

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

A Study on the Relationship between Servant Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Job Satisfaction in Fitness Clubs

Kyongmin Lee¹, Yongseek Kim² and Woojeong Cho³

¹Jeonju University, Department of Sports Coaching, Jeonju, Korea, ²New Mexico Highlands University, Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, New Mexico, USA, ³Korea Maritime & Ocean University, Department of Ocean Physical Education, Pusan, Korea

Abstract

In the field of organizational behavior theory, the influence of servant leadership and organizational culture on the job satisfaction of organization members has been actively studied to effectively achieve the goals set by the organization. However, there is a severe lack of studies on the relationship between servant leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction in the sport industry. Therefore, this study empirically analyzed the causal relationships among the three variables by surveying 320 employees in fitness clubs located in Pusan, Korea. Surveys were conducted using the convenience sampling method, and a total of 300 surveys were used in the analysis. Data analysis methods included descriptive statistics analysis, exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis using SPSS 19.0. Key results from this study were as follows. First, servant leadership in fitness clubs had a positive influence on organizational culture. Second, servant leadership in fitness clubs had a positive influence on the job satisfaction of their employees. Third, the organizational culture of fitness clubs had a positive influence on the job satisfaction of employees. The results of this study can contribute to establishing strategies to advance the organizational performance and effective human resource management of fitness clubs.

Key words: *job satisfaction, organizational culture, organizational performance, servant leadership*

Introduction

Amidst uncertain global economic conditions, it is important for sport organizations to effectively utilize resources to satisfy their customers and achieve organizational objectives. As such, sport organizations are focusing on strengthening the core competitiveness of their organizations and improving their core business competencies to a global level. A key factor that must be considered in order to increase the competitiveness of an organization is human resource management; in this regard, the job satisfaction of organizational members is directly related to the productivity of the organization, and improving job satisfaction is considered a very important factor for the success of sport organizations (Ramezani, Teimori, & Nedae, 2013).

Job satisfaction is defined as an emotional evaluation towards a job by an individual (Locke, 1976). Employees with high job satisfaction have lower turnover and absence rates than those with lower job satisfaction and are more likely to align with the organization, with a stronger tendency to continue working for their current organization (Lease, 1998). As such, job satisfaction is used as a key indicator in evaluating whether an organization has achieved its goals, and acts as a factor that causes members of the organization to strive for individual and organizational objectives (Jung, E. Lee, & S. Lee, 2004). Therefore, research on factors that can influence job satisfaction is necessary to improve organizational performance and human resource management in sport organizations.

Leadership refers to a process of influencing the members



Correspondence:

W. Cho

Korea Maritime & Ocean University, Department of Ocean Physical Education, 727 Taejong-ro, Yeongdo-Gu, Pusan, Korea

E-mail: mikecho@kmou.ac.kr

within an organization for the purposes of achieving organizational objectives, and can influence the attitudes and behaviors of its members and their interactions (Robbins & Judge, 2009). As such, a study on leadership in sport organizations found leadership to be an important variable that influences job satisfaction. In studies on leadership in the sport sector and job satisfaction, many researchers have focused on transactional leadership and transformational leadership, studying the relationship between the two variables (Ismaelzadeh & Tavakkol, 2016). However, in the case of transformational/transactional leadership, they assume that leaders play a dominant role which is then followed by the members; as such, these forms of leadership are being criticized for their limitations in proactively responding to rapid changes in the management environment and nurturing intelligent and creative human resources, which are required for the sustainable growth of organizations (Chu & Lee, 2017). As such, there is a newfound highlight on studies that focus on servant leadership, which focuses on the delegation of authority and horizontal relationships instead of vertical relationships, between leaders and members, and its relationship with job satisfaction (Ji, 2012) in the sports industry.

A servant leader prioritizes serving the members of the organization instead of personal gain, and focuses on meeting the needs of its members (Spears, 1995). Rather than using their authority to achieve organizational objectives, servant leaders focus on the roles of presenting future directions, perceiving employees' difficulties, and healing their wounds (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). As such, servant leadership focuses on the dual focus of achieving organizational objectives as well as the growth and development of its employees, based on the emotional solidarity between the leader and the members of the organization (Mayer, Barders, & Piccolo, 2008), and it can play an important role in improving the overall satisfaction towards the work performed by the members of the organization.

