A Conceptual Framework of Positive Organizational Behavior in Sport (POBS): The Role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

Minjung Kim, Florida State University
Yukyoum Kim, Seoul National University
Amy Kim (Advisor), Florida State University

Management/leadership
Saturday, June 6, 2015
Poster
Abstract 2015-169
8:00 AM
Ballroom B-C

One of the most significant changes in a modern society is that the organizational success is heavily determined by human capital (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Traditional stream of human resource management studies have solely focused on avoiding poor performance by handling negative issues and problems based on management control and economic principles (e.g., efficiency, cost reduction). In this sense, this traditional approach tended to maintain the current status of human capital rather than developing and enhancing towards a positive way. In order to overcome the limitations of traditional approach in managing human capital, employing the lens of positive thinking is an essential key to not only maximize the strength of human capital but also improve one’s psychological well-being (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010). By applying a positive approach toward workplace, therefore, we have an opportunity to consider “the pursuit of employee happiness, mental health, and betterment issues” (Avey et al., 2010, p. 3). While a majority of research on human resource management practices has been highly concentrated on traditional approach, this study attempted to introduce a novel view of strategic management of human capital by embracing a positive approach in the context of sport management.

Many organizational and management scholars have attempted to answer the question of “How does an organization within which people are able to flourish differ from those in which they merely survive, or indeed languish?” (Lewis, 2011, p. 14) As the main perspective of positivity in the workplace, positive organizational behavior (POB) refers to “the study and application of positively-oriented capacities that can be measured, development, and effectively managed for performance improvement.” (Luthans, 2002, p. 59) In today’s “flat-world” and fast-paced environment, modern organizations are well-fitted with the perspective of POB because it provides a clue to strengthening human capital. In particular, one of the most competitive modern industries is the sport industry, and the growth of sport has driven dramatic changes in managing sporting organizations at all levels. For those reasons, the main purpose of this study is to provide a conceptual framework of POB in sport (POBS) by adopting a relatively new research area of POB into the sport organizations.

In the boundary of POB, psychological capital (PsyCap) plays a crucial role in not only the individual growth process but also performance (Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, & Hirst, 2014). Appreciating the significance of PsyCap in the context of POB, POBS includes PsyCap as a central mechanism elaborating the left (i.e., antecedents) and the right (i.e., outcomes) of PsyCap in sport organizations. Luthans and Youssef (2004) explained PsyCap as they transferred the ideas behind POB to the practice of human resource management. Four capacities have been determined as sub-constructs for PsyCap both conceptually (Luthans & Youssef, 2004) and empirically (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007) to date: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. First, in workplace, self-efficacy is about employees’ confidence to mobilize motivation, cognitive resources, and successfully execute a specific task. Second, optimism is closely related to building positive expectancy and motivating themselves to reach their personal goals. Third, hopeful employees are more likely to set realistic and challenging goals, and generate alternative paths to reach desired destinations. Lastly, resilience is ability to ‘bounce back’ from failure, uncertainty, and conflict, and go beyond that and offer more opportunities for learning and flourishing.

The conceptual model of POBS included various outcomes of PsyCap including psychological well-being, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and job performance (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008). Rather than focusing on negative outcomes (e.g., job stress), POB studies have inclined to identify factors that facilitate employees’ flourishing and wellness. Most of all, given the importance of each employee’s PsyCap, it is invaluable to consider their psychological well-being because the ultimate goal of POB is the pursuit of their happiness and well-being beyond higher levels of performance. Avey and colleagues (2010) maintained that PsyCap plays an important
role in employees’ psychological well-being by reinforcing potential values, taking different perspectives, and appraising circumstances positively. As a result, psychological well-being was proposed an outcome of PsyCap in POBS along with traditional organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and job performance.

Accompanied by the outcomes (i.e., right) of PsyCap, POBS categorized the predictors of PsyCap by three entities: (1) leader’s skill and leadership style, (2) employees’ positive self-development process, and (3) organizational environment. First, leaders in sport organizations are responsible for handling various ethical issues and representing authenticity. Thus, authentic leaders, who is self-aware, seeking improvement, and building an ethical and moral framework, plays an important role in sport organizations. Because development of authentic leadership entails reciprocal and interactive process with followers, followers can develop self-efficacy, ethical reasoning, and positive emotions in the workplace. In addition, sport leaders need to build good political skills for their followers because politically skilled leaders also bring positive outcomes by inspiring trust and incurring follower motivation. Therefore, in POBS, both sport leaders’ authentic leadership and political skills are included as constructs of leader influence for followers’ PsyCap.

Second, in an organization, hiring positive individuals (e.g., optimistic) is not sufficient for creating and maintaining positive workplaces (Luthans & Youssef, 2007), so it is necessary to consider employees’ positive self-development processes. Employees’ sense of meaningful work and positive social identity can enhance their own PsyCap levels. Most employees want their work to be more than simply earning a paycheck. This employees’ sense of meaningful work can enhance their PsyCap by experiencing work as meaningful, understanding the influence of their work, and desiring an even broader impacts on others. For instance, in sport organizations, employees can experience certain emotional benefits from their group membership through sporting events (Todd & Kent, 2009). If employees in athletic departments have a high internal value to sport teams in their institution, they are more likely to show positive attitude and behavior by enhancing their self-efficacy.

Third, supportive organizational climate and organizational justice can play a vital role in employee’s PsyCap. Organizational environment is one of the most important influential factors for employees’ well-being because it contributes to shaping their belief and attitude (Guzley, 1992). Most of all, creating and maintaining a supportive organizational climate is an important aspect of sport organizations, especially due to them facing very competitive environment. When employees perceive supportive organizational climate in the workplace, they are more likely to be more hopeful, optimistic, and resilient employees by considering mistakes as external issues, utilizing various resources, and feeling socio-emotional support. On top of that, when employees consider the process of selection in decision and resource allocation is fair, they are more likely to have higher levels of self-efficacy and performance (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000).

The current study provides varying aspects of contributions. First, applying POB perspective to the sport context introduces the state-of-the-art view of strategic management of human capital in sport management literatures. Second, POBS provides better understanding of how and what extent PsyCap enhances employees’ psychological well-being in sport organizations. Third, POBS suggests the need of further discovery of distinctive factors in the context of sport organizations that influence on employees’ psychological well-being. Taken together, the contributions of the current research are notable for positivity in the workplace and sport organizational behavior literatures.