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Volunteerism During COVID-19: Sport Management Students' Career Interests Against Public Health Risks

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Employing the theory of planned behavior, this study aimed to identify how sport management students' intentions to volunteer for a sporting event were affected by their COVID-19 preventive health factors and social consciousness. From eight U.S. universities, 415 sport management students responded to a self-administered online survey. Collected data were analyzed via hierarchical regression modeling. While the students' health literacy and susceptibility affected their intentions positively, their social consciousness played a crucial role in producing low intentions to volunteer for a sporting event. Sport management educators should include more hands-on activities in the curriculum and collaborate with local sport agencies to provide diverse experiential learning opportunities while students comply with the health guidelines.

Keywords: social consciousness, health literacy, virus susceptibility, sport volunteering, career development

The COVID-19 outbreak to an extent stripped sport management students of certain education and career opportunities (Nietzel, 2020). The tournament committee for the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Final Four, for example, had recruited local sport management students as volunteers, but the students' time and effort came to naught. With no live sporting events for which sport management students could volunteer, many lost opportunities critical to a sport management education, which demands on-site experience for career growth.

According to Wang and Yu (2015), volunteering by college students does not stem from pure altruism; it can also be driven by career self-interest (Bang & Lee, 2014; Johnson et al., 2017). This self-interested aspect is particularly true for academic disciplines that emphasize practical experience in their curriculum, such as sport management education. Sport management programs frequently collaborate with local and regional sports entities to offer their students various practical learning opportunities, such as volunteering, practicums, internships, and organized networking events. Consequently, sport management students recognize the importance of networking with industry professionals and devote significant time to gaining experience in the sports industry. Therefore, it is vital to consider the discipline's field-oriented nature and the students' lack of field opportunities in understanding sport management students' volunteering behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic, where prioritizing collective health benefits over individual interests had become a norm.

To help predict people's behavioral intentions, Ajzen's (1985, 1987, 1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) proposes three components—attitudes toward behaviors, perceived subjective norms toward behaviors, and perceived behavioral control. In theory, a person's perceived behavioral control is the perception that certain behaviors are within one's control, suggesting a person can access resources and information to perform a behavior


successfully. When considering COVID-19's impact on society and our daily life, a person's behavioral intention could be affected more by behavioral controls, such as health-related information and perceived social pressure regarding public health vulnerability. As a resource that sport management students might draw on to determine their volunteering during the pandemic, the current study looks to health literacy (Nutbeam, 2000) and susceptibility to virus infection (Katz et al., 2012). Another behavioral control should be students' social consciousness, as a way of knowing how society and its members perceive public health risks (Williams et al., 2020).

Volunteers at sporting events provide real value to the sport world. Chelladurai and Kerwin (2017) estimated that in the United States, sport volunteers represent a value of >\$34 billion. One cohort of volunteers at sporting events is college students who want to pursue a career in the sport industry. These students volunteer to gain practical experience and networking and sometimes gather course credits essential to their desired occupations. As noted above, the COVID-19 pandemic was detrimental to sport management students' career development. How severely they were deprived may have been greater than what other college majors were. In the sport industry, volunteering is stressed as a qualification of competitive job candidates. With no volunteering opportunities, students had few other options.

While sport management students' desire to volunteer for sporting events is typically encouraged and praised, their motivation to volunteer may be in conflict with COVID-19's health prevention policies and practices, such as stay-at-home orders, quarantining, curfews, and social distancing requirements (American Medical Association, 2020; Chia & Oyeniran, 2020). Such a conflict provides a novel opportunity to study how sport management students pursue a career during a global pandemic—exemplified here as intentions to volunteer to help put on a sporting event—and how they try to ensure their personal and public safety. Despite the critical disadvantage caused by the sporting event hiatus, no systematic approach has been made to understand either how sport management students perceived their career development opportunities and health risks during COVID-19 or how they tried to create an advantage out of the uniquely bad circumstance.