When examining studies on the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction, a study on hospital employees (McCann, Graves, & Cox, 2014) revealed that the factors of servant leadership, including altruistic healing, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasion, and stewardship had positive correlations with factors of job satisfaction, including external satisfaction, internal satisfaction, and general satisfaction. A study on employees in the service industries (Kang & Kim, 2015) also found that servant leadership had a positive influence on job satisfaction; servant leadership factors that contributed to higher job satisfaction included wisdom, persuasion, and stewardship. There have been reports of significant positive relationships between the two variables in sport settings. The servant leadership factors of a marine sport center leader, including sense of community, vision, presentation, and forming bonds of sympathy, had positive influences on the job satisfaction of employees (Ji, 2012).

Along with leadership, another important factor that can influence job satisfaction is organizational culture. Organizational culture refers to the sets of values, beliefs, and ideologies shared among the members of an organization, and it is an important factor that influences the behaviors of individual members, as well as the overall behavior of the organization (Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 1991). Therefore, the organizational culture of an organization can influence the job satisfaction of the members of the organization. For exam-

ple, an organization with strong task orientation emphasizes task completion, achieving objectives, and competitive advantage, leading to low job satisfaction in employees (Cameron & Quinn, 1999); in an organization with strong relationship orientation, which is characterized by mutual teamwork and cooperation between employees, job satisfaction may be high (Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983).

The relationship between organizational culture and job satisfaction in previous studies has indicated that a diverse range of organizational cultures have had significant positive or negative influence on the job satisfaction of employees. In a study of employees of national oil companies (Zahari & Shurbagi, 2012), there was a high positive correlation between organizational culture factors, such as clan culture, adhocracy culture, market culture, hierarchy culture, and job satisfaction ($r=.89$). In a study with employees in small and medium enterprises who had participated in specialized training for SMEs (M. Kim, N. Kim, & No, 2017), market culture, hierarchy culture, clan culture, and adhocracy culture were the organizational culture factors that had positive influences on job satisfaction. However, in a study of elite sport leaders (Lee, 2011), adhocracy, clan, and market cultures all had negative influences on job satisfaction.

On the other hand, the role of a leader is very important in the formation and change of organizational cultures. In general, the beliefs, values, and behaviors of the chief executives of companies can significantly influence the formation of organizational cultures (Schein, 1983). Moreover, the helpful behaviors of leaders for their employees, including presenting visions for the members of the organization to make correct choices and helping them achieve organizational objectives in an effective manner, can contribute to the creation of a desirable organizational culture. It is also the role of a leader to seek stability in the organization amidst changing environments, and to create an organizational culture that can effectively respond to such changes (Sharaaz, 2014). Therefore, the leadership type of managers within organizations can influence the formation and change of organizational cultures.

Servant leaderships typically have a positive influence on organizational culture, as they maintain the value of community based on the values of trust, honesty, and consideration, as well as provide their members with appropriate opportunities for growth (Setyaningrum, 2017). In a study by Park (2011), who studied leaders in Taekwondo gyms, servant leadership had a positive influence on organizational culture. Specifically, trust, as a factor of servant leadership, contributed to the formation of a clan culture and a hierarchy culture; presenting vision contributed to creating a clan culture and a market culture; and modesty contributed to creating a hierarchy culture and an adhocracy culture. In a study on Chinese employees working in Korean conglomerates by Han, Kim and Kim (2016), the emotional healing factor of servant leadership had a positive influence on market culture, adhocracy culture, and clan culture; altruistic calling positively influenced adhocracy culture; and persuasion positively influenced advocacy culture. However, servant leadership did not have a significant influence on hierarchy-focused culture, with traits such as orders, rules, and regulations (Han et al., 2016).

As seen above, it is critical to understand the causal relationships among servant leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction to achieve organizational objectives and to establish effective human resource management strategies

in rapidly changing environments; however, there is a lack of studies that empirically analyze the relationship among these three factors in the sport industry. Moreover, the results of relevant existing studies have indicated differences in servant leadership factors and organizational culture factors that influence job satisfaction, as well as servant leadership factors that influence organizational culture, depending on the types of organizations (B. Kim & J.S. Kim, 2012). Therefore, empirical research is required on the characteristics of servant leadership and the types of organizational culture required for improving job satisfaction among members of sport organizations, as well as characteristics of servant leadership that influence the types of organizational culture in sport organizations. As such, this study has empirically analyzed the relationship between servant leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction in members of Korean fitness clubs.

Based on theoretical discussions on the relationship between servant leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction, the following hypotheses can be presented.

Hypothesis 1: The servant leadership of fitness clubs will influence organizational culture.

Hypothesis 2: The servant leadership of fitness clubs will influence job satisfaction of members of the organization.

Hypothesis 3: The organizational culture of fitness clubs will influence the job satisfaction of members of the organization.

