

## Exploring the Impact of Patriotism, Volunteerism and Perceived Empowerment on Community Engagement in Sports Events

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the role of patriotism, volunteerism, and perceived empowerment in fostering community engagement during sports events. Using purposive sampling, this study employed 174 undergraduate event management students to answer questionnaires that measured patriotism, volunteerism, perceived empowerment, and community engagement. The relationship of studied variables was primarily analyzed using correlational and multivariate regression analyses through structural equation modeling (SEM). The results of the analyses identified patriotism, voluntarism, and perceived empowerment statistically and significantly influenced respondents' community engagement. Patriotism also emerged as a predictor that influenced community engagement the most. The findings underscore the importance of understanding the specific event context in shaping the influence of these factors. The study highlights the significance of community engagement in sports events for sports management research and practice, emphasizing the motives behind voluntary participation and the potential impact on community development and social outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Patriotism, Volunteerism, Perceived Empowerment, Community Engagement, Social Impact.*

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### 1. Introduction and Background

This study aims to investigate the role of patriotism, Volunteerism, and perceived empowerment in fostering community engagement during sports events. The study aims to shed light on the theoretical and practical implications of community engagement in the context of sports events, exploring the motives behind voluntary participation and the potential impact on community development and social outcomes. By examining the multifaceted influence of these factors on community engagement, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for sport management research and practice, offering guidance to event managers and community development stakeholders in designing effective strategies and interventions that maximize the social impact of sports events. Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, the study aims to highlight the nuanced relationships between patriotism, Volunteerism, perceived empowerment, and community engagement, while also identifying potential areas for further research to deepen our understanding of the underlying mechanisms and moderating factors that drive community engagement during sports events. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader understanding of the complex dynamics between sports events and community engagement, emphasizing the importance of fostering positive social outcomes and promoting social change within communities.

### 2. Literature Review

The study of community engagement in sports events is of paramount importance for various reasons, as evidenced, by several research papers. Studying community engagement in sports events is vital for understanding its theoretical and practical implications in sports management research and practice (Marques Miragaia et al., 2018). The involvement of individuals in organizing community-level sports events reflects their values, concern for the community, and vocational guidance, making it essential to explore the motives behind voluntary participation (Wilson et al., 2022). Moreover, analyzing sports events' role in community development through community development theories can inform strategies to achieve community development goals and foster positive social outcomes (Schulenkorf & Schlenker, 2017). Participatory sports events, such as running events, offer unique opportunities to build social capital, contribute to community development, and enhance individual well-being through the cultivation of supportive attitudes, prosocial behaviors, and increased socialization (Yao & Schwarz, 2017). Furthermore, community sports events play a significant role in promoting social cohesion and trust, thereby contributing to building cohesive societies and strong community bonds (Schulenkorf & Schlenker, 2017).

Misener (2010) emphasizes that corporations can contribute to the social well-being of communities by strategically aligning themselves with a city's development agenda during the hosting of sporting events. Corte (2020) sheds light on the significant role of the local community through volunteerism experiences in small-scale sports events, highlighting the potential impact of community engagement on sustainable tourism in the local destination. Allen (2014) underscores the significance of comprehending the factors that influence sports event volunteerism to enhance event volunteer management. Additionally, Kerwin (2015) reveals that small-scale sports events can foster a stronger sense of community among volunteers, underscoring the positive social impact of such events within the community. Collectively, these studies emphasize that investigating community engagement in sports events is crucial for promoting social responsibility, sustainable tourism, effective volunteer management, and overall community development.