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This paper explores how sport management students' volunteering intentions during COVID-19 can be reconciled with public health concerns. Knowing the dynamics of sport management students' volunteering intentions during COVID-19 would reveal a new dimension of how sport management students balance their heavy reliance on on-site volunteering and COVID-19-related health concerns. Therefore, the current study's primary purpose is to identify sport management students' intentions concerning volunteering for sporting events, especially when they would have to expose themselves to COVID-19 health risks. More specific goals include the following: (a) to determine how sport management students' intentions to volunteer for a sporting event are influenced by their health literacy of COVID-19 and their perception of susceptibility to COVID-19, and (b) to identify how their intentions to volunteer for a sporting event are affected by their social consciousness.

This study's findings contribute to the knowledge of sport management students' preventive health behavior by revealing the dynamics of COVID-19 preventive health factors and career orientation. In addition, given that sporting events rely heavily on student volunteers, the study provides practical implications on how event managers might customize their volunteer-recruiting strategies. It also helps sport management educators understand what students need to help them develop their careers; such needs may in turn be reflected in the curriculum when public health risks restrict students' experiential learning activities.

Literature Review

Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen's (1985, 1987, 1991) TPB postulates that a person's behavioral intentions usually predict their behavior. These intentions have three predictors—attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms surrounding the behavior, and a person's perceived control over the behavior. If an individual has a positive attitude about a behavior, the individual is more likely to form an intention to participate in the behavior than is an individual having a negative attitude. In terms of subjective norms, this refers to the apparent social pressure to engage in or abstain from the behavior. Lastly, a person's perceived behavioral control refers to one's assessment of one's control over engaging in a particular behavior, such as time, resources, information, and opportunity.

Several studies (Bang & Lee, 2014; Lee et al., 2014) have attempted to utilize TPB to explain volunteering at sporting events. Bang and Lee (2014) used TPB to predict volunteer motivations for large-scale sporting events as well as volunteers' intentions to return as volunteers. Their findings revealed that subjective norms and perceived behavioral control were significantly effective in predicting volunteers' behaviors. Lee et al. (2014) also used TPB to predict volunteers' intentions to return as volunteers for another sporting event. Their findings revealed that a volunteer's intention to return for the next event was explained by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

In identifying numerous motivational factors for volunteers in a sporting event setting, Johnson et al. (2017) found that students' major motivators were their love of sport and career factors. This finding is similar to that of Pierce et al. (2014) and Wang and Yu (2015), namely that students are motivated by and satisfied with volunteer opportunities to enhance their careers. Given the substantial connections between students' volunteering intentions and their career interests, the perceived behavioral control's more

genuine effect on the volunteering intentions would be secured by controlling self-interest factors. Therefore, the current study controls these factors to secure the dynamics of how college students' preventive health factors and social consciousness genuinely affect their volunteering intentions. Identifying this effect would become more critical, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when various health-related factors and social consciousness control behaviors.

Health Literacy, Infection Susceptibility, and Social Consciousness

Volunteers' health literacy explains, in this case, their ability to gain, understand, and analyze information about a pandemic (Nutbeam, 2000). According to Nutbeam (2000), health literacy reflects three levels of literacy—functional health, interactive health, and critical health. Functional health literacy explains a person's ability to read and understand health-related materials. Interactive health literacy is a more advanced social and cognitive skill with which a person can extract information from different forms of communication and apply the information to changing environments. The most advanced social and cognitive skill is critical health literacy; this skill enables a person to analyze the information critically and exert greater control over life events.

