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This study used a human resource management (HRM) approach to examine the efficacy of volunteer management practices in predicting perceived problems in volunteer retention. Participants were a sample of 375 Australian Rugby Union clubs from across the country. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the properties of a hypothesised reflective measurement model with seven volunteer management constructs (planning, recruitment, screening, orientation, training and support, performance management, and recognition). The efficacy of volunteer management practices was tested using regression analysis.

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The study found significant relationships between perceived retention problems and several of the volunteer management constructs. Clubs that reported more extensive use of planning practices and training and support practices were likely to report significantly fewer perceived problems in the overall retention of volunteers. Results indicated significant relationships between management practices and retention problems, with variances noted by the category of volunteer position, including management committee or board members, coaches, team managers and volunteers in other formal positions. Implications for volunteer management and retention are discussed from a HRM perspective.

Over the past few decades, increasing competition, globalisation and continuous change in markets and technology have provided the impetus for rethinking the way organisations are managed. This reconceptualisation spawned the development of human resource management (HRM), a response to the proposition that effective management of human resources is vital to improve business outcomes and attained competitive advantage (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1987; Becker & Huselid, 1998). In testing this assumption an expansive body of research on the adoption and effectiveness of HRM has emerged and, in this research, organisational context has been identified as a critical aspect in determining effective HRM practices. As a result, there have been consistent calls for researchers to locate HRM practices in the broader context of organisations (Fenwick, 2005; Wright & McMahan, 1992). Existing research, however, has almost exclusively focussed on the HRM of employees working in large for-profit organisations, with non-profit and volunteer-dependent organisations receiving scant attention. In a review of HRM and organisational behaviour (OB) research in sport, Doherty (1998) reported, “only 5% of the OB research examined the attitudes and behaviours of volunteers, a unique human resource that is ... the mainstay for much of the delivery of sport and recreation services” (p. 16). Currently, we know relatively little about the adoption and effectiveness of HRM for voluntary human capital.

To date there has been no empirical evidence on the impact of volunteer management practices within community sport organisations (CSOs) and the efficacy of these practices in explaining the retention of volunteers in a sector that is volunteer dependent. In addressing this issue we began with the underlying premise that CSOs differ in the extent to which volunteer management practices are utilised and that organisational outcomes such as volunteer retention can be explained, albeit partially, by such practices. Volunteer retention was considered an important organisational outcome. Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data (1996, 2001), Cuskelly (2005, p. 98) concluded that the “bulk of the evidence on volunteer participation trends points to a steady decline in volunteering in Australian sport. This decline is most notable in statistics that describe volunteer ‘career’ lengths and the median annual hours contributed per volunteer.”
We tested our theory with 375 clubs from the Australian Rugby Union (ARU), a non-profit organisation responsible for the governance of the sport of rugby union in Australia. The ARU is a relatively large sport organisation in the Australian context and has over 800 community rugby clubs and 20,000 volunteers (ARU Annual Report, 2004). The ARU’s community sport operations are critically dependent on volunteer contributions for success.

### The Changing Nature of Community Sport Organisations

Traditionally, CSOs have been dependent on volunteers to manage and staff clubs and associations. In recent years, however, the professionalisation of organisational dimensions of amateur sport organisations has significantly changed the role of volunteers (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995a; 1995b; Slack, 1985; Slack & Hinings, 1992; Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1991). Sporting bodies have shifted focus to become more ‘professional’ or business-like in the way they approach people management issues (Chelladurai, 1999), and moved to more sophisticated and complex management (Sharpe, 2003), despite often not having the resources to fully embrace business strategy development and practices in their operations (Auld, 1997). As the nature of volunteering has changed, so have the roles and expectations of volunteers. Inherent difficulties in this transformation have been noted in other research and systematic change across sport organisations has been found to be highly variable (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004).

The context for this research is particularly relevant given the significant organisational change and rapid professionalisation that has occurred in the sport of rugby union in the past decade. Like most of the community sport delivery system, rugby clubs are predominately managed and operated by voluntary committees or boards. These clubs utilise volunteer coaches, managers and officials to deliver services to their members. The volunteer base of the ARU is vital for its club and sport operations and in fostering the growth and development of the game, particularly at the community level.

Changes in the external environment in which community rugby clubs operate have significant implications for HRM functions and practices, and of particular note is how these changes impact on volunteers. Volunteering is unpaid, freely chosen involvement undertaken through an organisation or agency and performed for the benefit of others or the environment as well as oneself. As defined by Sheard (1995), volunteering is not low or semi-paid work, compulsorily coerced (i.e., by government or law orders), informal assistance for friends or family, or for self-help, religious or leisure activities (although it is done in one’s leisure time). While the specifics of what volunteering involves varies between countries and cultures, Davis-Smith (1999) suggests that there is a shared understanding
of the basic elements of volunteering across the globe. However, this shared understanding has not been extended into evidence-based best practice in volunteer management.