**Patriotism and its Role in Community Engagement:** Patriotism emerges as a crucial factor in fostering community engagement during sports events, especially evident in the context of international mega-sporting events (Kaplanidou, 2020). The profound sense of pride and national identity experienced by participants and followers of international sports extends to the success of their national teams, creating a unifying force (Higham, 1999). This heightened patriotism can contribute to social development and intergroup relations at sports events by promoting positive interactions and fostering mutual understanding among diverse groups (Schulenkorf et al., 2022). Intercommunity sports events present an ideal platform to bring disparate groups together, fostering dialogue, integration, and peaceful coexistence, ultimately leading to the formation of robust community connections (Kim et al., 2013). Such events facilitate socializing, interaction, and cooperation among individuals from different backgrounds, facilitating cultural learning, increased trust, and the establishment of strong social networks (Kim et al., 2013). The positive experiences at these events further foster inclusive social identities, nurturing a sense of togetherness, belonging, and shared community pride (Schulenkorf & Schlenker, 2017). In this way, patriotism emerges as a significant driver of community engagement and social cohesion during sports events.

Kim (2013) found that patriotism positively influenced attitudes towards patriotic advertising and brands in international mega-sporting events but not in domestic events. Choe (2020) discovered that patriotism did not significantly influence physical attendance at the Rio 2016 Olympics, yet it did impact media consumption intention. Santos (2020) revealed that patriotism had a positive effect on fans' attitudes and behaviors towards sponsors during the FIFA 2018 World Cup. On the other hand, Ličen (2019) found that hosting a major sports event did not significantly contribute to nationalizing nationalism or nation-building in Slovenia, but even moderate exposure to the event led to increased patriotism. These studies demonstrate the nuanced influence of patriotism in the context of sports events, impacting consumer attitudes towards advertising and brands in international events, media consumption intention, and fans' attitudes and behaviors towards sponsors. While patriotism may not directly drive physical attendance or national identity-building efforts, it can evoke strong patriotic sentiments even with moderate exposure to the sports event. The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of patriotism's impact on different aspects of sports events and the need to consider the specific event context when examining its influence.

**Volunteerism and its Impact on Community Engagement:** Volunteerism assumes a central role in shaping community engagement and fostering the formation of social capital during sports events (Fotiadis & Vassiliadis, 2020). The active participation of volunteers in organized sports activities contributes to the development of a vibrant volunteer culture within the community, where individuals voluntarily offer their time and skills to support event organizations (Allen & Bartle, 2014). Intercommunity sports events play a pivotal role in promoting intergroup development and building social capital by creating opportunities for diverse groups to collaborate and interact (Kim et al., 2013). Local volunteers play a crucial role in transforming small-scale sporting events into thriving community occasions that generate positive outcomes, including community empowerment, improved well-being, and a sense of belonging (Della Corte et al., 2020). Community sports organizations, relying on networks of dedicated volunteers, can generate and sustain social capital through the cultivation of social trust and reciprocity (Fotiadis & Vassiliadis, 2020). As a result, inter-community sports events provide a fertile ground for socialization, interaction, and cooperation among diverse groups, ultimately leading to cultural learning, increased trust, and the establishment of enduring social networks (Schulenkorf, 2010).

Volunteerism emerges as a critical factor in promoting community engagement, fostering positive social relations, and enhancing the overall success and impact of sports events. Corte (2020) found that small-scale sports events can strengthen the sense of community and tradition, thus attracting visitors. Hallmann (2017) found that both event involvement and community involvement are significantly correlated and influence future behavioral intentions for one-off events. Allen (2014) found that volunteers' engagement was related to their initial motivation, however, management practices were also important. Zhigang (2022) found that sports event management practices, namely training and working conditions, significantly affected the volunteers' social capital, which in turn affected their satisfaction and work engagement. Overall, these papers suggest that Volunteerism and community engagement are important factors in the success of sports events and should be fostered through effective management practices.

**Perceived Empowerment and its Influence on Community Engagement:** Perceived empowerment assumes a significant role in influencing community engagement during sports events (Hover et al., 2016). When individuals feel empowered, they are more likely to actively engage with others and contribute to social development, fostering a sense of agency and responsibility within the community (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). Active engagement during participatory sports events facilitates the establishment of social networks, increased trust, and the creation of multiple inclusive social identities (Inoue & Havard, 2014). Engaging groups with others in participatory sports event projects allows them to experience firsthand the transformative impacts of cooperation and diversity, benefitting disparate communities in the long term (Inoue & Havard, 2014). Moreover, the attachment to the cause or event acts as a mediator between motivation factors and both social empowerment and engagement, highlighting the importance of meaningful and purpose-driven event experiences (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021). Sports event managers play a pivotal role in promoting events as opportunities for participants to collectively advocate for meaningful causes and raise awareness of relevant social issues, which contributes to community engagement and social development (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021). Thus, perceived empowerment emerges as a critical factor influencing community engagement and contributing to positive social outcomes during sports events.

