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How to Retain Volunteer Coaches

A qualitative study with club developers from organized youth team sport

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Sammanfattning

Idrottsklubbar beskriver ofta hur värdefulla deras ideella arbetskraft är för organisationen. Trots detta så finns det en nedåtgående trend i ideellt engagemang i idrott.

Därför är syftet med vår studie att undersöka hur fem idrottsklubbar i Göteborgsområdet arbetar för att behålla sina ideella ledare i deras ungdomsorganisation. För att undersöka detta genomförde vi fem semistrukturerade intervjuer med framgångsrika klubbar i Göteborgsområdet och jämförde deras svar med en väl etablerad vetenskaplig modell; ´A Model Of Volunteer Retention in Youth Sport´ (Kim, Chelladurai & Trail, 2007). Resultatet visade att det är viktigt för föreningar att ha en väldefinierad värdegrund och definierade beteenden som speglar värdegrunden, att jobba aktivt med föreningsutveckling och att utbilda sina ledare. Vår slutsats är att, trots den negativa trenden, det är möjligt för klubbar att påverka sin tillgång till ideella ledare genom att strukturera sin organisation.

Abstract

Sports clubs often report how valuable volunteers are to their organization. Despite this, there is a decline in volunteer engagement in sports.

Therefore, the aim of our study is to investigate how five sports clubs in the Gothenburg area work to retain their volunteer coaches in their youth organizations. To investigate this, we conducted five semi-structured interviews with successful clubs in the Gothenburg area and compared the responses to an established scientific model; ´A Model Of Volunteer Retention in Youth Sport´ (Kim, Chelladurai & Trail, 2007).

The result revealed that to retain volunteer coaches, it is crucial for the clubs to have well-defined core values and defined behaviors that reflect those core values, work actively with club development and educate their coaches. We concluded that, despite the declining number of volunteer coaches, it is possible for a club to affect their access to volunteer coaches by structuring their organization.

Förord

Vi vill börja med att tacka samtliga föreningar och individer som ställde upp på våra intervjuer och hjälpte oss att genomföra vår kandidatuppsats. Utan ert deltagande hade detta arbete inte varit möjligt. Vi vill också tacka vår handledare, Karin Grahn vid Göteborgs Universitet för hjälpen under arbetets gång, både vid författandet av denna uppsats och vår B-uppsats.

Tabell 1. Författarnas bidrag

Arbetsuppgift	Procent utfört av Adam, Andreas, Pontus
Planering av studien	33/33/33
Litteratursökning	33/33/33
Datainsamling	33/33/33
Analys	33/33/33
Skrivande	33/33/33
Layout	33/33/33

Table of contents

Introduction

Volunteer work forces within sports are considered to be invaluable; however, there is a lack of systematic research regarding retention of volunteers (Hallman, 2015). Further, Hallman means that work still needs to be done to find a specific understanding of how to control personnel in sports clubs. The bulk of the research done concerns volunteers in general and is not specific coaches. Most of the research is performed in the USA, Australia, Great Britain, Germany, and Switzerland and that there is a lack of research performed in a Swedish context.

Retention of volunteers is a difficult challenge many sports clubs face, according to Lee, Kim and Koo (2016). Clubs cannot offer monetary incitements to secure continued volunteer engagement. Therefore, it is important to identify other factors that can affect volunteer work forces intention to continue their engagement with the club. This would help clubs create effective volunteer retention programs (Lee et al., 2016).

Swedish Sports Confederation (2019) say that the sports movement builds on volunteer-based leadership and that lots of volunteers offer their time to get the non-profit organizations to work. They also say that the Swedish model of sports provide a platform through which many have the possibility to devote themselves to sports. Furthermore, they say that the sports movement through their impact on parts of the community makes Sweden a lot stronger. In Strategi 2025 (Swedish Sports Confederation, 2020), the Swedish Sports Confederation further expresses a desire to have a strong and vibrant sports movement with clubs that people want to engage in and are proud to be a part of by 2025. The vision states that clubs should be formed and developed in line with the sports movement common goals and sports specific identity. Also mentioned in the vision is a strengthened leadership where Swedish sports have attractive coach education programs with high quality, and that being a sports coach is a strong merit for future careers. Further included in the vision is for Swedish sports to be appreciated and perceived as Sweden's premier source of leader education. To obtain these goals the requisites of being a leader or coach in sports must be suited to different people's life situations.

Swedish Sports aim to create a physical, psychological, social, and cultural development in youths and promote a healthy lifestyle (Swedish Sports Confederation, 2019). As Swedish sports is based on a volunteer workforce, a lack of leaders and coaches risk ruining the sports movement in its current form. We are of the opinion that the foundation for a life-long interest in sports and a healthy lifestyle is laid during childhood and youth. Therefore, a lack of leaders and coaches in youth sport would be especially negatively impacted.

Aim of the study and research questions

With this thesis we want to contribute to achieving the vision set by Swedish Sports Confederation (2020) by illuminating how sports clubs can work to retain their volunteer coaches and thereby be given the opportunity to train and develop these coaches in line with the Swedish Sports Confederation's highly set goals. Our ambition is to contribute to reducing the research gap by examining how clubs from Sweden, and more specifically from Gothenburg, work to retain their volunteer coaches.

The aim of the study was to investigate how five sports clubs in the Gothenburg area work to retain their volunteer coaches in their youth organizations.

Based on the model by Kim et al. (2007), three research questions were formulated:
How do clubs work to ensure that the volunteer coach fit to the task they are assigned?
How do clubs work to ensure that their volunteer coaches fit into their organization?
How do clubs manage and acknowledge their volunteer coaches?

Background

Key words

Some key words for this study are presented and explained here:

Volunteer:" A volunteer is an individual who works out of free will or relatively uncoerced and receives no remuneration at all or only a relatively small reimbursement or pay (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996 in Wicker, 2017).

Recruit: "To persuade someone to become a new member of an organization" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020.)

Retain: "To keep or continue to have something" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020), in this thesis referring to continue to employ volunteer coaches in an organization.

Youth sport: "[…] adult-organized sports programs for children and youth, typically between the ages of 7 and 18 years which have designated coaches, organized practices, and scheduled competitions." (Feltz, 2001, p. 16674).

Theoretical framework

We have used the ´model of volunteer retention in youth sport´ by Kim, Chelladurai and Trail, (2007) to guide us to our research questions. The main reason that we chose this model is because it is focused more on volunteer retention than volunteer recruitment. Also, existing literature (Kim et al. 2007; Lee et al., 2016; Cuskelly, 2004) suggest that it is more effective (both economically, timewise, and quality-wise) to focus on retaining the already existing volunteers, rather than recruiting new. The scientist behind the model is well known and respected in this branch of science and the study where it was presented has been cited frequently, which increases the credibility of the model. It suggests that other aspects than socioeconomic, gender and being a parent can affect the intention to coach. Finally, we deem this to be a well suited and systematic model for our purpose.

A Model of Volunteer Retention in Youth Sport

The model of volunteer retention in youth sport by Kim et al. (2007) consists of three aspects; Person-Task (P-T), Person-Organization (P-O), and Managerial Treatment (MT) which together lead to the feeling of empowerment within the volunteers. The feeling of empowerment in turn affects the intention to continue as volunteers. Empowerment itself contains four additional aspects: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. According to the authors four aspects within empowerment must be met to achieve empowerment.

Person-Task (P-T)
The person-task part of the model focuses on comparing an individual's skills, knowledge, and abilities to the requirements of a specific task, to ensure that the organization recruits suitable volunteers. Matching the person to the task makes it easier for the sports club to retain their volunteer coaches.

Person-Organization (P-O)
The person-organization fit is equally critical to successfully recruiting and retaining volunteer coaches. It compares the norms and values of the organization with the values of the volunteer. If the volunteer's values differ from the values and norms of the organization, chance of retention is decreased.

Managerial Treatment (MT)
Managerial treatment can help facilitate the retention of volunteer coaches in sports clubs by recognizing and rewarding volunteer performance and clarifying the roles for the volunteers. There are two aspects of managerial treatment: contingent rewards and supervision.

Empowerment
If an organization achieves the three above mentioned parts of the model, it results in the coaches feeling a sense of empowerment. The feeling of empowerment has a positive effect on the intention to remain as a coach. As mentioned above, the authors explain that empowerment consists of four aspects: meaning, competence self-determination and impact.
By meeting all these four aspects, a club can further improve volunteer retention because it fosters loyalty, affective commitment and organizational attachment and reduce turnover.
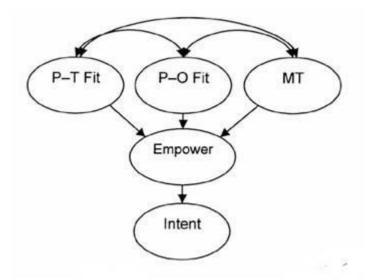

Figure 1. An overview of A Model of Volunteer Retention in Youth Sport (Kim et al. 2007).

Who are volunteer coaches today?

To get a better understanding of the volunteers coaching arena and how to retain these coaches we must start by looking to the existing coaches and who they typically are. Wicker (2017) points to aspects as male gender, high income, and high educational level to be related to volunteerism. Persons with the opposite aspects that are forced to work multiple jobs which gives them a lower amount of leisure time are less likely to participate as volunteers. People having young children and those with a migration background are also examples of persons who are less likely to be volunteers.