Individuals' health literacy is vital. This is especially evident when people must read or take in disease-related information conveyed through the media; further, they have to evaluate the reliability and genuineness of information to follow preventive health guidelines. Numerous studies (Bennett et al., 2009; Fleury et al., 2018) have shown that in behaviors pertaining to health prevention, a key role is played by health literacy. This was particularly evident during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when an influx of complex, conflicting, and inaccurate information needed to be adequately screened (Mahmood et al., 2022). More critically, during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals' health literacy played an essential role in solving their real-life issues immediately. Unfortunately, numerous studies have found that people's lack of health literacy negatively affected virus mitigation (Silva & Santos, 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

The impact of health literacy on the COVID-19 pandemic has been studied in a binary approach to determine whether health literacy has a positive or negative influence. Nonetheless, we still have much to learn about whether sport management students' health literacy would facilitate or inhibit their career-oriented behavioral intentions. Knowing this is more compelling for the COVID-19 crisis because "simply knowing about the risks is insufficient when scientific knowledge on COVID-19 is still limited, when interventions are complicated or inconsistent, and when fundamental values of self-interest versus communal solidarity clash" (Abel & McQueen, 2020, p. 1). Testing how sport management students' health literacy affects their intentions to volunteer is crucial, as COVID-19-related contextual factors restrict them. Therefore, the first research question (RQ) of this study is as follows:

RQ-1: Given the limitations on volunteering opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to what extent did sport management students' health literacy influence their intentions to volunteer for a sporting event?

Volunteers' perceived susceptibility to virus infection refers to their risk assessment of being infected with the virus (Katz et al., 2012; Lu & Schuldt, 2018). How susceptible a person is to

COVID-19 is largely determined by personal health risk factors (CDC, 2020). A considerable risk for people is that COVID-19 can spread from an asymptomatic person (Joseph, 2020). Indeed, it would seem inevitable that in volunteering at sporting events, one would encounter unknown and asymptomatic people. In this vein, sport management students who are free of health risk factors need to accept the probability of being exposed to COVID-19 when volunteering for a sporting event, which might cause them to perceive their susceptibility to COVID-19.

Sport management students' perceived susceptibility to the virus infection is crucial in determining their volunteering intentions (Commodari et al., 2020; Katz et al., 2012; Zegarra-Valdivia et al., 2020). Nevertheless, sport management students that were deprived of sporting event opportunities might neglect to properly evaluate how vulnerable they could be while volunteering. Thus, the current study explores whether sport management students' perceived susceptibility to the virus affects their intentions to volunteer for a sporting event during COVID-19. The second RQ is as follows:

RQ-2: As the COVID-19 pandemic restricted sport management students' volunteering opportunities, to what extent did susceptibility to the virus infection affect their intentions to volunteer for a sporting event?

Social consciousness refers to "the level of explicit awareness a person has of being part of a larger whole" (Schlitz et al., 2010, p. 21). When people take behavioral actions and interventions, their mindful initiatives are partly stimulated by their social consciousness. In this vein, social consciousness is not an individual's simple awareness of specific social issues (Schlitz et al., 2010). Instead, it is an individual's perceived sensitivity to how the surrounding environment and its members are affected by specific social issues and the realization of how his or her behaviors affect others and vice versa.

Schlitz et al. (2010) argued that, based on the social nature of humans, one may find oneself being affected by others and being aware of affecting others. People with a low level of social consciousness are less than fully cognizant of how they are impacted by others or how their behaviors impact others. On the other hand, people with a high level of social consciousness are fully cognizant of these matters. The expected outcome of social consciousness is a person's tendency toward being compassionate and service-oriented. Ultimately, a socially conscious person engages in prosocial actions and acts as an agent to change immediate communities and beyond (Carlo & Randall, 2002).

With the COVID-19 outbreak, several scholars have assumed that people's compliance with preventive health guidelines, such as social distancing and wearing a face mask, is reflective to how conscious they are of public health. Burmakina et al. (2020) predicted the spread of COVID-19 across four countries. They suggested that as the level of social consciousness rose the number of infected people would decline, especially for a country not practicing a rigid quarantine policy. Lakshmi Priyadarsini and Suresh (2020) set up social consciousness and social distancing for antecedents of social interaction and personal hygiene behaviors. In the tested model, the authors found each of these factors held strong power, suggesting that vital to controlling the spread of the virus was proper social consciousness of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mahmud et al. (2020) created a model to predict the spread of the COVID-19 virus, taking into consideration social consciousness of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings indicate that a "10% increase in social consciousness could possess a significant

impact on disease control for any given country" (p. 8). Williams et al. (2020) conducted online focus group interviews with the U.K. residents. One theme to emerge from the interviews was "adherence and nonadherence of self and others," in which interviewees addressed a high degree of social consciousness regarding their adherence to social distancing and quarantine. The interviewees also felt that nonadhering behaviors occurred due to a lack of social consciousness and understanding of how those behaviors could help spread the virus through a community.

