Volleyball		Football		Futsal		Basketball		Wrestling		Taekwondo		Total
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Population	19	45	27	45	22	45	12	35	6	60	23	50	389
Ratio	0.05	0.115	0.07	0.117	0.06	0.12	0.03	0.09	0.02	0.15	0.06	0.13	1
Sample	10	23	14	23	11	23	6	18	3	30	11	24	196

To measure the face and content validity of the instrument, the researcher asked the supervisor and advisor professors as well as 7 professors and experts of physical education (including two physical education PhDs, two of experts of the Mazandaran General Authority of Physical Education and three heads of physical education of the Mazandaran General Authority of Education and Training). After a three stage modification the (face and content) validity of the instrument was confirmed.

Reliability of the instrument was obtained as  $\alpha=0.91$  in Andam *et al* [1]. The author employed the Cronbach's Alpha to measure the reliability. The questionnaire is given to a unique group of the sample (with sample size of 20) and the scores are acquired by SPSS 19. Results –significant and confirmed- are shown in table 2.

**Table 2:** Reliability of the data collection tool separated by variables.

Variable	Alpha
Career	$\alpha=0.82$
Material	$\alpha=0.78$
Social	$\alpha=0.74$
Supportive	$\alpha=0.74$
progress	$\alpha=0.78$
Total volunteering continuance	$\alpha=0.88$

For data analysis, both the descriptive and inferential statistics are applied.

*Findings:*

To test data normality the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is applied. The data normality is confirmed and use of parametric statistical test for inferential analysis is allowed.

*The hypotheses:*

Career factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran.

According to table 3, in confidence level of 95%, measurement error of  $\alpha =5\%$ , degree of freedom of  $df=195$ , and significance level of  $Sig<0.05$ , difference of the calculated mean from the hypothetical mean 3 is significant.

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence it is concluded that “career factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”.

Material factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran.

According to table 3, in confidence level of 95%, measurement error of  $\alpha =5\%$ , degree of freedom of  $df=195$ , and significance level of  $Sig<0.05$ , difference of the calculated mean from the hypothetical mean 3 is significant.

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence it is concluded that “material factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”.

Social factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran.

According to table 3, in confidence level of 95%, measurement error of  $\alpha =5\%$ , degree of freedom of  $df=195$ , and significance level of  $Sig<0.05$ , difference of the calculated mean from the hypothetical mean 3 is significant.

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence it is concluded that “social factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”.

Supportive factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran.

According to table 3, in confidence level of 95%, measurement error of  $\alpha = 5\%$ , degree of freedom of  $df=195$ , and significance level of  $Sig < 0.05$ , difference of the calculated mean from the hypothetical mean 3 is significant.

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence it is concluded that “supportive factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”.

Progress factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran.

According to table 3, in confidence level of 95%, measurement error of  $\alpha = 5\%$ , degree of freedom of  $df=195$ , and significance level of  $Sig < 0.05$ , difference of the calculated mean from the hypothetical mean 3 is significant.

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence it is concluded that “progress factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”.

**Table 3:** Analysis of hypothesis 1.

Variable	Sample size	Sample mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean	t value	Degree of freedom	Significance level
Career	196	4.042	0.449	3	32,506	195	0.000
Material	196	3.478	0.602	3	11,127	195	0.000
Social	196	3.523	0.844	3	8,682	195	0.000
Supportive	196	3705	0.572	3	17,248	195	0.000
progress	196	3723	0.581	3	17,408	195	0.000

Priorities of the influential factors on volunteering continuance in professional sports of Mazandaran province are different

To check priorities of the influential factors the Freidman test was applied. Table 4 depicts the results

**Table 4:** Analysis of the primary hypothesis.

influential factors on volunteering continuance in professional sports	Mean rank	Rank
Career	3.85	First
progress	3.08	Second
Supportive	2.92	Third
Social	2.63	Fourth
Material	2.51	Fifth

According to table 4, in confidence level of 95%, measurement error of  $\alpha = 5\%$ , degree of freedom of  $df=195$ , and significance level of  $Sig < 0.05$ , there is a significant difference between group mean ranks. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. Hence it is concluded that “priorities of the influential factors on volunteering continuance in professional sports of Mazandaran province are different”. Moreover, ranking of variables indicates that career ranks first with a mean rank of 3.85, and material factors rank last with a mean rank of 2.51.

#### Discussion and conclusion:

To give an explanation for the finding “career factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”; volunteer activities generates job opportunities for young volunteers and the rewarded certificate counts as a worthy work experience for them. Volunteers commit volunteer activities for development and improvement of career skills. Given that a majority of the sample is formed by young people, this result looks logical. Therefore it is suggested to the authority that recruits and retains volunteer forces in professional sports through identification of the influential factors, and provides the volunteer forces with job opportunities.

To give an explanation for the next finding implicating “material factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”; the material factors represent the individual’s will for obtaining tangible benefits like material rewards and services. Moreover, although the word “volunteer” reminds us of an activity with no expectations of compensation, however it is proved that the volume of decisions to become a volunteer is dependant to the level of organization rewards proportionality. Reward could be a prime way to boost the quality and quantity of participation. Therefore it is mentioned that it could be effective to provide the volunteers with welfare facilities (like loan, accommodation, etc.), services and sport facilities.

To give an explanation for the next finding implicating “social factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”; Clary *et al.* regard volunteering as a factor to strengthen interpersonal relationships. Thereupon, the influence of social factor on continuance of volunteering

in professional sports looks rational. It also appears that volunteer activities could be an appropriate environment for strengthening of motives dependency and communication. Sport provides an opportunity for people to carry out volunteer activities with a friendly, convenient, and healthy environment for volunteer activities.

Hence, it is expected that volunteering in such an environment causes a strengthened collective behavior, increased cohesiveness and eventually improved social capital. Moreover, it is proposed to the managers to announce their specialty requirements in the right time so that the volunteers can enroll in their required specialties and have enough time for training and organization.

For explaining the finding “supportive factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”; supportive factor expresses that through a volunteer act, a volunteer avoids negative feelings. Taking this perspective, volunteering could have a therapeutic role. That’s why Wilson (2000) claims volunteering a factor of reduced anxiety.

To discuss the finding “progress factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran”, the progress factor reflects the individual’s need for self-fulfillment, self-esteem, success, care, and attention to self-interests. Findings of Perrino confirm this fact, stating that the superior cause for volunteers over the older people is progress.

Given the influential factors on volunteering continuance for professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran, it is concluded that “priorities of the influential factors on volunteering continuance for professional sports of Mazandaran province are different”. Ranking the variables, career factors rank first by a mean rank of 3.85 and material factors rank last with a mean rank of 2.51. This coincides with the findings of Ramezani nejad, Andam, and Molaei and those of Andam *et al* [1] which judge the career and material factors as the most and the least important factors, respectively, among motivational factors for volunteering. Findings of Afrooze, Moharamzade, Kashef, and Afrooze implicates that bonus is the least important motivational factor.

Moreover, since progress factors significantly influence continuance of sport volunteering in professional sports of Mazandaran, Iran; it is recommended to provide individuals with their requirements for volunteering in order to boost their self confidence. It is also suggested to attend needs and interests of the volunteers in order to improve their performance, and give them enough authority to employ their specialty, capability, and creativity according to requirements of sports.

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