There are other underlying, individual values that affect peoples' desire to volunteer, which Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) present by raising values and unselfishness and a desire to help others as factors for volunteering. However, there are a few on the other side of the scale with an egotistical attitude who volunteer for their own profit, such as getting future jobs.

Aspects such as feelings of satisfaction and the sensation of getting a sufficient reward for the time and effort put in by the volunteers must be met. If not met, the volunteers will not continue to volunteer, something that Schlesinger et al. (2018) writes when they bring Beckers (1976) utility exception theory to light, which explains that the volunteers must feel that they are rewarded for their time and work. Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) mean that these rewards can be things such as social recognition, gaining social contacts, a good reputation and social

appreciation from other persons in the club. The more important the volunteers feel in their clubs, the more their motivation to volunteer rises, and the less important and appreciated they feel, the more their motivation declines.

Furthermore, Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) also list five individual variables that are significant in relation to volunteerism. These were: are a strong sense of belonging a sense of identity and a collective positive sense of solidarity with the club, satisfaction with the club's work environment and having own children engaged/active in the club. These variables all had a positive impact on the intention to volunteer. A negative impactor of volunteerism is length of time, as volunteering for a longer period of time seems to reduce motivation over time. This is however something that the clubs can counteract through the examples given above.

Having an own child in the team that they are coaching is something that Kim et al. (2007), Kim et al. (2010) and Busser and Carruthers (2010) rank as the biggest impactor of them all when deciding to be a sport club volunteer or not.

The value of volunteer coaches

All organized sports, with the exception of elite sport, is based on non-profit leaders and coaches. Without them, organized sports that we know it today would not be possible. In Sweden, people talk about the Swedish sports movement and the importance of its nonprofit coaches. In Idrotten Vill (Swedish Sports Confederation, 2019, p. 9) it is expressed as follows: "The sports movement is mostly based on volunteer leadership. Leaders in sports devote a lot of hours to sports by doing activities, coaching or trustees in the club. Lots of functionaries offer their time to make organized sports go around".

In the US, nonprofit leaders and coaches in sports are considered to be of the utmost importance, not least financially. Kim et al. (2007) point out that the economic worth of the volunteer work is over 50 million dollars, almost 25% of the total value of the whole sport industry in the US. These numbers show the great need of volunteers from an economic standpoint.

Research also shows that many clubs in Australian and several other European countries are down on their knees due to the declining numbers and length of engagement of active volunteer leaders and coaches. According to Schlesinger, Egli and Nagel (2013) 40% of the Swiss sports organizations see this is a big problem and 10% of the organizations see this as a direct threat to their continued existence. They also suggest that similar problems exist in Australia, Belgium, Germany and Great Britain. This supports how important volunteer leaders and coaches are for organized sports. Schlesinger et al. (2013) emphasize this by pointing out volunteer leaders and coaches as the most important asset of all when it comes to non-commercial sports, as it needs a lot of committed people that it does not have the ability to compensate economically.

Hallmann (2015) illuminate the importance of volunteer work force from a wider community perspective by bringing up the great effect the volunteer work force has on organizations in social contexts, culture, and education. These organizations are entirely dependent on the volunteer work force. When the author focus on the role sports play in these other three areas, they use the example of how young people can in a positive way be integrated into a community by volunteering as leaders or coaches. The author mean that, on a long-term perspective, this also positively affects democracy in the community which makes the social value of volunteer coaches high. Additional positive aspects that stem from a volunteer-based collaboration

between sports and the community according to the author are the constant social interactions that create well-being and understanding for others.

Finally, the author mean that it is more beneficial for sports clubs and other organizations who are dependent of a volunteer work-force to have long-term personnel than to have short-term volunteers that have to be replaced after a short time, which has been found to be ineffective. Having long-term volunteers also raise the degree and quality of motivation with athletes, given that they are treated the right way.

Even sports outside of organized sports have a positive effect on society and relies on a volunteer workforce. An example of this is UNICEF who uses sports lead by volunteers to enhance the education and development of children in need (Kim, Zhang & Connaughton, 2010a). This highlights the importance of recruiting and retaining volunteers in sports as well as outside of the sports club perspective. Another example is the Paralympic games that also relies heavily on volunteers (Wu, Li & Khoo, 2015). Our hope is that our study can help to provide a better understanding of retaining volunteers in the above-mentioned contexts as well, in addition to our main target for this study which is youth coaches in sports clubs.

There are other studies that point to the importance of volunteers in sport outside of organized sports such as Busser and Carruthers (2010) who uses different types of public recreational parks and recreation agencies as examples of other activities that rely on volunteers to make keep their business going.

The decreasing number of volunteer coaches

Unfortunately, the availability of volunteer leaders and coaches have declined over time. This deficiency leads to complications for sports clubs whose existence is based on volunteer workforces (Schlesinger et al. 2013). This is something that Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) illuminate in their study where they mean that most sports clubs would not survive without volunteers. They also point to the fact that sports clubs find it harder and harder to find volunteers, especially to the more demanding positions that requires a lot of decision making. Additional points from this study shows that volunteers no longer can be taken for granted and that recruiting and retaining volunteers in a long-term perspective is the most important challenge organized sports face today. They emphasize that it is much more effective on several different levels for clubs to retain the leaders and coaches they have already recruited rather than having a high turn-over on new volunteers. However, it is possible to successfully retain volunteer leaders and coaches by having sound values, treating their volunteers well and having an organized structure in their organization (Schlesinger & Nagel, 2018).
Studies show that the number of people volunteering has declined at the same time that the need for them has increased due to the expansion of the sport industry in general (Kim et al. (2007), (Kim, Zhang & Connaughton, 2010b). Busser and Carruthers (2010) mean that coaches in youth sports are particularly difficult to recruit and retain.

Ways for a club to deal with the lack of volunteers: demand, recruit or retain more

The perceived lack of coaches can be dealt with in different ways. Lee et al. (2016) suggest three different ways of increasing the amount of volunteer work in sports: recruiting more volunteers, increasing the workload for the current volunteers or retaining the current volunteers. These efforts can increase the access to volunteer workers. Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) say that previous research indicate that the lack of access to a volunteer workforce has

not led to non-profit organizations reducing their service to club members. This leads us to assume that the most frequently used strategy is to increase the workload for the active volunteer coaches.

According to Kim et al. (2007) the strategy to retain volunteer workforces is most frequently used outside of sports. They argue that it is more cost-effective to retain competent coaches than replacing them as it could cost both time and money to recruit and educate new coaches. The authors also say that retaining competent coaches give other advantages such as economical and resource saving. They look at the organization as a service provider and the members as clients and mean that retaining coaches creates continuity in these relationships, which improves the service to the clients. Therefore, they mean that it is important to research the processes behind retaining volunteers.

Schlesinger, Klenk, and Nagel (2015) did a study on how organizations make decisions about recruiting new coaches. The research showed that these decisions often were made with inadequate information, as they were missing appropriate framework to analyze the situations, as well as inadequate time to discuss the problem and its possible solutions. Furthermore, the study showed that problems with staff tended to be dealt with reactively instead of proactively and with structure. Building on that, Schlesinger et al. (2015) also mean that issues in sports clubs were dealt with by the following strategies: a) continuing the same way as before, b) listening to experiences and intuition from people with a big influence in the club or those they deemed knowledgeable, c) copying strategies from other clubs or organizations. These strategies were often used without assuring that they would work in their own organization or context.

Differences between deciding to start and deciding to continue

Hallmann (2015) say that the motivation behind deciding to start and deciding to continue as a volunteer differ and suggests that this is important for organizations to consider when managing volunteers. The author explains that the motivation for volunteer work comes from individual expectations, how the club values volunteer work and the incentives the club offers. Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) exemplify this with social recognition, an enhanced reputation, gaining social contacts or social appreciation from other club members. Lee et al. (2016) show that social interactions is linked in a positive way to the intention of continuing volunteer engagements. They mean that team member exchange and the intention to continue volunteering is significantly affected in a positive way by social interaction, even when the social interaction takes place through social media.

Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) acknowledge the importance of noting that the different rewards must meet the expectations of the individual. They mean that reduced volunteer engagement can be viewed as the result of the individual experiencing a negative balance between cost and reward. If the volunteer experience does not reward the individual what they want from it the individual is highly likely to terminate his or her engagement and look for more gratifying activities (Schlesinger et al., 2013)

Schlesinger et al. (2013) reason that if the individual were to act rationally when looking at future opportunities and the balance between cost- and reward, their decision would be based on the resources the individual or his/her family has. This is not something we have explicitly researched, however Busser and Carruthers (2010) mean that values were the most important

factor for coaches in youth sport. They also point to the difference between starting and continuing to volunteer. They see differences between self-serving and personal growth, but not between values or the social interactions. Busser and Carruthers (2010) also explain that satisfaction within different sporting contexts correlate negatively with the intention to quit. This means that the values of the organization and the values of the individual are crucial for retention within volunteer engagement.

