

Original Article

Influence of the perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and career commitment on football referees' turnover intention

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Abstract:

Although sports referees are a critical element of sporting events, with athletes and coaches, little is known about factors influencing referees' intention to quit their career. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the influence of perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and career commitment on football referees' turnover intention. Data were collected from certified football referees in South Korea ($N = 172$) and analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0. The results revealed paths from perceived organizational support to job satisfaction, career commitment, and turnover intention were statistically significant. Job satisfaction positively affected career commitment. Finally, job satisfaction and career commitment have negative influences on referees' turnover intention. The findings of the current study contribute to the field's understanding of how officials' psychological well-being (i.e., perceived organizational support) affects their turnover intention.

Key Words: Perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, career commitment, turnover intention, football referee

Introduction

Referees in sporting events are one of the essential human elements contributing to high-quality game experiences for participants and spectators (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013). Referees must remain highly concentrated and make split-second decisions throughout a match. Their performance on the field can influence the outcome of games (ÇoBan, 2010; Dell, Gervis, & Rhind, 2014). However, it has been challenging to recruit enough quality referees for sporting events. For example, the England Football Association has a difficult time recruiting sufficient top-quality referees for matches from school levels to professional levels (Brackenridge, Pitchford, & Wilson, 2011). This issue also exists in South Korea. According to the Korea Football Association (2016), there were 6,023 active referees in 2016. However, less than 10% were level 1 and international referees, indicating a severely insufficient number of top-quality football referees in South Korea. This phenomenon can be attributed to the high turnover rate of early career referees (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; Dell et al., 2014). Many referees quit or leave their career before becoming high-qualified referees.

Given the important role of referees in sporting events and persistent shortage of top-quality referees, it is imperative to understand factors influencing referees' turnover intention, which may consequently sustain this important human resource in sporting events. To date, however, there has been far less research on empirically exploring sports officials' organizational behavior (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; Kim, 2017). Therefore, this study proposed a framework to investigate the influence of perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and career commitment on football referees' turnover intention.

Perceived organizational support

Grounded in the organization support theory, perceived organizational support (POS) was defined as a person's "global beliefs about the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being and values their contributions" (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001, p. 501). Moreover, it has been found that POS is closely related to various employee outcomes, such as commitment, satisfaction, performance, and intention to leave. For example, Kim (2017) identified POS was a critical antecedent of sports officials' commitment and satisfaction. Also, a meta-analysis of 167 studies found POS has a strong positive influence on employees' commitment and satisfaction and a strong negative impact on employees' intention to leave (Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). However, research comprehensively examining the influence of POS on career commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention is scant. Therefore, to understand the influence of POS on football referees' commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intention, the following hypotheses were proposed.

Hypothesis 1: POS has a positive influence on referees' career commitment.

Hypothesis 2: POS has a positive influence on referees' job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: POS has a positive influence on referees' turnover intention.

Satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention

Job satisfaction, defined as “a pleasurable affective condition resulting from one’s appraisal of the way in which the experienced job situation meets one’s needs, value, and expectations” (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984, p.72), is perhaps the most commonly discussed topic in organizational behavior, as individuals with higher levels of job satisfaction can contribute to many positive behavioral outcomes (e.g., performance or commitment) (Chiu, Cho, & Won, 2014; ÇoBan, 2010). The level of satisfaction reflects an individual’s reaction to the extent that athletic experience meets one’s expectations (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984).

Commitment in the workplace refers to an employee’s psychological attachment to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In the literature of organizational behaviors, commitment has been one of the most often-studied topics in addition to job satisfaction, as commitment is considered a major factor of maintaining individuals’ careers (Harman, Lee, Mitchell, Felps, & Owens, 2007). The relationship between satisfaction and commitment is one of the most commonly investigated relationships in the literature on organizational management. A positive relationship between satisfaction and commitment is widely recognized and empirically confirmed by numerous studies across different domains (e.g., Porter, *et al.*, 1974; Boles, *et al.*, 2007; Chiu, Cho, & Won, 2014). In a similar vein, referees with higher levels of satisfaction perceived from their work may, therefore, have a higher level of commitment. Accordingly, we proposed the fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction has a positive influence on career commitment.

