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**The Impact of Role Ambiguity on Future Volunteering: A Case Study of the 2017  
European Youth Olympic Winter Festival**

## **Abstract**

Research on role ambiguity suggests its relationship to retention and commitment in business, industry and non-profit settings. The purpose of this study was to explore factors associated with perceived role ambiguity experienced by volunteers at the 2017 European Youth Olympic Winter Festival (EYOWF), and their impact on future volunteering engagement and awareness post-event. The study also examined differences in event role ambiguity perceptions based on gender, age and volunteering experience among the participants. Data were collected by a means of an online-administered survey from a sample of 268 volunteers. A response rate of 44% was obtained. Results of PCA suggested two role ambiguity factors consisting of 'means-ends/expectations & Scope' and 'Consequences of role performance' that were relevant in this event setting. A significant association between volunteering experience and both role ambiguity dimensions was reported, while for 'means-ends/expectations & scope' ambiguity, males experienced greater clarity. Finally, the results indicate that role ambiguity is associated to future volunteering beyond the event. Implications for event managers are then explored.

**Keywords: Role ambiguity, multi-sport events, volunteering, volunteering legacy**

## **1.Introduction**

Many host cities of the Olympics or other major and mega sport events (MSEs) claim to develop sustainable social legacies for the host country by staging the event. Legacy refers to all 'planned and unplanned, positive and negative, intangible or tangible structures created through a sports event that remain after the event' (Gratton & Preuss, 2008, p. 1924). These legacies could be sporting, environmental, infrastructural, social or economic. While, there is

weak evidence to suggest that MSEs help to create a sport participation legacy (Hayday et al., 2019), they do trigger enthusiasm among local people and in particular of the volunteers of the event (Nichols & Ralston, 2015). It has been reported that 40% of London 2012 Games Makers were volunteering for the first time (LOCOG, 2013b).

However, despite the potential of MSEs to attract numerous volunteers, it does not necessarily mean that they will remain volunteers in sport, let alone in other types of community activities (Koutrou & Pappous, 2016; Koutrou et al., 2016). Evidence from the London 2012 Games suggests that the government and the local Organising Committee (LOCOG) failed to set precise legacy objectives and engage with the existing local voluntary sector to provide exit routes for the event volunteers to ensure a carryover effect of future volunteering in the community (Doherty & Patil, 2019; Koutrou et al., 2016; Nichols & Ralston, 2015). Studies have also identified that London 2012 volunteers were left disappointed by the low level of knowledge, and lack of challenge in their event roles, as well as the limited use of their skills within their assigned positions during the Games (Koutrou et al., 2016; Wilks, 2016). Indeed, satisfaction with the volunteer role, task assignment and the contribution made is perceived as a key determinant of future volunteering, particularly for first-time volunteers (Costa et al., 2006; Doherty, 2009; Doherty & Patil, 2019).

Roles are described as series of activities a person is expected to complete in a particular position and can be influenced by various forces (Kahn et al., 1964). Such forces include, but are not limited to the working context and its complexity, or the personality characteristics of both the role sender (Supervisor) and role holder (volunteer). For instance, these include their values, communication skills or other work-related behaviours (Kahn et al., 1964). Roles also characterise behaviour. For example, role holders work towards meeting the expectations of

those who assigned them to the given position (Supervisors). Thus, pressure to achieve such expectations may mean that role holders need to adapt their behaviour when performing a certain role. This process may lead to increased stress, psychological conflict, perceived ambiguity, dissatisfaction and can affect the individual's perception of their role. With regards to volunteering in formal settings, this is often contradictory, as it combines elements of both work and leisure. This can cause uncertainty to individual volunteers of what is expected from them in enacting their role, which then leads to ambiguity (Widmer, 1993).

Role ambiguity is considered as significantly influencing an individual's role experience, as it occurs when a person lacks appropriate information to the fulfilment of their role (Sakires et al., 2009). Previous research in industrial, business, education, sport and non-profit settings suggest that perceptions of role ambiguity are negatively related to employee or volunteer motivation, satisfaction, performance and subsequently retention and attendance within organisations (e.g., Bosselut, Heuzé, & Sarrazin, 2010; Eys & Carron, 2001; Koustelios, Theodorakis & Goulimaris, 2004; Sakires et al., 2009; Wright & Millesen, 2008). A few studies have examined the impact of role ambiguity or conversely role clarity within voluntary sport settings, though research on sport event volunteers and how they perceive and perform their roles at events is limited (Rogalsky et al., 2016).

