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Influence of Work Status on Organizational Commitment and Sport Identity of University Athletic Department Workers

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Nontraditional workers, such as volunteers and part-time employees, are a vital component of university athletic departments. However, few researchers have explored the psychological characteristics and attitudes of nontraditional workers or have compared nontraditional workers with traditional full-time workers. Moreover, no study was found that has compared the differences among different groups of nontraditional workers. In the current study, the researchers compared organizational commitment and sport identity among four different work statuses (volunteers, practicum/internship workers, part-time workers, and full-time workers) in a university athletic department. Full-time and practicum/internship workers indicated significantly ($p < .05$) higher sport identification than volunteers and part-time workers. Volunteers and practicum/internship workers reported significantly higher affective and normative commitments than part-time employees and significantly lower affective commitment than full-time employees. Thus, it is recommended that athletic departments hire part-time workers cautiously and alternatively consider the potential increased use of practicum/internship workers and volunteers.

Nontraditional workers, such as part-time, contract, contingent, leasing agency, and temporary workers (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Belous, 1989; U. S. Department of Labor, n.d.), are a vital part of today's workforce. In 2000, these nontraditional workers made up more than 30% of the American workforce (Polivka, Cohany, & Hipple, 2000). In the sport and recreation industry, nontraditional work arrangements are particularly important. For instance, most sport

events or games are held irregularly for a short period of time or during after-hours or weekends. Accordingly, sport organizations highly depend on part-time and temporary workers. In addition, unlike many other industries, volunteers and practicum/internship workers are another major labor force for sport organizations and events. Many organizations in other industries do not consider volunteers and practicum/internship workers as a labor source due to the nature of their work arrangement (i.e., no pay and no legal contract). However, in sport and recreation areas, volunteers make up approximately 20% of human resources (Chelladurai, 2006; Kim, Chelladurai, & Trail, 2007). That is, nontraditional workers, including both paid-workers (e.g., part-time workers) and non-paid workers (e.g., volunteers), compose a major portion of the workforce in the sport and recreation industry.

Despite the fact that nontraditional workers are a major part of the sport and recreation industry, little is known about the differences between nontraditional workers and traditional workers or the difference among various types of nontraditional workers. Although, research by Cuskelly, Boag, and McIntyre (1999) found that paid-administrators were significantly higher in continuous commitments than volunteer administrators in a sport organization. In 2003, Chang and Chelladurai reported that full-time workers of a sport organization expressed significantly higher affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors but lower continuous commitment than part-time workers.

However, these two studies only compared one type of nontraditional worker with paid- or full-time workers and did not provide practical recommendations to sport organizations utilizing various types of nontraditional workers. Specifically, sport organizations like university athletic departments consist of few full-time workers and many nontraditional workers including part-time workers, interns, practicum students, and volunteers. In general, university athletic departments host numerous sport games and events, manage facilities, market their games and events, sell tickets and sponsorships, and raise funds with the small number of full-time workers and their limited budget. Fortunately, most university athletic departments can easily recruit a large numbers of interns, practicum students, and volunteers among their students. As such, these athletic departments depend heavily on these inexpensive, if not free, nontraditional workers. However, neither practitioners nor researchers have investigated the characteristics and attitudes of various nontraditional worker groups or compared the characteristics and attitudes among different types of nontraditional workers and full-time workers in university athletic departments. Therefore, the researchers focused on organizational commitment and sport identity and compared three different nontraditional workers (i.e., part-time workers, interns/practicum students, and volunteers) and traditional workers (i.e., full-time workers).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment continues to be a salient research topic because of the positive outcomes derived from having workers with high organizational commitment such as high job satisfaction and motivation (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982) and low absenteeism and turnover (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Mowday et al. defined organizational commitment as:

...the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. It is reflected in (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of

the organization's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. (p. 27)

Similarly, Meyer and Allen (1991, 1993) defined organizational commitment as “a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization” (p. 65) and suggested the three-component model of organizational commitment as well. Their three dimensions are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is the emotional attachment of individuals to the organization. Continuance commitment refers to the intention to remain in the organization due to the rewards of staying or the costs of leaving. The last dimension, normative commitment, is associated with an obligation to remain as a member of the organization.