Successful methods of volunteer retention in literature

Research shows that certain socio-economic groups are more inclined to volunteer (Wicker, 2017), while Lee et al. (2016) mean that time and resources does not affect who chooses to engage in volunteer activities. They view this as positive for sports organizations as it points to the fact that almost anyone can consider volunteering. Previous research (Lee et al., 2016; Schlesinger & Nagel, 2018; Hallmann, 2015); Kim et al., 2007) show that there are factors that the sports clubs can affect, which can help sports clubs reduce the turn-over on volunteer coaches. Lee et al. (2016) discusses the fact that positive social interactions affect individual's intention to continue their volunteer-work. Further, Lee et al. (2016) mean that previous research has pointed out the connection between social interaction and the efficiency of organizations. They also say that it is important for organizations to establish positive social interactions between their members as good relations contribute to efficiency and sustainable power within the organization.

Furthermore, Lee et al. (2016) mean that the social interactions erase the boundaries between different parts of the organization, stimulates the creation of common interests which in turn supports the exchange of ideas and knowledge, as well as creates additional synergy effects. One of the strongest predicators of volunteer engagement is membership in the organization, something that we interpret as a form of social interaction. The same authors mean that empowerment is a crucial reward for volunteers. They also point to the positive correlation between social interactions and volunteers' intention to continue their engagement. To us, this means that the retention of volunteers increases when members have positive social interactions during their volunteer-work. Individuals who have positive experiences feel a greater sense of empowerment. Lee et al. (2016) stress the importance for sports clubs to create the sense of empowerment with their volunteers and they suggest that social interaction between members in the organization strongly affect the spreading and sharing of knowledge within the organization. They also mean that it encourages communication and cooperation. They suggest that increased cooperation, sharing of knowledge and creating common values can lead to an increased sense of empowerment with volunteer coaches. This assumption is strengthened by Wicker and Breuer (2010) who noted that sports clubs whose policies promote active companionship have a higher degree of volunteer retention. They note that sports clubs where a large portion of the volunteers participated in social contexts had fewer issues in retaining coaches. The research of Lee et al. (2016) and Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) show that active work in creating conviviality can improve stability in volunteer engagement and thereby reduce the turn-over of volunteer coaches.

Schlesinger et al. (2015) suggests that one of the keys to successful work with volunteer retention within a sports club is the engagement and competency of the people responsible for club policies and guidelines. Further, they mean that clubs that are characterized by a clear division of task and responsibilities as well as use a systematic process rather than solving personnel issues reactively will be more effective in solving personnel problems. This is confirmed by Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye and Darcy (2006), who points to planning operations as well as educating and supporting the volunteers is connected to fewer issues in volunteer

retention. Even the study from Wicker (2017) show that many different management practices such as involving the club members in decision making, delegating decisions and tasks, acknowledging volunteer work, having a strategy for recruiting and using electronic resources to increase communication all promote recruiting and retention of volunteers.

As well as the positive effects of volunteer management practices, Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) mean that non-profit organizations that too strictly control how practice is run have a negative impact on the autonomy perceived by the individual. This can make the club less attractive to volunteer workers.

Therefore, it seems like individuals who are engaged in volunteer work want a certain level of direction, such as job descriptions and a profile of demands provided by the organization, but they still want a certain level of autonomy in their work.

Method

We conducted a qualitative interview study (Kristensson, 2014) where we used a semi-

structured interview with questions based on the theoretical model that our study departs from (Kim et al. 2007). The reason we chose a semi-structured interview was to get deeper answers from the respondents. Semi-structured interviews give the respondents the opportunity to develop their answers and we could ask follow-up questions, which would not have been an option with a survey. Additional benefits of the semi-structured interview are that all respondents get the same questions, increasing the credibility. The respondents' also have the opportunity to ask questions if there is something that they do not understand or need clarified (Kristensson, 2014). Possible disadvantages to the semi-structured interview is that information can be overlooked, and it gives room for misinterpretations. It also places demand on the interviewer to be knowledgeable about the subject and to be able to work with people (Kristensson, 2014).

Sample

A suitable selection according to Denscombe (2018) is based on the principle that information is gained by hand-picking subjects based on their relevancy for the research project and their knowledge or experience in the area. He shows that researchers choose subjects they already know and that they assume can generate the most value.
We decided to only include team sports in our research. The following sports are represented in our research: basketball, floorball, football, and handball. When we selected which clubs to contact for the interviews, we intentionally chose clubs in the immediate area of Gothenburg.

These clubs are known to us for running a successful youth operation in the sense that they manage to engage many child and youth players. To our knowledge, the clubs run their operation largely in unity with Swedish Sports Confederation guidelines and core values concerning how to run child- and youth sports. We also chose to exclude the most notable clubs in the Gothenburg area in an attempt to exclude clubs that can recruit volunteer coaches based on their name or success as an elite club. Our assumption was that successful clubs are good at recruiting and retaining volunteer coaches and therefore would give the best understanding and knowledge on those topics.

The sample included responses from club developers representing different clubs and sports. We never had the intention to focus on the person we interviewed. We were only interested in getting their answers in their role as club developers to get an understanding of how the clubs work. For the club to be seen as suitable for our research it had to be seen as a) successful (as defined above), b) that the clubs did not have a too outstanding elite operation (we wanted to exclude clubs that had an advantage in retaining volunteer coaches due to their success on elite level), c) have the role of club developer (we wanted to have an as extensive insight surrounding retaining and managing of coaches as possible), d) different sports and e) all clubs had to be from around the Gothenburg area.

We tried to exclude clubs within the same sport to make sure we expanded our search to as many different sports as possible. We were successful with this, except for one sport, which two of the clubs engaged in. From these criteria, we contacted six clubs from the five different sports and received replies from five of them. Interviews were conducted with the club developers of those five clubs.

Data collection

We based our interview guide on the model developed by Kim et al. (2007) which encompasses the central part of the models. The interview consisted of 20 questions, the first five of which

were so called frame-questions which regarded the presentation of the respondents' work tasks and description of the organization in wide terms. The remaining questions were divided over the four pillars of the model: Person-Task (P-T), Person-Organization (P-O), Managerial Treatment (MT) and Empowerment. All questions aimed to give a deeper understanding of the work environment of the volunteer coaches and the motivational climate, which is strongly tied to their will to continue as volunteer coaches.

We created questions per above stated category for our interview guide (see appendix 1), to get an as comprehensive interview as possible to ensure that our questions encompassed the entire model upon which our thesis is based. All questions were asked to every respondent, but not always in the same order. When we found it appropriate, we asked spontaneous follow-up questions as the semi-structured interview allows (Kristensson, 2014).

The interviews were done virtually through the digital meeting tool, Zoom. The reason for that was that we could not meet our interviewees in person because of the Covid-19 virus and the risk of spreading of the infection that comes with meeting in person. Pontus was the one who led all interviews while Andreas and Adam assisted and asked follow-up questions. The reason Pontus led the interviews was that he had the most experience of interviews and to increase the chance of getting a reliable result. The interviews were recorded through Zoom which provides an easy way of recording sessions. The length of the interviews ranged from 40 to 70 minutes.

Disadvantages of the data collection could be that the respondents could have felt outnumbered since there were three interviewers to one interviewee, which could have affected the responses from the interviewee.

Data analysis

To process and analyze the collected data we used qualitative content analysis (Kristensson, 2014). The qualitative content analysis can be more or less interpreting, and it is based on different types of collected material (interviews, observations, diaries, or movies). The analysis is, in short terms, based on the researcher processing the texts from a relatively structured work method to identify patterns, resemblances, or differences.

After every finished interview, our perceptions and impressions from the interviews were discussed in group. It was a way for us to reflect on what was said and to see if we had interpreted the answers similarly and if we had registered something that was not expressed verbatim in the interview, but could be significant for our research. The first step of the analysis was transcribing the interviews which was done almost immediately after each interview. The same person transcribed every interview, to get a similarity in the presentations of the transcribed interviews, after which the interviews were read several times by each member of the group.

In the next step of the process, every group member did a separate analysis of each interview, with the intention of triangulating the analysis and creating three independent analysis results of the same material (Kristensson, 2014). Instead of looking for categories related to our three main themes, P-T, P-O and MT, we looked for categories that the respondents had in common in their answers. This was to avoid confirmation bias and let the material speak for itself (Denscombe, 2018). During this part of the process, the parts of the interview that did not relate to the research was filtered away. For example, the initial interview questions where the respondents clarified their role and detailed the size of their respective clubs was not included in the result.

When the analysis was finished, the identified categories were compared and re-worked to a conclusion that the authors' agreed upon. The following categories were initially identified: rewards, communication, profile of demands, motivation, organization, red thread, belonging, social, autonomy, education, and core values. After further discussion, we decided to categorize belonging, autonomy, and social as subcategories to motivation and red thread as a subcategory to core values.

The next step was to relate the categories to the model by Kim et al. (2007). This process was done through discussion in the group to make sure that we agreed on the interpretations and increase credibility. We found that *Motivation* permeated how the clubs operated in relation to their coaches. Because motivation was found in all three aspects of the model, we found it better to have it as a separate part of the result.

Profile of demands defines what competence is sought after by the club and what the clubs say the role of the coach entails. Therefore, it was categorized into P-T.

Core Values reflect what the club stands for and what their values are. The core values permeate the entire club and are also reflected in the *organization* of the club. Therefore, they were categorized into P-O.

Communication, Reward and *Education* were categorized into MT, because they all represent different methods with which the club treat their coaches.