Research suggests that the effective management of volunteer resources is an area in need of further investigation, particularly in light of increased pressure of professionalism, managerialism and accountability (Hager & Brudney, 2004; Lewis, 1993; Nichols & King, 1998; Nichols, Taylor, James, King, Holmes, & Garrett, 2003; Russell & Scott, 1997). Much of the pressure for HRM change in CSOs is driven by government policy and funding stipulations. Government agencies support the management of volunteers in CSOs in Australia through programs such as the Australian Sports Commission's Volunteer Management Program, which is based on a HRM framework “modelled on work organisations” (ASC, 2000, p. 10). Sport England's Volunteer Investment Program and Sport and Recreation New Zealand's Running Sport program similarly recommend a HRM system of planning, recruitment, selection, orientation, training and recognition practices in the management of volunteers. There is no acknowledgment in these programs that contemporary HRM can legitimise managerial prerogative, reinforce an outcome based approach to valuing of organisational practices, or undermine alternative ways of managing the employment relationship (Keenoy, 1999). The latter is especially important in non-profit organisations where HRM is “likely to be more relational than transactional, with members displaying a high degree of self-selection based on values affiliation” (Fenwick, 2005, p. 509). Furthermore, as Grube and Piliavin (2000, p. 1118) noted, “all behavior takes place within a situational context and the characteristics of the context must be considered in models of volunteer behavior.” Therefore, CSOs face the challenge of implementing government initiated HRM management systems with no firm contextual evidence of the effectiveness of such practices for volunteers or their organisation. In essence, the implementation of HRM practices in CSOs may be beneficial, or there may be unintended detrimental consequences.

The research presented here is the first phase of a project that aims to understand and explain the influence of volunteer management practices on the retention of volunteers within CSOs. The study collected evidence on the adoption of HRM practices in managing volunteers within a community sport context. These data were then used to examine the degree to which these practices impacted perceived problems in the retention of sport volunteers.
HRM Literature

The term HRM encompasses specific human resource practices such as: recruitment, selection, appraisal, rewards, measurement, training and development, communications, and work design (Beatty, Huselid, & Schneier, 2003); formal human resource policies which underpin these practices; and a human resource philosophy, which informs both policies and practice. However, HRM as a scheduled set of practices and understandings is widely variable (Keenoy, 1999) and comprises a complex package of concepts and practices (Storey, 1989).

Since the early 1980s, HRM has expansively developed both as a distinct body of knowledge and as a critical management function (cf. Guest, 1997; Schuler & Jackson, 1987; Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1994). The search for a systematic approach to effectively manage human resources as a basis for competitive advantage (cf. Barney, 1995) and to improve a firm’s performance (Huselid, 1995; Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997) provided the impetus for this growth. Contemporary HRM has emerged from the predominately operational function of personnel management to encompass a number of distinctive theoretical and applied approaches to people management. The transition from personnel management to HRM reflects a philosophical commitment to human capital development as a central business function, where the alignment of the human resource systems and the organisation’s business strategy is all important.

Human resource management literature is an evolving concept. Tichy, Fombrun and Devanna (1982) presented an early HRM model of employees as a business resource to be managed in a manner consistent with organisational requirements, emphasising HRM systems with a close strategic fit. In this model, appropriate selection, performance and appraisal measures, feedback mechanisms, systematic rewards for appropriate performance and the development of skills and knowledge required to meet business objectives are critical HR outcomes (Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1994).

Beer and his colleagues are credited with initiating the contemporary discussion about valuing human resources. Beer, Lawrence, Mills, and Walton (1984) posited that human resource policy impacts on the overall competence of employees, their commitment, the degree of congruence between employee and organisational goals, and the effectiveness of HRM practices. Consequently, HRM can be used to enhance employee and organisational effectiveness. Schuler and Jackson (1987) subsequently outlined a variation on the best fit model using Porter’s competitive strategy framework. Required role behaviours, consistent with organisational strategy, are identified and developed for each strategy. The HR system is thus designed to attract, select, develop, motivate, and retain employees for the effective operation of the organisation (Jackson & Schuler, 1995).
While HRM is predicated on improved business performance, empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of HRM in achieving this outcome has been mixed. A range of studies have found that the adoption of strategic human resource development has positively affected organisational performance outcomes or financial performance/market value (cf. Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Huselid et al., 1997; Koch & McGrath, 1996; Pfeffer, 1994; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). However, a significant degree of uncertainty still exists. Major discrepancies in the way the HRM practices are operationalised and measured, and differences of indicators of positive performance outcomes, have created doubt about the robustness of the findings (Barnard & Rodgers, 2000). A preeminent critic of the link between HR and performance has been Legge (2001), who has forcefully argued that presenting HRM as a magic solution and ‘best practice’ HRM practices as a universal panacea is flawed.

