
Editorial: Positive organisational scholarship and behaviour in sport management

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1 Introduction

Positive organisational scholarship (POS) is an umbrella term that provides an organising frame for research activity on positive states, outcomes, and generative mechanisms in individuals, dyads, groups, organisations, and societies (Cameron et al., 2003; Roberts, 2006). Positive organisational behaviour (POB), in turn, seeks to improve employee performance and organisational competitive advantage by focusing on state-like strengths and psychological capacities that are positive, measurable, developable, and performance-related, with four key components: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency (Luthans et al., 2006). Although more than 3,000 articles have been published relating to POS and/or POB in various industrial sectors and organisational settings (Rothmann and van Zyl, 2013), the sport management scholarly community has failed to underpin its research endeavours in and around POS/POB. This lack of explicit positioning through the lens of POS is somewhat surprising (if not paradoxical) when one considers that the claimed legitimations of sport are largely ‘positive’ as they relate to health, salubrious socialisation, economic, and community development, as well as national identity (Chalip, 2006). Indeed, as Walker et al. (2015) pointed out, empirical studies have shown that sport organisations impart significant influences on contemporary society, yielding positive and lasting effects on communities (Eckstein and Delaney, 2002), economies (Hefner, 1990), and other social mechanisms that influence individual behaviour (Coakley, 2011).

Furthermore, Todd and Kent (2009) offered the theoretical insight that a critical area that distinguishes sporting contexts more than other organisational settings may be the psychology of employees. Although psychology has been criticised as being primarily dedicated to addressing mental illness rather than mental ‘wellness’ (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008), the seminal work by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) emphasised positive psychological traits, states, and behaviours. This ‘positive psychology’ (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) – to which Todd and Kent (2009) implicitly refer – has subsequently had a great effect on the field of organisational behaviour (OB). Indeed, both Luthans (2002) and Wright (2003) argued that framing research with a positive lens through POB should be the way forward for organisational and management scholars.

2 Why POS/POB? Why now?

This special issue in the *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing* brings together work that promotes the positive manifestations inside and in relation to sport organisations through the lenses of POS and POB. A total of 18 papers were submitted, six of which were selected based on their quality of research and relevance to the special issue’s aims. Clearly, the number of submissions indicates the desire and/or need of sport management scholars to communicate the positive elements associated with organising and managing sport. We believe this desire and/or need is a scholarly ‘reaction’ that partly derives from the widespread and publicised social irresponsibility (match fixing, gender inequality, financial problems, racial vilifications, bribing, illegal gambling, unsocial labour conditions, etc.), which, in turn, has led to an increased attention to the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the sporting context (Breitbarth et al., 2015; Kent, 2016). After all, empirical evidence exists that bad is

stronger than good (Baumeister et al., 2001) in the sense that human beings (organisational actors, for example) react more strongly and more quickly to negative phenomena than to positive phenomena because (organisational) existence is threatened. To some degree, this reflects the way in which the sport management scholarly community has been trying (for almost 40 years now) to identify more effective and efficient processes and practices associated with the design and management of sport systems in order to reinforce and justify the significance and value of the sport management field (Chalip, 2006).

However, issues such as ‘irresponsible (organisational) behaviour’, ‘organisational slack’, ‘antisocial behaviour’, or ‘reinforcement of community differences through sport events’, to name but a few, do not necessarily have to dominate the sport management research as these issues connote a deficit (or problem-solving) approach. Through such an approach, the process is a well-established one. We first identify the key problems and challenges (such as those referred to above), and then generate alternative solutions to these problems that are based on the identification of the root causes of those problems. The third step is to evaluate and then choose the most optimal of these different solutions. The fourth and final stage is putting this chosen solution into practice and following up on it to ensure that the problem is actually solved (Cameron and Lavine, 2006). However, as Linley et al. (2013) pointed out, the focus of this approach is, by definition, on the negative, in the form of the problems to be solved and the deficits to be filled.

In contrast, at the core of the POS and POB are the so-called ‘heliotropic effect’ (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) and the ‘abundance approach’ (Cameron et al., 2003). The former borrows from the natural phenomenon of heliotropism and posits that a positive environment is the preferred condition because it engenders positive energy and life-giving resourcefulness (Cameron and Spreitzer, 2013). The abundance approach, as explained by Linley et al. (2013, p.4), involves four stages. It begins by identifying the peak experiences of when the (sport) organisation and its people (in our case, athletes, administrators, managers, volunteers, board members, etc.) have been at their best. The second step involves identifying and understanding the enablers of these optimal performances (such as sound governance mechanisms, volunteers’ training and development; employees’ commitment, identification, pride, passion, etc.). The third stage is creating sustainable impact through seeing what of these enablers of optimal performance can be continued and replicated in the future. The fourth and final part is designing interventions to create an ideal, desired future characterised by extraordinary performance. That being said, it is important to remember that the ‘negative’ element is always present in POS/POB. In fact, as Cameron and Spreitzer (2013, p.8) put it, “POS does not ignore the negative; instead it seeks to investigate the positive processes, outcomes, and interpretations embedded in negative phenomena”.