In addition, turnover intention was defined as an individual’s intent to leave an organization or quit work (Sager, Griffeth, & Hom, 1998). Turnover has long been a critical issue in the literature on organizational behavior, and it can lead to severe negative consequences for an organization (Wells & Peachey, 2011). Many studies have reported an individual’s satisfaction and commitment are the two most important predictors of that person’s turnover intention (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Although the relationship between satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention has been explored in the extant literature, it has not been empirically examined regarding sports referees. Hence, the following hypotheses were established.

Hypothesis 5: Job satisfaction has a negative influence on turnover intention.

Hypothesis 6: Career commitment has a negative influence on turnover intention.

Method

Participants and procedure

The participants of this study were football referees in South Korea. Referees registered in Korea Football Association were recruited using face-to-face survey. Of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 172 completed questionnaires were collected, accounting for the 86 % valid response rate. The details of sample characteristics were reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographics of respondents (*N* = 172)

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	172	100
Age (years)		
21-30	38	22.1
31-40	44	25.6
41-50	74	43.0
Over 51	16	9.3
Referee experience (years)		
Below 5 years	40	23.3
6-10	64	37.2
11-15	52	30.2
16-20	16	9.3

Measures

The survey instrument consists of four sections, including perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, career commitment, and turnover intention. First, the scales of perceived organizational support (four items), job satisfaction (three items), and career commitment (four items) were assessed using the four-item scale from Kim (2017). Finally, the three-item scale of turnover intention was adapted from Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino (1979). These items were originally written in English and translated into Korean, using back translation (Brislin, 1970). The Korean version of the survey instrument was carefully reviewed by sports management experts in South Korea. All items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted by SmartPLS 3.0 to validate the measures and test the hypothesized research model. This approach has the advantage of less restrictive assumptions about the data (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). PLS-SEM requires no distributional assumption, as it applied bootstrapping to estimate standard error for its parameter estimates (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2012). Hence, it is appropriate for analyzing the data of this study, which has a relatively small sample size ($N = 172$) (Hair et al., 2016).

Results

Common method variance

Due to common method variance (CMV), Harman's single factor test was conducted (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). It revealed a single factor was less than 50%, indicating CMV is not a concern in this study.

Measurement model assessment

As the next step, indicator reliability (factor loadings), convergent validity (average variance extracted, AVE), internal consistency reliability (composite reliability, CR, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients), and discriminant validity of the constructs were examined to evaluate the measurement model (Hair et al., 2016). As reported in Table 2, convergent validity was supported as all factor loading of the measures were highly significant ($p < .01$), ranging from .645 to .947, and AVE values ranged from .613 to .822, fulfilling the criterion (.50) suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The constructs possessed excellent reliability as the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all constructs were acceptably high, ranging from .789 to .892 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and the values of CR exceeded the criterion (.60) as suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988).

Table 2 Construct reliability and validity

Constructs/ items	Factor loading
Perceived organizational support ($\alpha = .814$, CR = .879, AVE = .647)	
Assistance is available from the officiating administration when I have a problem	.855
My officiating administration really cares about my well-being	.886
My officiating administration cares about my opinions	.716
My officiating administration tries to make my job as interesting as possible	.747
Job satisfaction ($\alpha = .784$, CR = .874, AVE = .699)	
Most days I am enthusiastic about my work	.882
I feel fairly satisfied with my present job	.828
I find real enjoyment in my work	.796
Career commitment ($\alpha = .789$, CR = .863, AVE = .613)	
I want a career in this vocation	.818
If I had all the money I needed, I would still want to be in this vocation	.645
I enjoy my vocation too much to give it up.	.824
This is my ideal vocation for my life work	.829
Turnover intention ($\alpha = .892$, CR = .933, AVE = .822)	
I often think about quitting my work	.836
I often consider transferring to a different job	.934
I will probably leave my job within the next year	.946

Discriminant validity was assessed with heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). If the HTMT value is below .90, discriminant validity has been supported between two constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). As reported in Table 3, HTMT values between two constructs were all below .90, demonstrating discriminant validity.