While not precluding the possibility of best practice existing within firms, it may be too simplistic to presume that a single optimal set of HR practices is ideal for all situations (Wood, 1999). The contingent perspective suggests that the effective use of different HR configurations is associated with the mode of employment of human capital (Lepak & Snell, 1999). Different employment modes are associated with different underlying objectives and psychological obligations between employees and organisations (Lepak & Snell, 1998; 1999; Rousseau, 1995; Tsui et al., 1995).

While there is no universal list of “high-performance HRM practices” (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Guest, 1997; Pfeffer, 1995), the fundamental issues of how to recruit, develop and motivate key people are central to all HRM. In the present study, we have included HRM practices that, according to the literature, can be expected to influence the HR outcomes of motivation, skills/knowledge development, commitment, satisfaction and particularly retention. The HRM framework utilised in this study encompasses seven discrete HRM practices, namely: planning, recruitment, screening, orientation, training and support, performance management and recognition. While these HRM practices have been identified as being used to manage volunteers within sport organisations (Australian Sports Commission, 2000), it is not known how these practices manifest at the local sports club level or how they impact on the retention of volunteers. This study focuses on of the use of HRM in the retention of volunteers; in particular, we examine how the adoption of specific HRM practices may contribute to reducing volunteer retention problems within community sport organisations.

In summary, the literature has shown that there is an opportunity to contribute to the conceptualisation of volunteer management practices using an HRM framework in the non-profit community sector. The objective of this research was to develop an understanding of HRM practices for volunteer management to address the retention of volunteers as a primary organisational focus.
Method

The present research comprised two related studies. In study one, focus groups were conducted with community rugby club administrators to identify current volunteer management practices and to develop a volunteer management inventory (VMI). In study two, a confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the goodness of fit of the hypothesised model of HRM practices using data collected from 375 rugby clubs. The influence of volunteer management practices on perceived problems in volunteer retention was tested using multiple regression analysis. The following section details the participants, instruments, procedures, and data analyses in these studies.

Study 1 Participants
The participants in this study were 98 rugby club administrators drawn from a number of separate rugby clubs across a range of metropolitan and regional centres and rural locations in five separate states and territories in Australia. A total of 16 focus groups were conducted with an average focus group size of six participants (range 2–12). The focus group participants were committee or board personnel such as presidents, secretaries, registrars and others including, in some cases, paid staff responsible for managing rugby clubs and volunteers.

Study 1 Instruments
An interview schedule based on the seven a priori categories of the HRM framework which was outlined earlier, was designed to gather the views of participants about current volunteer management practices in their respective clubs. The interview schedule is available from the authors. Within the context of managing rugby club volunteers, the focus group participants were asked questions such as ‘In your experience, what practices are used in recruiting volunteers?’ and ‘In your experience, what practices are used to induct and orientate volunteers?’ Prompts were used to probe initial responses. For example, more detailed responses to an interview question about monitoring volunteer performance and providing feedback were elicited by using prompts including “written or verbal?”, “formal or informal?”, “systematic or ad-hoc?”, and “which positions?”.

Study 1 Procedures
State (provincial) and district rugby governing bodies were asked for their assistance with organising club rugby administrators to participate in focus group interviews. The governing bodies either provided contact details for clubs or assisted directly in recruiting focus group participants. Each focus group was between 90 and 120 minutes duration. Interviewees were provided with information about the study
and were asked to sign consent forms prior to their participation. The focus group interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed. During focus group sessions, volunteer management practices identified by interviewees were verified with other interviewees in relation to whether a particular practice was widely used.

**Study 1 Analysis**

At the conclusion of each focus group session the interview data were analysed using NVivo. Statements were coded firstly using an open (or initial meaning code) and secondly an axial (or categorisation of open codes) coding scheme recommended by Huberman and Miles (2002). Where statements had several identifiable points, they were duplicated and coded with appropriate separate codes. Thus, statements could have several codes and the number of codes tended to be more than the number of subjects. The coding procedures retained the essential meaning of the information provided about the use of volunteer management practices and enabled the identification of the variety of volunteer management practices used within CSOs. A check of the reliability of coding was conducted using two coders independently analysing the same set of statements. It showed a high degree of consistency between coders’ choice of codes for statements.