Volunteers at MSEs perform a variety of roles including event planning duties, accreditation, logistics, transportation, athlete, and medical services (Allen & Shaw, 2009). Clear understanding of volunteer roles may be expected not only to assist with the event's success but also in making the overall experience and the management of the volunteers involved a positive one, thus aiding in repeat volunteering in the future (Costa et al., 2006). However, given the episodic and fast-paced nature of MSEs (Emery, 2003), event managers may have

limited time to properly induct their volunteers and guide them through the multifaceted tasks needing to be carried out, and the level of expected performance that is expected from them (Cuskelly et al., 2006). Further, the complexity of the situation and lack of prior experience have been noted as sources of role ambiguity (Kahn et al., 1964; Sakires et al., 2009). This is the case for MSE volunteers who oftentimes engage in volunteering for the first time (Koutrou et al., 2016; LOCOG, 2013b). Rogalsky et al., (2016) found support for a two-dimensional model of event volunteer role ambiguity at the 2012 Ontario Summer Games. The two dimensions in this event context included performance outcomes ambiguity and means-ends/scope ambiguity that relate to clarity in relation to evaluation mechanisms and consequences of one's performance, and awareness of the tasks involved and the means to fulfil them respectively.

Research also notes gender and age differences in perceptions of role ambiguity. Women are more likely to experience role ambiguity compared to men, which is perhaps linked to imbalance of power and access to scant resources (Ragin & Sundstrom, 1989; Sakires et al., 2009; Singh and Rhoads, 1991). With regards to age, studies suggest that older individuals are less likely to experience role ambiguity, which is perhaps linked to their previous life-experiences that they carry over to other working environments (Rizzo et al.,1970; Wolverson et al.,1999). This lack of clarity and event volunteer individual characteristics may lead volunteers viewing their roles in a negative way. As such, it is of benefit to event coordinators to understand how volunteers perceive and perform their role, what factors are associated with role understanding, and what difference, if any, role clarity makes to their overall attitudes to volunteering and likelihood to continue their involvement as volunteers.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the factors associated with volunteer role ambiguity at a major sport event (2017 European Youth Olympic Winter Festival (EYOWF) held in Erzurum, Turkey) and to examine whether there are differences in perceptions of event role ambiguity according to gender, age and volunteering experience among the current sample. Further, the research sought to examine the relationship between perceptions of role ambiguity and attitudes to future volunteering. In particular, to determine how EYOWF volunteers' perceived role ambiguity is manifested in their intentions to volunteer for other events, sport clubs, or encourage a wider awareness and engagement to volunteering post-event.

## **2.1. Literature Review**

Events of all types and sizes increasingly rely upon a plethora of volunteers to support their operations and success, as without them, the cost would be unbearable for organising committees (Hoye et al., 2020). Volunteers at MSEs undertake a multitude of duties and bring a wealth of skills and knowledge to their role that complement the existing capacities of paid employees (Allen & Shaw; 2009; Merrell, 2000). However, volunteers are often left to their own devices to perform their duties due to lack of training or mentoring activities and unclear job descriptions (Merrell, 2000). Given that volunteers at MSEs may be asked to perform multiple tasks that may vary in complexity (Cuskelly et al., 2006), it is imperative that volunteers hold a clear understanding of what their role entails. Role clarity and understanding significantly influences effort placed, performance, satisfaction with the contribution made and intentions to engage with similar roles in the future (Rogalsky et al., 2016). The extent MSE volunteers meet and exceed event organisers' performance expectations within their roles is vital to a successful event (Cuskelly et al., 2006). It has also been shown that satisfaction with the roles performed at MSEs, can influence interest in and



intention to repeat volunteering in the future or transfer volunteer efforts across activities (Doherty, 2009; Koutrou, 2018). Indeed, role ambiguity in any work-setting can lead to negative outcomes such as dissatisfaction, absenteeism, low involvement, and tension (Schuller et al. 1977). Thus, effective volunteer management and any plans for volunteer legacy beyond particular MSEs presupposes that event organisers are aware of the factors that may cause volunteer role ambiguity, and provide volunteers with clear tasks and general role clarity. However, role clarity may not always be guaranteed at MSEs, given the fast-paced and complex nature of such undertakings (Emery, 2003), and most volunteers limited former experiences to carry out such tasks effectively (LOCOG, 2013b).

### **2.1.1. Role Ambiguity (Theoretical Framework)**

Role ambiguity occurs when employees are uncertain of key requirements and the expectations placed on them on how to perform in their positions, often resulting from inadequate communication between themselves and their supervisors (Baron, 1986; Sakires et al., 2009). Kahn et al. (1964) were pioneers in extending organisational understanding about ambiguity and its impacts in role fulfilment. They referred to work-related ambiguity as an individual's perceived clarity about his work responsibilities. Kahn et al (1964) further stipulated that role senders (e.g. event managers) hold certain expectations on how role holders or the focal person (e.g. volunteers) should behave in their assigned role. However, communication about and reception of role responsibilities can be influenced by various factors, which can either be situation-specific such as task-complexity or personality-specific. In particular, personality-specific factors relate to the communication skills or role expectations of role holders or can be attributed to the focal person including their experience level or the other positions role holders interact with (Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964; Sakires et al., 2009; Tubre & Collins, 2000).