Although these studies identified the role of social consciousness in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic, their approach primarily focused on social consciousness as a direct antecedent of virus transmission. These studies were conducted during the early stages of the pandemic, with the aim of exploring ways to reduce the spread of the virus. Therefore, they primarily focused on the positive impact of social consciousness in promoting preventive health behaviors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed many social and economic issues in which an individual's self-interest runs counter to public health interests. Nonetheless, the volunteering of sport management students should not be merely framed as a conflict between an individual's career-oriented activity and collective health benefits. Sport management students had little choice in their career development but to look for hands-on experience. Therefore, their volunteering should be viewed from the perspective of balancing students' career-oriented aspirations and their social consciousness. Intending to volunteer is not necessarily reflective of a weak social consciousness. The third RQ then is as follows:

RQ-3: To what extent did sport management students' social consciousness affect their intentions to volunteer for a sporting event when the COVID-19 restrictions deprived their volunteering opportunities?

The current study aims to examine the impact of COVID-19 prevention-related factors on sport management students' willingness to volunteer for a sporting event during the early stages of the pandemic. As the virus began to spread across the country, the sport industry came to a halt, leaving many sport management students without the valuable opportunity to gain hands-on experience. Students had to prioritize public health by refraining from volunteering for sporting events. Understanding how individual self-interest intersects with collective health benefits during a pandemic is crucial, even beyond the COVID-19 crisis.

Methods

Samples and Data Collection

To better understand sport management students' intentions to volunteer during the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors created questionnaires on an online survey platform (Survey Monkey) and employed a convenience sampling technique. The survey was distributed to eight U.S. universities in various locations using the authors' network. After removing incomplete responses, a final sample of 415 was used for analysis. Of the eight universities, two were in the Southeast ($n = 213$), three in the Southwest ($n = 125$), and three in the Midwest ($n = 77$). The data collection occurred mostly in the last week of March and the first week of April 2020, when most sporting event cancellations and delays had already been announced, and universities had begun their remote learning modules. Considering this context, it is reasonable to assume that

survey participants did not have access to sport-related volunteering options. The average time for survey completion was approximately 5 min.

The participants were made up of 284 males (68.4%) and 131 females (31.6%). Most of them were seniors ($n = 198$, 47.7%) and juniors ($n = 134$, 32.3%), followed by sophomores ($n = 36$, 8.7%) and freshmen ($n = 12$, 2.9%). Also participating in the survey were 35 masters' students (8.4%). While 209 participants had volunteered for sporting events before (50.4%), 206 participants had not (49.6%). Their average age was 22.6 years old.

All eight universities included in the study are public and had an average enrollment of 38,766 students in the academic year when the survey was made. Likewise, the sport management students who participated in the survey were enrolled in sport management programs at each institution. These programs place a strong emphasis on experiential learning, as evidenced by their promotion of volunteer activities through student photos on their webpages and information about their industry advisory boards. Moreover, each program's curriculum incorporates practicum and internship courses that count toward course credits.

Measures

Health literacy is related to respondents' awareness regarding virus-related information. To measure it, the researchers adopted three items from Lee et al. (2012). The items concerned their familiarity with the COVID-19 symptoms, awareness of the COVID-19 infection cause, and familiarity with the practices of COVID-19 prevention. Perceived susceptibility of the virus infection focused on respondents' perception of adverse effects from becoming infected. Adopted from Lu and Schuldt (2018), the items measure their perceptions of infection risk, infection's side effect risk, and infection threat. Social consciousness asks respondents how conscious they are of public health; this was measured with Hwang's three items (2019)—their awareness of the outbreak, behavior of virus mitigation, and consciousness of public health.

