Examining Positive Fit and Engagement in Recreational Sport Employees: The Mediating Role of Intrinsic Motivation

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Arguably the most critical advantage for recreational sport organizations is human resources. A major approach to human resource management is concerned with motivating people to create individual development and help attain organizational goals (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2017). Person-organization fit (PO Fit) is a construct that explains the compatibility between employee and organization (Kristof, 1996). PO Fit may serve as a way to achieve desirable employee outcomes. This relationship is predicated on the notion that when there is positive fit, the work environment affords employees the opportunity to fulfill their needs (Arthur et al., 2006). Self-determination theory assumes that individuals are comprised of, and rely on innate psychological needs, which are essential for optimal functioning and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). PO Fit may lead employees to feel connected to their organization and promote the fulfillment of psychological needs, thereby creating intrinsic motivation (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). When employees are internally motivated, they are more likely to devote all of their attention to the problems they encounter (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Such direct attention results in being engaged with their work. Thus, the purpose of this study sought to test the mediating effect of intrinsic motivation through PO Fit and job engagement and organization engagement.

A total of 580 recreational sport employees across Division I universities participated in this study. To test the theoretical model and hypothesized relationships, structural equation modeling was utilized. All model fit statistics were acceptable and mediation effects were tested with bootstrapping at 10,000 iterations. The first hypothesis involved intrinsic motivation (IM) mediating the relationship between PO Fit and job engagement (JE). The indirect effect was significant and positive at the 99% confidence interval. The direct effects between PO Fit and JE (B = .14, p < .05), IM and JE (B = .67, p < .01), and PO Fit and IM (B = .57, p < .01) were all positive and significant. The second hypothesis consisted of IM mediating the relationship between PO Fit and organization engagement (OE). The indirect effect was significant and positive at the 99% confidence interval. The direct effects between PO Fit and OE (B = .44, p < .01), IM and OE (B = .48, p < .01), and PO Fit and IM (B = .59, p < .01) were all positive and significant.

The objective of this study was to develop a model to explain the value of PO Fit in the recreational sport workplace. Findings confirm all hypotheses, which indicates IM mediates the relationship between PO Fit and JE and OE. This study contributes to a growing body of knowledge and reveals several implications. First, it demonstrates an employee perceiving positive fit with their organization may feel a greater sense of internal drive towards learning new skills and becoming entrenched in their role. Second, we suggest recreational sport organizations provide resources in order to facilitate personal development opportunities. Third, making improvements to certain human resource management practices can create a competitive advantage through an effective and positive workforce.