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EUROPEAN US GIRLS

Academic Review



Young female community sports coaches (CSCs) leading a netball session in India



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1. Introduction

On a broad spectrum, sport and physical activity offer benefits beyond purely physical ones; they also offer significant opportunities to generate social cohesion within communities and among societies. However, overall across member states in the European Union (EU), participation in grassroots sport and physical activity is decreasing (Flash Eurobarometer, 2015). Moreover, when looking more closely at this domain, it is clear to see that sport is a male dominated environment. In fact, with specific regard to differences in participation based on gender, young men play and exercise regularly more often compared to their female counterparts - respectively, 74% compared to 55% (Special Eurobarometer, 2014). As girls grow older, there is a decrease in their engagement in physical activities as the gap between genders increases (Bailey, Wellard and Dismore, 2004). Barriers to girls' participation in sport are well known and intrinsically related to unequal and discriminatory gender norms, roles, and expectations, within the socio-cultural context of girls (Women in Sport, 2017). Thus, sport often times plays a part in reproducing unequal gender roles and stereotypes, which perpetuate a male dominated environment. Inevitably, women and girls are left to face barriers of various kinds to access sport and physical activities, as well as opportunities to continue participation (Bailey et al., 2004). In terms of grassroots and recreational sport programmes, the field relies heavily on the work of volunteers (Busser and Carruthers, 2010; Mirsafian and Mohamedinejad, 2012). For example, in the UK, many sport groups exist only thanks to the commitment and dedication of local volunteers (Women in Sport, 2017). Yet, there is less representation for women also with regards to female volunteers participating in sports. In fact, Women in Sport found evidence which proves that women are less likely to volunteer in sports than men - respectively, 14% and 30% - even though women are in the majority across all other volunteering activities in communities (Women in Sport, 2017).

The following report was written as part of the European Us Girls project, which aims to increase the participation in, and equality of access to, grassroots sports and physical activities by young women aged 13-30 with fewer opportunities. European Us Girls seeks to do so by building the capacity of organisations to work with female volunteers as peer educators. The goal is to increase participation of girls at all levels in sport - both as players and also as volunteers - in order to encourage other girls to take part. This project is a two-year study (January 1st 2017 – December 31st 2018) funded by EU Erasmus+ Sport. The initial phase of the project is to create an evidence base supporting the role of female volunteers in improving equal access and inclusion to grassroots sport and physical activity for girls and young women.

An academic review of relevant literature has been compiled, alongside a collection of good practice case studies (see Annex 1: Case Study Report). The academic review and case studies will contribute to the overall study by gathering relevant international evidence. Furthermore, the purpose of this report is to emphasise the status of the current literature on female volunteers in sport and the possible correlations and impact they have on girls and young women taking part in sport or physical activity themselves. A brief overview of volunteering in the EU will be presented to provide the broader context



of the European Us Girls Study and the value or relevance assigned to volunteering in the EU. Following this, the review will provide a definition of volunteering before focusing on the findings from the review, which will be presented according to overarching themes that emerged during the research process. Thus, the focus will be on volunteers' motivations, the benefits of volunteering and the relationship between volunteers involved in sport or physical activities and girls and young women who then participate in such activities.

2. Volunteering in the European Union

Volunteering was first acknowledged on an EU wide level in 1983 with a resolution from the European Parliament (Angermann and Sittermann, 2010b). More recently, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) was created as part of the *Youth in Action* programme (from 2007 to 2013), which aims “to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union’s future” (European Commission, 2011). EVS is currently a component of the Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020). Volunteering has become so highly regarded within the EU that 2011 was declared *European Year of Volunteering*, dedicated to the celebration of Europeans who undertake voluntary activities (European Youth Portal, 2017).

In February 2010, the European Commission published a study regarding volunteering in the Member States aimed at assessing the volunteering landscape across the various countries, the challenges faced by volunteers, along with relevant recommendations (GHK, 2010). Findings from this study also highlight the different traditions and understandings of volunteering across Member States. For example, in post-Socialist countries, civic participation was considered a duty expected of their citizens (GHK, 2010). In these contexts, a new understanding of volunteering needed to be developed to go hand in hand with the political changes these countries faced (*ibid*). Within the EU, “there is no uniform approach for the regulation of volunteering” (Angermann and Sittermann, 2010a:3).

Evidently over the last 30 years, volunteering has been regarded as a practice of great importance for the EU, especially prioritising the encouragement of young Europeans to volunteer. There are two reasons for such emphasis on volunteering: namely to promote learning, and to encourage the active involvement of people as European citizens, part of the European community at large (Angermann and Sittermann, 2010b). In fact, the European Commission (2011) declared that voluntary activity in sport can contribute to social inclusion and higher civic participation, especially among young people. Furthermore, following this finding, the notion of volunteering has acquired immense social worth in recent years. Volunteering in sport organisations is the most popular type of voluntary activity in the EU and it plays a crucial role in terms of increasing community-based sport (Erturan-Ogut, 2014) and strengthening the growth of social capital (Morgan, 2013).



With regards to age, although the numbers vary individually from country to country, a 2015 survey revealed that around 25% of European young adults had participated in a voluntary activity in the previous year (European Youth Portal, 2017). When asked to specify the types of voluntary activities, two main areas were identified: charity, humanitarian and development aid as one (44%) and education, training and sport (40%) as the other (Flash Eurobarometer, 2015). However, according to the EU Sport and Physical Activity Special Eurobarometer 412 (2014), only 7% of EU citizens engage in volunteering to support sporting activities. Moreover, men over women are more likely to become voluntary coaches or trainers (33% and 23% respectively). This difference in terms of engagement based on gender is especially pronounced among 15 to 24 year olds (Special Eurobarometer, 2014). The EU Recommendations on Gender Equality in Sport (2016) aspire that by 2020, 40% of women will be engaged in sport as volunteers or employed as coaches. The EU Gender Equality in Sport (2014-20) policy suggests that “more volunteer female coaches could also lead to more women being physically active in sport”. With this context in mind, the purpose of this academic review is to collect relevant evidence with regard to female volunteers and the potential impact they have on improving equal access and inclusion in grassroots sport and physical activity for girls and young women.