The papers in this special issue build on these foundations; that is, the ‘heliotropic effect’ and the ‘abundance approach’. The following section offers a brief overview of these contributions.

3 Overview of contributions

In the first study, Papadimitriou et al. investigate the role of passion in forming job and career satisfaction among employees in the sport industry using the dualistic model of

passion developed by Vallerand et al. (2003). Their research, which was conducted within a context of austerity measures, aimed to examine the mediating effects of job security in the relationship between passion and satisfaction at work. Employees within Greek municipal sport organisations completed a self-administered questionnaire ($N = 170$) in order to measure their level of passion towards their work (both harmonious and obsessive), their job and career satisfaction, and their perceptions of job security. The findings reveal that harmonious passion is significantly positively related to both job and career satisfaction, and that job security mediates these relationships. Papadimitriou et al.'s study demonstrates the benefits of having harmoniously passionate employees, as well as the importance of strengthening or retaining feelings of job security under drastic socio-economic measures.

Swanson and Kent used a positive psychology approach to gain insights into employees working within the professional sports industry. The purpose of their study was to assess the role of psychological fulfilment in the form of sport employee pride. This study also addressed the role of identification with a specific sport and introduced this concept to the OB literature more generally. More than 1,000 employees from five different professional sports leagues participated in their study, with structural equation modelling results providing support for sport identification and employee pride having a positive influence on satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour. The implications for sport managers that Swanson and Kent's study puts forward are that employees working in this environment can have a psychological connection with a particular sport, which in turn augments employee pride and leads to positive attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. Therefore, the results of their study are significant for sport managers in relation to human resource decisions and promoting positive psychology in the workplace.

One means of determining contributing factors for the low representation of women in collegiate sport careers is to consider this phenomenon from the perspective of OB, positive worker psychology, mental well-being, needs, interests, satisfaction, and perceptions of environment fit. In her study, Weatherford draws on person-environment fit theory to describe how individuals fit into their work environments while identifying distinct types of fit and specific predictors and outcomes. The purpose of her study was to determine the influence of gender on fit perceptions, while also establishing specific fit predictors and outcomes as the most relevant to National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) administrators and head coaches. Participants overall perceived person-job fit most positively, followed by overall fit and person-organisation fit, indicating that person-job fit is the most accurate indicator of fit among NCAA head coaches and administrators.

The point of departure of Dickson et al.'s study is that the decision to volunteer is influenced by expectations of positive emotions and that positive relationships underpin a sense of community. Therefore, they set out to identify antecedents to a sport events volunteer's sense of community. Dickson et al. argue that although previous research indicates that sense of community increases after the event, and that sense of community enhances volunteer's satisfaction and commitment, we know little about those factors that are likely to lead to a sense of community within sport-event volunteers. Having recruited participants from the World Rowing Championships and the IPC Athletics World Championships, Dickson et al. indicate that role and goal clarity were not distinct variables, and that clarity and individualised consideration both positively impact sense

of community, while length of volunteer's tenure and workgroup size do not impact a volunteer's sense of community.

The fifth contribution to this special issue comes from Harman and Doherty and also draws on the context of sport volunteerism. The authors argue that the nature of the exchange relationship between an individual and the organisation for which they work or volunteer is fundamental to the individual's wellbeing and the organisation's success. Psychological contract represents an individual's expectations surrounding that relationship, and fulfilment of the contract is purported to be a critical positive force. Therefore, their study assesses the content of volunteer coaches' psychological contract and the impact of the fulfilment of that contract on their satisfaction, commitment, and intent to continue. Coaches reported both relational and transactional expectations of their club, with the findings highlighting the complex nature of psychological contract fulfilment as a positive aspect of an effective volunteer environment.

The last contribution is that of Kim et al., who argue that in today's sporting world, the ability of managers to retain key employees is vital in any business. Based on this, the authors look at how managerial leadership practices can create more positive workplaces. Drawing on the NCAA Division I football league, their study sought to determine the relationship between a head coach's authentic leadership and job satisfaction of their assistant coaches, the mediating effect of psychological capital (PsyCap) on said relationship, and the effects of job satisfaction on overall life satisfaction. The study's results indicate that the relationship between a head coach's authentic leadership and assistant coaches' job satisfaction is not significant. Interestingly, however, hypotheses regarding the mediating effect of PsyCap on the relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction, and the positive relationship of job satisfaction on life satisfaction, were both supported.

3 Concluding thoughts

These papers provide but a small sample of recent and ongoing work on the 'positive' elements in and around sport organisations. As the articles illustrate, there are many complex and interesting avenues of inquiry that warrant further investigation. We very much hope that these papers, both individually and collectively, will encourage further significant theoretical, methodological, and empirical advances.

As a final note, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all contributors to this special issue, including the authors of the articles, the anonymous reviewers who devoted their voluntary time to provide valuable feedback to the authors, and the editorial team at Inderscience that was helpful throughout the process.

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