Table 3 Discriminant validity-Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. POS	-			
2. SAT	.604	-		
3. COM	.828	.621	-	
4. INT	.749	.683	.721	-

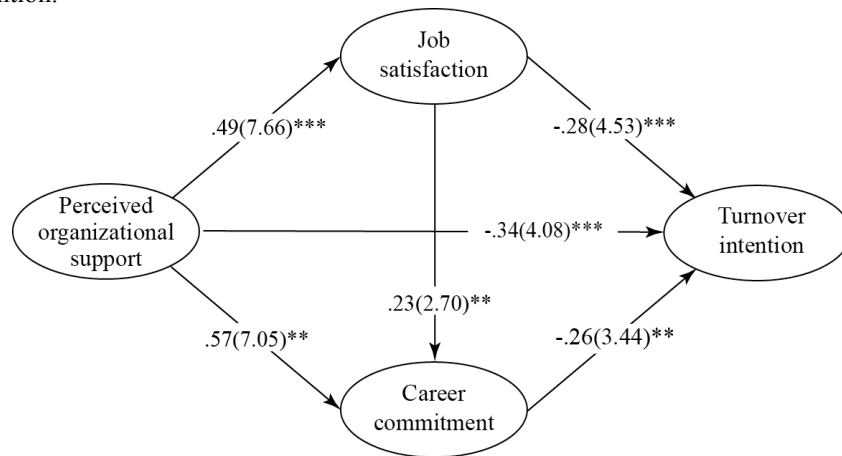
Note: POS = Perceived organizational support, SAT: Job satisfaction, COM: Career commitment, INT: Turnover intention

Structural model

Initially, potential collinearity issues of the structural model were assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF). It found all VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 1.997, which were much lower than 5, suggesting there were no significant issues of collinearity. As the next step, PLS algorithm procedures were performed to

examine the hypothesized relationships between the constructs (see Figure 1). The significance of relationships was examined by employing a bootstrapping algorithm (using 5000 resample). Table 4 reported path coefficient, standard deviation, and t -value for each path.

As reported in Table 4, all hypotheses were supported. The paths from perceived organizational support to job satisfaction, career commitment, and turnover intention were statistically significant. Job satisfaction positively affected career commitment. Finally, job satisfaction and career commitment have negative influences on turnover intention.



Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of POS on football referees' job satisfaction, career commitment, and turnover intention in South Korea. This study identified the critical role of POS for football referees in influencing their turnover intention. According to the findings of this study, discussion and suggestions are proposed as follows.

The findings reveal POS, satisfaction, and commitment have a strong influence on referees' turnover intention ($R^2 = .543$), indicating the importance of these factors on predicting referees' turnover intention. POS is the strongest predictor of turnover intention. This is consistent with the findings of Dell et al. (2014) that lack of organizational support significantly influences referees' intention to quit the game. However, other studies have shown POS has no direct effect on intention to continue (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013). This may be attributed to the partial mediating effects of commitment and satisfaction between POS and turnover intention, indicating commitment and job satisfaction can work with POS to weaken referees' intention to quit their work.

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for associations' referee administration. Due to the unique essence of referees' work, they are often under great pressure when officiating games. Support from organizations not only can increase referees' commitment and satisfaction toward their job, but also reduce their intention to quit officiating. The football association (i.e., Korea Football Association) needs to provide an organizational support program for young and less experienced referees. By doing so, it can reduce recruitment and training cost and increase the depth of officiating quality available to the game.

In addition, findings suggest the important roles of commitment and satisfaction in weakening their turnover intention. Understanding referees' current commitment and satisfaction to their work can be critical indicators of turnover intention. Therefore, the football association should also offer referees various internal marketing activities, such as educational training classes or fair reward systems for referees (Chiu et al., 2014). Such implementation of internal marketing would help referees strengthen their commitment and satisfaction and enhance their motivation, inspiration, and retention.

Limitations and future research

Although the findings of this study offer a better understanding of the influence of POS on job satisfaction, career commitment, and turnover intention in the sports officiating literature, some limitations should be addressed for future research. First, this study collected data in South Korea, where most referees are not full-time referees in professional leagues. Future studies should collect data from full-time referees with a stable working condition. It must be noted that all respondents were male referees. Female referees' perception toward their jobs should also be considered and may provide insightful implication for future research.

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