

# Understanding Crowd Management in Sports Events: A Preliminary Study

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## Abstract

Sport tourism events have increased in popularity due to their unique characteristics, and therefore it needs effective and successful planning because they would increase the total crowd size. However, a peaceful event could devolve into a disaster if effective crowd management is not implemented, and the failure in crowd management only exposes the attendees to high risk and accidents. Thus, a compelling crowd management belief is crucial for the safety and enjoyment of the people visiting the event. In relating to this concern, this preliminary study aims to understand crowd management strategy in sports events, specifically regarding the factors that lead to the crowd in sports events, crowd impacts on sports events, and crowd management strategies used by the event organizer. This study adopted a qualitative research method that focuses on semi-structured interviews with two event managers who have more than five years of experience in crowd management of sports events by using this sampling technique. This study found that management and attractions as the two primary factors that led to the crowd in the sports events. The crowd also had both positive and negative impacts on the sports events. Besides, forecasting and enhancing the job skills among the event organisers are the strategies that can be adopted in managing the crowd. The findings of this study are significant to be used as a guide for other event organisers or spectators at sporting events who aim to minimise risk and crowding at the event venue.

## Keywords:

Sports Events; Crowd Management; Malaysia

## 1 Introduction

The increased popularity and perceived benefits of attending sports events have resulted in more people attending such events. The commonly perceived benefits of sports events were to improve physical fitness and mental well-being, form social relationships, and win in sports competitions (Ramchandani et al., 2017). Sports events became popular not limited to personal benefits as they also benefited the food industry, building, carpentry, furniture, medical, transportation, and handicraft industry (Bjelac & Radovanovic, 2003).

From a tourism perspective, sports events were powerful in attracting people to visit the destination (Wafi et al., 2017), internationally well known (Liu, 2015). Sports events were attended by spectators, participants, volunteers, athletes, coaches, supporters, and tourists who come from all over the world, depending on the popularity of the sports events. At the sports tourism event, crowd management is a significant concern for the organizers of the event. The gathering of these people leads to a bigger crowd at the event site. Most large gatherings are typically dispersed peacefully, but it does have the potential for disorder, antisocial behavior as well as violence (Kingshott, 2014). This is in line with Berlonghi (1995), as he regarded the crowd as many persons gathered closely together, making safety and crowd management a vital part of every event, including sports events.

A peaceful event could devolve into a disaster if effective crowd management is not implemented (Martella et al., 2016). The failure in crowd management only exposes the attendees to high risk and accidents such as violence (Kingshott, 2014), crowd rusher, heat exhaustion, stage collapsing and overcrowding (Rahmat et al., 2011). It also may lead to losses of life, health, property and money (Berlonghi, 1995). Thus, instead of controlling the people, a compelling crowd management belief is crucial for the safety and enjoyment of the people visiting the event. The biggest concern in crowd management is to effectively move the crowd (Williams, 2013) and decrease the likelihood of a harmful incident so that it can facilitate the movement and maximize the enjoyment of people (Berlonghi, 1995).

Stadiums, arenas, and other places worldwide lead to thousands of injuries and deaths every year. Hence, it is necessary to ensure every aspect of the event must be well-managed, including the venue and through the event itself. As an event organizer, trying to protect the attendees from the unforeseen risk of harm from other individuals or the actual facility itself could be necessary. Major crowd management strategies include critical scheduling areas such as safety, security, emergency exits, seating arrangements, and facilities maintenance. Therefore, this research aimed to understand the crowd management in sports events, specifically on the factors that lead to the crowd in sports events, crowd impacts towards sports events and crowd management strategies used by the event organizer.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Sports Events in Malaysia

Generally, sports events are commonly hosted on their own which involve the phenomenon of fan zones. Fan zones are popular during sporting events, where spectators can gather and watch a live match on large television displays (Gammon, 2020). However, the sports events are also hosted to be part of another more significant event, and the size of sports events could be a mega-size and small scale of events depending on the nature and criteria of the events. Regarding crowd management, Yusof et al. (2009) stated that the crowd for small-scale events has proven more manageable than mega sports events. According to Bjelac and Radovanovic (2003), sports events also can be categorized based on three criteria. The first criterion is the importance of local, regional-zonal, national, continental-interzonal, and global (planetary). The second criterion is the number of places the event is held (all in one place or in several areas simultaneously). The third criterion is according to their character (sports-recreational, complex sports-touristic, sports events of professional competitive character, and sports events attached to other events).