Allen (2014) discovered that volunteers' engagement in sports events correlated with their initial motivation and management practices. Chalip (2006) argued that organizers should foster social interaction and a celebratory atmosphere to enhance liminality and *communitas*, promoting social value. Karadakis (2012) found that perceived event impacts influenced support for future events and community quality of life. Scotto di Luzio et al. (2020) revealed that a strong sports community negatively predicted athlete burnout and controlled motivation, while positively predicting engagement and autonomous motivation in adolescent athletes. These studies highlight the importance of understanding motivations, creating inclusive environments, and considering perceived impacts in promoting community engagement and well-being during sports events.

### 3. Research Methodology

**Population and Sampling:** To ensure the relevance of the study's findings to the target population, a purposive sampling technique was adopted. Undergraduate students enrolled in the Event Management program were selected as the study's participants. A total of 174 students participated in the study, consisting of 37 males and 137 females. This sample was deemed suitable for investigating the relationships between patriotism, volunteerism, perceived empowerment, and community engagement within the context of sports events.

**Instrument & Data Collection:** To measure the studied dimensions of patriotism, volunteerism, perceived empowerment, and community engagement, established scales were utilized. The Patriotism Attitude Scale (Schats, Staub & Lavine, 1999), Bales Volunteerism-Activism scale (Bales, 1996), Frans social worker empowerment scale (Frans, 1993), and the Civic Engagement Scale (Doolittle & Faul, 2013) were selected. Participants were presented with questionnaire items rated on a five-point Likert scale. Scale scores were standardized to enable the generalization of respondents' levels of patriotism, volunteerism, empowerment, and community engagement. Before analysis, the psychometric properties of the scales were rigorously examined, demonstrating high internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas of 0.81, 0.84, 0.93, and 0.86 for the Patriotism Attitude scale, Bales Volunteerism-Activism scale, Frans social worker empowerment scale,

and civic engagement scale, respectively.

**Data Analysis:** The collected data underwent a meticulous analysis process. Categorical variables were assessed through frequency and percentage calculations, while continuous variables were examined using mean and standard deviation calculations. Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation test was initially employed to explore associations between variables. Subsequently, multivariate regression analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM was chosen over conventional multiple regression analysis due to its ability to maximize the likelihood function through the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) approach. This approach also facilitated explicit evaluation of measurement errors, ensuring robust results (Acock, 2013). Reported P-values were two-tailed, and statistical significance was determined at  $P < 0.05$ . Data analysis was executed using Stata Statistical Software Release 17 (StataCorp LP, College Station, TX), ensuring accuracy and consistency in the analytical process.

#### 4. Results

**Descriptive Analysis:** A total of 174 students participated in the survey. Most respondents were female ( $n = 134, 78.7\%$ ). Mean comparison analyses using the Welch  $t$ -test identified no significant difference in respondents’ patriotism, volunteerism, perceived empowerment, and community engagement when the scores were statistically compared against respondents’ gender. Analysis of mean values showed the respondents have a moderately high level of patriotism ( $M = 4.21, SD = 0.56$ ), volunteerism ( $M = 4.30, SD = 0.65$ ), perceived empowerment ( $M = 4.27, SD = 0.70$ ), as well as a moderately high level of agreement on the statements measuring the community engagement ( $M = 4.30, SD = 0.66$ ).