3. Defining volunteering

Typically, volunteering is considered a meaningful activity that perpetuates positive engagement with society through the establishment of a commitment on behalf of a volunteer. In other words, volunteering is an excellent way for people to become active members of their community (the multitude of benefits to volunteering will be explored further in the report). However, what is meant by volunteering? What spectrum of activities are generally included or considered a part of voluntary work? Even though the answers to these questions may seem straightforward, in reality there is no single definition of what volunteering means, or what the term might encompass. In fact,

“Defining volunteering, something that on the surface appears to be relatively simple, is actually quite complex. Although the word volunteer may seem to have a common shared meaning, there is not universal consensus about the meaning of the term” (Cuskelly, Hoye and Auld, 2006:4)

Moreover, there are numerous diverging terms across different languages that relate to volunteering activities, which can be brought back to the specific English term ‘volunteering’. Some of these can be loosely translated in English as: civic participation, civic engagement, voluntary participation, voluntary engagement, engagement of civil society, etc. (Angermann and Sittermann, 2010a, b). Tied to the difficulty of finding language equivalents for terminology surrounding the discourse of volunteering is the matter of diverging cultural traditions in the many member countries of the EU (Angermann and Sittermann, 2010a, b).



Additional factors which complicate the quest for finding a suitable definition of volunteering are the broad variety of activities carried out by volunteers; the diversity in their backgrounds, age and skills; as well as the many roles volunteers can take on in different types of organisations (Bussell and Forbes, 2001). In terms of sports, there are volunteers who work only for specific one-off events, others who work on long term projects, or others who work within larger organisations or federations.

3.1 Types of volunteering and the importance of social context

Continuing this discussion, Hustinx and Lammertyn attempt to systematically classify styles (types) of volunteerism. These two authors frame their analysis on styles of volunteering within the perspective of sociological modernization, based on the assumption that relative behaviours need to be examined within a broader social framework. They acknowledge the shift from what are considered 'traditional' forms of volunteering to 'modern' ones. The former refer to a lifelong commitment to volunteering behaviours for the good of the community, while the latter are becoming tendentially more episodic and short lived, centring on personal agendas and objectives. The underlying explanation for this change is the fact that in contemporary society, people continually swing back and forth between two different biographical sources of determination - collective and reflexive - that are consequently reflected in their styles of volunteering, which vary accordingly.

In exploring these notions, at the heart of collective volunteerism lies the community; volunteering is an essential aspect of community life. Further, volunteers share a strong sense of belonging, and their personal objectives are subordinate to collective goals. Instead, the reflexive volunteer model turns the focus on individual forms of commitment and volunteers as individual actors. Nowadays, individual experience is the primary frame of reference, rather than the notion that volunteering is a natural component of collective behaviour. In the words of Hustinx and Lammertyn, volunteering "is a self-induced and self-monitored event within a self-constructed biographical frame" (2003:172), often not an activity taken on collectively.

However, what is essential to consider from Hustinx and Lammertyn's analysis, is that these classifications are the endpoints on a continuum of volunteering styles - what Hustinx and Lammertyn refer to as today's "dynamic volunteer reality" (2003). In other words, rather than seeing old and new types of volunteering as a *polarization* (traditional vs. modern), one must regard them instead as a *pluralization* (traditional *and* modern) of current forms of volunteering. Therefore, this multi-dimensional perspective is the basis for a systematic classification, covering several pertinent aspects of volunteerism, which go beyond the scope of this report. Nonetheless, these considerations do provide insight into the complexities of volunteer behaviour in today's world.

"Volunteering has to be interpreted in reference to both the individual biographical consequences of broader social-structural transformations and the organisational changes restructuring the volunteer field" (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003:170)

Turning back to the question of what can be considered volunteering with these considerations in mind, Angermann and Sittermann (2010a) suggest focusing on the common characteristics of volunteering activities. Following this line of reasoning, the subsequent characteristics of volunteering highlighted by the European Youth Forum are understood to cover the relevant dimensions of personal initiatives for the purpose of this academic review.

According to the European Youth Forum (2017), an activity can be defined as volunteering if it is:

- “undertaken of a person’s own free will and it involves the commitment of time and energy to actions that benefit others and society as a whole;
- unpaid (although it can involve reimbursement of expenses directly related to the activity);
- for a non-profit cause, primarily undertaken within a nongovernmental organisation, and thus clearly is not motivated by material or financial gain;
- not used to substitute or replace paid employment.”

Even though these characteristics outlined by the European Youth Forum cover various types of volunteering, what we can agree on is that the commitment of time for an altruistic motive is an important - if not essential - factor in the act of volunteering (Bussell and Forbes, 2001). Outlining the common criteria which define volunteering provides the foundation for the remainder of the report, which will focus on the research findings related to female volunteers and the increased access to and participation of girls in sports and physical activity.

4. Methodology

The focus of an academic review is to gain insight on what research topics and themes arise from previous bodies of knowledge through gathering and analysing peer-reviewed articles. The aim of this academic review is to explore trends from extant literature regarding the role of female volunteers in sports and physical activity. In light of this aim, the selection process of relevant literature is related to the following two research topics:

- (1) The engagement of female volunteers in grassroots sports and physical activity
- (2) If and how these female volunteers have an impact on the participation of other girls and young women in grassroots sports and physical activity

Accordingly, key search terms were entered in various search engines, including Web of Knowledge, Google Scholar and JSTORE, in order to find relevant peer-reviewed studies and literature. These terms included: “female volunteer”, “volunteering”, “grassroots sports”, “sport”, “physical activity”, “participation”, “equal access”, “inclusion”, “female role models”, “female leadership”, “effect of volunteering”, “peer to peer”, “sport participation”, “female participation”.