Autonomy, *Belonging* and *Social* aspects were mentioned repeatedly when the respondents talked about motivating their coaches. Therefore, they were identified as separate categories, rather than subcategories and subsequently categorized into Motivation.

Table 2: Categories and subcategories related to the model

	PT	PO	MT	MOTIVATION
CATEGORY	Profile of Demands	Core Values, Organization	Communication, Education, Reward	Autonomy, Belonging, Social
SUBCATEGORY		Red Thread (Core Values)		

Ethical considerations

Our work was guided by the research-ethical principles (Vetenskapsrådet, 2020; Kristensson, 2014) as explained below.

Before each interview started, we clarified the purpose of the study and the interview to the respondent. We explained that he or she could terminate the interview or choose not to answer any of the questions. We guaranteed the respondents personal anonymity as well as the club's anonymity and made sure that the respondent gave his or her consent to be recorded. The interview was started after that point unless the interviewee had anything to add.
We as interviewers had our web cameras active so that the interviewees could see us. Two out of five interviewees chose to have their cameras activated while the other three chose not to.

Activating the camera was completely optional for the interviewees for their comfort's sake, which they were informed of.

All respondents in our research were informed of the research purpose. Since we asked their permission to interview them, we mean that it was clear that participation was voluntary and that they were in control of their participation, since all participants expressed an interest in participating. All respondents were informed that neither them nor their club would be identifiable on the research. Therefore, we chose not to disclose names, clubs, sport, or sexes of the respondents, which is why we coded the respondent's names when we use quotes from the interviews.

All respondents were asked if they had any interest in reading the finished thesis as is recommended by Vetenskapsrådet (2020). All respondents expressed a will to do so, therefore, the finished thesis will be sent to the respondents. Our perception is that, in retrospect, all respondents expressed that they found their participation in the research beneficial to themselves and made them reflect over the strengths and weaknesses of their own practice.

Result

In the result, categories are presented representing the clubs' work with retaining volunteer coaches in relation to the model of volunteer retention in youth sport (Kim et al. 2007). The result for each research question and the categories attached to this question are also presented below. Further, the different categories are explained.

How clubs work with fitting the person and task

When the organizations work with P-T we notice that it is mainly done through the category *profile of demands.*

Profile of Demands
In this category we highlight data that connect what clubs demand and expect from their volunteer coaches. We found two main themes among the five sports clubs' profile of demands. The coaches were expected to possess some sport specific knowledge and the clubs' profile of demands was role specific.

The need for *sport specific knowledge* was related to the age of the players. All clubs thought the parents' knowledge and skills as coaches were good enough until the participants reached the age of around 12—13. Until then it was viewed as more important for coaches to have social competence, appropriate leader behaviors and values than sport specific knowledge. Most clubs appreciated parents with sport specific knowledge or experiences in sports in general but had programs for education and training to ensure that coaches got the knowledge they needed even if they had no previous experience. When the players have passed a certain age (around 13), the clubs and often the parents found that more advanced sport specific knowledge is needed, especially for the role of head coach. Respondent E exemplifies this:

> […] when I had the children that were 8, 9 or 10 years old I felt my knowledge was good enough, but now that they are 11, 12 and 13 I feel like I can't contribute anymore.

The demands were *role specific* depending on what role the coach had. An additional demand that the clubs expressed was that whoever had the position of head coach was also expected to take a larger responsibility around the team, for example with practice planning and analysis. When the players grew older, the clubs started paying more attention to results and several of the clubs expressed a desire to foster players for their elite teams starting around the age of 16. All coaches and leaders in all clubs were obligated to adhere to club policies and guidelines. The head coach often had a responsibility to ensure that everyone in and around the team followed those policies and guidelines. Head coaches for older players were sometimes also expected to participate in activities which coaches for younger ages were exempt from, such as club meetings, as exemplified by respondent A:

> If you have the head coach position in a group, you also have a greater responsibility for planning, execution and analysis. We also expect you to, to a bigger extent, also be a part of academy group meetings or other types of meetings.

How clubs work with fitting the person and the organization

We identified the following categories that clubs work with to ensure P-O: *core values* (and its' subcategory; *red thread*) and *organization.*

Core Values
In this category we display the results concerning the clubs' values, as well as what the organizations define as their main purpose or raison d'etre.

Our results show that the core values of a club greatly affect peoples' will to engage in their volunteer activities. We find that these values permeate the clubs in many ways and are expressed as all-encompassing and treat values, training, and games as stated by respondent D:

> […] it contains everything you need to know about our club, our values, our vision
> etc.

We have identified three key ingredients in a club's core values that seem to improve their ability to retain volunteer coaches, as follows: The values should be created by and connected to the club with its own specific context and possibilities in mind. The values should also guide coaches towards specific behaviors within the organization. Lastly, it should also install a sense of pride in the club members. Furthermore, it was noted that several of the clubs shared some of the core values, for example how retaining and developing players is more important than winning.

We find that *creating your own values* within the club makes the values unique and connected to the club. It distinguishes the club from other clubs in the same area or sport. Several clubs have well-detailed and public documents containing core values and guidelines, and the respondents refered to these documents' multiple times during the interviews (in one of the cases, before the interview started). Parts of the document are posted in locker rooms or around the training- or playing facility. It is talked about in leader- and parental meetings and in relation to recruiting new coaches, or when other personnel become tied to the clubs and the documents can also easily be found on the respective club's website.

A couple of the clubs based their documents on writings that their respective federation developed. They then re-wrote them to make them their own. One club expressed that their values, and by extension their entire operation, is built on evidence-based research. Another club stated that their work with values had spread outside of the club and that they are now cooperating with other clubs to create a mutual view of practices and games.

During the interviews, it became evident that the sport clubs have *behaviors linked to their core values* and that it affects their operation in a major way as exemplified by respondent A, followed by respondent D:

> […] partly we look at what types of behaviors we want to work with in our club,
> in line with our core values.

> We have told our leaders that we are supposed to conduct ourselves in a certain
> way, based on our core values.

One area where we noticed how the clubs' core values affected behavior concerns gameplay in younger ages. All clubs in this thesis express that winning matches is not what matters. Instead, the clubs focused on player development and to retain as many players as possible for as long as possible. Even though some people engaged in the club might find it difficult to abide to, the core values and guidelines of the club are clear about development and participation being more important than winning, which respondent B mentioned:

> […] children's sport is for the children, not for adults who want to act like [names a well-
> recognized and successful coach].

Instead of focusing on results, the coaches are expected to work with factors such as motivational environment, teaching, unity, and group dynamics. A couple of the respondents' state in their interviews that motivational environment is a prerequisite for player learning and development. The core values of some of the clubs stipulate that the coaches must have an acceptance for the different interests and abilities of the participants. It is important that

everyone is included and has a place in the team. All respondents point out how important it is for the players to have fun at practices and games.

The clubs we interviewed work to underplay the importance of the coach role. Some of them choose not to appoint a head coach and in certain cases the coaches are consequently called leaders instead of coaches. By seeing the coach as a leader, focus can be shifted from game results to the core values. They also talk about creating an understanding that being a coach is an opportunity, not a right. Coaches who do not adhere to the core values of the club can be moved to a different part of the organization or forced to quit as stated by respondent C:

> It doesn't matter if they have been a leader in the club for 15-20 years, we are very grateful for the time you have given me, but I can't keep you around if you don't want to do things the way we do them.

The core values are also apparent in the clubs' recruitment of new coaches. The respondents talk about the core values giving them an opportunity to be clearer towards potential coaches as they can more accurately clarify what the club offers and what it expects in return. During recruitment, the education and previous experience of the potential coach are weighed against their values and attitudes. An acceptance for the club's ideas and view on long-term development is crucial. If the core values and attitudes of the potential coach does not correlate with the core values and attitudes of the club, no role within the club will be offered.

Our respondents suggest that when core values *install a sense of pride* in the volunteer coaches it affects their intention to remain within the club. Our respondents mention that the work with core values also aim to create a sense of identity and pride in the club and the work the coach or leader does. Respondent B exemplifies this, followed by respondent E:

> And a sense of pride… and there is a great pride over [the club's name] based on our core values. It is a culture that I would say permeate the entire club. Strongly.
>
> […] that is what I want to say all along, that I want it to feel like an honor to be a leader in [the club's name], it's supposed to feel like something beautiful.

Red thread
We see a red thread in several parts of the coaches' practice. We regard this a result of the Core Values, and subsequently we consider this a subcategory to Core Values and includes what the respondents mention concerning guidelines for coaches. The extent to which these values are expressed varies, but they concern a variety of areas such as gameplay, practice, matches and training for both coaches and players.

In our data, the red thread is mainly recognized through the clubs having a common strategy for gameplay and practice methods. This facilitates cooperation and transitions between teams and age groups as exemplified by respondent E:

> […] it's not like, what should we do now? But instead it's very like, structured by the club what you are supposed to know, do and how to run your practice. This makes it easier for people to move in between the different teams in the club both as coaches, players and parents.

We also note that the respondents' suggested that the red thread being communicated and monitored is essential in motivating coaches to act in accordance with the club's core values. Finally, the red thread contains expectations regarding conduct and behavior, which acts as a guide for coaches in their everyday practice.

