Effects of Employees’ Extra-Role Behaviors on Organizational Performance: An Assessment of Minor League Baseball Team Front Offices

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Much like their counterparts in other industries, sport organizations place an emphasis on generating extra-role behaviors (ERB) from their employees. The sport industry has generally felt an increased pressure to improve organizational performance, in particular, revenue generation due to higher expectations of professionalization from stakeholders (Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012), and increased financial obligations (Troilo, Boucet, Urban, & Sutton, 2016). ERB can have significant impacts on organizational level outcomes including indicators of performance (Hart, Gilstrap, & Bolino, 2016). ERB are often defined by organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Lepine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002), but they can also include Innovative Work Behaviors (IWB), as well (Janssen, 2000). By engaging with these ERB, employees may go above the minimum standards, which could improve perceived service quality (Husin, Chelladurai, & Musa, 2012) or productivity (Scola, Schaeperkoetter, Lower, & Bass, 2017), eventually leading to improved organizational outcomes.

A number of factors could influence this relationship between ERB and organizational outcomes. Smaller organizations, such as sport-based small business enterprises (SBEs), operate with less formality and flatter bureaucracies that necessitate individuals to work outside their role (Atkinson, 2008; Nadin & Cassell, 2007). The scholarship also indicates the necessity to achieve formal objectives may hinder SBE employees’ willingness to engage in ERB (Atkinson, 2008; Nadin & Cassell, 2007). Many sport organizations fall under the category of sport-based SBEs (Barnhill & Smith, 2019). The research in sport examining the relationship between ERB and organizational outcomes has been mixed, with issues related to the measurement of performance outcomes (Husin et al., 2012; Rocha & Turner, 2008; Scola et al., 2017). While not examining the relationship of ERB and organizational performance, previous research related to Minor League Baseball (MiLB), organizational performance has been operationalized as attendance demand (see Agha & Cobb, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of employees’ extra-role behaviors on desired organizational outcomes in sport.

Using a sample of front office employees (N=216) from affiliated full-season MiLB franchises, OCB and IWB were measured prior to the season during a period when study participants were engaged in strategy development and planning activities for the upcoming season. Using average game attendance as a proxy for organizational performance, this study sought to examine whether OCB and IWB of employees influenced this important organizational outcome. An empirical model controlling for extraneous factors was developed and tested. Results revealed organizational citizenship behaviors of front office employees positively affected attendance during the season for Triple-A and Double-A level franchises. No significant effects between employees’ organizational citizenship and team attendance was seen in lower level teams. Employees’ innovative work behaviors were not significantly related to team attendance. The current study indicates that these sport organizations may not be benefiting from the behaviors it celebrates in its employees, namely the ERB. This study has demonstrated that context specific factors can substantially alter expected employee and organizational behaviors.