This initial online search yielded 98 potentially useful peer reviewed articles. After reviewing the abstracts of the initial articles, 36 were considered relevant for this review, as they fit the criteria



mentioned above. Further grey literature was also included where relevant in complementing the findings from the peer-reviewed literature initially selected. The findings from this review are presented in the section below and follow thematic trends that emerged during the analysis of the articles in question.

4.1 Research limitations

The main research limitation of this academic review is language itself. In fact, the review is based on literature in English; all search terms used were in English, and only studies and literature published in English were considered. Therefore, it is no surprise that most peer-reviewed articles were based on previous literature reviews or studies conducted for the most part in the United Kingdom, North America and Australia. The lack of diversity for this academic review poses a limitation in terms of analysis. Moreover, another limitation closely tied to language is related to the specific search terms chosen for the online search. Indeed, the relevant results presented in this review are related to the search term “volunteer” as opposed to other terms, such as “civic engagement,” as the latter yielded less relevant results to the overall research rationale. Furthermore, only studies regarding volunteering as defined within the characteristics outlined in the previous section were included, where a definition was provided in the relative articles. In cases where a definition of volunteering was not provided, only articles regarding female volunteers and/or girls’ participation in sports were taken into consideration.

Another challenge during the research process was finding relevant literature specifically with regard to the second point of interest cited above. Once again: (2) If and how these female volunteers have an impact on the participation of other girls and young women in grassroots sports and physical activity. Evidence regarding this point is limited in terms of peer-reviewed literature. For this reason, the scope of the review was broadened to also include the insights gathered through grey literature in order to complement the findings from peer-reviewed literature, which will be further discussed below.

5. Findings

The following section presents the findings from the relevant literature selected and organised by topic: from volunteers’ motivations, to individual and community benefits, and peer education. As language was already mentioned as a limitation in collecting diverse literature, it is no surprise that the majority of relevant articles included for this review are from the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. Furthermore, the literature selected for the purpose of this research focuses mostly on the individual level, in particular regarding people’s motivations for volunteering (including both altruistic and egotistic elements), and benefits for volunteers. These findings align with previous literature reviews carried out with regard to general volunteering and volunteer management in sports (Studer and Schnurbein, 2013; Wicker, 2017). Despite the order in which motivational factors are categorised or the ways they are considered, it is necessary for organisations to understand the reasons behind people’s decision to volunteer in order to tailor recruitment strategies accordingly.



Volunteer motivations often times vary from individual to individual within a same cultural environment depending on factors such as a person's age, life stage and gender. Non-profit organisations need to keep in mind the variety of these circumstances in order to attract a broader spectrum of volunteers, moving beyond a mainstream approach. These findings are particularly relevant for any European volunteering project, especially when considering the diversity of volunteering traditions found within Member States.

Even though altruism has been identified as the corner stone of volunteering, empirical evidence is limited in analysing the effects that a female volunteer's role has on the beneficiaries of related activities, or on other young girls' participation in sport and physical activity more broadly.

"Research efforts have focused on antecedents of volunteerism and experiences of volunteers, while consequences of volunteerism and specific groups of volunteers have attracted less research. [...] While understanding motivations and experiences of volunteers is certainly relevant to volunteer management, much has been said on this topic" (Wicker, 2017:5)

In comparison, research analysing the institutional perspective on volunteering is limited (Wicker, 2017). This was also evident from the findings of the current review, especially when researching studies specifically concerning female volunteers in sports. In fact, less literature is available that addresses organisational practices in terms of recruiting, training and retaining female volunteers over time. This could be due to the fact that volunteers have often been studied in this context as a general group, not paying much attention to different roles volunteers assume such as coaches or referees (Wicker, 2017). Findings for this academic review highlight this gap in research, which could be filled by the collection of good practices with the aim of engaging female volunteers. In fact, the case study report which also contributes to this research will provide more practical insight with regards to an institutional perspective, since the focus for that report was to collect case studies of good practices for engaging female volunteers in sport and physical activities and increasing girls' participation.

5.1 Understanding motivations for volunteering

Volunteers are a crucial component of the workforce in the sport industry (Kim, Zhang and Connaughton, 2010; Mirsafian and Mohamadinejad, 2011), particularly in the case of youth sports (Kim et al., 2010). Consequently, it comes as no surprise that literature regarding volunteering in sport is focused for the most part on understanding reasons why people volunteer in the first place. Often perceived to be of an altruistic nature, these motives are of particular interest for academics to investigate, especially when considering that volunteers do not receive remuneration for their efforts (Wicker, 2017). Organisations are also prompted to explore and understand the reasons why people volunteer in order to tailor their recruitment and retainment strategies accordingly and succeed in recruiting and retaining volunteers more often (Bussell and Forbes, 2001; Busser and Carruthers, 2010;

Kim, et al., 2010; Mirsafian and Mohamadinejad, 2011). The following sections explore the two main approaches used to study volunteer motivation: the incentives approach and the functional approach.

5.1.1. Incentives approach

On the one hand, volunteer motivation has been studied from the perspective of incentives or benefits that volunteers receive when taking on their role. Below several theories on the question are reported in order to gain a better understanding of the complex reasons behind volunteer motivation and to offer a well-rounded analysis. In fact, these outlooks will help identify and categorise specific sets of volunteer motivation.