Kahn et al. (1964) proposed a theoretical framework that includes two main types of role ambiguity namely 'task ambiguity' and 'socioemotional ambiguity'. The former is concerned with lack of information related to the 'job, its goals and the permissible means for implementing them' (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 97). Socioemotional ambiguity, on the other hand, is demonstrated through individuals' perceptions about how their work is perceived by others and 'about the consequences of their actions for the attainment of their personal goals (Kahn et al., 1964, p.94). Kahn et al., (1964) further suggested three dimensions of task ambiguity. The first dimension, 'scope of responsibilities' manifests itself when role holders experience ambiguity or a reduced understanding with regards to role expectations and extent of responsibilities. The second dimension, 'means-ends knowledge' reflects uncertainty about the behaviours required, or in other words, how to go about fulfilling tasks and performing in a given role. The final 'task ambiguity' dimension, 'priority of expectations' reflects individuals' uncertainty in prioritising competing expectations when there are multiple demands placed on them. In relation to socioemotional ambiguity, Kahn et al., (1964) proposed two dimensions. The first, 'performance evaluation' reflects uncertainty on how individual's work and performance will be evaluated by their peers. The second dimension, 'consequences of role performance' reflects uncertainty about the potential consequences of succeeding or failing to fulfil expected responsibilities in a role for the individual, others, or the organisation. As such, role ambiguity is conceptualised as a multi-dimensional construct (Beauchamp et al., 2002; Kahn et al., 1964; Sakires et al., 2009) and has been found to lead to decreased motivation, effort, performance and satisfaction in various, paid and voluntary organisational contexts (e.g., Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Sakires et al., 2009; Tubre & Collins, 2000). Despite the conceptual multi-dimensionality of the construct, unidimensional role-ambiguity measures have also been noted in the literature, with Rizzo et al.'s (1970) scale

being adapted widely (see Chang & Chang, 2007; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Koustelios et al., 2004; Schulz & Auld, 2006). However, global measures of role ambiguity have been criticised as inadequate in capturing the breadth and causes of the phenomenon and the ways it is experienced and resolved in organisational settings (Rhoads, Singh, & Goodell, 1994; Sakires et al., 2009).

Extending on from Kahn's et al (1964) framework and to address the above limitations, Sakires et al. (2009) developed the Multidimensional Measure of Organizational Role Ambiguity (MMORA) in the context of volunteer sport organizations. The 24-item MMORA represents three dimensions of role ambiguity, which include Scope of Responsibilities (awareness of the tasks that must be fulfilled), Means-end knowledge (understanding how to go about fulfilling these tasks), and Performance outcomes (understanding performance evaluation processes and consequences of one's performance). The authors did not find support for the 'priority of expectations' and 'performance evaluation' dimensions operationalised by Kahn et al (1964). This may be related to the difficulty in measuring and evaluating performance in voluntary organisations (Fishel, 2003; Sakires et al., 2009; Sawhill & Williamson, 2001). Doherty and Hoye (2011) in their study confirmed the factorial validity and reliability of all three dimensions of MMORA. Within sport event settings, Rogalsky et al (2016) used MMORA to investigate role ambiguity and its correlates with a sample of 328 volunteers at the 2012 Ontario Summer Games. They found support for the multidimensionality of role ambiguity, though with only two factors related to performance outcome ambiguity and means-ends/scope ambiguity in this sport-event context.

### **2.1.2. Role Ambiguity in Volunteer Settings**

A few studies have examined the impacts of role ambiguity in volunteer sport and health-related settings (Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Merrell, 2000; Sakires et al., 2009; Schulz & Auld, 2006). Jamison (2003) argues that role ambiguity can lead the volunteer workforce to turnover similar to paid employees. Stakeholders with competing interests and lack of clear objectives are known characteristics of voluntary organisations (Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000; Sakires et al., 2009), which lead to ambiguity in relation to the nature and scope of volunteers' responsibilities (e.g., Merrell, 2000; Pearce, 1993). Merrell (2000), for example, discussed the lack of clear boundaries for volunteers in undertaking duties for the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom, the divide between paid staff and volunteers, and the tensions experienced by volunteers in fulfilling their role responsibilities. The above make it imperative for organisations to be explicit on the reasons to involve volunteers in their services, invest in volunteer training, enhance volunteer role clarity through written guidelines and improve volunteer experiences and retention. Shulz and Auld (2008) found that volunteer Chairpersons and Executive Directors in Queensland Sporting Organisations had non-significant differences and low levels of perceived role ambiguity. However, role ambiguity was negatively related to organic organisational design, satisfaction with communication, and tenure, with those serving longer being less likely to feel ambiguity with their roles due to increased confidence and skills to cope with the demands of their positions. Similarly, Sakires et al. (2009) found that while administrators in voluntary sport organisations experience low levels of overall role ambiguity generally, this is negatively associated with satisfaction, effort and commitment. Differences were found in relation to age, role and organisation tenure, as greater years in the position and organisation reflected greater role clarity (Sakires et al., 2009). However, no significant differences in relation to gender or assigned position were reported in this sport volunteer context, despite research supporting gender association with role ambiguity (Shulz and Auld, 2008). Females, for

example, often report limited access to resources to fulfil their roles, while they are also less likely to hold leadership positions in sport. This may be attributed to low self-confidence in putting themselves forward in male-dominated settings (Ragin & Sundstrom, 1989; Singh & Rhoads, 1991; women in sport, 2018).

