The Impact of Justice Perception in Non-Profit Sport Organization on Citizenship and Dysfunctional Behavior: The Intervening Role of Exchange Orientation

Sangchul Park, Texas A&M University
Calvin Nite (Advisor), Texas A&M University
Hyun-Woo Lee (Advisor), Texas A&M University

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Non-profit sport organizations are forced to operate with scant financial resources because of the increased competition for limited funding opportunities (Misener & Doherty, 2009). As such, non-profit sport organizations need to work diligently to retain employees given financial costs associated with recruiting, staffing, and training new employees (Robinson & Dechan, 1997). As employees actively interact with each other in diverse work contexts, their intention to leave might be significantly affected by other employees’ (a) citizenship behaviors or voluntary altruistic actions that promote the effective functioning of the organization and its members (Organ, 1988) and (b) dysfunctional behaviors or discretionary destructive actions that damage the overall performance of the organization and its members (Peterson, 2002). However, no comprehensive framework exists to specify how non-profit sport organizations can both facilitate employees’ citizenship behaviors and attenuate their dysfunctional behavior.

The present study attempts to bridge this research gap by investigating how, why, and under which conditions employees’ justice perception toward organization affects both their citizenship and dysfunctional behaviors. Justice perception – segmented into distributive, procedural, and interactional justice – relates to employees’ perception toward how they are treated by organizations carefully and fairly (Moorman, 1991). As the theoretical baseline, we employ (a) the reciprocal norm of social exchange theory and (b) the affective reaction perspective of frustration-aggression theory. The former posits that, in the dyadic interaction, an entity’s treatment leads to the other’s reciprocal reactions (Blau, 1964). The latter assumes that unjustified frustration leads to negative affect such as anger, which in turn causes aggressive behaviors (Berkowitz, 1993). Using these theories, we hypothesize that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice linearly relate to positive affect (H1), which in turn increases the level of employees’ citizenship behavior (H2). Three justice perceptions are also hypothesized to inversely relate to negative affect (H3), and negative affect is hypothesized to increase the level of employees’ dysfunctional behavior (H4). Additionally, those high in exchange orientation is known to carefully track reciprocal obligations (i.e., scorekeeping) while those low in exchange orientation are less concerned about whether the exchange should be reciprocated (Clark & Mills, 1979; Mustein et al., 1977). Hence, we also propose that when employees are high (vs. low) in exchange orientation, the influence of justice perception on positive and negative affect is boosted (H5).

The data collection is in progress. A series of surveys will be conducted with participants recruited from MTurk (Study 1) and non-profit sport organizations (Study 2). Participants will respond to items pertaining to focal variables that are adapted from the previous studies. The hypotheses will be tested using the structural equation modeling after conducting preliminary analyses such as correlation and confirmatory factor analysis. The results will be shared at the time of the presentation. This research contributes to sport management literature by (a) responding to our field’s call for investigating how the effect of interactional justice in sport organization contexts (Mahony et al., 2019) and (b) providing the field with a comprehensive framework to specify organizational, dispositional, and affective antecedents of citizenship and dysfunctional behaviors.