**Table 1: Correlational Analysis**

	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Patriotism	4.21	0.56	-		
2. Volunteerism	4.30	0.65	0.69***	-	
3. Perceived empowerment	4.27	0.70	0.65***	0.67***	-
4. Community Engagement	4.30	0.66	0.75***	0.68***	0.63***

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Correlational Analysis:** Table 1 presents the result of multiple correlation analyses. The result of the analysis suggests patriotism, volunteerism, and perceived empowerment scores are significantly correlated with respondent’s community engagement scores. Patriotism ( $r = 0.75, p < .001$ ), Volunteerism ( $r = 0.68, p < .001$ ), and perceived empowerment ( $r = 0.63, p < .001$ ) showed a positive relationship with community engagement, suggesting the higher the respondent’s level of patriotism, volunteerism, and perceive empowerment, the higher the agreement of respondents on the statements measuring the community engagement. The effect sizes for correlation are larger than typical, according to Cohen (1988).

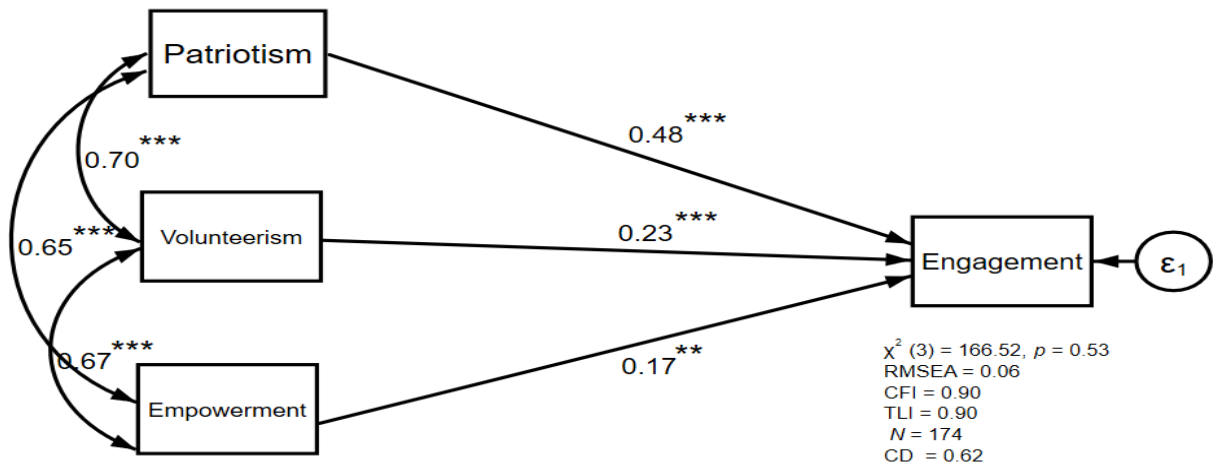
**Regression Analysis:** Multivariate regression analysis was performed using SEM to determine the level of patriotism, volunteerism, and perceived empowerment in community engagement. To improve the model estimate, we allowed the error terms to be correlated between and among independent variables (patriotism volunteerism, and perceived empowerment). The model shows an appropriate fit (LR chi-squared = 166.52,  $p = .53$ , RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.090, TLI = 0.090, CD = 0.62) and the  $r$ -squared value explains 62% of fitted data in the regression model. The analysis revealed that patriotism, volunteerism, and perceived empowerment are significant predictors of community engagement. Based on the standardized coefficient, patriotism has a greater influence on community engagement ( $\beta = 0.48, p < .001$ ), when compared with the influence of volunteerism ( $\beta = 0.23, p < .001$ ) and perceived empowerment ( $\beta = 0.16, p < .001$ ) on community engagement. Table 2 summarizes the results of multivariate regression analysis, and Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic presentation of the variable's relationship.