Organizational commitment has shown a negative relationship with turnover intention (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002), a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Mowday, et al., 1982) and a weak relationship with job performance (Meyer et al.) in business settings. In athletic settings, Turner and Chelladurai (2005) found similar results that all three commitments, affective, normative, and continuance commitments, were negatively related to coaches' turnover intentions and also positively related to their work performance.

Researchers have also explored organizational commitment among nontraditional workers. Affective commitment of part-time workers in the fitness industry was positively related to organizational citizenship behavior (Chang & Chelladurai, 2003), and affective commitment of part-time workers in university athletics positively influenced training motivation (Cunningham & Mahoney, 2004). Also, organizational commitment of volunteers in youth sport leagues was positively related to willingness to be trained (Kim & Chelladurai, 2008) and organization commitment of volunteer administrators in sport organizations was a significant predictor of turnover intention (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001).

Research has also been conducted which directly compared the level of organizational commitment among groups with different work status. A meta-analysis by Thorsteinson (2003) on 20 studies showed no differences in the level of organizational commitment between full-time and part-time workers. However, the results of the studies conducted in sport settings contradicted the results by Thorsteinson. The levels of organizational commitment were different between full-time workers and part-time workers of fitness clubs (Chang & Chelladurai, 2003) and between paid-workers and volunteers of sport organizations (Cuskelly, et al., 1999). Also, the previous studies comparing organizational commitment between work status groups included only two groups of people. Therefore, it was necessary to explore the differences of organizational commitment levels among traditional workers and various nontraditional worker groups in a university athletic department.

The results in Chang and Chelladurai (2003) suggest that affective commitment of full-time workers was significantly higher than affective commitment of part-time workers. Therefore, the evidence supports the premise that affective commitment of full-time workers would be higher than the affective commitment of nontraditional workers. In addition, since volunteers do not sign any legal employment contract or receive any monetary compensation, the emotional attachment to the organization would be the main driving force for volunteers to stay

in the organization. Thus, among nontraditional workers, there is support for the premise that volunteers would possess higher affective commitment than the other two groups. Finally, it was assumed the characteristics of part-time workers and practicum/internship workers would be similar in terms of devoting a certain level of time and receiving a certain level of compensation (e.g., money and university credits). Therefore, affective commitment levels should be similar between the two nontraditional worker groups. Based on the arguments above, the following were hypothesized:

H1a. Full-time workers would possess a significantly higher level of affective commitment than all other groups.

H1b. Volunteers would possess a significantly higher level of affective commitment than part-time and practicum/internship workers.

H1c. The affective commitment level of part-time workers and the affective commitment level of practicum/internship workers would not be significantly different.

Further, it was believed that full-time workers who were paid and devoted their entire work time to the organization would be more obligated to stay in the organization than the others. On the other hand, volunteers usually do not sign any legal contract; thus, they would be the least obligated to stay in the organization. However, no difference in normative commitment level would exist between practicum/internship workers and part-time workers. Based on these arguments, three hypotheses were presented regarding normative commitment.

H2a. Full-time workers would possess a significantly higher level of normative commitment than all other groups.

H2b. Volunteers would possess a significantly lower level of normative commitment than all other groups.

H2c. The normative commitment level of part-time worker and the normative commitment level of practicum/internship workers would not be significantly different.

Sport (Team) Identity

Sport (team) identity, which is also called team commitment or loyalty, has been identified as one of the more salient concepts when understanding the consumption of spectator sports. Trail, Anderson, and Fink (2000) defined identification as “an orientation of the self in regard to other objects including a person or group that results in feelings or segments of close attachment” (pp.165-166). Sport marketing researchers have found that sport (team) identity strongly influences motives of sport consumption (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000; Matsuoka, Chelladurai, & Harada, 2003; Robinson & Trail, 2003). Specifically, sport spectators or fans possess a feeling of close attachment toward the sport team, which influences sport spectators’ or consumers’ purchase decisions (e.g., attending a sport game). Sport (team) identification has been used to predict sport consumers’ behaviors including game attending or watching behaviors (Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003) and licensed apparel purchasing (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002).