While these studies extend our understanding on how role ambiguity may be perceived and experienced in volunteer settings, they specifically focus on formal, long-term designated positions, which is not the case for event volunteers. Event volunteers' involvement is episodic; thus, they are less likely to develop extensive relationships with a particular organisation and its members, or staff and other volunteers (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Rogalsky et al., 2016). This perhaps suggests that there may be limited time available for volunteers to familiarise themselves with their tasks and roles at the event, and for event managers to define their role expectations on those volunteers more clearly. Rogalsky et al., (2016) found support for a two-dimensional volunteer role ambiguity model that included performance outcomes ambiguity and means-ends/scope ambiguity at the 2012 Ontario Summer Games. The authors concluded that effective event volunteer supervision predicted overall lower levels of role ambiguity, which may be the result of volunteers being allocated with specific, narrow tasks that made use of their existing skillset. Further, both ambiguity dimensions differentially predicted role effort, performance and role satisfaction. Finally, Rogalsky et al (2016) suggested that specifically role performance and role satisfaction predicted overall satisfaction with the Games experience, which then predicted intentions to volunteer in the future. This further suggests the importance placed by volunteers in role clarity and understanding of the contribution made to the success of an event, as significant predictors of overall satisfaction and future intentions to volunteer (Love et al., 2011; Rogalsky et al., 2016).

Evidently, the above discussion suggests that high role ambiguity can have a negative impact on employee performance, motivation, satisfaction and other affective states (Kahn et al., 1964). It can also negatively affect individuals' intention to remain within an organisation (Kahn et al.1964). Jackson and Schuler (1985) in their meta-analysis indicated that role ambiguity has a negative effect on employee retention. The authors content that if an individual experiences ambiguity in their role, they “will seek alternative situations that are less discomforting” (Jackson & Schuler, 1985, p. 41). In the team-sport context, it was also found that role ambiguity leads to athlete withdrawal and negatively impacts intentions to continue participating at team functions including coaching practice or matches, intentions to remain in the team instead of dropping out or return to team participation the following season (Spink, 1995). Eyes et al (2004) suggested that role ambiguity relevant to scope of responsibilities has a negative effect on intentions to return to the same team, though there was no relationship between perceptions of role ambiguity and intentions to return to the sport or level of play. This suggests potential athlete withdrawal from the team but not the sport per se, thus seeking alternative opportunities to continue practicing in environments where their scope of responsibilities is clearly outlined. While the effects of role ambiguity on various constructs in different working environments are pronounced, research has also shown that perceptions of role ambiguity may differ between genders influenced by the context or with levels of experience and age (Eys and Carron, 2001; Sakires et al., 2009). With the exemption of Rogalsky et al., (2016) in a major sport event context that found that role clarity affects role and global satisfaction and subsequently lead volunteers to express interest in and repeat volunteering in the future, research testing the impact of perceived volunteer role ambiguity between different demographics d within a MSE context is limited.

The current study aims to extend our understanding on volunteer role ambiguity at MSEs, how it is perceived by different individuals and its impacts on effective volunteer management, human resource sustainability and legacy. It aims to do so by focusing on a unique event context, the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival (EYOWF) held in Turkey in 2017.

### **2.1.3. Volunteering in Turkey**

Volunteering in Turkey is largely informal and includes activities to help those in need, donations to charities, schools, mosques or foundations or assisting with the construction of buildings and other public benefit facilities (Boz, 2005). This low-level of volunteering is linked to traditions of governmental suppression of civil society associations that date back the establishment of Turkey republic in 1923 (Akboga, 2017). However, the 1980s saw the rise of civil society associations followed by the rise of islamist groups, Kurdish nationalism, the growing establishment of the national women's movement and Turkey's desire to join the EU that was linked to societal reforms, establish freedom of expression and prevent political oppression (Akboga, 2017; Toprak, 1996). However, Turkish citizens still lack positive attitudes and trust in the services provided by civil society associations driven by this long-standing state restrictions of their activities, while they expect state provision of welfare services. In sport, barriers to volunteer participation may relate to the limited number of sport clubs, which are approximately 9000 (Eurobarometer, 2018). Further, females face barriers in volunteering due to social, religious and cultural traditions (Erturan-Ogut, 2014). Young individuals are more likely to volunteer in Turkey (Akboga, 2017). This may be explained since young individuals below the age of 25 comprise 40% of the Turkish population (Mackay, 2014). The desire to host the 2017 EYOWF in Erzurum was seen as an opportunity

to use this MSE as a way to inspire Turkey's youth to take part in sport and to enhance a culture of volunteering within the country's youth, as also emphasised by the then President of the Turkish National Olympic Committee (NOCT), Uğur Erdener (Mackay, 2014).