In 1984, Knoke and Prensky formulated a categorisation for motivation among volunteers centring on three basic incentives. The first incentive is of an affective nature, concerning the interpersonal relationships gained from positive social interactions. The second is a utilitarian incentive, referring to the indirect benefits of volunteering, such as broadening one's knowledge and developing practical skills. Lastly, Knoke and Prensky identify the third as normative incentives, meaning the philanthropic and altruistic motives for volunteering, such as sharing and helping others. Adopting Knoke and Prensky's approach, Caldwell and Andereck (1994) classify the incentives behind volunteer motivation into three separate sets: purposive, solidary and material. A purposive incentive, often considered as the strongest volunteer motivation, encompasses contributing to society or doing something useful. Next, a solidary incentive indicates potential networking opportunities and new social interactions for the volunteer. Contrary to the previous two, a material incentive refers to all the tangible benefits of volunteering and is regarded as the least important motivation.

Reinforcing Caldwell and Andereck's findings, similarly Williams, Dossa, and Tompkins (1995) found in their study that community support was identified as the most important volunteer incentive (purposive benefit), whereas souvenirs and free tickets (material benefit) were the weakest motivational incentives. Taking Knoke and Prensky's theoretical framework one step further, Farrell, Johnston and Twynam (1998) conceptualise the four-dimension Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS) in order to analyse volunteer motivations in greater depth. They propose categorising volunteer incentives as: purposive, solidary, commitments (such as the external expectations and the need of personal skills) and external traditions (such as external influences and family traditions). In addition, Farrell et al.'s study also found that solidary and purposive incentives are the highest among the recognised motives for volunteering, as opposed to commitments and external traditions. Although several nuances can be found in the incentive approaches explored above, all perspectives concur that solidary and purposive incentives are the primary attraction behind volunteer motivation.

5.1.2 Functional approach

On the other hand, volunteer motivation has been studied based on the functional approach by Clary and Snyder (1999), which highlights how people who volunteer can take part in the same activity, but have different and multiple motivations for doing so. Consequently, this perspective can also account for the motivational differences among individuals from diverse backgrounds (Kim et al., 2010), but also differences among individuals from the same or similar background.

Delving into the functional approach, Clary and Snyder (1999) determine six different functions of volunteer motivation. These cover:

“(a) Values (i.e., humanitarianism or concern for the beneficiary of volunteering); (b) Understanding (i.e., learning knowledge and skills); (c) Social (i.e., concern about relationships with others); (d) Career-related (i.e., professional benefits, such as experiencing different career options or building career-related networks); (e) Protective (i.e., reducing negative feelings or guilt, or to address personal problems); (f) Enhancement (i.e., psychological growth and development)” (Kim et al., 2010:346)

Further, Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copelande, Stukas, Haugen, and Miene (1998) also developed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), which contains 30 functions in terms of reliability and validity that can be classified under one of these six major concepts. The VFI is a well-established method for measuring aspects that motivate people to volunteer (Studer, 2013).

Building onto Clary et al.’s theoretical framework, Kim Zhang and Connaughton (2009) developed a Modified Volunteer Functions Inventory for Sports (MVFIS) in order to enhance the VFI’s applicability in better assessing volunteer motivation in the setting of youth sports. In fact, the MVFIS consists of only 18 functions under the six categories, rather than 30, due to perceived irrelevance of some items when considering the context of youth sports. More specifically, for teenage volunteering in youth sport organisations, “Understanding, Enhancement and Values were ranked highest volunteer functions” (Kim et al., 2010:347). Nonetheless, even though altruistic motives have been often categorised, personal motives need further consideration and acknowledgement.

Bussell and Forbes (2001) argue that volunteers “tend also to act on egoistic motives. People volunteer to satisfy important social and psychological goals” (Bussell and Forbes, 2001:50). Likewise, this is seen in Kim et al.’s study (2010), in which youth indicated Careers as one of their top three motivators. More precisely, Careers delineates all the professional benefits gained from volunteering, such as experiencing different career options or building career-related networks, and thus, it can be considered more of a personal or ‘egoistic’ motive.

However, it is relevant to note that literature regarding volunteer’s motivations has had for the most part a theoretical focus, lacking practical applications (Kim, 2010). Wicker (2017) also confirms that there is limited information with regard to how sport organisations use the findings pertaining to volunteer motivation in their management of volunteers. Often the organisational context in which



volunteers work has not been considered as a factor that can affect their motivations, especially lacking in analyses of sport settings. In fact, Kim et al. argue that so far a 'common approach' has been adopted when carrying out studies on volunteerism, meaning that "volunteer motivations have been commonly studied as a universal concept" (Kim et al., 2010:345). Clearly, this approach gives rise to some contention as it disregards potential differences in volunteer motivation among people who volunteer over time in a programme or at one-off events, such as a sport tournament. In order to fill in the gaps of the 'common approach', Kim et al. (2010) highlight the contrasts in volunteer motivation by comparing and analysing them in various youth sport settings. The different sport contexts are delineated as: (1) a state youth sport organisation (2) a national youth sport organisation (3) an international youth sport event, and (4) a sport event serving youth with special-needs. Further, the nature of different events and organisations varies based on several factors: competition level (i.e., elite vs. recreational sport), functional types (i.e., activity programme vs. athletic event), organization type (i.e., commercial programme vs. non-profit) and clientele (i.e., children with special needs vs. general youth population) (*ibid*).

Specifically, in terms of non-profit youth sport organisations, volunteers are often the primary human resource for the organisation since they contribute in key roles such as team managers, coaches, and referees (Kim et al., 2010). Consequently, the recruitment process is an essential step for these non-profit organisations. In their study, Kim et al. (2010) found that Values was the highest ranking motivation looked for in volunteers by all types of organisations and events; Understanding was the second. Interestingly enough, volunteers working at the international and/or special-needs sport events displayed higher motivations in all six factor areas discussed above when compared to volunteers at the national and local organizations level (Kim et al. 2010). Regardless of which factor is prioritised, organisations should be aware of the reasons why people look for volunteering opportunities in order to adapt their recruitment process accordingly.