An iterative process was used in each subsequent focus group whereby participants were asked to comment on whether their club used volunteer management practices identified in earlier focus group interviews. After completing and analysing 12 of the 16 focus group interviews we found no new volunteer management practices were emerging. The practices identified to that point were used to construct a total of 48 statements about volunteer management across the seven dimensions of the hypothesised HRM model. The subsequent four focus groups were used to refine each of the statements as well as to identify statements that were either redundant or irrelevant. The initial list of volunteer management statements was reduced from 48 to 37 items for use in Study 2.

**Study 2 Participants**

The sample for Study 2 was all 814 community rugby clubs affiliated with the Australian Rugby Union at the commencement of the 2004 rugby season. Of the 814 clubs invited to participate, 25 could not be contacted, and another 16 were joint rather than separate entities (e.g., combined junior and senior club). A sample of 773 clubs remained. Representatives from a total of 375 clubs completed and returned useable self-administered surveys for a response rate of 48.5%. The representatives varied but were mostly the president or other senior committee members. Consistent with the national dispersion of rugby clubs, most responses were from the states of New South Wales (53%) and Queensland (24%). Of the respondent clubs, 37% were based in capital cites, 30% in regional towns and 26% in country towns.
rural areas accounted for 6% of respondents. The range in years that clubs had been established was from less than five years (14%) to more than 100 years (4%). Clubs were comprised of junior and senior players (33%), senior players only (25%) and junior players only (23%).

Study 2 Instruments
The club survey gathered data about representative’s ratings of the extent to which a range of volunteer management practices were utilised by their club, details of volunteer numbers, roles and characteristics, and perceptions of the extent to which volunteer retention was a problem. An open-ended question asked survey respondents to identify which volunteer positions (e.g. coaches, team managers) their club found most difficult to fill.

Volunteer management inventory (VMI). Volunteer management was defined as the application of HRM functions that deal with the recruitment, selection, orientation, training, support, performance management, and recognition of organisational volunteers. In the absence of an established scale or inventory to measure volunteer management practices, a series of items were designed for this purpose through Study 1, and designated as a volunteer management inventory (VMI). The VMI items are presented in Table 2.

The content validity of the VMI was established through the iterative process described with reference to the focus groups above. The VMI was also pilot tested with rugby club administrators during their annual conference. Thirty club administrators were asked to complete the survey and provide written and verbal feedback about the relevance and wording of each of the survey items. A minor adjustment to the wording of several VMI items was necessary to further clarify their meaning and to establish content validity in relation to the definition of volunteer management practices used in this study. The VMI was designed to collect data on the extent to which clubs reported using each of 37 volunteer management practices. The foil for the items was, ‘In managing its volunteers to what extent does your club ...’. Responses used a five point Likert scale (1 “never”, 2 “rarely”, 3 “sometimes”, 4 “often”, 5 “always”).

The 37 items in the VMI were representative of seven HRM constructs: planning, recruitment, screening, orientation, training and support, performance management and recognition. Planning practices incorporated job descriptions, succession planning, encouraging turnover in key positions, and identifying and targeting potential volunteers. Recruitment practices included developing positions to meet the needs of volunteers, active recruitment of volunteers from diverse backgrounds, word of mouth and other advertising to attract volunteers, and attempting to fill key positions prior to annual meetings. Screening practices comprised verifying accreditation and undertaking background suitability checks for child protection. Orientation practices involved conducting induction sessions
for new and continuing volunteers, introducing new volunteers to key people in the club, and briefing volunteers on codes of conduct. Training and support practices covered mentoring new volunteers, providing resources, assisting with access to training, reimbursing training costs and out-of-pocket expenses, role support, and workload management. Performance management practices encompassed monitoring performance, providing feedback, and facilitating problem resolution. Recognition practices included formal recognition programs, and individual and public acknowledgements of volunteers’ efforts.

**Volunteer retention.** Perceptions of the extent to which volunteer retention was a problem for the club were measured using a Likert-scale and asking survey respondents to estimate the extent to which volunteer retention was a problem or issue for their club (1 = “not a problem”, 2 = “minor issue”, 3 = “major issue”, 4 = “a serious problem”) across several categories of volunteer positions. Categories of positions included board or management committee, coaching, team management, and other formal volunteer positions. An index of perceived volunteer retention was constructed by calculating a mean score across all categories of positions. A higher score indicated that volunteer retention was perceived as a greater problem. There were no outliers for the perceived volunteer retention index score and its Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.80.