Besides business events, Mapjabil et al. (2015) agreed that sports events have significantly contributed to the economy, particularly in Malaysia. Events play a vital part in the economic planning and tourist development of many regions and cities (Agha and Task, 2015; Gratton, Dobson and Shibli, 2000). Diederling and Kwiatkowski (2015) added that hosting a major sports event is still promoted as being extremely positive since it is said to create new jobs, flush millions of dollars into the community's empty coffers, and strengthen the economy of the economy host region. In Malaysia, the sports events development has been aided by world-class sports event infrastructures and facilities, and this made sports events regarded as the catalyst for tourism attraction due to its capability to boost the visitors to the country.

Therefore, many international sports events were taken place. These global events include Royal Langkawi International Regatta, Ironman Triathlon, Formula 1 Grand Prix Malaysia, FEI Showjumping World Cup, Petronas Primax 3 Merdeka Millennium Endurance Race, Super GT, Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix, A1GP Malaysia, and Monsoon Cup. Mapjabil et al. (2015) recognized the contribution of these sports events to society and the economy. However, sporting events have become one of the highest risks compared to other events. As stated by Ramchandani et al. (2017), apart from the crowd, most sports events will involve heightened risk due to their nature, related to various physical activities involving casual or organized participation injuries. Additionally, sports venue security is an important component that is associated with high risk and crowd management (Menaker et al., 2020). Therefore, the organizer should carefully choose an event venue for sports events so that it will help to accommodate huge gatherings and minimize the risk from the crowd.

## 2.2 The Crowd and Its Triggering factors

According to Challenger et al. (2010), there is no single or detailed definition of a crowd. However, Wyld (1957) defines a crowd as the large assembly of people in insufficient space that produces a sense of mass where they casually gathered without organized discipline or order. There are a few criteria are being used in discussing a crowd. The first criterion is the size that represents a sizeable gathering of people. The second criterion is the density which refers to individuals coming together in a specific venue with a particular purpose, and they should be co-located in a specified region with a proper density distribution. The third criterion is collectivity, which remarks that the crowd members should share a common social identity, interests, and goals and act coherently. The fourth criterion is the novelty that exhibits despite coming together in unusual and ambiguous situations, individuals should work in a socially coherent manner.

In recent years, event studies particularly sports events have grown in importance as a field of study, relying on various fundamental disciplines to form an interdisciplinary field of study that identifies distinct types of sporting events and distinguishes them based on certain characteristics (Getz and Page, 2020; Bazzanella et al., 2021). In event planning, proper crowd management is believed as provides a safe event as well as an enjoyment session. However, the organizer also needs to understand the factors that trigger the crowd from manageable to unmanageable. Understanding these factors might help the organizer identify the prevention measure before something terrible happens in the event. By referring to Berlonghi (1995), nine categories of factors might trigger the crowd. Table 1 lists these factors.

Table 1: Factors That May Trigger Crowd

Category	Description
Operational circumstances	Lack of parking, no-show of performers, cancellations, sold-out event.
Event activities	Special effects (smoke, lasers, fireworks), music, loud noises, video replays.
Performer's actions	Sexual and violent gestures or comments, dare-devil or macho challenges, performer invitations.
Spectator factors	Consuming alcohol, rushing for seating, overnight waiting, crowd cheering, crowd activities (the wave, playing with inflated balls), throwing objects
Security or police factors	Use of excessive or unreasonable force, altercations or arguments with spectators, provocations, abuse of authority.
Social factors	Racial tension, nationalism, long-standing rivalries, gang activities, rioting.

Weather factors	Heat, humidity, rain or hail, lack of ventilation.
Natural disasters	Earthquakes, tornadoes, avalanches, floods.
Man-made disasters	Toxic chemicals, structural failures.

Source: Berlonghi (1995)

### 2.3 Crowd Management in Sport Event

Martella et al. (2016), Williams (2013) and Rahmat et al. (2011) refer to crowd management as a technique to manage people involving seating arrangements, crowd behaviour, demographical criteria of the people involved, emphasizing collaborative effort between people involved and as well as the duration of the event. The objective of crowd management is likewise a safety concern and demands specific attention, which necessitates careful observation by the event organizer. An event manager must develop hard and soft tools that help monitor and control the individual's movement and behaviour within the crowd. Two types of crowd control can be adopted, which are soft crowd control and hard crowd control. Soft crowd control is one of the types of crowd control that reduces the ability or effectiveness of the target's actions but does not entirely prevent them from doing them. On the other hand, hard crowd control is a type of crowd control that completely prevents the target from taking specific actions, like moving or casting abilities.