In their study carried out in Australia, Randle and Dolnicar (2009) research cultural differences towards attitudes and norms with regards to volunteering among Australian, Anglo-Celtic and Southern European community members. Indeed, they found that there are significant differences among these community members, however, they also emphasise that other factors (e.g. age, gender, family status) can also account for differences within these communities. Furthermore, Randle and Dolnicar argue, "if minorities are excluded from mainstream volunteering activities, these groups, which often have limited access to suitable resources and services, can actually become even more marginalised" (2009:230). These nuances need to be taken into account by non-profit organisations, especially if their aim is to attract volunteers from a range of cultural backgrounds, moving beyond a mainstream approach to volunteering.

The satisfaction of volunteers (and their motivation over time) depends on meeting their expectations (Kim et al., 2010). Generally, volunteers with low levels of motivation are more likely to have low morale and, consequently, they are less productive and have more absences and higher turnover rates. On the other hand, volunteers with higher levels of motivation are more productive and resilient. Responsibilities and time commitments can be very demanding and stressful for a volunteer, thus



creating challenges in volunteer motivations. Clearly, training sessions and orientations for volunteers in order to understand motivations and expectations are key in recruiting and retaining quality volunteers (Powell and Steinberg, 2006). Busser and Carruthers argue that “agency managers should provide experiences that satisfy the functional motives of its volunteers in order to satisfy and retain them” (2010:136). In fact, Kim et al. (2009) also found that volunteers were less empowered and less likely to stay with the organisation if their prior expectations were not met during their volunteer experiences. Therefore, an organisation should provide accurate information about the organisation itself and the expected volunteer duties before the volunteer begins and, then, it should help the volunteer become empowered and satisfied during the volunteer experience. In this process, organisations need to account for the differences among motivations based on gender, age, ethnicity, cultural background and nationality. This finding is especially pertinent to any project at the European level, especially considering the different traditions related to volunteering that are found among the Member States.

5.1.3 Focusing on female volunteers

In terms of gender, women often take on more volunteering roles compared to men (Bussel and Forbes, 2001). However, findings from previous research show that in the sports field, it is mostly men who volunteer. As the focus for this review are female volunteers, this section collects data and research on the experiences and barriers of female volunteers, and their motivations for volunteering, through a gender lens.

As previously mentioned, girls and women face numerous barriers in the context of sport, even in their role as volunteers. Women in Sport (2017) found that women primarily look for volunteering opportunities which allow them to maintain a certain flexibility in their daily schedule in order to balance their roles within their family, work and volunteering activity. Needless to say, in a sports environment, the need to remain flexible also influences the type of volunteering roles that women decide to take on - coach or board member being more demanding and less accommodating. In fact, Women in Sport assert that, “coaching roles are seen as being inflexible and present challenges to women with children who may not be able to meet the demands of these roles” (2017:2). As can be inferred, another factor to consider which can function as a double-edged sword is that of family, seen both as a barrier and as an enabler. Indeed, parents (both men and women) of children who play sport are more likely to volunteer in sport contexts as a way to support their young. However, having children also presents barriers only for women in managing their priorities (Women in Sport, 2017).

Turning our attention to the motivations for volunteering, which are complex, they have been studied extensively from differing perspectives. Extant literature also highlights the fact that people volunteer for various reasons that can differ depending on the individual and their age (Eley and Kirk, 2002). Further, studies regarding volunteer motivation have focused on the contrasts between men and women. In their review, Busser and Carruthers (2010) mention how previous research found that in some cases women are mostly motivated by the altruistic factor to take on volunteering experiences, contrary to their male counterparts. Moreover, Berit Skirstad and Dag Vidar Hanstad (2013) specifically examine the gender-based differences among volunteers in their study on sport event volunteering.



Their findings suggest that increasing social capital and expanding networks is one of the major reasons why women engage in volunteering. Similarly, Women in Sport (2017) assert that men volunteer for extrinsic reasons (i.e. 'perks' related to volunteering and their interest in sports), whereas women volunteer based on intrinsic motivations (i.e. to create and reaffirm social networks, for personal/career growth and to support their children). However, in their research across various types of youth sport organisations and events, Kim et al. (2010) found that gender had a minimal influence on volunteers' motivations.

Interestingly to note is that women who volunteer at sport events are less likely to be members of sport clubs and they have less experience related to sports compared to their male counterparts (Skirstad and Dag Vidar, 2013). In other words, women are more likely to doubt their coaching capabilities, based on their previous coaching experience (or lack thereof), social support and coaching satisfaction. In their study on female volunteers progressing in sport, Women in Sport report that women admit to uncertainty and lack of confidence to undertake leadership roles, as well as feeling disconnected, isolated, less valued as volunteers when compared to men (Women in Sport, 2017). Therefore, researchers highlight how specific training would probably be more useful for female (volunteer) coaches.

With reference to reflexive and collective types of volunteering sport events, Skirstad and Dag Vidar (2013) point out how females are mostly in the reflexive type ('modern' volunteers, with no previous ties to sport clubs); compared to males who are of the collective type ('traditional' volunteers and sport club members). In fact, female volunteers are younger, better-educated and often not previous members of a sport club, contrarily to male volunteers. Nonetheless, the stereotypical relationship female:reflexive = male:collective is a product of the wider sport context, dominated by men. Truly, a lower volunteering rate among women in sports is "conditioned largely by the male bias in organised sports participation, since sports volunteers are often recruited from within clubs, and from ex-participants [primarily male]" (Taylor et al., 2012:217). Furthermore, gendered norms are perpetuated in terms of the roles that male and female volunteers play when volunteering in sport events: women mostly have support jobs; while men often take on more official sport roles (Skirstad and Dag Vidar, 2013). Similar findings were also collected by Women in Sport (2017), who corroborated that men often serve as volunteer coaches or board members; whereas women find themselves in 'behind the scenes roles' (e.g. supporting children or catering).