Respondents' career orientation was assessed using three items—the strength of their resume, assistance with job seeking, and career development opportunities (Bang & Lee, 2014). Next, subjective social norms were measured by evaluating respondents' perceptions of others' opinions about volunteering for a sporting event, including the importance placed on approval, awareness, and willingness to participate (Bang & Lee, 2014). Finally, attitude toward volunteering for a sporting event was measured using Ajzen's three-item scale (1991), which assesses participants' attitudes toward volunteering based on whether they perceived it to be beneficial or harmful, useful or useless, and whether it made them feel foolish or smart.

Lastly, to measure how likely respondents were to volunteer for a sporting event that was canceled or delayed due to COVID-19, the study used Eddosary et al.'s three items (2015). Respondents were informed that, while the event may have been canceled or delayed indefinitely, they were to indicate their intentions to volunteer had that not been the case. Thus, the items concern their willingness to volunteer, planning to volunteer, and trying to volunteer.

The wording of the adopted items was revised to fit the context of the study. All items were measured on a 7-point, Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) through 4 (*moderate*) to 7 (*very much*). However, the attitude of the volunteer was measured on a semantic differential scale, ranging from -3 (*foolish, harmful, useless*) through 0 (*neutral*) to 3 (*smart, beneficial, useful*). Table 1 shows specific items, descriptive statistics, and reliabilities.

Data Analysis

Two-step hierarchical regression modeling was used for analysis. The items of each construct were averaged into a global construct. The modeling's first step included career orientation, subjective social norms about the volunteer, and attitude toward the volunteer for controlling factors on the volunteer intentions. The second step accounted for respondents' COVID-19 prevention factors—health literacy, perceived susceptibility to the virus, and social consciousness—on the volunteer intentions. Each step's coefficient of determination and its significance were analyzed. Also, all the steps' accountability levels of explaining the intentions' variances were compared.

Results

The model's normality, homoscedasticity, and independence of error were checked by plotting residuals. The residual statistics indicated no potential outlying cases.

In hierarchical regression modeling, the first step resulted in 29% of variance on volunteer intentions, $F(3, 411) = 56.31$, $p < .001$. The standardized effect of each construct was 0.40 in career orientation ($p < .001$), 0.16 in subjective social norms about the volunteer ($p < .01$), and 0.07 in attitude toward the volunteer ($p = .16$). All constructs' tolerance ranged from 0.67 to 0.71, and variance inflation factors were from 1.41 to 1.50. These indicators suggested no multicollinearity among the constructs.

The second step incorporated health literacy, perceived susceptibility of the virus, and social consciousness in the modeling. The variance on volunteer intentions accounted for a 3% increase to the variance of the previous step, that is, 32%, $F(6, 408) = 32.51$, $p < .001$. The standardized effect of each construct was 0.41 in career orientation ($p < .001$), -0.19 in social consciousness ($p < .001$), 0.15 in health literacy ($p < .001$), 0.15 in subjective norms ($p < .01$), 0.11 in perceived susceptibility ($p < .05$), and 0.07 in attitude toward the volunteer ($p = .15$). All constructs' tolerance ranged from 0.63 to 0.80, and variance inflation factors were from 1.26 to 1.59, suggesting free multicollinearity among the constructs. Table 2 presents the statistics of hierarchical regression modeling.

