Employee Engagement in Sport: An Integrated Literature Review

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Employee engagement has become increasingly popular within management over the past decade (Albrecht, 2010), but has been rarely explored in the sport setting. Employee engagement, defined as an employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy directed towards positive organizational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), suggests employees can positively affect an organization (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Ferrer, 2005; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

While employee engagement has been examined in general management disciplines (i.e., human resources, services marketing, etc.) there is little to no research regarding employee engagement as a concept in sport management. Instead, the focus of sport scholars has been on the various antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to conduct an integrative review of the literature on select antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement in sport, and to provide a conceptual model for the application of employee engagement in our field.

Antecedents of employee engagement can be categorized as job demands and job resources due to their measurement on perceived working conditions (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Job resources are positively related to employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2011; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009a) and predict relationships more consistently compared to job demands. Positive outcomes from this construct are job attitudes (Hakanen et al., 2006; Saks, 2006), job performance and organizational citizenship (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), health and wellness outcomes (Cole et al., 2012; Crawford et al., 2010), and a negative relation to turnover intention (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Antecedents and Outcomes of Employee Engagement within Sport

In the sport management literature, leadership is positively related to employee performance and satisfaction (Pastore, 1993; Yusof, 1998), leaving room to increase attention towards leadership behavior in sport organizations (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Perceived organizational support increases satisfaction amongst coaches and influences retention and satisfaction within sport organizations (Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Mahony et al., 2010). Job attitudes relate to performance and intention to turnover, especially within the coaching context (Dixon & Warner, 2010). Organizational citizenship behaviors play an important role for effective organizational performance (Wagstaff et al., 2011).

Method

Following established integrated review techniques (i.e., Cooper, 2017; Torraco, 2005), studies related to the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement will be collected, inclusive of the period from 2001 through present day. Keywords regarding select antecedents (i.e., leadership and perceived organizational support) and outcomes (i.e., organizational citizenship behavior, turnover intention, job performance, job satisfaction, and organization commitment) will be examined. These keywords represent the related antecedents and outcomes found most often in sport management literature.

Proposed Implications for the Sport Industry

The proposed model may hold several implications for scholars within the sport industry. Potential research avenues include exploring ways to improve the lives of employees in organizations. Stakeholders within the sport industry may benefit from this through a better understanding of how employee engagement influences various outcomes that will benefit the organization as a whole, underlining the importance of focusing on the individual.