In their study analysing motivations of university students who volunteered in sport programmes in Iran, Mirsafian and Mohamadinejad (2011) found significant differences related to gender. In fact, higher motivations among female and male students are social and career functions respectively. This finding is not consistent with female volunteers as reflexive volunteers. Mirsafian and Mohamadinejad (2011) argue that their results are most likely due to traditional beliefs related to women's and men's roles and expectations in the Iranian social context. For example, in terms of career related motivations, boys/men are expected to be the breadwinners within their families and thus need to find jobs after graduating from university. Understanding these gendered differences in motivations can help organisations tailor efforts to engage more female volunteers by "recognising their social needs and



social interests, and developing their social relationships in grouping activities at the universities” (Mirsafian and Mohamadinejad, 2011:82).

When compared to prior analysis of volunteer motivations through a gender lens, the variety of results among research findings highlight the complexities of the topic at hand. What becomes clear is that there are multiple factors to consider when analysing motivations that go beyond gender alone to include other variables (i.e. socio-economic background) and characteristics of volunteers, such as race, ethnicity and nativity (Mirsafian and Mohamadinejad, 2011). Previous studies are limited in terms of considering different cultural and national backgrounds and their effect on volunteering motivations (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009). Wicker further argues that, “research efforts should be more directed towards an analysis of specific groups of volunteers, other correlates of volunteerism, and potential consequences of volunteerism” (2017:325). The European Us Girls project is specifically focused on young peer volunteers, meaning young girls volunteering in sports programmes to increase the participation of other young girls. Thus, this initiative could prove extremely helpful in informing some of the gaps made evident by previous studies and literature with regard to young female volunteers in sport and the impact they may have on young female participants.

5.2 Benefits to volunteers as individuals

Volunteering yields numerous benefits for those who participate proactively in related activities (Kay and Bradbury, 2009; Bailey, Wellard and Dismore, 2004). In categorising said benefits, studies have distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards come from the content of volunteering, such as challenges, personal growth, and opportunities to learn (Kulik, 2010). Extrinsic rewards derive from the conditions of volunteer activities and include relationships between the volunteer and the organisational environment; some examples of these include appreciation from the provider organisation and contact with other volunteers (Kulik, 2010). In a study of Irish volunteers, MacNeela (2008) reports that participants in the study understood ‘benefits’ to be the achievement of motives as well as the unanticipated rewards that emerge during the volunteer experience. Further, MacNeela (2008) found that when reporting on their experiences, participants cited benefits that generally fell into the two sub-themes of other-oriented and self-oriented benefits. An example of the former category is helping vulnerable people in society, whereas one of the many latter types of benefits include an improved professional profile. This section of the report looks at the entire range of rewards mentioned above. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that the benefits in question typically exist within the context of broader issues pertinent to a volunteer’s individual development, such as the person’s career and life stage (MacNeela, 2008).

Miller, Schleien, Rider, Hall, Roche and Worsley (2002) report on research that corroborates numerous (intrinsic) psychosocial benefits to volunteering. These include enhanced self-esteem, attitudinal changes, improved self-concept, reduced alienation, increased feelings of helpfulness, a greater sense of social responsibility, a reduction in problem behaviours, and a more focused sense of purpose. Moreover, Piliavin and Siegl (2007) assert that when one engages in social activities and hobbies, one



experiences 'hedonic well-being'. However, in their paper based on the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, the two researchers contend that in other-oriented activities such as volunteering, one can enjoy the activity itself and also feel a simultaneous sense of satisfaction in serving society. Piliavin and Siegl (2007) go on to suggest that it is the focus outside of oneself that brings the greater benefits to the inner self. These benefits may also improve mental health, perhaps through increasing self-esteem and the sense of 'mattering' (i.e. the idea that we are significant to the world around us and we are valued as a part of this world). Further, the researchers found that numerous studies reveal positive effects of volunteering on mental and physical health. In fact, in their study, Piliavin and Siegl (2007) claim that they are able to demonstrate that volunteering is positively related to psychological well-being. In fact, according to the Corporation for National Community Service (2007), volunteers tend to have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression (particularly later in life) when compared to people who do not volunteer.

As noted above, a person's life stage has an influence on the nature of the rewards reaped as a volunteer; this seems to be the case particularly in relation to extrinsic rewards. Smith, Holmes, Haski-Leventhal, Cnaan, Handy and Brudney (2010) aver that young people volunteer for different reasons and seek different benefits when compared to older people. More specifically, a significant motivator for young people is the opportunity to gain work-related experience, skills, and qualifications that can help them as they continue on their educational paths or careers. Smith et al. (2010) quote one study, which reveals that "to learn new skills" is the second most important reason for volunteering among 16- to 24-year-olds in the UK. Another study cited by these authors found that more than half of 15- to 19-year-olds in Canada listed "improving their job prospects" as their reason for volunteering. Following on from these findings, according to MacNeela (2008), the job-related benefits of volunteering take a variety of forms depending on a person's career stage and the type of work involved. Smith et al. (2010) state that instrumental motives and benefits, such as those relating to career development, dominate the volunteering discourse as students recognise the need to build their personal capital. However, these authors further observe that career-related factors exist alongside a variety of other motivations and benefits, such as the psychological ones mentioned above. In fact, Smith et al. (2010) quote a national study of university students in England, which recorded both altruistic and instrumental reasons for volunteering. More closely, the motives cited by these students include: to help someone in their community; to learn new skills; to respond to their needs or skills; and to help gain experience to benefit their future career. Therefore, this response confirms MacNeela's thesis (2008), which suggests that a volunteer's motives for taking on this role and the related benefits and personal development gained from the volunteering activity are all integrated factors.