According to Fruin (1993), crowd management and crowd control are synergistic instead of being incompatible. Crowd management focuses more on practical strategies and systematic planning of movement and assembly, while crowd control focuses more on reactive strategies and restriction and the constraint of action. Both crowd management and crowd control are influenced by time, space, information, and energy. Crowd management and control are becoming significant issues in the event industry due to this massive increase in sports events or outdoor events. Crowd management is never can be missed in the event planning process. Small mistakes in planning would change a great return into a total loss in sports events (Mapjabil et al., 2015). A study found that crowd management in sports tourism events has increased in popularity due to their unique characteristics, and therefore, it needs particularly successful planning because it will also increase the average crowd numbers. Improper crowd management also can quickly turn a peaceful event into tragedy (Martella et al., 2016). Bjelac and Radovanovic (2003) also agreed that port events require good crowd management practices because of their special characteristics.

In the context of crowd management, the spread of non-compliant behaviour can have a severe impact on crowd safety if safety rules are not visibly enforced or crowd control is not maintained. For example, others may follow suit if the response from those controlling the crowd is slow, weak, or non-existent. The uncontrolled crowd flow may lead to overcrowding and other related hazards. In the early stages of an emergency, crowd behaviour can be influenced by individuals who appear to be experts

or know what to do. An individual or group of people taking decisive action such as leaving a nearby exit and outwardly dismissing a warning as a false alarm) can trigger a widespread response among the crowd. The team members of staff might be allocated to evacuate a venue or another area.

As early as 1995, Berlonghi has discussed eleven elements when the organizer intends to implement crowd management. They are the size of the crowd, crowd capacity, demographics of the crowd, and location of the event, day and time of operations, schedule of event activities, weather conditions, seating arrangements, and crowd movement patterns, the density of crowd in various locations as well as specific operations such as transportation, parking, ticket selling and admission control. Other than that, Martella et al. (2016) and also opined crowd management should include thorough planning and preparation, effective communication with the whole crowd (audio and visual), coordinating and collaborative effort between all agencies involved, led by skillful and experienced personnel in crowd management, as well as leadership and guidance to initiate crowd management emergencies.

Besides, Williams (2013) also recommended two significant steps in strategizing crowd management. These steps include early and often pre-planning meetings with all stakeholders and performing risk-hazards analysis of the event venues. Risk-hazards analysis should consist of unique and contingency plans according to the types of events. The event organizer who intends to manage the crowd also needs to be aware of the individual's diversity and complexity. Kingshott (2014) mentioned that each individual possesses different attitudes, social, racial, religious, cultural composition, and various psychological dimensions.

### **3 Methodology**

Aside from the other organizing skills, one of the most crucial aspects for event managers to consider is crowd management (Bjelac & Radovanovic, 2003; Rahmat et al., 2011). Thus, this study conducts a preliminary study to understand crowd management strategy in sports events. A preliminary study is a generic test of measurements from a specific instrument used to determine whether the study is viable. Smith (2019) mentioned that convenience sampling with a smaller sample size is appropriate for a preliminary study. According to Patton and Cochran (2002), convenience sampling selects the easiest, closest, and available respondents to provide the needed data. This study approached and interviewed two event managers who have more than five years of experience in crowd management of sports events by using this sampling technique. Previously, Abdul Majid et al. (2017) also carried out a small-scale preliminary study with two respondents in their qualitative research to practice interviewing skills and provide suggestions and modifications to the research. Mohajan (2018), Chiaro (2016) and Patton and Cochran (2002) also stated small samples, a limited number of respondents and limited resources are usually conducted in preliminary qualitative research. Therefore, two respondents are acceptable in this study.

Interviews are very effective for learning more about the respondents' experiences, and they can be used as a follow-up to specific questionnaire respondents to delve deeper into their responses. Accordingly, the interviewer gets the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the issue (McNamara, 1999). Furthermore, it aided the researcher in gaining expertise in conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews and establishing a good rapport with the informants (Abdul Majid et al., 2017). The respondents were selected on their willingness to participate in the data collection. To establish an adequate research sample, the selected respondents need to have a full spectrum of experiences, various fields, diverse professional figures and the ability to give further insights into the cognitive response process (Bazzanella, et al., 2021; Silber et al., 2021). As the purpose of this preliminary research was to see if the questions were appropriate and to give the researcher some early feedback on the research's potential, therefore two respondents are appropriate. Above all, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) stated that researchers can use a small sample size as long as they have fruitful data collection with respondents and are able to address the research problem in depth through theoretical contemplation. This is supported Table 2 shows the respondents' profiles

Table 2: Respondents' Profiles

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>
Respondent 1	35 years old	Male	Bachelor Degree
Respondent 2	38 years old	Female	Bachelor Degree

The data of this study were transcribed manually and the researcher also used thematic analysis in analysing the qualitative findings. Braun and Clarke (2013) stated thematic analysis is a data analysis method that aids a researcher in identifying themes and patterns of meanings across a dataset related to a specific research issue. He added that a study can capture the complicated, messy and contradictory interactions in the real world using this data analysis technique. This study is also considered a phenomenological study as it helps explore the respondents' experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019) within the crowd in sports events management context.