#### **2.1.4. The Event Case Study**

The former President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the European Olympic Committees (EOC), Dr Jacques Rogge founded the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) in 1990. His goal was to raise awareness among young athletes aged 14 to 18 years, about the Olympic Movement, the Olympic values and ideals and their universal appeal. Dr Rogge sought to offer an opportunity to the youngsters to experience and become familiar with an international Olympic-related competition setting early on. The festival takes place biennially in European countries, including the EU member states, and aims to avoid the Olympic years. The event has both a Winter and Summer edition. The EYOF has throughout the years turned out to be one of the most celebrated and high-profile youth events within the European continent (EYOF, 2019).

The 13<sup>th</sup> Winter EYOF was hosted in the city of Erzurum, which is located in the east of Turkey between the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2017. Erzurum had already hosted other events prior to the EYOF including the 2013 FIS Snowboard Junior World Ski Championships and the 2011 Winter Universiade. Erzurum is also home of Atatürk University, one of the largest in Turkey with more than 40,000 students (Anderson, 2014). Approximately 700 athletes from 34 countries took part in the 2017 EYOWF and had the opportunity to compete in nine disciplines including Alpine skiing, Biathlon, Cross Country, Curling, Figure Skating, Ice Hockey, Short Track, Ski jumping and Snowboard (Mackay, 2015).



A total of 600 volunteers assisted with the organisation of the event, who were students of Atatürk University. Among those, 43 foreign volunteers from countries including Syria, Russia, Colombia, Afghanistan and Croatia, who were students at Atatürk University dedicated their time to the organisation of the event and were mainly assigned to roles related to VIP, Winter Sports and IT Directorships (EYOF2017, 2019). Volunteers received orientation training at Atatürk University before the start of the festival. This included generic event information and role-specific information including the EYOWF departments that had to serve within (EYOF2017, 2019).

The current study aims to explore the factors associated with volunteer role ambiguity, differences in role ambiguity perceptions in relation to gender, age and volunteering experience. Finally, the research seeks to examine the relationship between perceptions of role ambiguity and attitudes to future volunteering. Studies addressing volunteer experiences and the impact these may have on volunteer continuous engagement in an Eastern society with limited formal volunteer engagement such as Turkey (Akboğa, 2016) are limited, thus, the current paper intends to fill this gap.

### **3.Methodology**

This section explains the process by which the data was collected and statistical analyses employed to explore perceived role ambiguity, differences in role ambiguity perceptions and whether perceived role ambiguity has an impact on future volunteering decisions among volunteers at the 2017 EYOWF.

#### **3.1. Participants**

Volunteers who served at the 2017 EYOWF were the participants of the study. A total population of 600 volunteers assisted with the event (EYOF2017, 2019). Sample size was determined using the Cochran (1977) sample size determination formula. The minimum sample size needed based on an acceptable margin of error of 5%, and a confidence level of  $p=.05$  was 235 individuals. The current study was able to obtain responses from 268 volunteers, which equates to 44% response rate for the research. Table 1 presents the detailed sociodemographic characteristics of the current sample. The data reveal that the majority of the 2017 EYOWF volunteers were young, local University students and without previous volunteering experience. The participants were primarily of Turkish ethnicity (91%). The respondents performed a variety of roles including serving as NOC assistants, interpreters, transport coordinators, sport and athlete services, security, antidoping, VIP, information technologies, accommodation and catering staff among others.

**INSERT TABLE 1 HERE**

### **3.2. Research Instrument**

The research instrument was a closed survey designed and hosted using Bristol Online Survey's (BOS) tool. The survey aimed to elicit respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, their volunteering experiences, perceived ambiguity with their volunteer role at the event as well as attitudes to future volunteering post-event. Role ambiguity was measured with the Multidimensional Measure of Organizational Role Ambiguity (MMORA) by Sakires et al., (2009). Similar to Rogalsky et al (2016), several MMORA items were slightly adapted to reflect the nature of the 2017 EYOWF. For instance, respondents were

asked to indicate how clearly they understood ‘How my work related to the overall objectives of the 2017 EYOWF’ and what level of performance was expected of me at the EYOWF 2017’. As with the original MMORA, the current study comprised 24 items to measure on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) the extent of volunteers’ understanding with aspects of their role and their performance at the Festival. Future intentions items sought to elicit likelihood to continue volunteering in other sport events, sport clubs or wider activities post-event. They also aimed to assess whether the event experience left them with a positive impression, facilitated greater awareness of future volunteering opportunities and a desire for volunteers to pursue training courses to aid in further development. Items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

