

## **VOLUNTEERING AT SPORT EVENTS AS A RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS' CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Volunteerism has been actively developing in Russia over the past few years. The state policy of the country is aimed at supporting, developing and encouraging voluntary initiatives of the citizens. The President declared 2018 as the year of volunteering in Russia. Russian government has developed an action plan for development of the volunteer movement in the country and launched several Federal programs. 7.4 billion rubles were spent to support volunteer activities in Russia from the state budget in 2018 (excluding the cost of the world Cup).

Volunteering in sport event is one of the most popular types of volunteering in Russia. This is due to the fact that Russia over the past five years has hosted such major international competitions as XXVII world summer Universiade in Kazan (2013), XXII Olympic and XI Paralympic winter games in Sochi (2014), FIFA Confederations Cup (2017), world Cup FIFA (2018) and XXIX world winter Universiade in Krasnoyarsk (2019).

Russia has developed a standard for promoting volunteer activities, developed a network of regional resource centers and formed a team capable of carrying out professional work with volunteers according to international standards. The largest number of sports volunteers in our country is students. Volunteer centers were established in the structure of the largest Russian universities to prepare volunteers for international projects. These volunteer centers continue to operate in this direction today.

Sverdlovsk region is one of the key regions that stimulates voluntary activity of the citizens. According to the Department of youth policy in Sverdlovsk region, more than 100 000 people took part in volunteer activities in 2017. The regional capital hosted matches of the world Cup in 2018, where more than 2,000 volunteers were involved.

The leading center for training sports volunteers in the region is the center "Volunteers of the Urals", created at the Ural Federal University. This center uses a bank of technologies that meet international norms and standards for recruiting, training, motivating and retaining volunteers. More than 11 000 residents of Sverdlovsk region are registered in the volunteer base of the center.

Activities for the preparation of international and Russian sport events are centralized in the region. The area of responsibility to international sport organizations and the government of the Sverdlovsk region is always assigned to a specific volunteer center. As a result, the base of the center "Volunteers of the Urals" covers almost the entire regional community of sports volunteers. Thus, volunteers of this center can be considered as an important resource of the region, constantly hosting mass international events on its territory.

The report is based on a survey of volunteers of the Sverdlovsk region, who participated in sports mega-events. The survey was conducted in 2017 (the target sample, N=706). The sample includes 30% of school and college students, 55% of University students, 15% of University graduates. The study addressed the following research tasks: to characterize the community of sports volunteers in the region, to identify tools to stimulate and motivate the participation of volunteers in sports events, to characterize sports volunteers' social networks and social environment.

The report compares University students with the experience of volunteering in sport events and other groups of young volunteers. The authors have identified differences in the motivation for participation in the projects of sport volunteering. The report assesses the importance of interaction with existing officials for students in the framework of sport volunteering projects in which they participate. Students with experience in sport volunteering often interact with government officials. In comparison with the rest of the surveyed sports volunteers, the experience of social and political activity, which can be acquired through sport volunteering projects, is more important for them. Accordingly, it can be assumed that students with experience of volunteering in sport events are more focused on public career and see their place in the socio-political sphere.

**Keywords:** Volunteering, student volunteering, young people, civic engagement, sociological monitoring.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Volunteerism has been actively developing in Russia over the past few years. The state policy of the country is aimed at supporting, developing and encouraging voluntary initiatives of the citizens. The President declared 2018 as the year of volunteering in Russia. Russian government has developed an action plan for development of the volunteer movement in the country and launched several Federal programs. 7.4 billion rubles were spent to support volunteer activities in Russia from the state budget in 2018 (excluding the cost of the world Cup).

Volunteering in sport event is one of the most popular types of volunteering in Russia. This is due to the fact that Russia over the past five years has hosted such major international competitions as XXVII world summer Universiade in Kazan (2013), XXII Olympic and XI Paralympic winter games in Sochi (2014), FIFA Confederations Cup (2017), world Cup FIFA (2018) and XXIX world winter Universiade in Krasnoyarsk (2019).

Volunteers are an integral part of major sport events. About 5.3 million Russians are engaged in volunteer activities. Voluntary initiatives of citizens receive more and more support from the government every year, volunteering becomes a subject of public attention. Sports volunteering is formed into a separate social institution with its own models of behavior, social status, ideology, system of incentives and sanctions (Gorlova, N. I., 2018).