#### **4 Results and Discussion**

In understanding crowd management strategy in sports events, this preliminary study seeks the respondents' feedback regarding the factors that lead to the crowd in sports events, crowd impacts towards sports events, and crowd management strategies used by the event organizer. The following subsections present and discuss these three elements and their themes.

#### 4.1 Factors that Led to Crowd in Sports Events

People exhibit an unusual variety of events and behaviours when they are in a crowd. Many people act in crowds in ways they would not work on their own, and this mentality can lead to hazardous situations if it is not kept in check by crowd management experts. Therefore, it is essential to identify factors that can lead the crowd, particularly in sports events, to avoid major injuries. As illustrated in Figure 1, this study found two main themes emerged from the respondents' feedback. Both management and attractions led to crowds in sports events.

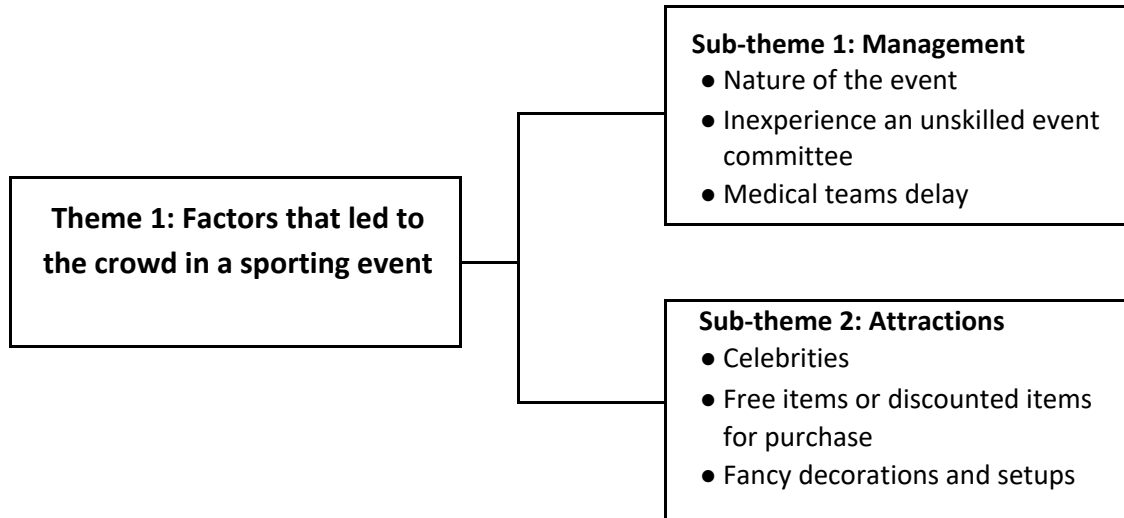


Figure 1: Factors that led to crowds in sports events

##### Sub-theme 1: Management

Boyer et al. (2007, p. 280) defined a sports event as a social gathering that brings together many people and activities on the occasion of a competition. Thus, the nature of a sporting event itself requires people to assemble physically to celebrate the victory in the spacetime continuum (Merriam Webster, 2021). One respondent agreed that managing the crowd needs experience and a well-trained committee in facing the nature of sports events. He stated that:

*“Big events such as sporting events can contribute to a large crowd. Incidents such as traffic accidents and congestion may arise if an experienced event organizer does not adequately manage this gathering. In sporting events, the way an organization conducts events is also a component that contributes to crowds and chaos. Sometimes, the organizer himself does not learn from the mistakes of past or previous events and causes them to repeat the mistake in future events. As an event organizers, we need to strengthen our skills in dealing with crowd issues, especially in sporting events involving many attendees.”*

Earlier, Laura (2015) reported that hundreds of sports events occur outside the regular sports competitions each year and contributed to many jobs employment as



well as economic. Examples of these outdoor sports events are marathons, baseball leagues, basketball games, rugby, and football. Therefore, safety is needed, especially when the players need to deal with injuries. One of the respondents in this study indicates that the delayed time from the medical team to address players' injuries may result in a rowdy crowd. She narrates that:

*"I have also dealt with a huge crowd where something unexpected happened to our team and resulted in an accident involving a marathon runner. The crash occurred when other runners tried to help, and the medical team also took a long time to get to the scene and causing a bad crowd. However, the crowd managed to overcome and control with the safety team."*

### **Sub-theme 2: Attractions**

Generally, international sports events need to upgrade the event environment up to the international standard with many attractions to increase spectators' enthusiasm and excitement. Due to the pandemic Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) where the event industry was closed down and now started to re-develop, more attractions in events are needed to raise appetite and excitement in an event (OECD, 2020). However, attractions provided during the event may cause a crowd. For instance, celebrities, free items or discounted items for purchase, and fancy decorations and setups may increase people's attention, leading to the crowd. Both respondents reported that:

*"There are some reasons and factors that lead to the crowd such a lot of fancy decorations and setups at the event venue itself that attract the attendees to get together to have taken a closer look. Celebrities are also one of the attractions for an event. For sports events, when the organizer invited celebrities' fitness such as Kevin Zahri, it will also lead to the crowd, especially during the opening."*

*"Sometimes when an event offers free drinks and snacks, this can also lead to crowds. We also know that Malaysians love free things, so they will attack the kiosk with free food and drinks. Other than that, the sporting event usually sells some fitness merchandise such as a t-shirt, water bottles, books, skipping ropes, etc. This also allows crowd as selling merchandise at sporting events usually are the limited edition."*

The results of this study relate to the findings of Al-Shaery and Khozium (2018) where the crowd is a phenomenon that describes a large group of people with similar interests, such as large concerts or sporting events or casual crowds. If this crowd has not been correctly handled, incidents such as traffic accidents and congestion may occur. Although crowd management is defined as structured planning and monitoring of organized people's movement, it involves assessing people who manage the capabilities of the pre-use space. Most of the crowd incidents that have arisen since then could have been prevented by using basic crowd management strategies, where

the primary purpose of crowd management is to reduce high crowd volume and massive group movements. Hence, the event management teams need further look at this matter by providing experienced and well-trained staff.

## 4.2 Crowd Impacts Towards Sport Events

Normally, the behaviour of individuals in a crowd can be influenced by the things they see others doing. Individuals within a crowd may carry out actions that they would not perform if they were on their own. For example, the frustration of excessive crowding, queuing, or delays may result in climbing barriers, leading to overcrowding in another area. People's emotions such as excitement, desperation, aggression and hysteria may affect their behaviour (Health and Safety Executive, 2000). People who are eager to gain entry may surge towards the doors when they are opened. Other than that, those who are not satisfied with the quality of a performance or outcome of a sporting fixture may become aggressive, offensive and uncooperative. As illustrated in Figure 2, the results of this study found crowds can affect sports events in both positive and negative ways.