Our respondents mention a red thread that permeates the organization on several different levels, such as playing system, training methodology and work methods. The most common red thread referred to in the interviews concerns playing philosophy or idea of play. Several of the clubs have a way of playing that permeates the entire club, and it is adapted to the age of the players as mentioned by respondent A:

> And when we have set methods of operation regarding what we want to achieve during a game, both offensive and defensive methods.

The clubs demand that the coaches teach the common idea of play. Some clubs have clear guidelines concerning the methodology and exercises the coaches are expected to use. In other clubs, the coach has a big opportunity to shape their own practice as long as they stick to the core values, the players learn the common style of play and they retain and develop players.

Several of the interviewees express how important it is that these red threads are clearly and uniformly communicated to all coaches, leaders, players, and parents. They also raise the point that in their roles as club developers they need strong support from the board, and they need to know that they communicate the same message.

Some of the clubs have recruited people with the task of helping coaches in the club with organizing practices, interpreting the playing system and their behavior during practice and games. These functions are not tied to a specific team but instead to a certain age interval and work as support and mentors to the coaches. They can also have a controlling or monitoring function that helps the club assure that the guidelines are being followed which respondent A stated:

> I have two people who two- to three times per week visits the [playing area] and follow these groups in the different forms of play, and make sure that the leaders of [name] in the girls -08 team isn't focusing on whether she can do [a sport specific maneuver]but what they are doing to stimulate her developmental environment.

Furthermore, they are also assigned to newly assembled teams to guide the coaches in what the club considers important and how they can run their practices.

In some of the clubs, there is a system in place for how coaches from elite- or elite-preparing teams engage in younger teams and work as support for coaches, but also as a way of securing that the club's guidelines and idea of play permeate the entire club.

The clubs have written instructions related to the expected behaviors of the coaches. All clubs have their core values and red threads posted on their websites. In these documents, most of the clubs dictate how you as a coach are supposed to treat your players and what is expected of you as a coach. In most cases, the red thread is based on Idrotten Vill (Swedish Sports Confederation, 2019) and documents from their respective sport federations. These documents are often named in such a way that the name of the document clearly relates to the name, logo, or color of the club. They have adapted behaviors and instructions according to the age of the players the coach will be working with. Respondent B exemplified this:

> […] our guidelines are pretty much all-embracing, so they concern both core values, training and how to operate in all age groups.

Organization

In this category, we present the respondents' perception that organization of the clubs is important for the intention to remain as a volunteer coach. All respondents mention roles or structures as influential factors, when answering questions not explicitly regarding organization.

Our data shows that club representatives emphasize a stable organization as an important mean to retain volunteer coaches. We have identified three factors that plays an important part in how the clubs were organized: differentiation in how the activities are organized for children and youth- and elite players; having a systematic approach towards recruiting coaches, and; identifying what a team needs to function and having the organizational structure needed to supports those needs.

We found that having *different organizations* for different age groups makes it possible to set separate goals for different parts of the organization. One club had an appointed youth committee while another club had a youth-board which acted independently from the senior- or elite board. A few clubs had one person in charge of the youth organization and one in charge of the senior organization. Our respondents suggest that different goals create the possibility to place coaches within a context that they thrive in, depending on the coaches' skills and preferences.

We also found that a *systematic approach for recruiting* volunteer coaches helps organizations ensure that they recruit the right person for the right position, which in turn facilitates retention. It also helps the organization ensure that they have enough people to distribute the workload. Since the clubs were dependent of the parents, they had specified methods to engage the parents at the start-up of new teams. One club pointed at the importance of recruiting and engaging the parents early on. They also had different support functions such as support staff and training in place to facilitate the parents, as respondent A expressed:

> […] if you say that "we need four leaders" who run this together I mean, with me and our play-developers from the start, the threshold most often becomes a lot lower.

The clubs worked systematically, to varying degrees, with recruiting coaches internally. For example, experienced players who had shown sought-after qualities and behaviors were encouraged to engage as coaches. A couple of the clubs were clear about avoiding having an appointed head coach up to a certain age (of the players). These clubs instead spoke of finding a group of coaches who could share the responsibility of leading the team.

The clubs had structures which defined roles and tasks that needed to be handled around each team. How these roles and tasks were appointed varied to some degree, but overall, the people engaged in the team divided the roles and tasks themselves, which respondent D exemplified:

> We have a template that we work from, what has to be included, which functions have to exist in every team. And that is distributed to the teams from the person in charge of the youth organization. And they appoint the roles.

The part where clubs felt the parent coaches needed the most support was in sport specific areas. To meet those needs, they had play-developers, experienced coaches and trained senior players to step in and support the coaches. In addition to that, all our respondents held a position that was in some way tied to club development. They did not work in direct relation to one specific

team, but instead had the task of developing internal structures, trainings, guidelines, and the club's core values. Respondent D explained:

> […] nowadays I only work with club development in the club. I don't care about how we do competitively.

In their role, they had close contact with the club's coaches and were responsible for making sure that the coaches had the support they wanted or needed. Also included in the role was securing that coaches followed the club's guidelines and that they acted in line with the core values, as well as support, guide and in some instances relocate coaches who failed to do this.

In conclusion, our result show that to retain volunteer coaches, it is important to have an organization and structures in place that support the volunteer coaches. The clubs we examined did that by dividing the recreational- and elite organizations into separate organizations. This helped them ensure that they recruited the right kind of people to begin with and having other functions in place to support the coaches.

How clubs work with managerial treatment

We identified the following categories as part of the clubs' work with managerial treatment: *communication, education,* and *reward.*

Communication

In this category we have sorted out what emerged during the interviews, which concerns communication between the club and its volunteer coaches. It addresses the communication methods mentioned by the respondents and at what frequency the communication takes place. Our data shows that continuous and clear communication is important to the retention of volunteer coaches. The communication category includes three important factors: a clear communication from the start of the volunteer coach's engagement, planned regular meetings, and daily communication between the club and the coach. The data further shows that communication took place both digitally via email, internet links, Facebook-groups, verbally in person, notes in the arena, via telephone, leader meetings and yearly club meetings, which respondent E stated:

> I mean purely practically, through email, the website, over the phone, a lot of contact daily from the chancery and the leaders… there are many leaders and very many players, so it's not like you have time to go around and call everyone or see everyone but instead, daily communication via mail and such.

The respondents indicate that having a *clear communication* from the start of the volunteer coach's engagement reduces the risk of misunderstanding and ambiguity related to the coaches' practice. Respondent A exemplified:

> Being clear when communicating from the board (to the organization) that this is our goal, this is our work method, that it isn't just something they hear from me.

According to the respondents', *planned regular meetings* is a way to keep a good communication with coaches. Several clubs work systematically with upholding communication through planned meetings every year, and communication tied to the coaches' practice is common, which respondent A illustrated:

> […] and again, that's where these leader meetings come in, the communication there, on the [playing area], I communicate with the play-developers, we meet at leader meetings, we have specific group, academy group meetings and such.

The respondents also indicate that *daily communication and reinforcement* with the purpose of ensuring the coaches are noticed was also something several clubs did consciously. Positively reinforcing communication to motivate the coaches was also common amongst the responses as clarified by statement from respondent C followed by statement from respondent E:

> I see them practically daily since I am here from 4—9 every day and of course you throw them a word every time you see them and just let them know that we see them.

> […] at the same time you are thorough with saying thanks you and letting you know how good you are, and thank you for your engagement and show them that they really are needed, that we hear them, see them and appreciate them.

Education

In this category, we have gathered information concerning the clubs' view on education and the different kinds of education they provide their coaches. We have also included information on the formulation and implementation of the education.

Our data shows that the respondents believe educating volunteer coaches to be important for retaining them. All clubs emphasized the importance of educating their coaches, here expressed by respondent C:

> I think it's really important with education and clinics and so on, we want them to educate themselves because, the more they educate themselves, the more we get out of them later.

However, our data also shows that clubs educate their coaches for the coaches' own sake. Our respondents point to educated coaches being more likely to feel competent enough to handle the demands that comes with coaching. We noticed three themes regarding the education of coaches. First, all clubs had a basic training program for coaches designed by their local or national federation. Secondly, they had developed their own training programs and lastly, they had a progression when educating coaches.

All clubs had a *basic training* program provided by their local or national sport specific federation, which was exemplified by respondent B:

> It is above all those available on [the federation], namely the coach course, but also, they have a rich array of programs, both for players and for coaches.

In some cases, the club had the mandate to organize the training in their own regime and some clubs relied on their federation. The federation's training programs were formed as a ladder from coaching the youngest ages all the way to elite coaches. The clubs paid for coaches to participate in the appropriate programs.

Several of the clubs also held *training programs of their own*. These often focused on practical learning on the playing field, but several clubs also educated their coaches in the club core values. Two examples from respondent A:

> If we instead hold programs about, like, "this is how you can think about training, in relation to this" and then go out on the [playing area] and give examples of exercises […]

> […] we train them in core values and give them the right tools to incorporate their core values in an as easy and clear way as possible. So that we have done, we have created a quick reference guide for how the groups can work with their core values, or how the leaders can work with the core values in their group.

As a way of educating future coaches, two clubs mentioned the importance of providing their players with leader- and referee training courses. Respondent E exemplified:

> […] you want to keep as many players as possible for as long as possible, you want to give them the opportunity to be leaders and referees.