**Study 2 Procedure**
Midway through the 2004 rugby season a self-administered survey package was mailed to club representatives of all 814 community rugby clubs on the ARU database inviting their participation in the study. In most cases the club representative was the president, registrar or secretary to the management committee or board. The survey package consisted of a self-administered questionnaire, a cover letter, incentive draw entry form and a reply-paid envelope. An incentive draw of ARU merchandise was offered to motivate club representatives to complete and return their club’s survey. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The anonymity of each club and the club representative was ensured through the use of a coding system that enabled the club identity to be disassociated from the completed questionnaire. The incentive draw entry form was separated from the completed survey immediately upon its return.

A follow-up letter reminding participants to complete and return the survey was sent 30 days after the initial mail out. A complete survey package was posted to all non-respondent clubs 60 days after the initial mail out. Thirty day periods were considered necessary to allow club representatives time to gather the information necessary to complete the survey and in many instances seek approval from their management committee or board to participate in the study.
Study 2 Analysis

The 37 VMI items were examined in terms of item-scale correlations and Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients for each of the seven HRM constructs. One recruitment item, “use coercion or pressure to recruit volunteers” had a very low item-scale correlation and was dropped from further analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed through AMOS 5.0 to examine the measurement properties of the 36 VMI items. Many constructs in the social sciences are concerned with human characteristics such as cognitive processes. However, constructs can “also represent phenomena where the units of analysis are not persons” (Kline, 1998, p. 198). SPSS missing value analysis revealed 14 missing data points distributed across five of the VMI items. No single case had more than three missing data points. The 14 missing values were replaced using the SPSS expectation-maximisation method. Raw data from the respondent clubs \(N = 375\) was the input data.

The CFA examined relationships between the 36 observed variables and the seven hypothesised latent HRM constructs: planning (PLAN), recruitment (RECRUIT), screening (SCREEN), orientation (ORIENT), training and support (TRAIN), performance management (PERFMGT) and recognition (RECOG). The error terms for all 36 observed variables were constrained to not correlate, while the seven latent constructs were left to freely correlate. The seven constructs represented in the measurement model were considered reflective according to the criteria of Jarvis, Mackenzie and Podsakoff (2003). The observed variables are manifestations of the construct to the extent that the direction of causality is from the latent constructs to the indicators, the measures are correlated, expected to covary, possess internal reliability, are interchangeable, or can be dropped without affecting the conceptual domain of the construct and share a common theme. For example, clubs that make more extensive use of planning in their volunteer management practices are likely to utilise an array of such practices. To test this assumption, covariances between the six observed variables for the planning construct were calculated. Covariances ranged from 0.27 to 0.54 and all were significant \(p < .001\). The extent or degree of planning is likely to be reflected not only in a clubs’ HRM practices, but also in other aspects of its operations such as budgeting, financing and facility management. In other words, a clubs’ planning practices are reflected in a number of indicators of its HRM practices. Extensive use of an array of volunteer recruitment practices is likely to be evident also in recruitment practices used to attract new players to a club, supporting the assertion that the seven constructs measured by the VMI are effects indicators.

Maximum likelihood estimation procedures were used to evaluate data fit to the a priori hypothesised model of HRM practices. To examine the fit between the measurement model and the data, three goodness of fit indices were utilized. The indicators and their associated “rule of thumb” criteria included a \(\chi^2/df\) ratio
of less than three (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999, p. 399), a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) less than .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), and a comparative fit index (CFI) greater than 0.90 (Kline, 1998, p. 131).

To test the efficacy of volunteer management practices in explaining perceived problems in the retention of volunteers, a series of standard multiple regression analysis procedures using SPSS default values were used to enter variables in the equations. The dependent variable was perceived problems in volunteer retention (index score) and the independent variables were the seven HRM constructs. The significance of $R^2$ change ($p < .05$) was used as the criterion to evaluate whether the inclusion of additional variables predicted significantly more variance in the dependent variable.

**Results**

The fit indices for the hypothesised model of HRM practices, single construct and independence models for the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 1. Two of the three fit indexes ($\chi^2/df$ and CFI) for the single construct model demonstrated that the hypothesised HRM model was not unidimensional. Two of the three fit indexes ($\chi^2/df$ and RMSEA) demonstrated that the hypothesised model fit the data. The hypothesised model was, at best, an adequate fit for the data. However, a $\chi^2$ difference test revealed that the hypothesised model was a significantly better fit to the data than the single factor model ($\chi^2(21) = 546.1$, $p < .01$).