**Table 2: Result of Multivariate Regression Analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)**

Structural			<i>P</i>	95% CI	
CE					
	0.56 [0.48]	0.08 [0.07]	6.85	<.001	0.40 – 0.72
	0.23 [0.23]	0.07 [0.07]	3.20	0.001	0.09 – 0.37
	0.16 [0.17]	0.63 [0.07]	2.48	0.013	0.03 – 0.28
Constant	0.29 [0.44]	0.24 [0.39]	1.18	0.237	-0.19 – 0.76
ean (PA)	4.21 [7.52]	0.04 [0.41]	99.20	<.001	4.13 – 4.30
Mean (VO)	4.30 [6.64]	0.05 [0.36]	87.64	<.001	4.20 – 4.39
Mean (PE)	4.27 [6.11]	0.05 [0.37]	80.63	<.001	4.17 – 4.38
Var (e. CE)	0.16 [0.38]	0.02 [0.05]			0.13 – 0.20
Var (PA)	0.31 [1.00]	0.03			0.25 – 0.39
Var (VO)	0.42 [1.00]	0.04			0.34 – 0.52
Var (PE)	0.49 [1.00]	0.05			0.40 – 0.60
Cov. (PA, VO)	0.25 [0.70]	0.03 [0.04]	7.54	<.001	0.19 – 0.32
Cov. (PA, PE)	0.25 [0.65]	0.04 [0.04]	7.17	<.001	0.18 – 0.32
Cov. (VO, PE)	0.30 [0.67]	0.04 [0.04]	7.38	<.001	0.22 – 0.39

**Note:** beta values and S.E in the enclosed square bracket represent the standardized coefficient and (observe information matrix) standard errors. Abbreviation: S.E = Standard Error, CE = Community Engagement, PA = Patriotism, VO = Volunteerism, PE = Perceived Empowerment

**Figure 1: Standardized Estimates for Patriotism, Volunteerism and Perceived Empowerment with Correlated Errors (*N* = 174; \*\**p* < 0.01, \*\*\**p* < .001).**



**Discussion:** The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of patriotism, Volunteerism, and perceived empowerment in fostering community engagement during sports events. The results indicate that all three factors significantly influence community engagement, with patriotism showing the strongest impact, followed by volunteerism and perceived empowerment. These findings align with previous research that has highlighted the importance of these factors in shaping social outcomes in the context of sports events.

Patriotism emerged as a crucial driver of community engagement during sports events, particularly in the

context of international mega-sporting events. The strong sense of national identity and pride experienced by participants and followers of such events creates a unifying force that promotes positive interactions and mutual understanding among diverse groups (Schulenkorf & Schlenker, 2017; Kaplanidou, 2020; Scotto di Luzio et al.). This sense of togetherness and shared community pride fosters inclusive social identities and strengthens community bonds, contributing to social cohesion and intergroup relations. However, it is noteworthy that patriotism's influence may be context-dependent, as it showed different effects on attitudes towards advertising and brands in international events compared to domestic events. Therefore, event managers should consider the event context and cultural factors when leveraging patriotism to enhance community engagement.

Volunteerism also played a significant role in fostering community engagement during sports events. The active participation of volunteers in organizing sports activities creates a vibrant volunteer culture within the community, promoting community empowerment and a sense of belonging (Fotiadis & Vassiliadis, 2020; Della Corte et al., 2020). Volunteers catalyze transforming small-scale sporting events into thriving community occasions, generating positive outcomes such as improved well-being and community tradition. Effective management practices and adequate training for volunteers contribute to their engagement and social capital, which, in turn, enhances the overall success and impact of sports events. Event managers should prioritize volunteer management to ensure positive social outcomes and community engagement.

Perceived empowerment emerged as a critical factor influencing community engagement during sports events. When individuals feel empowered, they are more likely to actively engage with others and contribute to social development (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018; Hover et al., 2016). The attachment to meaningful causes or events acts as a mediator between motivation factors and both social empowerment and engagement. Event managers can promote community engagement by providing opportunities for participants to collectively advocate for meaningful causes and raise awareness of relevant social issues. Such initiatives create a sense of agency and responsibility within the community, fostering positive social outcomes during sports events.

## 5. Discussion

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role of patriotism, Volunteerism, and perceived empowerment in fostering community engagement during sports events. The findings underscore the importance of understanding the specific event context and management practices in shaping the influence of these factors. Event managers and community development stakeholders can use these insights to design effective strategies that maximize the social impact of sports events, ultimately benefiting communities and promoting positive social change. Continued research in this area will further enrich our understanding of the complex dynamics between sports events and community engagement, contributing to the advancement of sport management research and practice.

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