Although the concept of sport identity and the measures of sport identity (e.g., Points of Attachment Index) were constructed based on sport fans and spectators, sport identity may exist among individuals working for the sport team. According to Kim and Trail (2007), among

volunteers of a university athletic department, team identity was the strongest predictor of volunteering for university sporting events. Although researchers have not explored sport identity among employees of the sport team/organization, a majority of sport team workers may have had stronger longing to be a part of a field (e.g., the sport industry, intercollegiate athletics, or football) even before they started working in the field or the team. Based on the premise above, it was hypothesized that individuals working in the front office of the athletic department would highly identify themselves with the sport team (athletic department), regardless of their employment status.

H 3. The level of sport identity would not be significantly different among four employment groups: full-time workers, part-time workers, practicum/internship workers, and volunteers.

Methods

Participants

The data were collected from individuals working for a university athletic department in a Southern state in the U.S. Approximately 200 individuals worked and many university students volunteered for the front office of the athletic department at the university. A staff from the human resources department in the athletic department sent out an announcement email to their employees. The email included the study introduction and the instruction to complete the survey (i.e., where and when to pick up and return the survey). Two weeks after the email was sent, the staff closed data collection. The number of the questionnaires picked up was not known but 87 completed questionnaires were returned. Among the respondents, 37 were women and 49 were men (no answer = 1). More than 85% of the respondents were White/Caucasian ($n = 74$) and an additional 9% were Black/African American ($n = 8$). The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 53 with the average age being 23.7 ($SD = 5.89$). The respondents ($n = 65$; 75%) were between the ages of 20 and 23. Among the respondents, 32.2% were volunteers ($n = 28$), 29.9% were practicum/internship workers ($n = 26$), 19.5% were part-time employees ($n = 17$), and 18.4% were full-time employees ($n = 16$).

Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of items measuring two different constructs (i.e., organizational commitment and sport identity) along with items asking for demographic information. Two subscales (affective and normative commitments) from Meyer and Allen's (1997) organizational commitment scale were included in the questionnaire. Meyer and Allen's (1997) organizational commitment scale consists of three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitments. However, continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the cost to leave the organization. Therefore, it was inappropriate to measure continuance commitment of the current sample, which was comprised of volunteers and practicum/intern workers as well as full-time and part-time workers. Affective commitment ($\alpha = .75$) and normative commitment ($\alpha = .76$) were measured with 12 items (six items per concept) from

Meyer and Allen's scale. A sample item of affective commitment is, "I do not feel like part of the family at my organization" and a sample item of normative commitment is, "I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer." All items are listed in Appendix A.

In addition, sport identity was measured using three items ($\alpha = .75$) from the Points of Attachment Index (PAI) (Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003) which comprises 21 items in seven subscales (*Team, Sport, University, Player, Coach, Level of Sport, University, and Community*). The team identity dimension of PAI was created to measure identification with a specific sport. However, three items of team identity were modified to measure identification with the athletic department (e.g., "Being a fan of (the name of the athletic mascot) is very important to me."). Items implemented measured affective commitment, normative commitment, and sport identity and were answered on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

A general linear model (GLM) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) technique was used to compare affective and normative commitments and sport identity among people with different work status, volunteers, practicum/internship workers, part-time workers, and full-time workers. After completing MANOVA, Bonferroni post-hoc tests were implemented if necessary. The descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency estimates of affective commitment, normative commitment, and sport identity were also reported.