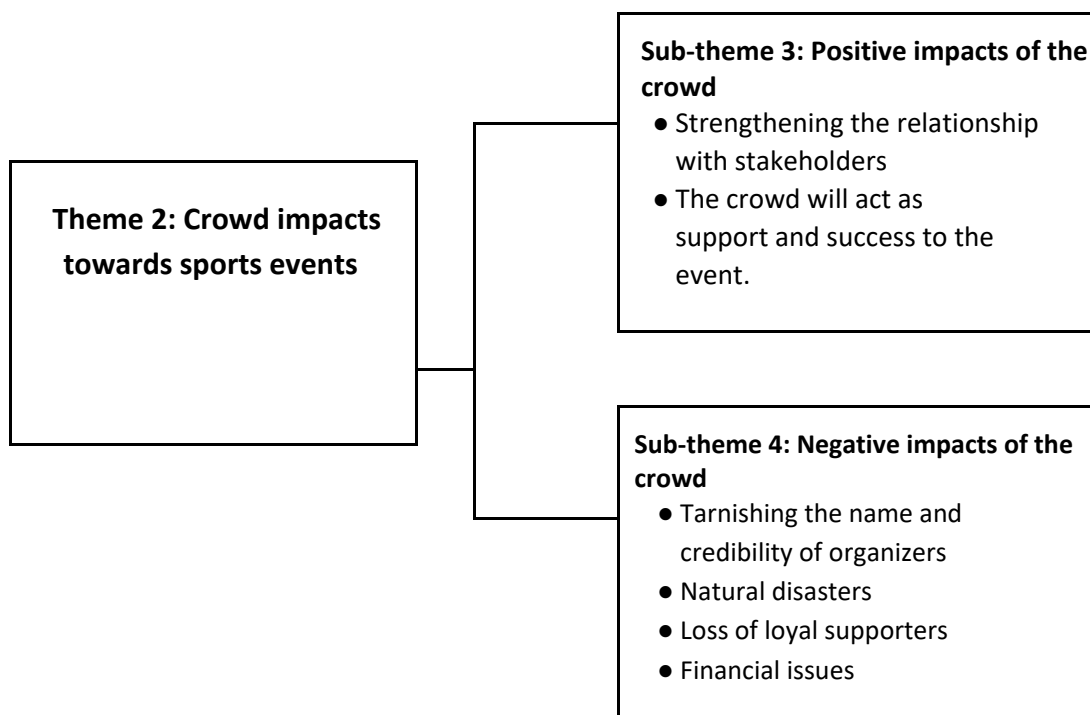


Figure 2: Crowd Impacts Towards Sports Events

### Sub-theme 3: Positive Impacts of the Crowd

Sport events that can sustain their attractiveness will immediately attract crowds were the significant number of crowds becoming an indicator of a successful event. Before the benefit, the nature of local people who always support local events leads to the success of the events, hence increasing the number of crowds. The crowd somehow will have positive impacts, which will assist in strengthening the relationship with

various stakeholders such as the local community, sponsors and others. Respondents stated that:

*“It is important to have a crowd because it is one of the ways for people to get in touch with the community and broaden the network while strengthening the brotherhood and solidarity.”*

*“I think one of the signs of a successful event is the crowd because it shows how the community supports the event. When the crowd happens, it means we have success in our marketing.”*

Apart from the aforementioned advantages of having a crowd, proper crowd management is critical for assuring the safety of individuals who attend the event. When an event is taking place, everyone in the event venue should be able to enjoy themselves without worrying the safety (Show and Events Security Group, 2021). Few strategies for managing the crowd have been discussed in Theme 3.

#### **Sub-theme 4: Negative Impacts of the Crowd**

Both respondents agreed that the crowd is essential for an event. However, the event organizers need to be fully aware of crowd management, especially in a sporting event. A sporting event can elicit enthusiasm, enjoyment and excitement, but it can also have negative consequences if the organizer fails to properly manage the crowd. Bad management of the crowd will tarnish the good name and credibility of the event organizer, loss of loyal supporters and financial issues.

*“When there is a crowd, it definitely will cause harm either to the attendees or the management itself. One of the biggest impacts for me is that if the event organizer fails to handle this crowd, this is also one of the common factors of inappropriate space utilization. It will result in tarnishing the name and credibility of the organizers. We organize an event to show you what product or service our company provides. So when this crowding problem arises, it will certainly damage the reputation of the organization as it will be the mouthpiece of the people.”*

*“Crowd has its advantages. However, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. When this happens, it not only affects the event, but it may also affect the future event. Maybe we will lose our loyal supporters, and our income will also decline due to the lack of support from our loyal visitors who have given us this bad impression. Even worse, we, as event organizers, may also be fined by the authorities. This is because we failed to manage the crowd and may also cause a worse crowd disaster if we continue to take this for granted.”*

The situation is aggravated and very dangerous when crowd movement occurs in a size-restricted area such as a walkway, staircase, corridor, and doorway. This phenomenon occurs when large numbers of people move hurriedly and uncontrollably (Fruin, 1993). Additionally, crowd events can be dangerous conditions in the current endemic COVID-19 situation, as people must live with the disease while still adhering to social distancing when attending an event. Active participation from the attendees may prefer to be physically close to one another and may have a reduced awareness of health risks (Templeton, 2021).

### 4.3 Crowd Management Strategies used by the Event Organizer

As events grow in its size, new risks emerge, and the crowd's emotions can be unpredictable and extremely dangerous. It is crucial for event organizers to properly equip venues to regulate crowd movement and plan for and simulate an emergency evacuation. For instance, if a crowd is particularly harsh, others may push the atmosphere and energy, and violence can soon follow (Branscombe, 1992). There have been all too many stories about eager and impatient crowds pushing to get closer to the stage and creating a crush that leads to people dying in horrible circumstances, and to prevent this, a clear crowd management strategy needs to be in place. Crowd management is used to ensure that a large gathering of people is controlled, orderly and problem-free. Therefore, Figure 3 illustrates the crowd management strategies that can be implemented in a sporting event.