An emphasized concept in the responses from the clubs was the importance of *progression* in the education. The progression related to the age of the players of the team the coach was engaged in. Respondent D explained:

> We have had a fairly good educational progression within [the sport] and we have clear rules for our leaders and so on.

The clubs also offered and encouraged their coaches to engage in other types of educational programs such as injury management, diet, and training theory. These types of subjects were deemed important even though they did not relate to how to play the sport. The coaches attended these programs based on their own level of interest. The courses where sometimes managed by the clubs themselves but more often by an external provider.

Reward

In this category we list the different types of rewards given to volunteer coaches mentioned by our respondents. What qualifies as a reward differed, as some things we considered to be rewards were considered obvious or necessary for the coaches by the club.

We found three different types of rewards clubs used to compensate their coaches for their time and effort. Clubs rewarded their coaches with training and education, material compensations and with different kinds of social events. Result show that all clubs used all three different types albeit in different ways to motivate coaches to remain with the program.

All clubs offered their coaches *education* from the respective federation. Several clubs also offered other types of coach training programs, either in the club's own orchestration or external. Most of these training programs were directly sport specific or sport related. Some clubs offered programs with a less obvious connection to sports. All clubs encouraged their coaches to educate themselves and saw a benefit for both the coach and the club to have well-educated coaches. The education was always free of charge for the coaches, here illustrated by respondent C:

> The education they get for free, for example. If they want to go somewhere to train themselves, we send them. We do of course need to have a plan regarding it though, it can't be a vacation to Spain and no actual education going on… but we are very liberal with, if you apply for a training program, you will get it.

The clubs did not want the coaches to have any costs associated with their engagement in the club and all of them rewarded their coaches with some kind of *material reward*. The most frequently mentioned material reward was leader outfits. Every coach got some clothes to use while coaching. Another way of rewarding coaches was a small economical compensation like salary, a reduced club membership fee or other costs related to the club. Respondent C expressed it in the following way:

> They always get to go to tournaments for free. The club pays that. That can be 3-4000 crowns (SEK) in certain tournaments, so that's good. So, we try to make it as good as possible and make it so that they don't have to pay for their presence here. That's really the thing.

The final way of rewarding coaches that we identified was inviting them to different *social events,* free of charge. For example, our respondents mentioned after-work activities, Christmas dinners, coach-exclusive parties, engagement in recreational sports such as the sport played by the club, and others such as bowling or paddle tennis, as stated by respondent E:

> They get clothes, education, leader parties, Christmas dinner every year, a leader party in May every year which unfortunately was cancelled this year, but usually we have it.

Motivation

We found motivation to be present and apparent throughout all our research questions. In this part, we present information about how the clubs tried to motivate their coaches with methods outside of our research questions.

We defined the categories *Belonging* – to feel part of something greater than oneself, *Autonomy* – the possibility to make own decisions and affect one's own practice and *Social* – considering activities outside of sports are part of this category.
A large part of the clubs expressly said that they consciously work with strengthening the coaches' motivation in their practice as respondent B expressed:

> […] through general communication so that, both personal from person to person but also that we send out emails and that you point out that it is important and appreciated what they do. But then, I also think that if we succeed well with our guidelines and they are well established with everyone, you will feel a… get this self -motivating factor. That you feel like you are doing an important, that what you are doing is important and that it is good. And that it works well.

The clubs also made a conscious effort to make their coaches sense a feeling of *belonging* with the club. As mentioned earlier, the core values were part of this, but they also had other approaches. All the respondents mentioned clothes as one way of creating the feeling of belonging. All coaches were given clothes in team colors and with the club's logo, here exemplified by respondent D:

> All leaders wear the same clothes so it's clear that they have a physical affiliation. All leaders have signed an agreement which gives them a psychological sense of belonging; this is what we stand for, and they are given the opportunity to affect in different ways.

Several of the respondent mentioned the fact that they had their own home field or arena as a way of creating belonging. When teams in a club practice simultaneously in the same facility, it makes for a feeling of belonging to the club and not just a team. Some also mentioned trying to establish different traditions within the club to create a sense of belonging.

Autonomy over your own practice as a coach was something most of the clubs supported. Several clubs had instructions for coaches to base their practice upon but in most cases those instructions were looked upon as guidelines and not rules. The instructions were also put in place to help unexperienced coaches. When the coaches grew more competent, they could

deviate slightly from the instructions. However, it was important for the coaches to adhere to the clubs core values. Respondent B explained:

> […] they are completely free to do as the like as long as you don't… like, guidelines aren't laws but a recommendation of direction … and if you leave that direction completely, then we have to go in and re-direct that.

All clubs point out the importance of social events outside of sports to retain volunteer coaches, which respondent A stated:

> I also feel like this, like, the social part is incredibly important. I think, I have a background as a leader myself and that if you do not have any type of connection to anyone else in the club, things will be difficult. So that is something I value heavily, that they should feel welcomed and safe and that there is a great atmosphere in the club.

Discussion

In our discussion, we shine a light on the weaknesses of our method and the choices we have made while making this thesis. We observe the strengths of the method and the measures we have taken to face the method's weaknesses. Further, we discuss the results we have produced. The aim of the study was to investigate how five sports clubs in the Gothenburg area work to

retain their volunteer coaches in their youth organizations. Our respondents convey their image of how this work is done in their club and we have related their responses to the model of volunteer retention in youth sports (Kim et al. 2007). The responses we have gathered allow us to answer how organizations perceive they fit their volunteers to the organization and the tasks they are given. Finally, we reflect on the responses provided concerning how clubs manage and treat their volunteers.

Method discussion

Flaws

One weakness in our choice of method is that we only get one perspective of the area we are researching. We have not asked how volunteer coaches in the club perceive their situation, nor have we researched whether the respondents' information correspond with the documents or the practice (practices and games) they refer to. Due to this, our result only expresses what was said during the interviews. This was a conscious choice we made to limit the size of our research, but we feel that we have compensated for the lack of perspectives through our careful choice of clubs.

We researched a context in which we have a lot of own experience in different roles which could increase the risk of bias in our interpretation. In an attempt to counter this bias, triangulation was used, as all authors analyzed the data separately. Since we have used a model to form our interview questions, there might be an (unintentional) desire to adapt the answers according to the part of the model the question was meant to research. We made an effort to create categories of our own, which we then adapted to fit the model.

The results we present are the results that emerged from the interviews. We compiled them in unity with our identified categories and attempted to reinforce them through quotes from the interview. As a consequence of the previously stated problem that there are difficulties in fitting a complex reality into a theoretical model, the same quotes sometimes appear in more than one category. This highlights the fact that one single action from a club can serve multiple purposes. For example, a club can train volunteer coaches both for them to better be able to handle their task (P-T) and give them the opportunity to develop as people (MT).

In our result discussion we are limited to drawing conclusions from the information given to us by the respondents. We have, as mentioned earlier, not triangulated the information by collecting data through other sources in the different clubs, nor have we critically reviewed our sources. Our assumption is that the respondents are telling the truth and that they run their operation in a proper way. If a similar study would be conducted through other sources, it is possible that the result would be different, even if the same clubs were studied. Additional thoughts concerning further research are presented under its own headline later in the thesis.

Strengths

To reduce the risk of own interpretations and personal bias, interpretation and categorizing was done individually to then be discussed in the group to form a unified view of the result. We consider it worth nothing that, based on our own role in non-profit sports, we might have noticed different things or put different emphasis on different parts of the interview. The different attitudes towards the interview is something we found enriched our discussions and understanding of the subject.

We find that we have seen such likeness in the responses from the respondents that is enables us to transfer them to other contexts and lets us answer our research questions and purpose.

In our data analysis we find a conflict between a theoretical model and a complex reality. The respondents' clubs have not formed their operations after the model we are comparing them to. We have tried to limit our categories to specific parts of the model, but the reality is such that the categories are applicable to several parts of the model. For example, we find that core values affect large parts of the clubs which in turn makes it affect the organization, but also the shaping of roles and view of volunteer coaches. Because of this, Core Values can be related to Person-Task (P-T) and Managerial Treatment (MT) as well, however we chose to relate it to Person-Organization (P-O). We are aware that there are other ways in which to present the result and discussion but we presume that it makes the thesis easier to follow and relate to the model which we have chosen to compare it with.

Result Discussion

Person – Task

P-T can be defined in two ways, either from how well a person's competence correlate with the demands that are put on that person, or how well a task fulfills the persons expectations on the task (Kim et al. 2007). Since we have only interviewed representatives of the clubs, our focus will be on the clubs' expectations on the individual. The categories from our result that we can link to P-T and the model (Kim et al. 2007) are profile of demands and the consistent theme, the so-called red thread. These categories can be linked to P-T because we find that they focus on how well the coaches fit in the specific role and/or what the club is doing to ensure that the coach is a good fit for the role.