Discussion

The current study utilizes the TPB to investigate sport management students' intentions to volunteer for sporting events, considering the risks associated with potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus. While previous research using TPB has adopted a comprehensive approach to understanding volunteers' behavioral intentions based on their attitude toward volunteering, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Bang & Lee, 2014; Lee et al., 2014), this study uniquely examined how COVID-19-specific behavioral control factors, such as health literacy, virus susceptibility, and social consciousness, influence sport management students' volunteering intentions. Given the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study emphasizes behavioral control's impact while controlling for volunteers' attitudes, perceived subjective norms, and career orientation. By doing so, the research extends the applicability of TPB and sheds light on how COVID-19-specific factors influence sport management students' intentions to volunteer. The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic enables us to uncover how contextual controlling factors related to COVID-19 play a role in shaping sport management

Table 1 Item Descriptions, Descriptive Statistics, and Reliabilities

Construct (Cronbach's α)	Item/mean	Item-to-total correlation	Interitem correlation
Health literacy (.71)	To what degree are you familiar with the symptoms of the COVID-19 infection?/5.60	.56	.45
	To what degree do you know the causes of the COVID-19 infection?/5.08	.54	
	To what degree are you familiar with the practices that help prevent the COVID-19 infection?/6.00	.48	
Perceived susceptibility (.80)	To what degree would you perceive the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 while volunteering?/4.56	.63	.57
	To what degree would you perceive the risk of suffering from a COVID-19 infection's side effects from volunteering?/4.90	.66	
	To what degree would you perceive a threat from COVID-19 infection while volunteering?/4.64	.64	
Social consciousness (.81)	How aware are you of the current outbreak?/5.86	.65	.58
	How aware are you that your behaviors influence virus outbreak mitigation?/6.00	.66	
	To what degree are you conscious of the importance of public health?/6.08	.66	
Career orientation (.92)	To what degree do you think that volunteering would strengthen your resume?/5.31	.85	.80
	To what degree do you think that volunteering would have helped with a job search?/5.33	.89	
	To what degree do you think that volunteering would have helped your career?/5.58	.80	
Social norms (.95)	To what degree do you think that people important to you would have approved of your volunteering?/4.79	.87	.85
	To what degree do you think that people important to you would have known about your volunteering?/4.43	.91	
	To what degree do you think that people important to you would have wanted you to volunteer?/4.32	.89	
Attitude of the volunteer (.85)	I would feel foolish (or smart) if I had volunteered for the event./0.29	.72	.65
	Volunteering for the event would have been harmful (or beneficial) for me./0.90	.79	
	Volunteering for the event would have been useless (or useful) for me./1.41	.65	
Intention to volunteer (.96)	I would have volunteered for the event had it not been canceled or delayed./3.83	.90	.90
	I would have planned to volunteer for the event had it not been canceled or delayed./3.85	.93	
	I would have tried to volunteer for the event had it been canceled or delayed./4.00	.93	

Table 2 Hierarchical Regression Modeling

Predicting constructs on volunteer intentions		R ²	Standardized β	t	p
First step (enter)	Career orientation	.29 ($p < .001$)	0.40	8.15	$p < .001$
	Social norms		0.16	3.17	$p < .01$
	Attitude		0.07	1.41	$p = .16$
Second step (stepwise)	Career orientation	.32 ($p < .001$)	0.41	8.38	$p < .001$
	Social consciousness		-0.19	-3.78	$p < .001$
	Health literacy		0.15	3.24	$p < .001$
	Social norms		0.15	3.08	$p < .01$
	Susceptibility		0.11	2.42	$p < .05$
	Attitude		0.07	1.43	$p = .15$

students' volunteering intentions, which have not been experienced before.

Given the literature showing that possessing high health literacy is an effective way to adopt health-preventive behaviors (Levin-Zamir et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2014), it is natural to expect that sport management students who are more capable of dealing with COVID-19-related information would be hesitant about volunteering for a sporting event. However, the current

study finds that sport management students' degree of health literacy positively affected their intentions to volunteer ($\beta = 0.15$), a finding that appears to be inconsistent with existing studies in health (Fleary et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2013). To shed light on this result, the authors consider sport management students' perceived severity about COVID-19 (Wickman et al., 2008) and misguided information regarding the virus's apparently slight impact on young persons (Baum et al., 2020). They might not have correctly

interpreted the information regarding COVID-19, evaluating its health risk to be negligible compared to the benefits arising from volunteering.