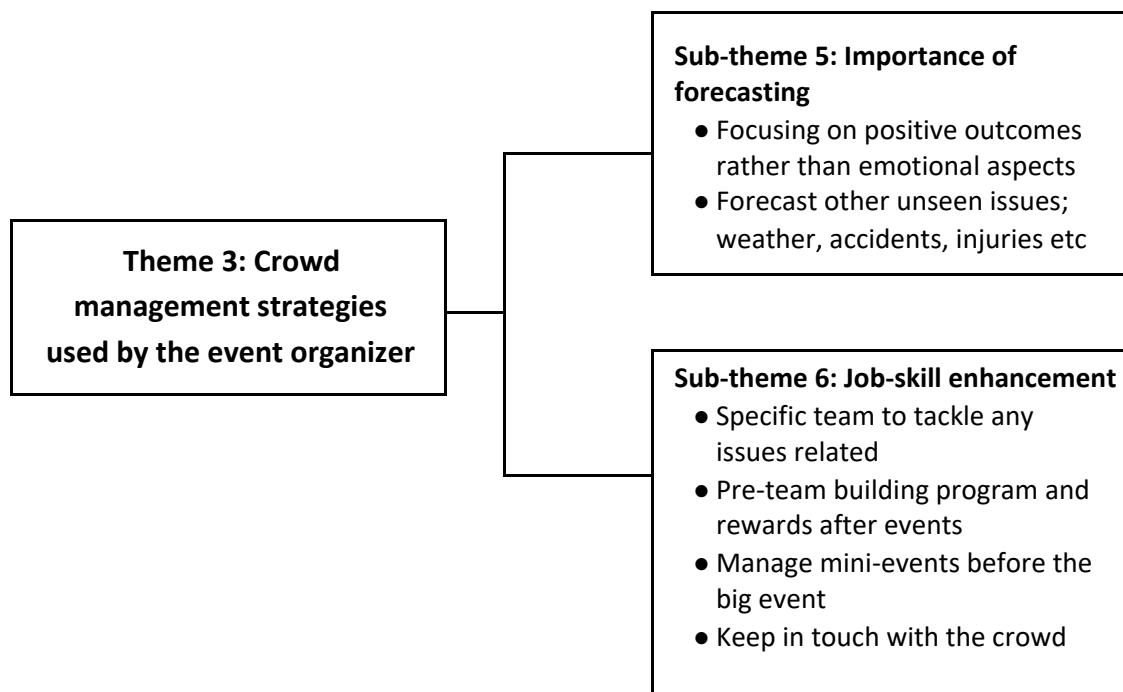


Figure 3: Crowd Management Strategies in Sport Events

#### Sub-theme 5: Importance of Forecasting

As an event organizer, it is crucial to identify possible hazards that could harm people attending or involved in that particular event.

*“I have been in the event industry for almost seven years and have to face some experience during handling crowd disasters, especially in this sports event. As a professional event organizer, my team and I usually focus on positive outcomes rather than being emotional.”*

Martella et al. (2016) mentioned that the event organizers should have preparation activities before the event. The activities include detailed potential risk analyses, the development of comprehensive “what-if” scenarios, the formation of the control point to coordinate all personnel and activities for the event, and the establishment of crowd management strategies and contingency plans. Thus, once the decision to proceed with an event is made, it will start by holding regular event planning meetings, bringing together all the main interested parties. It is essential to have pre-meetings and what has been agreed upon between various parties needs to be documented to avoid unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding. This can be related to feedback from one of the respondents, who stated that forecasting possible risks and crowds in an event is essential. She narrates that:

*“Before the event, we will have various meetings with the head of committees to discuss what issues may arise in our marathon event. We will discuss how to resolve the problem if it does. So, we will prepare a forecast for unseen issues such as weather, accidents, injuries, fire and others. We will prepare crowd management strategies and contingency plans. After that, we will assign our safety team to check road traffic and any obstacles that may harm the participants at the event venue. This is to ensure that everything on the road is safe for the participants and spectators on the day of the sporting event. It might have gotten worse if we overlooked the safety issues of the participants.”*

#### **Sub-theme 6: Job-skill enhancement**

Variation in crowd behaviour means there is often more than one way to tackle a particular hazard. For example, to ensure an early and effective response in an evacuation, where panic may be a feature, measures might be taken to improve the quality and clarity of information broadcasted over the public address system and displayed through the use of signs. Such measures would enhance the role of staff in directing or leading people out of the venue and aid the staff in maintaining as much calm as possible. This is in line with what respondents said about the importance of a team member or staff to have skill and knowledge in handling crowd management:

*“In every event we handle, we will assign a specific team to tackle any issues related. It includes the safety team to control the crowd and any emergency incident that occurred in our event. When planning a sports event, we should reinforce our team, especially the management team responsible for the event.”*

