Mediating Mechanisms of Coping Strategies Between Severity of Spectator Dysfunctional Behavior and Stadium Revisit Intention

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Sport management scholars have placed increasing attention to spectator dysfunctional behavior (SDB) (Berendt & Uhrich, 2018). Despite scholarly interest in this area, most studies have focused on the direct relationship between SDB and team identification (e.g., Wann et al., 2017). It remains unclear as to how sport consumers cope with SDB. According to the stress and coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), in the face of stressful encounters, individuals experience three sequential processes: primary appraisal (i.e., evaluating the intensity of a harmful situation), secondary appraisal (i.e., adopting coping strategies), and behavioral outcomes. Duhachek (2005) proposed a coping framework in a general consumer context, consisting of active, expressive, and denial coping. Active coping is aimed at taking assertive actions against stressful encounters. Expressive coping involves support-seeking behaviors by engaging in emotional venting. Finally, denial coping is a passive way of coping by denying a stressor. Per the stress and coping theory, it was hypothesized that active (H1), expressive (H2), and denial (H3) coping would mediate the relationship between severity of SDB (high vs. low) and revisit intention. More specifically, (a) high-severity SDB (vs. low-severity SDB) would positively cause active coping and expressive coping but would negatively elicit denial coping and revisit intention, and (b) active coping would positively influence revisit intention but expressive and denial coping would negatively influence revisit intention.

A repeated measures scenario-based experimental study was used. Two pretests were conducted to identify the severity of SDB (high; physical fighting vs. low; arguing) and to validate the scenarios. A single-factor (severity of SDB; high vs. low) between-subject design was used, and 345 NFL fans (Time 1) were recruited from M-Turk. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (n = 176 for high severity; n = 169 for low severity). To enhance ecological validity, sketches describing high and low levels of severity were included. After the exposure to the stimuli, participants responded to items of manipulation check, coping strategies, and self-construal. After a month (Time 2), a follow-up survey was conducted in which 311 respondents participated in this study and reported their revisit intention.

The manipulation check was successful. The results via Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS showed that the severity of SDB (0 = low and 1 = high) negatively influenced revisit intention (B = -.34, p < .05) and positively predicted active coping (B = .55, p < .001). Active coping significantly mediated the relationship between the severity of SDB and revisit intention (B = .17, CI = .14 to .30), supporting H1. High-severity SDB (vs. low-severity SDB) positively affected expressive coping (B = .52, p < .001) and negatively influenced revisit intention (B = -.19, p < .01). Expressive coping significantly mediated the relationship between the severity of SDB and revisit intention (B = -.10, CI = -.22 to -.02), supporting H2. High-severity SDB (vs. low-severity SDB) negatively influenced denial coping (B = -.62, p < .001). Denial coping negatively predicted revisit intention (B = -.13, p < .05) and significantly mediated the relationship between severity of SDB and revisit intention (B = .09, CI = .01 to .17). Thus, H3 was supported. Theoretical and practical implications will be discussed.