The respondents express that they have a clear image of what is expected by the coaches in their respective organizations. Several of the clubs consciously try to tone down the significance of the sport specific knowledge for the coaches in their younger teams. The demands in these teams are instead focused on the ability to create good environments for children and youths to thrive in. Up until the age of 13, the clubs feel that parents without sport specific knowledge can coach the teams. In support of the coaches, the clubs have developed more- or less detailed guidelines for how coaches are expected to run their operation. We have respondents who say that everything from practical exercises to execution of gameplay is detailed for the coaches. Other clubs instead have demands of what is supposed to be taught while giving the coaches a greater freedom to control how that is taught. The clubs also have a system, or an educational progression in place to train coaches on sport specific topics.

When players get to a certain age it seems like parents, but also to some degree that the clubs' themselves, put higher demands on the sport specific competence of the coaches. We presume that this can be related to the forms of competition in the different sports. It seems like youth sport starts to resemble adult sports at around the age of 13. The clubs handle this in different ways, but they all strive to increase the sport specific competency in the teams coaching staffs. Some clubs do this by recruiting the competence in the role of head coach and others do it by adding a mentor-like function to the staff. We also found examples of clubs that employ both these methods simultaneously. In the cases where a head coach is recruited there are outspoken demands in place for this person. These demands cover practice and gameplay structure as well as a larger personal responsibility for making sure that the clubs core values and guidelines are adhered to by the entire group. These are all examples that help us identify a clear link to our category, profile of demands, which shows us that the model by Kim et al. (2007) is a suitable model for interpreting our results.

All clubs have a structure for which roles and tasks exist around a team. They are clear with the fact that they strive to recruit several people who share the roles to unburden the coaches and

make their roles even clearer or more focused. The coaches are expected to coach and take care of what happens in the playing area. The other tasks are supposed to be taken care of by other engaged persons.

We find that it is crucial that there are clear expectations on competence in a role to be able to determine whether a person fits into that role. It is otherwise impossible to know whether someone is a good fit for a role or what is expected by the person. By club's clarifying to themselves what is expected of coaches in different age groups, people who are interested can evaluate whether they have the right competence on their own. It also makes it possible for the person and the club to evaluate if the demands are met. Therefore, we mean that some sort of profile of demands is crucial to create a good P-T fit in a club.

We suppose that a contributing factor to volunteer coaches choosing to terminate their engagement is that they feel that their workload is too heavy. The clubs handle the workload by engaging several people in different roles around the team and the coaches. As mentioned earlier, Cuskelly (2009) mean that a way of dealing with the lack of volunteer engagement is to increase the workload of those already engaged in volunteer work. This tactic to retain the coaches by the clubs is not presented in the clubs in this study. The clubs we talked to have, on the contrary from the finds of Cuskelly (2009), defined other roles as well to be able to recruit and retain other important volunteer work forces, using the same logic as with the coaches. By defining other roles as well, the clubs can express both what the coach is expected to do but also what not to do. We find that this is critical to shape the role of the coach in such a way that the workload becomes reasonable for the person taking on the role.

The thorough strategy used by a couple of the clubs to recruit new coaches contradict the findings of Schlesinger et al. (2015) that say that recruitment decisions often are made with inadequate information.

Person – Organization

The model we base our thesis on shows that how well a person fits in with an organization is vital both for continued engagement and productivity. Several parts of an organization can affect these factors, but in our thesis, we have focused on clubs' core values and how they work with these values to make them fit with the core values of the coaches. The categories from our result that we can clearly relate to P-O are Organization and Core Values since it is vital that the coaches share the basic principles the club stands for, e.g. how the organization is structured and what their core values are based on. The importance of this is something we find consistent in the responses from all clubs. After having taken part of the result we find that shared core values are one of the absolute key factors for continued cooperation between club and coach. It is the most consistent of the responses given by all clubs. This is strengthened by Schlesinger and Nagel (2018); Kim et al. (2007) who suggests that having shared values and a strong sense of identity with the club has positive influence on the intention of continuing as a volunteer. We are of the opinion that Core Values and Organization relate well to P-O because P-O treat how the organization is built on the connection between the club's and the coaches' core values. Therefore, we find that our model works well to interpret P-O. That these categories are well suited to answer our research purpose is strengthened by Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) who says that a sense of identity to the club, a strong sense of belonging, a sense of identity and a collective positive sense of solidarity with the club are some of the most important components when it comes to volunteer coaches.

In our interview, we can identify three methods that the clubs use to attempt to ensure that the clubs' core values align with the core values of the coach.

1. Identifying the club's core values
2. Relate behaviors to these core values
3. Clarify the values

Identifying clubs' core values

We did not explicitly ask the respondents to clarify how they developed their club's core values, but all respondents clarified that they have core values in the interviews. Club development was in some way included in the work description for all respondents, and we found that the clubs with the clearest identified core values are the club's where the club developer had no other task than club development. To have a clarification of what the core values of the club are something that we found to have a highly positive relation to retaining coaches. Further, it is important that the individuals who have the role of club developer does not have any other task than the ones relating to club development so they can focus strictly on the clubs development from an organizational view. Research that strengthens our thesis about the importance of having an engaged person who is responsible for the core values and principles of the club is Schlesinger et al. (2015) and Cuskelly et al. (2006) who lists this as one of the key points regarding retaining volunteer coaches.

It was common for the clubs to base their core values on Idrotten Vill (Swedish Sports Confederation, 2019) but it also happened that they used material produced by their sport specific federations, but regardless of what material they based their core values on, they adapted and developed it to suit their own club and context. The fact that these documents have names, colors or logos tied to the club is something we find helps create the club's identity, both by showing what they stand for, but possibly also in an attempt to separate the club from other club's in the same area or sport.

When we compare parts of the core values presented to us in the interviews, we find that they are quite similar. All clubs focus on development over results and strive to keep as many children and youths as possible for as long as possible. The coaches are expected to focus on motivation, learning and group unity, and showing an acceptance for the fact that the different members have different skill levels and reasons for their involvement in sports. A literature review by Backström, Boman and Ekblad (2019) point to these being success-factors for youth retention in sports. Since all clubs in our study states that they are dependent of parents as coaches to some extent, we assume that by retaining the youths, the clubs will also succeed in retaining the parents as coaches. This is strengthened by Kim et al. (2007) and Busser and Carruthers (2010) that say that having a child of your own in the club is the most important motivator for volunteer engagement,

Relating behavior to core values

The behaviors related to the club's core values touch on many different aspects of the club's operations. As mentioned above, the core values are connected to gameplay and the view of game results. The core values affect the way the club plays, with the purpose of developing players rather than winning games, which accentuates that everyone should get to play. This can be seen as the red thread (one of our subcategories) that permeates the whole club and for us something that can be related to P-O and the model by Kim et al. (2007). The core values also cover behaviors around games for coaches, players, and audience. The respondents mean that the core values express sought after behaviors.

Not only do the core values affect games, they also affect practice and practice methodology. Some respondents say that the documents contain exercises and instructions for the coaches to use at practice. Further, they also cover the environment and jargon they want in their clubs. All clubs have an obligatory training program for coaches but also encourage their coaches to educate themselves to broaden their knowledge. This shows that the clubs value educated coaches and we assume that this is brought up in their core values. We can see a connection between education and the sense of competence which might affect motivation. The feeling of competence is also mentioned by Kim et al. (2007) as an important aspect of P-T.

By extension, the core values also affect the club's organization. The clubs we have talked to differentiate between their youth organization and their elite organization. One of the clubs has no elite organization since they find that this does not fit in their core values. That all clubs have recruited an individual to work on club development makes us conclude that this is something all of the club's value. One respondent talks about their core values saying that everyone is welcome in their club and attempt to live up to this by making it available for people of all conditions or preferences.

Our interpretation is that it is important for a club to relate behaviors to their core values and clarify how it is applied in every-day activity. It also seems crucial that the core values encompass more than what happens in the playing area.

Clarify your core values
All clubs included in this thesis have their core values available on their website, and the respondents mean that it is made visible in other ways as well. Parts of the core values document are posted in locker rooms or around the training- or playing facility, it is talked about in leader- and parental meetings and in relation to recruiting new coaches, or when other personnel becomes tied to the clubs. When the clubs recruit new coaches', they evaluate the individual's core values and how well they fit to the core values of the club. The clubs strive to recruit coaches internally since that makes it easier for them to make sure that the coach has the sport specific competence they want, but primarily that they share the club's core values.

Further, the clubs consequently clarify their core values by training their members in their core values as well as have it affect which training programs are offered. We will discuss education more thoroughly during MT but find it worth mentioning here as well.

It is important for the club to be clear about what they stand for and what they value to secure the fit between person and organization. It makes it easier for people who want to engage with the club do determine whether it is a suitable club for them to engage in. The core values play an important role in creating the pride that the clubs want their members to feel over the club, its operations and what it stands for. We also conclude that it is important for the club's believability and clarity that there are consequences for individuals who does not share or adhere to their core values.

Managerial - Treatment

We chose to use Managerial Treatment (MT) from the model by Kim et al. (2007) when we interpret our result since we found that investigating how the sports clubs management act and treat their volunteer coaches gives additional insight to what the clubs are doing to retain the coaches.

Three of our categories fit well and has a lot in common with MT since they relate well to personnel management. These three categories are communication, rewards, and education. The clubs and their staff within leading roles (management) such as club-developers and sports managers, work systematically with these three categories to make the coaches thrive, and in the long run, stay in the club. This shows that the model by Kim et al. (2007) fit well when it comes to analyzing MT as well.