Results

The internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha) of the three variables, affective commitment, normative commitment, and sport identity ranged from .75 to .86. The correlations among these variables were between .45 and .68. The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the constructs are listed in Table 1. The multivariate test, using the Wilk's criterion, showed that work status (volunteers, practicum/internship workers, part-time workers, and full-time workers) had a significant effect on dependent variables [$F(9, 197.283) = 5.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = .155$]. Work status had significant effects on all three dependent variables: affective commitment [$F(3, 83) = 4.639, p < .005, \eta^2 = .185$], normative commitment [$F(3, 83) = 6.946, p < .001, \eta^2 = .202$], and sport identity [$F(3, 83) = 14.054, p < .001, \eta^2 = .213$]. The multivariate test results were listed in Table 2.

Bonferroni post-hoc tests on the three dependent variables showed that the affective commitment of full-time employees ($M = 5.81, SD = .94$) was significantly higher than the affective commitments of volunteers ($M = 5.00, SD = .72, p < .05$) and part-time employees ($M = 4.74, SD = 1.02, p < .005$), and the affective commitment of practicum/internship workers ($M = 5.57, SD = .82$) was significantly higher than the affective commitment of part-time employees ($p < .05$). That is, H1a was partially supported but H1b and H1c were not supported.

Further, the normative commitment of part-time employees ($M = 3.97, SD = .97$) was significantly lower than the normative commitments of volunteers ($M = 4.87, SD = .91, p < .05$)

and practicum/internship workers ($M = 5.38$, $SD = .94$, $p < .001$). Regarding sport identity, practicum/internship workers ($M = 5.90$, $SD = 1.13$) were significantly higher than volunteers ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.59$, $p < .01$) and part-time employees ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.55$, $p < .005$) and full-time employees ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 1.08$) were significantly higher than part-time employees ($p < .05$). Unexpectedly, none of the hypotheses regarding normative commitment and sport identity was supported. Bonferroni post-hoc test results are shown in Table 3.

Table 1 - Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach's Alpha, and Correlations of Affective and Normative Commitments and Sport Identity

	M	SD	α	Affective Commitment	Normative Commitment	Sport Identity
Affective Commitment	5.27	.94	.75	1	.60*	.68*
Normative Commitment	4.81	1.10	.76		1	.65*
Sport Identity	5.15	1.52	.86			1

Note. * $p < .01$

Table 2 – Univariate Test Results on Affective and Normative Commitments and Sport Identity

	Univariate df	F	p	Partial η^2
Affective Commitment	83/3	6.27	.001	.185
Normative Commitment	83/3	6.70	<.001	.202
Sport Identity	83/3	7.47	<.001	.213

Table 3 - Means, Standard Errors, Bonferroni Test for Significant Differences among Scenarios on Perceived Organizational Image and Intention to Attend a Game

Dependent Variable	Employee Status	Mean	SD	Employee Status	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Affective Commitment	Full-time	5.81	.94	Volunteer	5.00	.72	.813	.021
	Full-time	5.81	.94	Part-time	4.74	1.02	.245	.003
	Intern	5.57	.82	Part-time	4.74	1.02	.833	.016
Normative Commitment	Volunteer	4.87	.91	Part-time	3.97	.97	.898	.026
	Intern	5.38	.94	Part-time	3.97	.97	1.41	<.001
Sport Identity	Intern	5.90	1.13	Volunteer	4.64	1.59	1.26	.007
	Intern	5.90	1.13	Part-time	4.24	1.55	1.67	.001
	Full-time	5.88	1.08	Part-time	4.24	1.55	1.53	.012

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare organizational commitment and sport identity of four employment groups (full-time, part-time, and practicum/internship workers and volunteers) in a university athletic department. All four groups reported high affective commitment. Specifically, the affective commitment of full-time workers was the highest and the affective commitment of practicum/internship workers was the second highest. Regarding normative commitment, practicum/internship workers and volunteers were higher than full-time workers while part-time workers were significantly lower than the other groups in normative commitment. In addition, all four groups showed a high level of sport identity. Interestingly, practicum/internship workers reported the highest sport identity among the four groups.