*Sometimes, due to the slow response from the management, this can also lead to a crowd disaster. Every team needs to be alert to what is happening around them as they are trained to handle emergencies, especially when handling high-risk and vulnerable events. That is why I say that the skill of handling an event is essential because it cannot be successful without the cooperation of all parties, including organizers and attendees."*

*"Everyone who joins our team will go through the pre-team building program for them to sharpen their skills in managing events. This is also one of the strategies that we use for our event, and it is an investment that I can say is very worth it to us as our team has become a stronger team by using all the knowledge and experience that we have in dealing with the issue of crowds at sports events. After the event, we also reward our team for them as a motivation and encourage them to give their best in our event."*

Sports events are organizational challenges characterized by time constraints, complexity, and a predetermined life cycle from start to finish (Parent and Ruetsch 2021). This is supported by the respondent's statement that the company provides basic training to their employees, including small-scale event planning before they are empowered to plan large-scale events.

*"Before we organize a big event, we must manage to organize a mini-event for us to find out how sports events work. By organizing this mini-event, it will help the organizer to anticipate how many attendees to attend and join our real big event in the future"*

He also agreed that people or attendees are more likely to be in a relaxed and contented frame of mind if they are effectively managed, and the venue is comfortable and pleasant, with adequate facilities, such as toilets, food, drink, and clear information points. Therefore, information must be effectively communicated to the staff to avoid confusion or causes for complaints. He said that:

*"However, we as an event organizers for this event usually always keep in touch with the crowd and assist them in calming down and taking the right action before the chaos happens. We will guide the participants and the attendees and ask them to queue first and take their turn during the registration session. After they queue up, we will entertain them one by one, and we also manage to prevent the big crowd and chaos so that in the end, everything is under control."*

Based on the interview, the researcher concludes that respondents' feedback is in line with Leopkey and Parent (2009) research. It points out that risk or crowd management is a process involving the evaluation of all possible risks to the event and its participants and the tactical mitigation, prevention, reduction, distribution, reallocation, legalization, or use of relationship management to reduce defined risks. The ultimate purpose, indeed, is to avoid the risk of the crowd becoming a disaster. The

organizer of the event has a range of areas of responsibility when organizing the event. One of the most crucial issues is to provide a secure environment for volunteers, participants, staff, and other stakeholders. This includes protecting the resources of the organization's facilities and other agencies attending the event and executing the policies and procedures of the system reasonably.

## 5 Conclusion

Overall, this preliminary study explored more understanding of the crowd management strategy in sports events, specifically on the factors that lead to the crowd in sports events, crowd impacts towards sports events and crowd management strategies used by the event organizer. This study found that the management (such as the nature of the event, inexperience an unskilled event committee and the medical teams delay) and attractions (such as celebrities, free items or discounted items for purchase and fancy decorations and setups) as the two primary factors that led to the crowd in the sports events. The crowd also had both positive and negative impacts on the sports events. The positive impacts are strengthening the relationship with stakeholders, and the crowd will act as support and success to the event. Meanwhile, the negative impacts are tarnishing the name and credibility of organizers, natural disasters, loss of loyal supporters and financial issues.

The skills of forecasting and enhancing the job skills among the event organizers are among the strategies that can be adopted in managing the crowd. For example, forecasting can be implemented by focusing on positive outcomes rather than emotional aspects besides forecasting unseen issues such as weather, accidents, injuries, etc. Accordingly, enhancing the job skills among the event organizers can be done by having a specific team to tackle any related issues, pre-team building program and rewards after events, practicing managing mini-events before the big event and keeping in touch with the crowd. These strategies to manage the crowd are important to ensure the event runs smoothly and everyone who attended the event can enjoy themselves without worrying about their safety.

Above all, the findings of this study can be used as a guide for other event organisers or spectators at sporting events who want to reduce risk and crowding at the event venue. This preliminary study assisted the researcher in selecting qualified respondents for the research as only experienced respondents know what they are precisely doing in crowd management. For research implications, further case studies in specific types and sizes of sports events could be conducted to look more closely at how the organisers handle their crowds, as it may require different crowd management approaches. Challenger et al. (2010) also agreed that more research is needed to understand crowd management using different crowds and the features and behaviours they are likely to exhibit. Despite the mentioned values of this study, further research in understanding crowd management is necessary. As stated in this paper, society may comprehend the

roles of a crowd and how to deal with them when participating and involving themselves in any sports event. Eventually, all stakeholders will be able to grasp and understand crowd management, which will aid in the efficient running of sporting events.

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