| Table 1: Fit Indexes for Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Volunteer Management Inventory (VMI) Constructs ($N = 375$) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fit indexes | $\chi^2/df$ | RMSEA | CFI |
| Hypothesised model | 2.46 | 0.062 | 0.837 |
| Single construct model | 3.29 | 0.078 | 0.735 |
| Independence model | 9.14 | 0.148 | $< .001$ |

Standardised regression weights (factor loadings), means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alpha reliability measures for each of the VMI constructs in the hypothesised model are displayed in Table 2. The means for each dimension ranged from 2.83 for recruitment to 3.94 for recognition. Standard deviations ranged from 0.54 to 1.14. The standardised regression weights for the observed variables in the VMI ranged from 0.27 to 0.84. The internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) coefficients ranged from $\alpha = 0.55$ to $\alpha = 0.85$. Except for the screening construct, which had a value of 0.55, all of the reliability estimates for the VMI
compared favourably with the Cronbach alpha value of 0.6 recommended for use in research by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The low coefficient for screening is explained by its relatively high SD and that it had only two indicators. Screening was included in the VMI because of recent child protection legislation enacted in most states and territories of Australia requiring volunteers to be screened for criminal records before being allowed to work with children in community organisations. A correlation matrix for the VMI is displayed in Table 3. Inspection of this matrix revealed moderate correlations among the seven constructs, which ranged from $r = 0.37$ to $r = 0.67$. These results provided evidence that VMI constructs were related but distinguishable from one another.

Table 2: Results for Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Hypothesised Final Model ($N = 375$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale item:</th>
<th>Standardised regression coefficients</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>Factor Means</th>
<th>Factor SD</th>
<th>Factor $\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In managing its volunteers to what extent does your club ...</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning practices (PLAN)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify potential volunteers before the season commences</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target individuals for volunteer positions based on their skills</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in succession planning to replace key volunteers</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide role or job descriptions for individual volunteers</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>9.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively encourage turnover of volunteers in key positions</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain a database of volunteers' skills, qualifications and experience</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment practices (RECRUIT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match the skills, experience and interests of volunteers to specific roles</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill key volunteer positions prior to the AGM</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop positions to meet the needs of individual volunteers</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds (e.g., minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities)</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use advertising for volunteer recruitment (e.g., newsletters, online, local papers)</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use “word of mouth” to recruit volunteers</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table continued)
(Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale item: In managing its volunteers to what extent does your club ...</th>
<th>Standardised regression coefficients</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>Factor Means</th>
<th>Factor SD</th>
<th>Factor α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively recruit volunteers that are not directly associated with the club</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening practices (SCREEN)</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verify the accreditation of coaches and officials</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct suitability checks of volunteers (e.g., child protection, responsible service of alcohol)</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation practices (ORIENT)</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce new volunteers to people with whom they will work during the season</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>11.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct induction sessions for specific groups of volunteers (e.g., coaches, managers, committee members)</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>11.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage volunteers to operate within a code of acceptable behaviour</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise induction meetings for new or continuing volunteers</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and support practices (TRAIN)</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor volunteers, particularly when starting in a new role</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>13.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support to volunteers in their roles (e.g., assist with the resolution of conflicts)</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>13.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide sufficient resources for volunteers to effectively carry out their tasks</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>12.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage the work loads of individual volunteers where they are excessive</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist volunteers to access training outside the club (e.g., coach accreditation)</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>9.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover or reimburse the costs of volunteer attendance at training or accreditation courses</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimburse volunteers for “out of pocket” expenses</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply volunteers with food and beverages when volunteering</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide club uniforms or clothing for volunteers</td>
<td>(Table continued)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Volunteer management practices

(Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale item: In managing its volunteers to what extent does your club ...</th>
<th>Standardised regression coefficients</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>Factor Means</th>
<th>Factor SD</th>
<th>Factor α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance management practices (PERFMGT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor the performance of individual volunteers</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide feedback to individual volunteers about their performance</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>17.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address performance problems amongst individual volunteers (e.g., a volunteer who fails to complete essential tasks)</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>16.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition practices (RECOG)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise outstanding work or task performances of individual volunteers</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan for the recognition of volunteers</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>14.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank volunteers for their efforts (e.g., informal thank yous)</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>14.15</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly recognise the efforts of volunteers (e.g., in newsletters)</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>13.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide special awards for long-serving volunteers (e.g., life membership)</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (1) Standardised regression weights for observed variables measured by the VMI. (2) Critical ratios (regression weight estimate divided by its standard error) all significant at $p < .001$. Regression weights set to one to arbitrarily fix a measurement scale on one item for each unobserved variable, per Arbuckle and Wothke (1999). (3) Factor means, standard deviations and Cronbach alphas calculated from individual VMI scale item scores.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Volunteer Management Index (VMI) Dimensions ($N = 375$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>RECRUIT</th>
<th>SCREEN</th>
<th>ORIENT</th>
<th>TRAIN</th>
<th>PERFMGT</th>
<th>RECOG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECRUIT</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCREEN</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORIENT</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAIN</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERFMGT</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOG</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All significant at $p < .01$.

