Transformational Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Mediating Role of Affective Commitment

Ye Hoon Lee, University of North Alabama
Boyun Woo, Endicott College
Yukyoum Kim, Seoul National University

Management - Leadership (College Sport) 20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Abstract 2017-264 Saturday, June 3, 2017
Room: Harvard 9:20 AM

Transformational leadership has received a significant attention over the past three decades due to its potential contribution to the happy and successful organizations (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Indeed, the studies conducted in the area of organizational psychology and management suggested transformational leadership style was strongly associated with positive job attitudes and outcomes among employees (see Yammarino, Dionne, Chun, & Dansereau, 2005). Despite the importance of transformational leadership style in various areas, little research has been conducted in sport management settings (Stenling & Tafvelin, 2014). Moreover, the scope of the existing research is also limited to its effect on athlete motivation and performance, well-being, and team cohesion (see Smith et al., 2013) in coach-athlete relationships.

The pressure on intercollegiate athletics to build and maintain winning athletic programs has increased over the years as intercollegiate athletics has been recognized as a main source of influencing the public image and the prestige of university in the United States (Won & Chelladurai, 2016). For example, it has been found athletic programs success leads to better student recruitment, and more alumni donations and endorsement (Grimes & Chressanthi, 2003). Although winning and success in athletics can be largely determined by coaches and student-athletes by producing the excellence and entertainment within the team, the importance of athletic directors who bear crucial responsibilities such as hiring and influencing coaches cannot be overlooked. That is, athletic directors can influence the success of the athletic programs by influencing their coaches positively. Thus, investigating the factors that may influence head coaches’ work attitudes and behaviors is warranted. Based on previous leadership research, one of the factors determining followers’ behavior is leaders’ transformational leadership style (Cho & Dansereau, 2011). However, the link between transformational leadership and consequences in coaches has not been sufficiently explored in intercollegiate athletic settings (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001).

Further, Smith and his colleagues (2013) call for studies investigating the process that underlies transformational leadership to develop more complete understanding of transformational leadership. Up to date, very few studies have examined the direct and/or indirect relationship between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Kim, 2014). Even the studies that investigated such relationships, the results have been mixed showing positive in some studies (Kim, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) and no relationship in others (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001). The mixed evidence may be due to the mediator underlying the direct relationship between transformational leadership and OCB (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). However, little is known about the mechanisms that could mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and follower outcomes in the sport domain. In an effort to fill this void, this study focuses on the cascading effect of transformational leadership in athletic director-coach relationship and the psychological process underlying transformational leadership. In sum, the purpose of this study was to examine: a) the relationship between athletic directors’ transformational leadership style and head coaches’ affective commitment; b) the relationship between head coaches’ affective commitment and OCB; and c) the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB in a way that affective commitment may serve as important psychological mechanisms in transformational leadership process.

The participants were 244 head coaches in NCAA Division II across the United States. Participants completed the modified questionnaires that come from the previous literature including 22 items measuring their perceptions of the athletic directors’ transformational leadership style (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990), six items measuring their affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and eight items measuring their OCB (Podsakoff et al., 1990). The analyses included confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to verify the factor structure of the scales employed.
and structural equation model procedures to test both the direct and indirect relationships in the model using Mplus 7.3. To reduce biasing effects associated with common method variance (CMV), we utilized several procedural and statistical steps suggested in prior literature (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

The results of CFA confirmed a good overall fit of the measurement model, S-B \( \chi^2/df = 729.57/459 = 1.59 \), CFI = .96, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .05, 90% CIRMSEA [.04, .06], WRMR = 0.99. Additionally, all the items have significant factor loadings on the latent variables, ranging from .61 to .97. All of the measure of Cronbach alpha coefficient and AVE values indicated good reliability and convergent validity. The unconstrained model was significantly better than the constrained model (i.e., correlation between a pair of latent factors constrained as 1) in all comparisons (the smallest adjusted \( \Delta S-B \chi^2 \) was 77.70, \( p < .001 \)). In addition, AVE values for all constructs were larger than the corresponding squared inter-construct correlations, providing additional support for discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Further, the goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that the structural model showed a good fit (S-B \( \chi^2/df = 786.38/484 = 1.63 \), RMSEA = .05, 90% CIRMSEA [.04, .06], CFI = .96, SRMR = .05, WRMR = 1.10). Specifically, transformational leadership style had a significant and direct positive relationship with affective commitment (\( \beta = .70; p = .01 \)). Further, affective commitment had a significant and positive relationship with OCB (\( \beta = .81; p < .01 \)). Finally, transformational leadership had insignificant relationship with OCB (\( \beta = -.37; p > .05 \)). Thus, it was found that affective commitment fully mediated the transformational leadership-OCB relationship.

The results of this study provide a better understanding of how athletic directors may increase their head coaches’ OCB strategically. Due to the wide variety of work duties in sports coaching (Turner & Chelladurai, 2005), OCB can be an important construct which can contribute to the effective management of athletic departments and coaching. Thus, if an athletic director wants to increase head coaches’ OCB, she should focus on the transformational leadership style of articulating vision, providing shared goals, showing individualized considerate behavior, and providing innovative strategies. Then, her head coaches’ emotional bond with the athletic department and teams can be strengthened, which in turn increase OCB.

To conclude, this study contributes to our knowledge by addressing a mediator that has seldom been examined previously by showing that affective commitment is an important psychological mechanism in the transformational leadership process. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that although it may look like head coaches’ OCB is determined by their level of affective commitment, it is, in fact, the athletic directors’ transformational leadership style which fosters head coaches’ affective commitment, which further enhances their extra-role job performance. Thus, the results of this study clearly support the importance of athletic directors’ transformational leadership style on head coaches’ OCB development.