A Conceptual Model of Occupational Stress in Sport Leadership: A Case of Athletic Directors

Ye Hoon Lee, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Boyun Woo, Endicott College

Management - Leadership (School Sport)
Poster
Abstract 2019-099

Thursday, May 30, 2019
2:35 PM
Room: Napoleon CD corridor

Previous literature has reported that occupational stress is a significant predictor of chronic diseases and job performance among business leaders (Collins & Jackson, 2015). In fact, repetitive and chronic stress has been found to negatively affect leaders’ physical and mental health, decision-making process, adaptive leadership behaviors, and leader-member relationship (Collins & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, these negative consequences were found to influence organizational performance through increased stress and burnout among followers (Harms, Crede, Tynan, Leon, & Jeung, 2017).

Sport leaders in athletic organizations are no different in this process (Martin, Kelley, & Eklund, 1999). For example, several researchers noted that athletic directors experience significant stress (Copeland & Kirsch, 1995), and this increases the risk of burnout among the athletic directors (Martin et al., 1999). Considering the detrimental effects of occupational stress, it is critical to explore the factors creating sport leaders’ occupational stress to prevent health problems and decreased leadership effectiveness. However, despite the importance of this matter, scholars in sport management have ignored this topic. Therefore, this study attempts to void the gap.

The primary purpose of this review is to propose a conceptual framework of occupational stress in sport leadership, particularly athletic directors, based on the literature on both occupational stress and sport leadership. To attain this goal, this study critically reviewed several existing models in other domains including Karasek’s (1979) job demand-control model, Siegrist’s (1996) effort-reward imbalance model, and person-environment (P-E) fit model (Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, & Pinneau, 1975).

The proposed model identifies five different occupational stressors, leading to the first-level outcomes of individuals and the second-level outcomes of organizations. Furthermore, the model includes the two higher-order moderators of personal factors and organizational factors in the relationship between stressors and the first-level outcomes and between the first-level outcomes and the second-level outcomes.

The occupational stressors include five higher-order stressors of job demand (e.g. administration-related and competition-related job demands), job autonomy, interpersonal conflict (e.g., working with coaches and student-athletes), lack of reward, and sport culture (e.g., winning-at-all cost culture). Regarding the consequences of occupational stress, previous literature has noted that these occupational stressors cause various consequences including individual-level results and organizational-level results (Kalimo & Mejman, 1987). Finally, the model suggests several moderators in the relationship between stressors and the first-level outcomes and between the first-level outcomes and the second-level outcomes. The first higher-order moderator includes sport leaders’ individual characteristics including Type A behavior pattern, personality, esteem, previous athletic experience, age, gender, and education level. The second higher-order moderator in the proposed model is the organizational-level moderators regarding what sport governing bodies or institutions may provide.

Based on the previous literature on occupational stress in other domains and sport, this study proposes a conceptual model of occupational stress in athletic directors. This study strove to identify idiosyncratic components of occupational stress and synthesize them in sport leadership contexts to create a sport-specific conceptual model. This initiative can invoke interests in this topic to provide a health-enhancing environment for sport leaders and quality sport services to the society.