PLAN = Extent of planning practices, RECRUIT = Extent of recruitment practices, SCREEN = Extent of screening practices, ORIENT = Extent of orientation practices, TRAIN = Extent of training and support practices, PERFMGT = Extent of performance management practices, RECOG = Extent of recognition practices.
Management Practices and Retention
The volunteer positions reported most frequently by survey respondents as difficult to fill were coaching positions (reported by 28% of clubs), team manager positions (24%), and committee or board positions (22%). Fewer than half of the clubs surveyed (44%) reported that they had no volunteer positions that were difficult to fill.

The results of a standard multiple regression analysis demonstrated that perceived volunteer retention problems (index score) were influenced by volunteer management practices in rugby clubs ($F(7,367)=11.79 \ p < .001; \ \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.17$). Of the seven VMI dimensions, planning was the only significant predictor of perceived volunteer retention problems ($\beta = -.22, \ p < .01$). That is, the more extensively clubs reported using planning practices in managing volunteers the less likely they were to report perceived overall problems in the retention of volunteers. This result prompted more detailed analyses. Volunteer retention was predicted by volunteer management practices for four different categories of club volunteers also using standard multiple regression analysis procedures.

Volunteer management committee or board members. Clubs that reported more extensive use of training and support practices ($\beta = -0.17 \ p < .05$) in the management of volunteers perceived fewer problems in the retention of volunteer management committee or board members ($F(7,367)=6.21 \ p < .001; \ \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.09$).

Volunteer coaches. The more extensively clubs used planning practices ($\beta = -0.23 \ p < .01$) and orientation practices ($\beta = -0.15 \ p < .05$) in the management of volunteers the fewer problems they perceived in the retention of volunteer coaches ($F(7,367) = 9.80 \ p < .001; \ \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.14$).

Volunteer team managers. The regression equation was significant ($F(7,366) = 5.70 \ p < .001; \ \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.08$) for volunteer team managers. However, none of the seven VMI dimensions was a statistically significant predictor of perceived problems in the retention of volunteer team managers.

Volunteers in other formal volunteer positions. The more extensively clubs used planning practices ($\beta = -0.26 \ p < .01$) in the management of volunteers the fewer problems they perceived in the retention of volunteers in formal positions other than management committee or board members, coaches or team managers ($F(7,360) = 8.03 \ p < .001; \ \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.12$).

Discussion and Conclusions
The HRM literature has been dominated by research on the effectiveness of HR practices with paid employees, and the volunteer management literature has predominantly focussed on motivation and satisfaction issues. Although these
Volunteer management practices

research foci have contributed much to the literature, there is increasing need to move beyond these traditional boundaries. The present study represents an initial examination of the efficacy of HRM practices in the prediction of volunteer retention. As such, this research agenda can be located in the broader HRM literature which has argued that organisational context is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of HRM practices (Fenwich, 2005; Wright & McMahan, 1992).

The seven HRM constructs identified in this study were theoretically distinguishable from one another and we found empirical evidence to support our hypothesised HRM framework. Within the context of CSOs, these HRM constructs measured the breadth of HRM practices and the extent to which they are currently utilised by CSOs. It has been argued in the literature that HR systems are designed to attract, select, develop, motivate and retain employees (Jackson & Schuler, 1995) for the effective operation of organisations (Beer et al., 1984). We found evidence that HRM planning practices were associated with fewer perceived problems in the retention of volunteers generally. Planning practices significantly predicted lower retention problems for volunteer coaches and volunteers in other formal positions. However, planning practices were not a significant predictor of fewer retention problems amongst volunteer committee or board members or team managers. Perceived problems in the retention of volunteer committee or board members were predicted by training and support practices only. Along with planning, orientation practices were found to be a significant predictor of lower volunteer retention problems amongst volunteer coaches. However, the relatively small proportion of the variance in volunteer retention problems explained by HRM practices in our study (range of $R^2$ values 0.09 to 0.17) suggests that the tenuous link between HRM practices and organisational outcomes (Barnard & Rodgers, 2000; Legge, 2001) is as evident in voluntary organisations as it is in work organisations.