### **3.3. Procedure**

Data collection took place in March 2017, immediately after the 2017 EYOWF. Official permission from the Volunteer Manager of the Festival was obtained to electronically distribute the survey to the event volunteers. The Organising committee emailed a link to the survey that was translated in Turkish directly to the volunteers after the close of the Games. Given that the original instrument was constructed in English, it was independently translated into Turkish language by two bilingual experts. The Turkish version of the survey was then translated back into English by two other bilingual experts following the approach of Van de Vijver and Leung (1997). The two back-translated versions of the survey were compared to each other by the investigators, and were found to accurately reflect the original English version. Ethics approval for the study was secured from the research ethics committee at the authors’ University prior to data collection. The survey included a participant information sheet to detail the nature of the study, participants’ right to withdraw at any time, and that confidentiality and anonymity assurance in treating individual responses. Participants were

then asked to give check box consent before proceeding to the survey. Two reminder emails were sent by the Organising Committee within one and two weeks after the initial contact with the volunteers to encourage participation of those who had not yet responded, as recommended by Dillman (2007). Data collection commenced in March 2017 and was completed in April 2017.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Descriptive Statistics**

The mean ratings for the 24 ambiguity items ranged from 4.98 to 5.88. Based on the 7-point rating scale, participants reported fairly low levels of role ambiguity, as higher scores reflect greater role clarity. Participants also reported fairly high levels of intentions to engage in future event volunteering (M=6.21, SD=1.457), volunteer for a wider range of organisations post event (M=6.15, SD=1.480), have greater awareness of volunteering opportunities (M=6.10, SD=1.565), being more likely to engage in sport club volunteering post-event (M=6.09, SD=1.542), intentions to engage in sport-related training courses (M=5.61, SD=1.803), and finally more likely to have a good general impression about the event (M=6.03, SD=1.580).

### **4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Table 2 presents the results from an exploratory factor analysis on the perceived role ambiguity amongst 2017 EYOWF volunteers. Factors were extracted using the principal component analysis (PCA) method with oblimin rotation, as correlations between the factors

were expected (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Previous research suggests that PCA is ideal when attempting to re-specify a measure, particularly when it is used in a new research context, where it may have slightly different meaning, thus scale configuration is expected (Devellis, 2012).

### **INSERT TABLE 2 HERE**

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the data matrix was ideal ( $KMO=.960$ ) for factor analysis and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the dataset was significant at the .001 level (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Factors with eigenvalues equal to or greater than 1.0 were considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). To ensure robustness of the components, items with a factor loading of .50 and above on a component were retained (Blaikie, 2003). One item 'the impact of doing what is expected of me' that loaded onto more than one factor was excluded due to lack of factor purity. Two factors were extracted with a total of 23 items by considering their eigenvalues being greater than 1.0, a review of the scree plot and the percentage of total variance explained by each factor (Stevens, 2012). Convergent validity was also achieved as each of the items loaded significantly on its specified factor (Anderson & Gerbig, 1988).

#### **4.2.1. Factor Interpretation**

The analysis produced a final 2-factor structure with a total of 23 items that met the specified criteria. The first factor was labelled "means-ends/expectations & scope ambiguity" comprising 18 items that represent volunteers' understanding of the tasks they had to undertake, the role responsibilities they had to fulfil and how to carry them out effectively. The "means-ends/scope ambiguity" factor accounted for 73% of the total variance. The

second factor comprised 5 items that referred to volunteers' understanding of the potential consequences of one's role performance to oneself, others and the event. The second factor was labelled 'Consequences of Role Performance' and accounted for 8.3% of the total variance. The two factors explained 81.4% of the total variance. To ensure the identified factors were robust, it was necessary to conduct a reliability analysis on the components. Cronbach's Alpha for each of the extracted factors was .944 for "means-ends/expectations & scope ambiguity" and .985 for "Consequences of role performance" respectively, comfortably exceeding the recommended minimum of .70 (Blaikie, 2003). Factor mean scores were also calculated with "Means-ends/expectations & Scope" achieving (M=5.74, SD=1.38, n=246) and "Consequences of role performance" (M=5.19, SD=1.66, n=249). Based on the 7-point rating scale, participants reported fairly low levels of role ambiguity, as higher scores reflect greater role clarity.

### **4.3. ANOVAs**

Past research has shown that perceptions of role ambiguity can differ between genders, age groups, employment status or degree of experience (Beard, 1996; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Rizzo et al., 1970; Sakires et al., 2009). Thus, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed with gender, volunteering experience, and age to test for group differences, using the mean scores on the performance ambiguity dimensions. For the "Consequences of role performance" dimension, significant differences were only found for volunteering experience,  $F(1, 247)=16.27$ ,  $p<0.001$ , with first-time volunteers scoring significantly higher than regular volunteers. In the "means-ends/expectations & scope ambiguity" significant differences were found for volunteering experience,  $F(1, 244)=15.20$ ,  $p<0.001$ , with first-time volunteers having statistically significant higher scores than those with previous

volunteering experiences, and Gender,  $F(1, 244)=5.03$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) with males scoring significantly higher than females.