Resource centers play a key role in the implementation of the state policy for the development of volunteer activities. The main emphasis is on organized volunteering, which people can engage in thanks to the activities of these non-profit organizations. The development of organized volunteering begins in 2011 with the creation of Volunteer training centers on the basis of 25 higher education institutions in connection with the summer Universiade in 2013 and the winter Olympic games in 2014. Volunteer centers of universities are still special centers of competence in the development of volunteerism.

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In Sverdlovsk region the level of development of sports volunteering began in 2012, when the Volunteer center of the Ural Federal University "Volunteers of the Urals" was created. Over the years, the staff of the organization was formed, as well as the base of real volunteers. The resource center uses a bank of relevant international norms and standards of technologies for recruiting, training, motivation and retention of volunteers, fills the Internet portal, which presents all projects and registered volunteers. The volunteer center serves the largest sports events in the region, including the recently held World Cup.

The largest number of sport volunteers in Russia is students. In this regard, the organization of volunteerism receives systematic development in the structure of higher education, where sport volunteering occupies one of the leading positions in the management and in the daily life of young people. In addition, American researchers have identified and described the relationship of motivation to participate in major sport events with the practices of successful employment and career development of volunteers (Giannoulakis, C., Wang, C., Gray, D., 2014).

The purpose of this article is to determine how the experience of sports volunteering can influence the further career growth of students in the Ural region.

## **2 THEORETICAL IDEAS**

Volunteer activity is widely studied among specialists in various fields. In the world community, the emphasis in the study of volunteering is more on the labor approach and the economic efficiency of volunteer work. Researchers are studying the socio-economic consequences of mega-sports events held in different countries. As a rule, researchers study the social and economic aspects of the influence of sport volunteering on the development of different countries and how sport volunteering is included in the processes of formation of internal and external image of individual regions.

The researchers study the social functions of sports volunteering projects, their impact on the solution of global problems, such as the problem of social exclusion of people with disabilities or the problem of formation of citizenship and socially responsible behavior among young people. Sociologists study the impact of volunteering on the development of the non-profit sector and the effectiveness of youth policy (Heinemann, K., 2015).

Sociologists separately consider the internal environment of interaction of the volunteer community in the framework of organizing a sports event. This research strategy allows us to study the situational interaction of volunteers through the context of everyday life, as well as through the assessment of the normative regulation of their actions and the creation of the framework that determines the management of their activities by the organizers (Swierzy, P., Wicker, P., Breuer, C., 2018). The processes of recruiting and retaining volunteers are studied at the level of individual organizations (Ahn, Y., 2018).

The researchers often investigate the motivation of sport volunteers. Motivation is investigated from the position of volunteers' involvement in the environment of sport organizations or in the socio-cultural environment of mega-events. The motivation of volunteers who took part in mega sport events is also studied in the context of their achievement of any personal results. Such positive results include self-confidence, development of creativity, formation of abilities for self-development, ability to communicate and work in a team, etc.

## **3 DATA AND METHODS**

The report is based on a survey of volunteers of the Sverdlovsk region, who participated in sports mega-events. The survey was conducted in 2017 (the target sample, N=706). The sample includes 30% of school and college students, 55% of University students, 15% of University graduates. The study addressed the following research tasks: to characterize the community of sports volunteers in the region, to identify tools to stimulate and motivate the participation of volunteers in sports events, to characterize sports volunteers' social networks and social environment.

To consider career prospects, we analyzed the answers of existing University students. We are interested in this group of respondents, as the student youth, as a rule, already has an idea about the future profession and actively develops the skills required for employment or further career growth. The sample includes 58% of students in social and humanitarian areas of study, 27% of students in technical specialties, 10% of students studying natural sciences and 5% of medical students.

After analyzing the results, we found differences in motivation to participate in sport events. Most of the current students of social and humanitarian direction chose the answer "experience of social and political life" to the question "What does participation in volunteer activity give you?". In comparison with the students of other directions, the experience of social and political activity, which can be acquired within the framework of sports volunteering projects, is more important for them.