5. 3 Benefits of volunteering on the community level

In recent years, the notion that volunteering has social worth has gained momentum in terms of social inclusion and civic participation. This concept ties in closely to the idea of social capital. According to Kay and Bradbury (2009), the most popular academic conceptualisation of social capital is Robert



Putnam's definition: "networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (1995 and 2000:17). Thus, Putnam argues that increased social connectedness encourages greater social solidarity and social cohesion through 'bonding' and by 'bridging' individuals into a larger collective whole. In the UK, for example, the notion of social capital has found support in national policy for a variety of reasons. According to Kay and Bradbury (2009), volunteering in this context is seen as a key element of strategies to promote social participation and increase individual and collective citizenship, especially among young people. Thus, youth volunteering has gained prominence as a policy mechanism for addressing concerns pertaining to young people's individual and collective citizenship. Kay and Bradbury go on to claim that the special value of sports volunteering within the framework of the social capital thesis centres on the fact that "it explicitly engages young people with their wider community" (2009:136). Furthermore, Morgan (2013) argues that in order to gain social capital, a voluntary activity needs to be based on altruistic motives, not egoistic ones.

In addition to connecting young people with their community in a holistic way, the aforementioned benefits can also appeal to individual members of the community. In the specific line of inquiry of how female volunteers impact female participants in sport, Bean, Forneris and Fortier (2015) carried out a study of a female, youth-driven, physical-activity-based life skills programme targeting female youth aged 11-14. These researchers explored the factors that were important for participants in the programme and they found that the presence of female volunteers was a benefit in terms of two specific aspects: a 'Girls Only Environment' and a 'Trusting and Caring Environment'. With respect to the former aspect, Bean et al. (2015) report that an all-female environment was felt as more comfortable for the participants; from this observation the authors theorise that this was a major reason for female youth to attend the programme in question. With regards the latter aspect, Bean et al. (2015) relate that participants found an all-female context to be conducive to a trusting and caring environment. Johnstone and Millar (2012), who emphasise that women and girls are influenced by those around them, also reinforce the vital importance of creating a positive environment as far as engaging women and girls in physical activity.

Young participants in a programme can also benefit from volunteers simply because they represent adults outside immediate family or the peer sphere. Even social scientists have emphasised the critical role of non-family adult agents in the social development, school achievement, and social mobility of urban working-class adolescents (Stanton-Salazar and Spina, 2003). These researchers found that for youth from working-class and/or ethnic minority communities, older siblings, extended family members, peers, neighbours, and key adults in the community all play an essential role in determining their overall well-being and future life chances. Moreover, the research literature on this matter presents a strong body of evidence which indicates that in any population of urban, low income youth, the most resilient tend to be those who are socially connected to supportive adults in the extended kinship group, school, or community (Stanton-Salazar and Spina 2003). Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) also draw attention to individuals who act as role models and sources of inspiration; these individuals are perceived to have personal qualities and aspirations that are deemed worthy of



emulation. Role models inspire and teach by example, often while they are doing other things themselves (Cruess, Cruess and Steinert, 2008); similarly, volunteers can function as effective role models for marginalised youth. Role modelling is associated, among other things, with social learning theory, which emphasises the social context of behaviour and the critical nature of observational learning: acquiring new skills, information, or altering old behaviours simply by watching other children and adults (Wells-Wilbon and Holland, 2001).

5.4 Peer education

Volunteers can also function as effective peer educators. The term 'peer' relates to a person who is of equal status to another. Researchers have postulated that peer-led interventions are more effective in changing young people's behaviour than non-peer-led interventions (Milburn, 1995). Common to such theories is the idea that behaviour is influenced by an individual's social network and the values and beliefs of other peers. The claimed advantage of peer-led programmes over traditional teacher-led methods is that peer leaders can convey information to the target group in a more credible and appealing way. Although empirical evidence of such benefits from long-term studies is scarce (Stephenson, Strange, Forrest, Oakley, Copas, Allen, Babiker, Black, Ali, Monteiro and Johnson 2004), in a study of pupil-led sex education, Stephenson et al. (2004) found that following the intervention, significantly fewer girls reported intercourse in the peer-led group than in the (teacher-led) control group. Elsewhere findings suggest that peer education approaches may have particular value as a way of including young people who are excluded from the mainstream, such as young parents, young people from black and minority ethnic groups, disaffected young people and those with special educational needs (Department of Health, 2002).

According to the UK Department of Health (2002), there is evidence that peer education approaches are effective in increasing young people's knowledge and skills and, in some instances, changing their behaviour. Beyond this, young people find peer approaches very acceptable. Moreover, as Coalter (2012) has shown, volunteering as a peer educator can also have a significant impact on the volunteers themselves. Many evaluations show that young people who become peer educators gain knowledge, confidence and interpersonal skills. Further, their sense of maturity and confidence in managing their own relationships increases, as well as their ability to clarify their own attitudes and values (Department of Health, 2002).

Research regarding girls' and women's participation in sports can also offer insight for different ways organisations and volunteers can accommodate them to encourage their participation. For example, one useful observation is that girls are more likely to engage in physical activities if they are accompanied by another female friend in a space where they feel safe (Bailey et al., 2004). Furthermore, a study published by Women in Sport (2015) found additional factors that positively impact women's behaviour toward sport, namely interactions with other participants, and being in contact with people who could be considered role models. In this regard, Women in Sport mention: (1) possibilities (inspiring women with real stories they can relate to) and (2) togetherness (sharing intentions increases commitment - socialising with friends is rewarding and bonding and becomes a



strong external motivator), among the key areas sport providers can work on in order to increase participation on women's behalf in sport.

Bailey et al. (2004) further bring forth the proposition that sport practitioners (from clubs to non-governmental organisations) should select local role models from communities or schools, and give women more opportunities to take on key roles (e.g. coaches or mentors) in sport-based programmes. Even though Snape's (2005) study comprised a small sample of qualitative data, nonetheless it offers interesting insights worth considering, especially with regards to female volunteers as peers and role models. Participants of the study recognised that participating in fitness activities for Asian women in Bolton (United Kingdom) was not considered normal. With this in mind, it is no surprise that participants preferred to have instructors who were of the same cultural background and who could communicate in their language. They would be more likely to understand the cultural context participants were coming from and what they were going through by participating in the fitness activities; but they also validate the 'cultural acceptability' of Asian women participating in fitness activities (Snape, 2005).