#### **4.4. Regression Analysis**

This subsection provides the results of the regression analysis. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis was performed to examine the impacts of role ambiguity on volunteers' intentions/likelihood to a) volunteer for a wider range of activities/organisations than before the event b) continue volunteering in a sport organisation/club c) become more aware/enhance awareness of a wider range of volunteering opportunities than before d) volunteer for other events in the future, e) gain sport-related training and qualifications f) having a good general impression about the event experience.

Table 3 provides the regression results for each case. The dependent variables are given at the top of the relevant column. All dependent variables are cases of Likert scales, thus Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) was employed. For each model, the table presents estimated coefficients. For ease of interpretation, significant variables at the 1%, 10% and 5% are reported and are indicated by \*\*\*, \*\*, \* respectively. The available sample for regression analysis was 255 responses. This comprised the maximum set of observations across all variables analysed. Based on recommended guidelines for the suitability of the sample for multiple regression analysis, about 15 participants per predictor are needed for a reliable equation (Stevens, 2012). An examination of the VIF values ( $< 1.99$ ) revealed that collinearity among the independent variables was not a problem (Stevens 2012; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), and thus it was appropriate to interpret the results (see Table 3). Based on these considerations, the sample was deemed appropriate for empirical analysis.

The results of the regression analysis are illustrated by examining each equation in turn. For ‘wider volunteering’ that examined whether volunteers intended to volunteer for a wider range of activities or organisations than before the EYOWF, the analysis suggests that for the perceived role ambiguity variables both “means-ends knowledge, expectations and scope of responsibilities” and ‘consequences of role performance’ raise the likelihood of volunteering more widely after the event.

### **INSERT TABLE 3 HERE**

The regression results that examined intentions to continue volunteering at a sports organisation/club, denoted as ‘sports club volunteering’ suggest that both ‘means-end knowledge, expectations and scope’ and ‘consequences of role performance’ are significant predictors of this relationship. This suggests that event volunteers are more likely to transfer their efforts to a more regular, formal sport club context in the future, provided that they have more clarity of their scope of responsibilities, expectations and means-ends processes to fulfil their given position as well as that they are aware of what difference their unique contribution makes to the organisation.

For ‘more aware of volunteering’, which encapsulates volunteers’ enhanced awareness of volunteering opportunities as a result of their EYOWF experience, the analysis suggests that having greater clarity with regards to means-ends knowledge, expectations, and scope of responsibilities at a given position raises the likelihood that they will enhance their awareness about volunteering opportunities than before the event.



For 'more event volunteering' that examines volunteers' intentions to volunteer for other events in the future both perceived ambiguity factors were significant suggesting greater role clarity in one event raises the likelihood of seeking to engage in future event volunteering.

The regression results for 'interest in qualifications' showed that 'means-ends, expectations & scope' and 'consequences of role performance' were significant for the perceived ambiguity variables. Thus, greater role clarity increases volunteers' self-confidence in seeking to developing themselves further by engaging in attending other training courses or gaining sport-related qualifications.

For 'good general impression', the analysis suggests that greater role clarity with regards to 'means-ends, expectations and scope of responsibilities' was a significant predictor of the likelihood that the volunteers were left with a positive impression with the event experience.

## **5. Discussion**

The current study is one of the few that aims to shed light on the concept of role ambiguity in volunteer roles at a major sport event, how this differ between individuals and affects future volunteer engagement and transfer of volunteer efforts across activities beyond the event. Consistent with research from Rogalsky et al., (2016), the present study supports the multi-dimensionality of the construct by identifying two distinct role ambiguity factors: 'means-ends, expectations/scope of responsibilities' and 'consequences of one's performance'.

Volunteers in the present study reported moderately low levels of overall role ambiguity. It may be the case that role ambiguity in the present case study was avoided through placing due and careful consideration to volunteer recruitment, selection, training, and orientation practices by the EYOWF 2017 Organising Committee. Moreover, the fairly low role ambiguity observed within this study may be due to the organisers focus on making use of the existing skill-set of volunteers by allocating them with relevant and specific duties and responsibilities instead of a plethora of distinct and complex roles. This perhaps have enhanced their understanding of the nature of their responsibilities and how their role and performance related to the broader objectives of the 2017 EYOWF. Given that past research suggests that the impacts of MSE volunteering are far greater for new or inexperienced volunteers, this may be considered a good practice for a carry-over effect of volunteering in the local community (Doherty & Patil, 2019).