Methods

Participants

This study selected a sample group of participants among employees of fitness clubs located in Pusan, Korea, and conducted a survey of 320 employees of fitness clubs using convenience sampling. A total of 300 valid surveys, excluding 20 with insincere responses, were used for analysis.

Measures

Aside from the general characteristics of participants, all survey items were composed of 5-point Likert scales. The surveys used were verified for content validity through an expert panel, and the formation validity and the reliability of the survey was verified using exploratory factor analysis and internal consistency analysis.

To measure the servant leadership of direct managers as perceived by their employees, the survey developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) was translated to serve the goals of this study. The survey questionnaire on servant leadership was composed of five factors: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasion, and stewardship, and each factor included four items. As shown in Table 1, the explanatory power of all servant leadership factors was found to be 81.97% of total variance; the reliability coefficients of the survey questionnaire were all over 0.7 ($\alpha=.896-.938$), thus demonstrating reliability.

Table 1. Factor and Reliability Analysis of the Servant Leadership Survey

| Item | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Stewardship4 | .907 | | | | |
| Stewardship2 | .899 | | | | |
| Stewardship1 | .881 | | | | |
| Stewardship3 | .850 | | | | |
| Emotional2 | | .880 | | | |
| Emotional3 | | .876 | | | |
| Emotional4 | | .863 | | | |
| Emotional1 | | .856 | | | |
| Altruistic2 | | | .889 | | |
| Altruistic3 | | | .870 | | |
| Altruistic4 | | | .857 | | |
| Altruistic1 | | | .849 | | |
| Wisdom2 | | | | .884 | |
| Wisdom3 | | | | .882 | |
| Wisdom1 | | | | .842 | |
| Wisdom4 | | | | .835 | |
| Persuasion3 | | | | | .852 |
| Persuasion1 | | | | | .836 |
| Persuasion2 | | | | | .825 |
| Persuasion4 | | | | | .818 |
| Eigenvalue | 3.389 | 3.381 | 3.326 | 3.223 | 3.075 |
| % of Variance | 16.943 | 16.906 | 16.632 | 16.116 | 15.374 |
| Cumulative % | 16.943 | 33.849 | 50.481 | 66.598 | 81.971 |
| Cronbach's α | .935 | .938 | .933 | .917 | .896 |

Legend: Altruistic=Altruistic calling, Emotion=Emotional healing

To measure the organizational culture perceived by employees of fitness clubs, the measurement tools developed by Quinn and McGrath (1985) were used as a basis, along with survey items used by Jung, Nam and Kwon (2011), modified appro-

priately to serve the objectives of this study. The survey questionnaire on organizational culture was composed of the four factors of market culture, adhocracy culture, hierarchy culture, and clan culture, and each factor was composed of four items.

Table 2 shows that the explanatory power of all organizational culture factors was found to be 80.54% of total variance; the reliability coefficients of the survey questionnaire were all over 0.7 ($\alpha=.898-.929$), thus demonstrating internal consistency.

Table 2. Factor and Reliability Analysis of the Organizational Culture Survey

| Item | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Adhocracy3 | .880 | | | |
| Adhocracy2 | .866 | | | |
| Adhocracy4 | .855 | | | |
| Adhocracy1 | .779 | | | |
| Hierarchy3 | | .939 | | |
| Hierarchy2 | | .932 | | |
| Hierarchy4 | | .853 | | |
| Hierarchy1 | | .848 | | |
| Clan3 | | | .892 | |
| Clan1 | | | .870 | |
| Clan2 | | | .868 | |
| Clan4 | | | .832 | |
| Market1 | | | | .893 |
| Market3 | | | | .826 |
| Market4 | | | | .789 |
| Market2 | | | | .770 |
| Eigenvalue | 3.309 | 3.283 | 3.206 | 3.088 |
| % of Variance | 20.684 | 20.520 | 20.040 | 19.302 |
| Cumulative % | 20.684 | 41.204 | 61.243 | 80.545 |
| Cronbach's α | .929 | .924 | .912 | .898 |

To measure the job satisfaction of fitness club employees, measurement tools which were originally developed by Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969), then translated and modified by Park (2009) to fit the purposes of this study, were used. It included one factor containing five items. The reliability coefficient was found to be $\alpha=.901$ and thus reliable.

Data analysis

The SPSS 19.0 statistical program was used to analyze the 300 surveys collected for this study. To identify the demographic characteristics of the fitness club employees, frequency analysis was conducted. Multiple regression analysis was

used to verify the study hypotheses. All statistical significance tests in this study were verified at the $\alpha=.05$ level.