Participation in sports volunteering more often than other areas of volunteer activity includes interaction with representatives of the government and the socio-political sector. Every second volunteer to some extent interacted with officials in the framework of sport events. Thus, participation in sports volunteering is the basis of business communication and provides great opportunities to communicate with influential people. In the future, this can be very important in terms of employment and career advancement.

To analyze how the experience of sports volunteering affects the employment of students in technical, natural science and medical areas, we conducted in-depth interviews with representatives of these areas (N=15, 2018). The interview included several blocks, one of which was devoted to self-assessment of the respondent's professional development during the volunteer activity. The results showed that the experience of sports volunteering helps to develop the general skills required by any employer.

## **4 THE RESULTS**

To determine the motives of volunteers at sport events, respondents were asked one of the questions "Does volunteering give you the experience of social and political activity?". The study revealed statistically significant differences between the responses of respondents who are students of social and humanitarian areas and other groups. The data are presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: "Does volunteering give you the experience of social and political activity?" (%)**

Respondents' answers	Social and humanitarian areas	Other areas
Yes	72	36
No	28	64
Total	100	100

Source: author's calculation

The opportunity to gain experience of social and political activity correlates with the experience of sports volunteering among students of social and humanitarian areas of study (Cramer's  $V=0,184$ ). As can be seen from table 1, the majority of students-humanitarians (72%) consider it important to join the social and political life of the country. Other groups are characterized by the opposite situation – the number of those who do not care about the experience of socio-political activity exceeds the number of those for whom it matters. We can say that students of social and humanitarian areas of study more often than others choose this motive, which is due to their professional orientations and interests.

Sports volunteering more often than other types of volunteering is associated with the authorities. One of the ways to gain experience of social and political activity for volunteers at sport events is interaction with representatives of the state power. To determine how often such an opportunity occurs, respondents were asked: "Have you had any experience with officials in the framework of volunteer projects?". We have identified statistically significant differences in the responses of respondents who are students of social and humanitarian areas and other groups. The data are presented in table 2.

**Table 2. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: "Have you had any experience with officials in the framework of volunteer projects?" (%)**

Respondents' answers	Social and humanitarian areas	Other areas
Yes	60	38
No	40	62
Total	100	100

Source: author's calculation

The ability to communicate with the authorities correlates with the experience of sports volunteering students in social and humanitarian areas of study (Cramer's  $V=0,182$ ). As can be seen from table 2, more than half of the humanities students (60%) had contact with officials during sport events. Among other groups, there are almost two times fewer respondents (38%).

To determine the impact of the experience of sports volunteering on the employment of students in other areas, we conducted in-depth interviews with representatives in each area of study. Respondents were asked: "Does the experience of volunteering influence your professional development?". Thus, students of technical specialties believe that such experience improves soft-skills, which are important to any employer. Volunteers learn public speaking, acquire organizational skills. Students of natural science note that participation in volunteer projects allows them to get acquainted with a large number of people, thereby increasing the chances of acquiring useful contacts. Medical students, as a rule, have the opportunity to gain

direct professional experience, working at major sport events in a team with the medical service and provide emergency care to those in need.

Thus, sports volunteering for students in social and humanitarian areas of study is a channel of career advancement in the socio-political sphere. And for students in other areas of study, sports volunteering is a way of forming soft skills.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

After analyzing the results of the study, we can say that the experience of sports volunteering affects the employment of students through the acquisition of important skills. Thus, students of social and humanitarian areas of study have the opportunity to gain the necessary experience of social and political life to better understand their profession. They also have the opportunity to communicate with the authorities and see how they work, which is especially important for students studying political science and management.

Students in other areas of study through volunteering receive general skills that are also necessary for a successful career. We can say that volunteers at sport events are more seriously involved in the volunteer movement than students engaged in other types of volunteering. Thanks to sports volunteering, the resource centers launch serious programs of recruiting, special training, motivation, team building among students who participate as volunteers in major sport competitions. Such students are carefully selected and have the characteristics of the "best of the best" in their professional, personal, communicative competencies.

It is important to consider the requirements that are put forward to applicants for volunteers at sport events. International standards of their activities and responsibility for the image of the host country explain the multi-level selection system in this area, seriously limiting access to sports volunteering for everyone. In our opinion, this direction of volunteering, unlike all other directions, determines special professional and personal characteristics of the students having such experience and considerably increases their chances of successful career advancement.

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