Although many hypotheses were not supported, the results were intriguing. In general, two unexpected patterns emerged from the results of this study. One interesting finding was practicum/internship workers reported high affective and normative commitments and sport identity. Practicum/internship workers in a university athletic department are more likely to be current or former students of the same university or individuals who might be highly attached to the athletic teams of the university. Thus, practicum/internship workers could be high in affective commitment and sport identity. Still, it is interesting practicum/internship workers identify themselves with the athletic department more than the other groups, and practicum/internship workers were more attached to the athletic department than volunteers and part-time workers. The most intriguing result regarding practicum/internship workers was

practicum/internship workers possessed the highest level of normative commitment. Most practicum/internship workers usually do not sign a legal employment contract and are not paid (if paid, not well paid); thus, it was not expected for the level of practicum/internship workers' normative commitment to be higher than the other groups. However, it is probable that the period of time (e.g., semester and year) practicum/internship workers have to stay and the evaluation of a site supervisor and faculty advisor might fortify the normative commitment of practicum/internship workers.

Another interesting result was that part-time workers displayed the lowest level of affective and normative commitments and sport identity. This result confirmed the result of previous research that part-time employees tended to have lower commitment than full-time employees (Chang & Chelladurai, 2003). However, it was unexpected that part-time workers of the athletic department were committed less than practicum/internship workers and volunteers. Especially in the sample of the current study, the age of part-time workers ($M = 21.41$, $SD = 1.66$) were not distinctive from the age of the two other groups, practicum/internship workers ($M = 22.62$, $SD = 1.27$) and volunteers ($M = 21.21$, $SD = 1.03$). Also, the job duties of part-time workers were not distinct from the other two groups. One possible explanation for this result is that many part-time workers might stay in the athletic department mainly for financial reasons and thus might be ready to leave the athletic department if they could find a full-time job or a higher paying part-time job somewhere else. In today's society, many part-time workers are as educated, knowledgeable, and skillful as full-time workers, but they choose to work part-time. However, part-time workers of the athletic department are likely to be the traditional type of part-time workers who take part-time positions because they cannot find a full-time position. Still, more research on the characteristics of the part-time workers in athletic departments should follow.

As discussed earlier, despite the importance of nontraditional workers in the sport industry, very few studies have explored the characteristics of nontraditional workers; thus, leading to a limited knowledge base concerning nontraditional workers. Further, some researchers have assumed the characteristics, perceptions, and attitudes of nontraditional workers (e.g., part-time workers) would be similar to other nontraditional workers (e.g., volunteers) (Cunningham & Mahoney, 2003; Kim et al., 2007). However, the current study indicated part-time workers, practicum/internship workers, and volunteers were clearly different in commitment and identity which may influence other factors such as job satisfaction, motivation, and turnover (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday et al., 1992). Thus, more studies should be conducted in this area. Since the current study was conducted with a small sample, replication of this study with a larger sample should follow. Also, the sample of the current study were workers of a very successful NCAA Division I athletic department. Thus, the commitment and identity levels of the workers might be higher than the individuals working in the athletic departments of different levels or divisions. In addition, it would be interesting to conduct the same study with employees of professional sport teams.

The results of this study can aid in serving human resources directors or different department managers who make hiring decisions in university athletic departments. In particular, part-time workers who received financial benefits were committed less to the athletic department than unpaid volunteers and practicum/internship workers. Thus, managers should be more

cautious when hiring part-time workers and might consider utilizing more practicum/internship workers or volunteers instead of part-time workers. Further, in spite of the high level organizational commitment and sport identity of practicum/internship workers and volunteers, the human resources department of the athletic department did not have any information, list, or record of their practicum/internship workers and volunteers. Practicum/internship workers and volunteers were hired and managed by each department independently but not in a very effective way. However, it is believed the effective management of volunteers and practicum/internship workers, who are highly committed to and strongly identified with the athletic department, can lead to better work performance and service and can also reduce the financial burden of hiring paid-staff (e.g., part-time workers).

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Appendix A

Survey Items

Affective Commitment

I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.
I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization.

Normative Commitment

I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.
Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.
This organization deserves my loyalty.
I owe a great deal to my organization.
I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.
I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.

Sport identity

I consider myself to be a "real" fan of (xxxx).
I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of (xxxx).
Being a fan of (xxx) is very important to me.