In fact, participants who were interviewed by Snape (2005) unanimously attributed the success of the project based on the fitness classes being delivered by Asian women:

"The identity of the volunteers as community based Asian women was essential to the success of the project, giving it credibility and cultural acceptance. The volunteers saw themselves as community-orientated pioneers, their role being not so much to persuade Asian women to participate in physical activity as to facilitate opportunities for them to fulfil previously unrealised aspirations" (Snape, 2005:13)

The fact that the volunteers were of similar status, not only in terms of their gender but also in terms of their ethnicity and language, was a key success factor in Asian women's participation in the Steps to Health project, as analysed by Snape (2005). Female Asian instructors acted as role models for other Asian women, increasing their participation in fitness. Thus, Snape (2005) concludes that the main barriers to Asian women's participation in physical activities are of a social and cultural nature.

Despite peers playing a vital role in the experiences of young people, little research has focused on peer relationships in the domain of physical activity (Smith, 1999). However, in one study, Asher, Parker, and Walker (1996) found that peer acceptance and friendship are related to increased physical activity. To quote these authors, "perceptions of both friendship and peer acceptance in physical activity settings can contribute to the formation of physical activity attitudes and behaviours of young adolescents" (Asher, Parker, and Walker, 1996, as cited in Smith, 1999:346). Nonetheless, the majority of programmes do not have formal monitoring and evaluation processes in place to measure the impact role model programmes have on participation in sports (Smith, 1999). Through his research, Smith (1999) found that limited funding is the main reason organisations are not able to collect more data beyond basic information, even though they are interested in knowing more about the level of impact achieved through their programmes.

6. Conclusion and recommendations for further research

Traditionally, attempts to understand volunteering behaviour among peer-reviewed literature have focused on analysing motivation, a broad concept that encompasses a variety of psychological processes that lead people to engage in volunteer activities. The central questions usually refer to why people volunteer and what rewards they obtain from doing so. In the past, often studies regarding volunteering in sports have also centred on analysing the motivations behind volunteering. In particular, on an individual level, this activity often entails giving up one's free time to carry out activities for the benefit of others (altruistic motive), but also for oneself (egoistic motive). However, in most of these studies, there is limited evidence specifically regarding female volunteers in the sport context and the impact they may have on the participation of other girls and young women in sports or physical activity.

Yet motivations alone cannot fully explain the phenomenon of volunteering; indeed, the social context in which similar behaviours occur must be considered as well (Kristiansen, Skirstad Parent and Waddington, 2014). Kristiansen et al. (2014) argue that, on the one hand, for researchers this means that they must look beyond individual traits and motivators to come up with a complete picture of volunteerism. On the other hand, for managers looking to attract and retain volunteers, the local context must be recognised as an essential element that cannot be overlooked. With regard to context, less research has been produced in sports volunteering regarding the differences in settings (e.g. volunteering for a sports event or for an organisation). Indeed, studies that acknowledge these differences continue to centre on motivations, but go no further to explore variables embedded in context. This is a similar finding from Wicker's (2017) review. Furthermore, Wicker (2017) calls for researchers to pay more attention to the institutional context, rather than framing the subject in terms of the same topics; also warranting more attention are differences in long-term compared to momentary initiatives and how these differences affect volunteers in various ways, from their motivations (individual level), to methods for recruiting and retaining volunteers (institutional level).

This academic review illustrates that there is a strong research background in volunteering in general, and the sport volunteering field in particular. However, research with a gender lens is limited to a single variable in studies that seek to understand volunteer motivations. Furthermore, investigation into volunteering often assumes that volunteers are a homogeneous group. In these cases, the focus is solely placed on differences affecting motivations for volunteering; less research can be found regarding the relationship or effect of volunteers on 'beneficiaries' of the volunteer/participant relationship. This finding is interesting considering that research on motivations for volunteering concludes that altruism (carrying out an activity for someone else) is often the core motivation, and basis for the development of social capital. Furthermore, there is little empirical evidence supporting the causality between female volunteers and greater participation of other girls and young women in sport. In fact, only one study in this review directly highlights the influential role peers of similar status



play in increasing participation in sport for Asian women taking part in fitness activities through the Sport to Health project (Snape, 2005).

What emerges from this review is the scarcity of research carried out thus far, and therefore, the lack of solid evidence with specific regard to the impact that female volunteers have on increasing participation of other girls in sport or grassroots activities. This observation emphasises the need for further investigation in order to make a strong case to encourage more girls in sports, whether as volunteers - which would be a success in itself considering the context in question is dominated by men/boys - or as players. This report has provided the backdrop regarding female volunteers in sport, looking at their motivations, individual and community benefits and their potential role as peer leaders for other girls. The present review complements the case study report, which will provide practical examples of good practices that have been gathered in the field, offering insight into how organisations and initiatives have successfully engaged female volunteers.

This gap in the research described above also shows how critical and relevant the European Us Girls study could be in providing evidence that would in turn generate further insights into the increased participation by girls and women in sport due to female volunteers. As an additional suggestion, during the pilot phase of the study, a monitoring and evaluation system could be tested as a way to measure the impact of the female volunteer/girl participant relationship. By reflecting on the reasons and motivations why people volunteer and the benefits they receive from volunteering, we can come to a better understanding of what we need to do to recruit and retain volunteers at an organisational level. Though further investigation into the topic at hand is required, taking explicit action to directly engage female volunteers to be active in sports has the potential to pave the way for young women to become volunteers and encourage other girls to take part in sports.

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