The current study also sought to examine whether perceptions of role ambiguity varied among participants of different gender, age, and with former volunteering experiences. Previous studies within the non-profit sector have been inconsistent in identifying an association between gender and role ambiguity (Sakires et al.,2009; Singh & Rhoads, 1991; Wolverton et al., 1999) despite often being argued that females due to cultural and societal norms that place them at a disadvantage, often greatly experience lack of access to information that may assist in role clarity (Ragin & Sundstrom, 1989; Singh & Rhoads, 1991). The present study suggests an association between gender and role ambiguity with males being more likely to have greater clarity with regards to the scope of their responsibilities, what is expected of them in the given role and how to go about fulfilling their duties. Given that the study took place in Turkey, where the role of females in society is not well-established yet due to social, cultural and religious norms (Erturan-Ogut, 2014),

females may be feeling lower self-confidence that they are doing a good job, and perhaps reluctance to ask event managers for clarification. Perhaps, in future similar event undertakings frequent performance feedback sessions, tailored training, two-way communication, and interactions with volunteer supervisors may enable females to experience a greater role clarity and a sense of self-worth to repeat volunteering. This is further supported by Rogalsky et al., (2016) who note that positive feedback and communication with a supervisor is associated with lower volunteer role ambiguity. Interestingly, first-time volunteers appeared more likely to experience lower role ambiguity in both dimensions. As such, they experienced greater clarity with regard to what they were supposed to be doing, how to do it and the consequences of their performance for themselves, others and the success of the event. While past research supports that greater experience is associated with greater role clarity (Beard, 1996; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Rizzo et al., 1970; Sakires et al., 2009), this is not the case in the current context. It may be expected that individuals with greater human capital acquired over time would feel more confident in undertaking a new and unfamiliar role. However, the unique nature of major sport event volunteering that draws individuals from distinct backgrounds with little or no connection to sport (Koutrou & Downward, 2016) suggests that first-timers may have been more flexible with regard to what their event role entailed. Volunteers with former experiences are more likely to perceive their roles as more challenging (Rogalsky et al., 2016). Although, the nature of that experience was not measured in the current study, perhaps the cultural specificities might suggest these were a source of perceived lack of confidence for volunteers in the present study. Moreover, regular volunteers often prefer clear communication, guidance around task expectations, expect to be consulted and appreciate roles that make use of their existing skill-set, as this ensures a level of familiarity (Allen & Shaw, 2009). For first-timers, on the other hand, being part of a unique experience was perhaps more of value

regardless of their role specifics (Koutrou & Pappous, 2016; Nichols & Ojala, 2009). These issues warrant further investigation in future research to understand event volunteer recruitment dynamics in distinct event locations.

Finally, the study showed a clear association between role ambiguity and intentions to repeat volunteering, engage and become more aware of wider volunteering opportunities and transfer volunteer efforts across activities. Role clarity in relation to 'means-ends/expectations & scope' also assisted with volunteers been left with a good general impression of the event and its organisation. Satisfaction with the overall experience at an event has been shown to promote future volunteering (Doherty, 2009; Love et al., 2011). This is important for similar future undertakings, as event organisers could draw from an existing pool of volunteers rather than relying on generic volunteer recruitment exercises. In particular, it appears that for the current sample both knowing what they are expected to do in their current role, how to go about it, what difference their role and contribution made and the implications their performance had on the event are important factors in determining their future engagement with volunteering more widely, their willingness to volunteer in sport organisations and the community or in other similar events, and seeking to develop further by undertaking sport-related training and qualifications. This is further supported by Rogalsky et al., (2016) who discussed the impact of role satisfaction and performance on overall satisfaction with the experience at an event, which then also predicted intentions to repeat volunteering in the future. Thus, event volunteers' enhanced clarity of their role, and satisfaction with the contribution made to the success of an event are significant predictors of overall satisfaction and future intentions to volunteer (Love et al., 2011; Rogalsky et al., 2016).The current findings are also consistent with other settings such as athletes and interactive sport teams. For example, Eys et al., (2005) suggest that athletes who experience

greater role clarity are more likely to return to their present team or remain for the following season (Eys et al., 2005). Similarly, event managers could ensure volunteers understand what is expected of them to raise the likelihood they are left with a good general impression of the event and are keen to repeat volunteering in the future.

While the findings are specific to the context of study, they extend understanding of volunteer role ambiguity in major multi-sport events and can offer some future directions in the management of sport event volunteers and their roles. In particular, the current study advances understanding on the link between event volunteer roles, role clarity and associated mechanisms to promote repeat volunteering in the local community beyond the event, thus potentially creating a long-term volunteering legacy. Similarly, Rogerson et al., (2021) showed that the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Volunteer programme enabled volunteers to feel more connected to their city as well as it facilitated the development of social connectedness and active citizenship following the event. This is often the aspiration of many MSE hosts to justify investment in such large undertakings (Doherty & Patil, 2019; Doherty, 2009; Love et al., 2011). Future research could validate the role ambiguity instrument used in the current study and extend our understanding of the nature of different roles, and sociodemographic characteristics in promoting future volunteering, channelling MSE volunteer efforts in the community and maximising event volunteer legacies.

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