Several studies (Commodari et al., 2020; Katz et al., 2012; Zegarra-Valdivia et al., 2020) have suggested that one's virus susceptibility positively affects attitudes, intentions, and actual behaviors in preventive health. However, in the case of the H1N1 influenza virus, Katz et al. (2012) found that college students perceived their risk of being infected, regardless of their documented risk factors, to be low to moderate. This low-risk perception was the same whether they had contact with symptomatic persons or not. Yet when they perceived themselves to be at high or very high risk of virus infection, their vaccination behavior was still found to be <50%. Kats et al. suggested that this tendency occurred due to their young age and relatively good health. While people's perceived risk between HIV1 virus and COVID-19 are different, Kats et al.'s findings suggest an implication regarding how college students' health factors affect their behaviors from the spread virus.

The current study finds that sport management students were inclined to volunteer despite their perceiving themselves to be of high susceptibility to COVID-19 and increasing probabilities of becoming infected with the virus. The authors attribute much of this trend owing to when the data were collected. Data collection occurred during the last week of March and the first week of April in 2020 as COVID-19 was still spreading across the nation. Thus, we postulate that their intentions were due to their being unable to critically process all the COVID-19 information being conveyed through the media. This assumption becomes enhanced by several studies that examined public misperception of COVID-19 during the early pandemic. For example, Maloney et al. (2022) found that consuming particular television networks positively correlates with virus misperception in the early stage of the pandemic.

Sport management students' health-related factors did not compel them to place greater value on their own safety from exposure to COVID-19 than on developing their careers. It should be noted that this result should be comprehended by considering the sporting event's hiatus imposed by COVID-19 policies. Due to uncertainty and prolonged delay during the early stages of the pandemic, sport management students felt deprived of career opportunities. They were likely to feel victimized from career opportunity deprivation, and such feelings left them vulnerable to mental challenges (Cohen et al., 2020). It may be fair to say then that sport management students were willing, in the current study, to volunteer despite the inherent risks.

While the amount of health information by means of health literacy and virus susceptibility was not necessarily related to low intentions, sport management students who were thoughtful of others and public health had lower intentions to volunteer despite it being their primary way to develop their career path. Several studies see people's compliance as capturing the role social consciousness plays in identifying factors that can mitigate the disease and predict the spread and termination of the virus (Burmakina et al., 2020; Mahmud et al., 2020; Lakshmi Priyadarsini & Suresh, 2020; Williams et al., 2020). Such a role being played by social consciousness is again confirmed in the current study. Using the TPB, the current study frames the dynamics of how sport management students' preventive health factors and social consciousness relate to their intentions to volunteer for a sporting event. Revealing the influential role of social consciousness sheds light on how sport management students' pursuit of career opportunities squares with the COVID-19 prevention policy.

It is vital that sport management educators understand students' eagerness for career development opportunities and meet such need through their curriculum. Sport management education should provide multiple ways to diversify their career development behaviors. Also, sport management education should diversify platforms for curriculum delivery. They could, for example, collaborate with local sport agencies to create hands-on projects; programs could host virtual conferences in which students can meet and interact with industry professionals (Terason et al., 2022). Designing and teaching a project-based online curriculum are another way to diversify students' career behaviors (Davies & Ströbel, 2022; Garrido-Lopez et al., 2018). Examples of these types of initiatives include sport event management online simulation and virtual case experience. These learning activities could stand in for students' missing out on in-person career development opportunities. Furthermore, anticipating potential challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, sport management education should develop teaching strategies that ensure effective learning during such situations. Offering rich content and promoting interactions among students and with teachers can enhance the virtual learning experience. This approach helps maintain the continuity of students' education and supports their career aspirations even during challenging times.

Sport management educators can effectively support students in their pursuit of successful careers in sport management by adopting a curriculum that provides diverse paths for career development, embracing various delivery platforms, and preparing for potential challenges.

