The Cultural Landscape of Sport Management: Experiences of Sport Management Faculty

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Higher education is in a time of substantial change (Scobey, 2012) and the sport management discipline in particular has experienced rapid evolution. As a fairly young discipline, research has rightfully focused on a number of topics to describe the state of affairs in sport management academe, including potential “academic homes” of programs (e.g., Zaharia, Kaburakis, & Pierce, 2016), composition of faculty and students (e.g., Jones, Brooks, & Mak, 2008), curriculum (e.g., Eagleman & McNary, 2010) and instructional textbook content (e.g., Pitts & Danylchuk, 2007). Further, research has also explored the experiences of sport management students (e.g., Harris, Grappendorf, Veraldo, & Aicher, 2014) and faculty (e.g., Taylor, Hardin, & Rode, 2018), and discussed career-related topics for these stakeholders (e.g., Barnhill, Czekanski, & Pfleegor, 2018).

However, a more encompassing investigation of sport management faculty perspectives is of value. Faculty are charged with preparing future professionals of the sport industry and it is therefore key for sport management programs to ensure “overall program excellence…if sport management is to thrive as an academic discipline and profession” (Cuneen, 2004, p. 1). This necessitates an exploration of the views of faculty so as to better understand the discipline and allow programs to effectively chart a course for the future. The specific purpose of this study is to examine faculty perceptions of their workplaces, including views on work satisfaction, management support, organizational citizenship, and harassment/incivility. This work is particularly beneficial because much prior research has been qualitative in nature and often focused on female faculty perspectives (e.g., Taylor, Smith, Welch, & Hardin, 2018). This study, therefore, allows for a more holistic overview in scope, methods, and participants.

Sport management faculty (n=144) responded to survey questions regarding their experience with the aforementioned variables. To illustrate some key findings, faculty reported higher rates of sexual harassment and incivility than other industries (e.g., Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Spence Laschinger, Leiter, Day, & Gilin, 2009). Additionally, participants indicated they were satisfied with the nature of their work but dissatisfied with their pay, suggesting a disconnect between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Several implications will be detailed during the presentation, but to give one example, findings from the project suggest a rather hostile climate within sport management programs. Moreover, higher levels of sexual harassment and incivility and low levels of workplace satisfaction influenced turnover intention within respondents, suggesting the “chilly” climate that exists has the potential to impact actual turnover which makes it difficult for a program to thrive. Additionally, there were differences found on the unwanted sexual attention subscale based on gender and gendered harassment based on age. This suggests there may be a minority group of young women who are more likely to experience sexual harassment and therefore more likely to leave the profession, creating an even greater skew in the gender of sport management faculty. Further, the existence of this hostile climate may convey problematic norms to students who could then bring them into the industry.