Results

Analysis of descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 3 shows the results of descriptive statistics and correlations between the three factors. The measurement variables showed significant positive correlations at $p<.05$ and $p<.01$ levels. However, there were no significant correlations between altruistic calling and hierarchy culture, and between stewardship and clan culture.

Table 3. Correlation between Servant Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Job Satisfaction (N=300)

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|------------|------|-----|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| Altruistic | 3.37 | .95 | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Emotional | 3.20 | .98 | .383** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Wisdom | 3.43 | .93 | .304** | .355** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Persuasion | 3.36 | .90 | .386** | .397** | .348** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Steward | 3.35 | .98 | .364** | .344** | .288** | .188** | 1 | | | | | |
| Clan | 3.54 | .85 | .131* | .306** | .152** | .191** | .097 | 1 | | | | |
| Adhocracy | 3.50 | .86 | .451** | .430** | .324** | .352** | .318** | .415** | 1 | | | |
| Market | 3.59 | .75 | .407** | .370** | .364** | .329** | .268** | .299** | .583** | 1 | | |
| Hierarchy | 3.47 | .95 | .093 | .138* | .289** | .124* | .174** | .120* | .169** | .249** | 1 | |
| JobSatis | 3.64 | .73 | .320** | .295** | .311** | .308** | .213** | .354** | .472** | .485** | .204** | 1 |

Legend: $p<.05^*$, $p<.01^{**}$, Altruistic=Altruistic calling, Emotion=Emotional healing, Steward=Stewardship, JobSatis=Job Satisfaction

Hypothesis verification

The verification of the results of Hypothesis 1 is shown in Table 4. Servant leadership explained 10.1% of the total variance in clan culture; only emotional healing was found to have a significant positive influence on clan culture. Servant leader-

ship explains 31.4% of the total variance in adhocracy culture; the comparative influences of servant leadership factors were, in order, altruistic calling, emotional healing, and persuasion. Moreover, servant leadership explained 26.8% of the total variance in market culture; the comparative influences of servant

leadership factors were, in order, altruistic calling, wisdom, and emotional healing. Lastly, servant leadership explained 9.4% of the total variance in hierarchy culture; only wisdom

had a significant positive influence on hierarchy culture. As such, Hypothesis 1, which proposed that servant leadership in fitness clubs influences organizational culture, was accepted.

Table 4. Influence of Servant Leadership on the Organizational Culture of Fitness Centers (N=300)

| Variable | Clan | | | Adhocracy | | | Market | | | Hierarchy | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
| | B | SEB | β | B | SEB | β | B | SEB | β | B | SEB | β |
| Altruistic | -.006 | .058 | -.007 | .234 | .051 | .258*** | .181 | .046 | .230*** | -.038 | .065 | -.038 |
| Emotion | .236 | .057 | .272*** | .192 | .050 | .217*** | .119 | .045 | .156** | .016 | .063 | .017 |
| Wisdom | .034 | .057 | .037 | .094 | .050 | .101 | .149 | .045 | .187** | .260 | .063 | .257*** |
| Persuasion | .072 | .060 | .076 | .108 | .054 | .112* | .085 | .048 | .103 | .025 | .067 | .023 |
| Steward | -.016 | .054 | -.019 | .087 | .047 | .099 | .044 | .042 | .058 | .100 | .060 | .104 |
| R ² | | .101*** | | | .314*** | | | .268*** | | | .094*** | |
| F | | 6.954 | | | 26.871 | | | 21.581 | | | 6.096 | |

Legend: p<.05*, p<.01**, p<.001***, Altruistic=Altruistic calling, Emotion=Emotional healing, Steward=Stewardship

The verification of the results of Hypothesis 2 is shown in Table 5. Servant leadership explained 18.6% of total variance in job satisfaction. The comparative influences of servant leadership factors on job satisfaction were found to be in the

order of wisdom, altruistic calling, and persuasion. As such, Hypothesis 2, which proposed that servant leadership in fitness clubs influences job satisfaction, was accepted.

Table 5. Influence of Servant Leadership of Fitness Clubs on Job Satisfaction (N=300)

| Variable | Job satisfaction | | |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|
| | B | SE B | β |
| Altruistic | .122 | .047 | .160* |
| Emotion | .078 | .046 | .105 |
| Wisdom | .128 | .046 | .164** |
| Persuasion | .112 | .049 | .140* |
| Steward | .035 | .044 | .047 |
| R ² | | .186*** | |
| F | | 13.376 | |

Legend: p<.05*, p<.01**, p<.001***, Altruistic=Altruistic calling, Emotion=Emotional healing, Steward=Stewardship

The verification of the results of Hypothesis 3 is shown in Table 6. Organizational culture was found to account for 31.9% of the total variance in job satisfaction; the comparative influ-

ences of the factors were found to be, in order, market, adhocracy, and clan. As such, Hypothesis 3, which proposed that organizational culture influences job satisfaction, was accepted.