Limitations and Future Studies

Numerous studies have shown that Americans' perceptions of COVID-19 can differ based on their geographic location (Ricciardelli & Appel, 2022). Therefore, it was important for the current study to investigate how the location of sport management students, specifically in the Southeast ($n = 213$), Southwest ($n = 125$), and Midwest ($n = 77$), may have impacted their health literacy, infection susceptibility, and social consciousness. The researchers used multivariate analysis of variance to test for location-based differences in these variables but found no significant effects, $F(6, 820) = 1.18, p = .31$. Specifically, health literacy, $F(2, 412) = 0.08, p = .93$, infection susceptibility, $F(2, 412) = 0.31, p = .74$, and social consciousness, $F(2, 412) = 1.30, p = .27$, did not differ by location. These results suggest that the study's findings are not influenced by location-specific factors that could impact perceptions of COVID-19. This finding is not compatible with Americans' different perceptions of COVID-19 by their location. The authors attribute this finding to the data collection period coinciding with the initial spread of COVID-19 and a relatively low intensity of social discussions. However, future studies should still consider the geographic location of participants, as it can impact their culture, lifestyle, and political views.

A potential concern in this study is that, when responding to the survey, students' enthusiasm for volunteering at sporting events may overshadow their COVID-19 health concerns. To assess this, the researchers used multiple regression analysis to determine whether students' career-related factors influenced their susceptibility to the virus, a direct reflection of their COVID-19 health concern. The findings revealed that none of these factors significantly predicted susceptibility (career orientation: $p = .08$, attitude: $p = .17$, and subjective norms: $p = .35$). This outcome suggests that despite high motivation to volunteer at sporting events, students'

perceived susceptibility to COVID-19 was not affected, which is a critical consideration for their health and safety. However, it should be noted that students' eagerness to volunteer did impact their intentions to volunteer, as controlled in the study.

The current study's data collection time might affect survey participants' responses. This claim becomes appealing in light of how people's perceptions of the pandemic changed after March and April 2020 (Wise et al., 2020). To address this, the researchers surveyed 83 sport management students, using the same questionnaires, on how they intend to volunteer for sporting events in March 2023, 3 years after the study's original data collection. The descriptive statistics report their volunteering intention at a mean score of 4.86 ($SD = 1.44$), planning volunteering at 4.65 ($SD = 1.50$), and trying to volunteer at 4.78 ($SD = 1.68$). This group comprised 64 males (77.1%) and 19 females (22.9%), with an average age of 22.1 years. The majority were seniors ($n = 30$, 36.1%) and juniors ($n = 31$, 37.3%), followed by sophomores ($n = 15$, 18.1%) and freshmen ($n = 7$, 8.4%). It is worth noting that the study's cross-sectional nature is a limitation when interpreting the findings, particularly in terms of how fluctuations in the pandemic's severity may have influenced the sport management students' perceptions of COVID-19, as evidenced by the higher volunteering intentions reported compared to the original survey results (see Table 1).

Despite the media's purported reliability, it is important to note that the media outlets often projected their own political perspective while reporting on pandemic-related information (Maloney et al., 2022). As a result, the students might have been exposed to nonevidence-based information, which could have affected their attitude toward volunteering. Therefore, future studies should consider the type of media sport management students consume and their potential impact on developing their attitude toward volunteering.

Conclusions

Employing the theory of planned behavior, we have examined how sport management students' degree of health literacy, susceptibility to the virus, and social consciousness affect their intentions to volunteer for a sporting event. Responding to the self-administered online survey were 415 sport management students from eight universities in the United States. Surveys were completed even as COVID-19 spread across the United States and all sporting events had been either canceled or postponed indefinitely. Results suggest that sport management students' capacity to assess their level of protection from the disease did not offset their pursuit of career-oriented benefits. However, their consciousness for community and society played a role in lowering intentions to volunteer for a sporting event. By extending the knowledge of sport management students' health prevention and volunteering behaviors, the study reveals a new dimension of how they aspire, even while putting at risk their own health, to develop their careers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also suggests some practical implications regarding sport management education's extracurricular activities and collaboration to provide experiential learning activities for career development.

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