Organizational Justice as a Predictor of Overall Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment: A Study Distinguishing Organizational Justice Components

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The structure of intercollegiate athletic departments offers unique challenges to colleges and universities. While the average Division I institution sponsored 17 teams in the academic year 2006-07 (eight men’s and nine women’s) (NCAA, 2008a), only three of these sports actually produced a profit (football, men’s basketball and men’s ice hockey) (EADA, 2008). These statistics clearly indicate a setting where the revenue potential of only a few sports finance the majority of the organization. This dynamic within athletic departments, combined with the increased expenses and shifts in sponsored sports, has likely produced different perceptions of organizational justice among revenue and non-revenue-generating sport coaches. These justice perceptions can also affect perceptions of job satisfaction and organizational commitment leading to organizational distress in the forms of turnover, toxic work environment, and lower levels of success (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Therefore, the need to understand differences in the impact coaches’ perceptions of fairness have on organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction and organization is paramount to an athletic department decision makers’ ability to effectively support the needs of all coaches within the intercollegiate athletic department.

The construct of organizational justice has been divided into three components: (a) distributive justice – an individual's perception of fairness of resource allocations (Greenberg, 1990), (b) procedural justice – an individual's perception of fairness based upon an organization’s policies (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005), and (c) interactional justice – an individual's perception of fairness based upon the interpersonal communications within the organization (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). The literature on organizational justice has primarily focused on the procedural and distributive justice components. Research on interactional justice has not experienced the same attention mainly due to the debate over interactional justice’s place within the organizational justice structure. One argument says interactional justice is a sub-component of procedural justice, stating the development and implementation of organizational procedures is dependent upon individual interactions (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; McFarling & Sweeney, 1997). The counter argument claims interactional justice to be a distinct and unique component of organizational justice (Bies & Moag, 1986; Moorman, 1991).

Research on fairness perceptions in the sport setting has focused on the possible predictors of distributive justice (e.g. job title, gender, NCAA Division, NGB size) (Dittmore, Mahony, Andrew, & Hums, 2009; Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony, Hums, & Riemer, 2002, 2005; Mahony, Riemer, Breeding, & Hums, 2006; Patrick, Mahony, Petrosko, 2008). However, fairness perceptions have also been linked to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). The current literature on the relationship between perceptions of organizational justice components and perceptions of both overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment is scarce (Jordan, Turner, & DuBord, 2007; Whisenant, 2005). Further, few studies have attempted to examine differences of sport types based on revenue generation of the sport programs (Evans, 1983; Kim & Cunningham, 2005). This study examined all three organizational justice components in the intercollegiate athletics setting, with the purpose of distinguishing each component as it relates to overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment among intercollegiate sport types.

The present study examined perceptions of organizational justice, overall job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in the intercollegiate athletics setting using the following grouping variables: (a) sport type (revenue generating (men’s basketball), non-revenue-generating-stable (baseball), and non-revenue-generating-unstable(wrestling)); (b) coaching position (head and assistant), and (c) NCAA Division (I and III). Participants of the study included NCAA Division I and III head and assistant coaches from the sports of baseball, men’s basketball, and wrestling. Each participant completed a questionnaire containing items used to measure: (a) descriptive statistics, (b) perceptions of organizational justice, (c) overall job satisfaction, and (d) organizational commitment. Data was analyzed using six multiple regression analyses to assess which organizational components predicted overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment among each sport type.
Result indicated for baseball both distributive ($\beta = .298$) and interactional justice ($\beta = .362$) predicted overall job satisfaction, while only procedural justice ($\beta = .491$) predicted organizational commitment. For men’s basketball coaches, both distributive ($\beta = .510$) and interactional justice ($\beta = .281$) predicted overall job satisfaction while, only distributive justice ($\beta = .292$) predicted organizational commitment. Finally, wrestling coaches indicated both procedural ($\beta = .308$) and distributive justice ($\beta = .243$) as predictors of overall job satisfaction while, only distributive justice ($\beta = .350$) predicted organizational commitment.

The following implications surfaced for athletic department decision makers’ understanding of organizational justice perceptions as predictors of overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Male sport coaches of different sport types had different predictors of overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment, implying athletic department decision makers must be able to appeal to all three organizational justice components in increasing overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The development of a scoring or tracking system of how each organizational justice component is communicated to each individual coach is an example of a more global approach to increasing perceptions of organizational justice. Findings also support the use of interactional justice as an independent organizational component. Athletic department decision makers may be able to alter interactional justice perceptions by altering topics of conversation, using a different tone in communicating, or increasing frequency of interaction with the coaches. Each of these suggestions is cost effective and poses little risk for major organizational change, but provide opportunity for athletic department decision maker to have lasting impacts on coaches’ perceptions of fairness.