

parkrun participation, impact and perceived social inclusion among runners/walkers and volunteers with mental health conditions.

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Abstract: Engagement in recreation can positively impact the physical and mental health of those experiencing mental health challenges; however, the impact of engaging in other aspects of such recreation, such as volunteering, remain largely unexplored in this population. Volunteering is known to have a wealth of health and wellbeing benefits among the general population; therefore, the impact of recreational-based volunteering for those with mental health conditions deserves to be explored. The current study sought to examine the health, social and wellbeing impacts of parkrun engagement among runners and volunteers living with a mental health condition. Participants with a mental health condition ($N = 1661$, $M(SD)_{age} = 43.4 (12.8)$ years, 66% female) completed self-reported questionnaires. A MANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in health and wellbeing impacts between those who run/walk vs. those who run/walk and volunteer, while chi-square analyses examined variables of perceived social inclusion. Findings suggest that there was a statistically significant multivariate effect of participation type on perceived *parkrun* impact ($F(10, 1470) = 7.13$; $p < 0.001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.954$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.046$). It was also found that for those who run/walk and volunteer, compared to those who only run/walk, *parkrun* made them more feel part of a community (56% v 29% respectively, $X^2(1) = 116.70$, $p < 0.001$) and facilitated them meeting new people (60% v 24% respectively, $X^2(1) = 206.67$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that the health, wellbeing, and social inclusion benefits of parkrun participation are different for those who run and volunteer, compared to those who only run. These findings may have public health implications and clinical implications for mental health treatment, as they convey that it is not simply the physical engagement in recreation that may play a role in one's recovery, but also the volunteer aspect.

Keywords: physical activity, sport, community-based programming, volunteering, mental health, recovery, recreation, leisure

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