Communication and how it takes place between management and the coaches was something all clubs put a lot of effort into, according to the respondents. Clear communication with the purpose to express core values and profile of demands also fit well into Person-Task (P-T) and Person-Organization (P-O), but since it deals with how management handles their personnel, we find that it fits even better into MT.

Communication in the form of positive feedback and encouragement, however, fits exceptionally well into MT as that type of communication is a way for management to take care of, and motivate their coaches in their practice. Daily, general communication from management is also a conscious strategy employed by a significant number of the clubs, with the expressed purpose of making the coaches feel seen. We find this to be particularly important for motivation since it creates a feeling within the coaches of being important and valued. Communication is a kind of social interaction that affect sharing of knowledge and encourages communication and cooperation Lee et al. (2016). The same thing can be said about the positive feedback and encouragement linked to the coaches' practice. That type of communication can work as a receipt for the coaches to show that they are doing the right thing, which might make it more likely for them to maintain that behavior, and in turn increase the chance of them staying on as coaches. Communication from management with the purpose of altering the behavior of coaches can function as guidance and development for the coaches which can help motivation, as an increased sense of competence can increase motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012). However, Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) find that too much control from management might have a negative impact on the willingness to engage as a volunteer. This is also strengthened by Deci and Ryan (2012) who suggests that external control might lead to a negative impact of coaches' perception of autonomy.

The reward category shows that the club takes care of the coaches as it makes sure that the coaches get something in exchange for their services to the club, which strengthens our thesis that rewards go hand-in-hand with MT. It serves as a way of showing appreciation towards the coaches. Since our definition of a volunteer coach refers to a coach who works out of free will and receives none, or a small reimbursement or pay, it can be discussed how material rewards can affect a volunteer coach's intent of continuing in a club. We find that several types of rewards combined might strengthen a coach's motivation to continue coaching. The appreciation that all the clubs from our study want to reward their coaches with to motivate them is supported by Schlesinger and Nagel (2018), who explains that coaches need to feel rewarded for their time and work in order to stay motivated.

A form of reward that holds significant value as a motivational booster that we found in our result was offering education of different sorts to the coaches, free of charge. The reason for the significant value of this one aspect is that it is multifaceted, because it encompasses two of our categories (reward and education). Education stands out both as a form of reward and as a stand-alone category in the responses by the clubs when it comes to how the clubs manage, develop and work to retain their coaches. This correlates with Cuskelly et al. (2006) who states that education and supporting volunteers is connected to fewer issues in volunteer retention. A

portion of the clubs express that they expect the coaches to continue coaching in the club after completing a training program.

Motivation

Motivation is a category that permeates our entire thesis and lays the foundation for the answer to our research purpose, since we find that motivation is included in all parts of the model. It fits into P-T because having the right person at the right place increases the chance of success and reduces the risk of assigning tasks unfit for the individual coach. In turn, this increases the chance of continued engagement for the coach, which reflects what motivation is. We have found that P-O is tied to MT because it has a clear connection to our categories (reward, communication, education), and plays a big part in managements role in motivation coaches, based on the replies in our interviews. If we compare the research of Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) which shows that the more important the coach feel in his/her club, the more their motivation increases and vice versa to our results, it shows that some of the clubs have a plan for this, and some do not. Even if all the clubs might be making their coaches feel important, we cannot take that for granted since we cannot say that we see a connection between Schlesinger and Nagel (2018) and the result from the clubs in this matter.
However, motivation is applicable to most things when it comes to getting people to do anything and is not something that only fits to our chosen model.

Conclusion

Our conclusion is that the organization of the clubs is crucial to their ability to retain volunteer coaches. Even if research shows that the number of volunteer coaches within sports are declining, we find that this development can be affected by the clubs if they work to motivate and empower their coaches. We find that the model of volunteer retention (Kim et al., 2007) is a model that fits well for Swedish clubs to depart from when working with improving their volunteer retention.

Regarding Person-Task, it is our conclusion that clubs must clearly define for themselves and for their coaches which demands are placed on a coach in the club, what qualifications are wanted and what competency is sought. Clearly defining the roles also give them the opportunity to show what is and is not included in the task of the coach, which can influence the intention of the coach to continue coaching.

Regarding Person-Organization, we clearly see the importance of having well defined core values that permeate the operations of the club, but the critical factor in implementing the core values into the club is having behaviors attached to the core values. These behaviors should affect how coaches and players act during practice and games, but also be related to how the club runs the rest of their operation. The results have shown that core values are clearly shown in recruitment, planning of training, goalsetting, the view of the coaches and education. Clear and well-defined core values can also be related to a red thread in the club which facilitates cooperation and transitions between teams and create a feeling of togetherness in the club. In the cases where we have found the most successful work with core values, we have also found a pride within the coaches over their club. The core values become a way of separating the own club from the other clubs.

The core values also affect how the clubs choose to organize themselves. That they find the core values to be important is shown in the fact that all clubs have recruited one or several

people to continuously work with developing the club. These people are not related to a specific team within the club but instead work across the entire club.

Within Managerial Treatment we can see that the clubs highly value different types of training programs to develop their volunteer coaches. The clubs train their coaches in areas that the club find to be crucial or important for the coaches, but the coaches are also given the opportunity to affect their own education based on their interest or perceived needs. The clubs are thorough in showing appreciation to their coaches through different forms of rewards and social gatherings.

We also identified that the clubs work in different ways to motivate their coaches. We could not relate this category to a certain part of the model but instead found it to be present in all parts of the clubs work in retaining coaches. The fact that motivation is instrumental to the intention of the coach to continue coaching is somehow imbedded in the definition of the word.

Further research

When we identified motivation as a permeating category, the question of whether motivation could be created in the same way as empowerment was brought to light, meaning that clubs who work with the three parts of the model both achieve a sense of empowerment and motivation in their coaches. This is outside our research purpose but would be interesting to research further.

It would also be interesting to use the model and our research questions in other perspectives. We have solely departed from the respondents' point of view and the responses they have given us in the interviews. Future research could investigate whether our answers ring true with the actual practice in the clubs and how the coaches perceive their situation.

We have chosen to research what we defined as successful clubs, but our thesis says nothing about causality. Does our result show the reason the clubs have reached success or are there other essential factors behind their success that we have not noticed? This is also something that we find needs more research, from different perspectives.

We have a desire to generalize our results, but as the research gap is large in Swedish contexts, more research would have to be conducted before any generalizing would be possible. Since we see the lack of volunteer coaches as something that could have big consequences on sports in Sweden, we would like to see that our thesis could be used as a step towards researching how this trend could be turned around.

Implications

Based on our findings we conclude that our thesis can lead to an increased understanding among Swedish clubs in team sports as to how they can work and organize to increase retention of volunteer coaches. We further conclude that it can affect their practice in this regard. We find that having well-defined core values that affect how the club and its members behave and act can benefit clubs in team sports regarding retention of volunteer coaches.

We also want our work to increase the understanding of club development. All clubs do not have the opportunity to employ club developers. Our findings show that all clubs have the possibility of rallying volunteer workforces to collectively work with this particularly important task. We conclude that if more people pull in the same direction within the clubs, they have a

better chance of retaining volunteer coaches and thus create opportunities for stable development.

When we anonymized our respondents, we can also see that clubs in different sports work with similar problems and that the successful clubs point to similar solutions, independent of the sport specific context. Therefore, we would like to see that different sports in the future can work more across the boundaries of their specific sport. In which forum this would take place we leave for the future to decide.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Questionnaire
Ramfrågor
Vilken roll har du i föreningen?
Kan du beskriva er ungdomsverksamhet?
Hur många aktiva per ideell ledare har ni i era grupper?

Hur rekryterar ni ideella tränare till er ungdomsverksamhet?

Är det lika lätt/svårt att rekrytera till olika åldersgrupper?

P-T

Hur ser era arbetsbeskrivningar/kravprofiler för ideella coacher ut?

Hur gör ni för att säkerhetsställa att coacher har rätt kompetens för sin roll?

Hur lär ni upp ni era ideella coacher?

P-O

Hur säkerställer ni att de ideella coacherna och föreningen delar värdegrund

Hur kommunicerar ni dessa värdegrunder till träning?

På vilket sätt är dessa värdegrunder närvarande på träning/match?

Hur ser er struktur med rollfördelning inom ungdomslagen ut? Vem bestämmer vem som är ass/huvudtränare till exempel? Volontären själv, föreningen eller inom laget?

MT

Vad gör ni för att behålla de ledarna som ni har?

Hur ser er kommunikation mellan organisation och ledare ut? Finns det någon röd tråd i värdegrund och arbetssätt?

Får ideella coacher någon belöning?

Beskriv hur ni arbetar med målsättningar för ideella coacher

EMPOWERMENT

Hur mycket självbestämmande har varje ledare i sin roll? Hur stort inflytande har coacherna på sin praktik?

Vilken påverkan skulle du säga att ledarna har på klubben? Vad får de bestämma/påverka gällande roller/värderingar osv?

Sammanfatta hur ni gör för att coacherna ska känna att de är en del av föreningen och inte bara en del av sitt lag.

Hur skulle du sammanfatta vad ni gör för att få ledarna att känna sig viktiga?

Sammanfatta vad ni gör för att få coachers att känna sig kompetenta