Table 6. Influence of Organizational Culture of Fitness Clubs on Job Satisfaction (N=300)

| Variable | Job satisfaction | | |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|
| | B | SEB | β |
| Clan | .143 | .045 | .168** |
| Adhocracy | .187 | .052 | .223*** |
| Market | .279 | .059 | .286*** |
| Hierarchy | .058 | .038 | .075 |
| R ² | | .319*** | |
| F | | 34.387 | |

p<.05*, p<.01**, p<.001***

Discussion

This study was conducted to empirically identify the relationship between servant leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction in employees of fitness clubs. This section presents a discussion as follows, based on the study results.

First, servant leadership was found to have a significant positive influence on organizational culture. These results are in line with a study by Setyaningrum (2017) which has assert-

ed that servant leadership is a leading variable that influences the maintenance and formation of organizational culture. Among the servant leadership factors shown by managers of fitness clubs, emotional healing had a positive influence on clan, adhocracy, and market cultures, with the exception of hierarchy culture. Therefore, to establish the bonds of sympathy through cooperation and communication between members, to strengthen adaptability to changing external environments,

and to maximize the productivity and efficiency of achieving organizational objectives (Quinn & McGrath, 1985), managers of fitness clubs should help employees who have had personal difficulties through emotional healing and, at the same time, create an environment where employees can freely state their difficulties (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

Along with emotional healing, altruistic calling was found to be an important factor that influenced adhocracy culture and market culture in fitness clubs. Externally-oriented organizational cultures, such as adhocracy and market cultures, place importance on adapting to the external environment and competition (Quinn & McGrath, 1985), and may often overlook the relationships between members. Therefore, it is important for fitness club managers to place a priority on meeting employees' needs instead of personal gain through altruistic calling (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), forming emotional solidarity with the members of the organization, and aiming to achieve change and objectives within the organization.

Servant leadership in fitness clubs was found to have a statistically significant positive influence on job satisfaction. These results are in line with existing studies, which have asserted that servant leadership has a positive influence on job satisfaction (Kang & Kim, 2015; McCann et al., 2014). This indicates that managers should play the role of the servant leader to increase the positive attitudes of fitness club employees towards their jobs.

In particular, the sub-factors of servant leadership in fitness club managers, such as wisdom, altruistic calling, and persuasion, were found to influence job satisfaction. Therefore, the most important roles of fitness club managers as servant leaders are to present a direction to move forward for their employees and to focus on the attention of the employees and bilateral conversations, rather than engaging in authority, unilateral orders, and control, to raise job satisfaction (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

Lastly, market, adhocracy, and clan cultures, among the organizational cultures of fitness clubs, were found to positively influence the job satisfaction of employees, while hierarchy culture did not have a significant influence on job satisfaction. These results are in line with a study by Kim and Hur (2013) studying public enterprises. Thus, to raise the job satisfaction of fitness club employees, managers of fitness clubs should strive for an externally-oriented organizational culture that respects improvements to productivity and the value of creativity, rather than oppressive methods through formal processes, orders, and control. Moreover, they should also strive to create an organizational culture that focuses on internal collaboration, such as trust, cooperation, and cohesiveness between the members of the organization (Quinn & McGrath, 1985).

This study has examined the characteristics of servant leadership and the types of organizational culture needed to improve the job satisfaction of fitness club employees and the characteristics of servant leadership that were appropriate for the types of organizational culture in fitness clubs. The results of this study may be helpful to provide basic data required for improving organizational performance and effective human resource management in fitness clubs.

Despite the implications of this study, the following limitations to the study, and future directions, can be noted. First, the level of servant leadership in fitness clubs relied on employee perceptions instead of self-evaluations of managers, which may have led to difficulties in accurately measuring the level

of servant leadership of the managers. Second, as mentioned by B. Kim and J.S. Kim (2012), differences in organizational culture may lead to results in other sport organizations that differ from the aforementioned relationships among servant leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction in fitness clubs. Therefore, future studies should cover other sport organizations to empirically research the relationship among the three variables. Third, servant leadership, self-leadership, authentic leadership, and super leadership are being introduced into the realm of organizational behavior as alternatives to traditional leadership. Future studies should focus on the relationships among these new leadership types, organizational culture and job satisfaction to improve the organizational performance of sport organizations.

Acknowledgements

There are no acknowledgements.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Received: 29 July 2018 | **Accepted:** 17 August 2018 | **Published:** 01 October 2018

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