Our results support contentions in the literature that HRM practices are widely variable (Keenoy, 1999) and comprise a complex array of practices (Storey, 1989). This is evidenced by the finding that different HRM practices predicted volunteer retention problems across several categories of volunteer positions. For example, planning was an important HRM practice in two out of four volunteer positions but had no significant influence in predicting retention problems amongst team managers or committee or board members. However, clubs that reported more extensive use of orientation, and training and support practices reported fewer problems in the retention of volunteer coaches and team managers, respectively. The results of our study suggest that HRM practices not only vary in the extent to which they are practiced across CSOs (range of mean scores 2.83-3.94 on a 5-point scale), but that the influence of HRM practices in the reduction of volunteer retention problems varies between different volunteer positions.

Highly formalised HRM practices may not necessarily fit comfortably with the management of volunteers in CSOs, given the voluntary nature of these
organisations. An underlying assumption in the HRM approach is the tendency to regard volunteers as a resource, thereby legitimising managerial prerogative, valuing outcome-based approaches to organisational practices, and undermining other ways of conceptualising employment relationships (Keenoy, 1999). As members of CSOs, volunteers are also the constituent body, co-workers, managers, and clients of non-profit organisations (Pearce, 1993). Viewing sport volunteers as a human resource tends to overlook the complexity of relationships between volunteers and CSOs. However, the quality and reliability of the programs and services delivered by CSOs may decline if volunteers are not “managed”. Evidence from our study suggests that the more extensive use of HRM practices is associated with fewer problems in the retention of volunteers. This would appear to provide the contextual evidence that the adoption of formal HRM practices as recommended by government sport agencies, such as the ASC, may lead to better volunteer management outcomes, with specifically fewer problems in the retention of volunteers.

In the absence of evidence-based volunteer management practices, the application of established HRM approaches, as used in this study, presents a way forward to further explore, describe and measure the impact of volunteer management practices within CSOs on not only retention but also other dimensions of organisational performance. However, this also raises a question for future research. If a HRM approach is not the most appropriate for managing sport volunteers, then what are the alternatives and what is their impact on volunteer motivation, satisfaction, commitment and retention?

There were several limitations of the present study in relation to methodological and sampling issues. Common method variance may explain part of the relationship between VM practices and perceived volunteer retention problems. The measurement of volunteer retention problems within surveyed organisations was limited to the degree to which the perception of a club representative was accurate. Perceptions about retention problems could have been influenced by recent events (e.g., several volunteers departing at short notice but with little turnover in the previous season). However, it is rare for CSOs to maintain reliable records from which objective measures of volunteer retention or turnover rates could be obtained. Items in the VMI need to be further refined to improve what was no better than an adequate fit between the data and the hypothesised model of HRM practices. Of the three goodness of fit indexes used to evaluate the hypothesised model, the CFI did not meet the 0.90 criterion. In general, the VM constructs demonstrated adequate reliability. However, 10 of the 36 volunteer management practice items had factor loadings of less than 0.5 on their respective constructs. Further, a number of individual items had low correlation coefficients with their underlying constructs which is suggestive of weak effects indicators and poor convergent validity in some instances. Despite some evidence of content and discriminant validity, “construct validity is not typically established in a single
study" (Kline, 1998, p. 198) Further development of the VMI may be expected to improve the veracity of the HRM approach in explaining important organisational outcomes, such as increased levels of volunteer satisfaction, commitment and retention.

The study has several implications for further research and practice. For researchers, this study found that HRM practices and their association with volunteer retention problems vary within and across different categories of volunteer positions. Research should focus on studying the nature of CSOs, (thereby adding to the knowledge about how HRM practices are implemented), the barriers preventing clubs from adopting what appear to be more effective practices, and the skills base of those charged with responsibility for managing volunteers. Future research might explore the preferences, expectations and satisfaction of volunteers in terms of how they prefer to be managed in different positions. Volunteer expectations and preferences concerning management practices may vary in relation to their level of training and experience, which in turn may be influenced by their knowledge, duration of membership and perceptions of the organisational culture of their club. From another perspective, the HR management practices and culture of clubs with high volunteer retention rates could be compared with clubs that experience high levels of volunteer turnover.

For CSOs and government policy makers it might be tempting to develop policies and programs designed to encourage sport clubs to more extensively utilise a wide array of HRM practices in the management of volunteers. While more extensive use of HRM practices is associated with fewer perceived problems in retaining volunteers, imposing higher levels of compliance or standards of HRM practice may negatively impact on CSOs, particularly those that have developed a less formalised management culture. Policies which require or encourage CSOs to adopt more extensive HRM practices should be assessed within the context of particular CSOs before implementation. The resource base, culture, history and existing HRM practices used by CSOs would be important considerations.

References


