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DETERMINANTS OF JOB SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION AMONG PRACTITIONERS EMPLOYED IN INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into factors that influence job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among intercollegiate athletics department employees. Factors influencing job satisfaction could impact one's job performance and willingness to remain in a job. When employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to remain at their job and successfully complete tasks associated with the job (Kaltenbaugh, 2009; Dixon & Warner, 2010). The purpose of this study was to gain insight into factors influencing job satisfaction. Five individuals employed within intercollegiate athletics departments participated in this study. Four of the participants worked at NCAA Division I institutions. One participant worked at an NCAA Division II institution. Two themes responsible for feelings of satisfaction and two themes connected to feelings of dissatisfaction emerged from the interview data. The themes related to satisfaction were: (a) student development and achievement and (b) workplace relationships and environment. The themes related to dissatisfaction were: (a) personnel management and (b) financial pressures/lack of resources. Further examination of perspectives and experiences of current employees could be beneficial to those who are interested in pursuing a career in this profession. Understanding the elements that contribute to job satisfaction could help upper level management attract and retain quality employees. In addition, these findings can help individuals who possess an interest in entering the sport industry be better prepared for the challenges and circumstances they might encounter.

Introduction

The concept of job satisfaction has been examined over the past several decades and various authors of scholarly works have studied and discussed this concept

from different angles and dimensions. Edwin Locke's (1976) description of job satisfaction has been widely utilized in scholarly work. Locke described job satisfaction as the pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Other scholars have also identified the affection or liking for a job as a determinant of job satisfaction. For example, Agho, Mueller, and Price (1993) stated that job satisfaction may be perceived as the extent to which employees like their work.

In addition to an affective liking for a job, other scholars have stated that job satisfaction is the product of numerous intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. One of the most significant contributions to research related to job satisfaction has been Herzberg's (1966) dual factor job satisfaction model. This model, the "Motivation-Hygiene Theory," was developed after conducting interviews with employees and analyzing job elements that led employees to be satisfied or dissatisfied with their work. According to Herzberg, satisfaction was driven by intrinsic factors related to the nature of the job and dissatisfaction was driven by extrinsic factors that related to the environment surrounding the job. His model identified achievement, interesting work, and advancement as factors that influenced job satisfaction. Company policy, supervision, working conditions, salary, status, and lack of security were identified as factors that contributed to job dissatisfaction.

Duffy and Richard (2006) state that job satisfaction consists of two categories, work satisfaction and environmental satisfaction. They state that work satisfaction is concerned with an individual's satisfaction with the actual work they are doing. Environmental satisfaction is concerned with an individual's satisfaction with factors such as management personnel, coworkers, physical space in which the job occurs, and quantity of hours spent on the job. Furthermore, Lu and White (2011) offer a two-factor theory of job satisfaction. They state that job satisfaction is composed of two elements. Those elements consist of intrinsic job factors (e.g., the employee's desire for achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement), and extrinsic job factors (e.g., supervision, pay, working conditions). Finally, Spector (1997) states that job satisfaction is associated with numerous internal and external factors. Internal factors include a sense of appreciation and recognition felt by the worker. External factors include compensation, fringe benefits, job conditions, the nature of the work itself, the culture within the organization, opportunities for promotion, and job security.

Although numerous factors can be responsible for one's satisfaction with his or her job, factors that result in a less satisfying experience must be acknowledged as well. Factors related to compensation that could reduce job

satisfaction include aspects such low pay, little or no increase in pay over an extended period of time, and reduction or elimination of benefits. Additional job and environmental factors including poor communication and relationships with management, disagreements with colleagues, lack of autonomy and authority, long hours, and heavy workloads could also contribute to poor job satisfaction (Higgins, 2003).

This study focused on gaining insight into the numerous internal and external factors that drive job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Lu and White's (2011) as well as Spector's (1997) identification of numerous internal and external factors that shape job satisfaction served as the foundation of inquiry in this study. Numerous factors can shape an employee's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with his/her job. Therefore, attempts to uncover which of those factors were pertinent to the participants were made.

Literature Review

A review of literature revealed that job satisfaction studies have been conducted with employees who work on a college campus. The occupational areas in which this work has been conducted include campus recreation and coaching. The methodology of these inquiries has included quantitative (e.g., surveys) as well as qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) approaches.

Kaltenbaugh (2009) surveyed 104 campus recreation administrators and found that the nature of the employees' work and relationships with supervisors were the strongest determinants of job satisfaction. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients revealed that compensation and opportunities for promotion were factors that contributed to job satisfaction (.80 and .79, respectively).

Steir, Schneider, Kampf, and Gaskins (2010) surveyed 283 campus recreation program administrators in order to determine factors that contributed to their overall job satisfaction. Satisfaction was influenced by their supervisor's expectations, salary, and quantity of hours worked. Participants who perceived their supervisor's expectations to be realistic expressed higher job satisfaction than those who perceived expectations to be less reasonable. Those who felt underpaid and overworked with regard to quantity of hours spent on the job reported lower levels of satisfaction and also expressed a greater desire to leave their present positions. Correlation coefficients were not articulated in this study; however, percentages of respondents indicating satisfaction based on various factors was articulated. For example, the data suggested that employees working within a campus recreation

department were satisfied; however, the higher an individual's job title, the higher the level of satisfaction. This was demonstrated by respondents identified as Directors reporting a 97% overall degree of satisfaction versus an 87% overall degree of satisfaction reported by those in Coordinator positions.

Ross, Young, Sturts, and Kim (2014) surveyed 506 full-time campus recreation administrators in order to gain insight into factors influencing their job satisfaction. These participants were in charge of managing on-campus student recreation centers. They found that education, position title, salary, and years of full-time experience in the field significantly predicted overall job satisfaction. Conversely, they found that the employee's gender, age, and the size of the campus had no significant effect upon job satisfaction. An exploratory factor analysis was used to discover the factors that influenced various job satisfaction variables of campus recreational sport professionals. Four factors, including a) supervisory support and interaction, b) working conditions, c) work and environment, and d) resources and employee benefits explained the variance that emerged with regard to participants' job satisfaction.

Within the coaching setting, Chelladurai and Ogasawara (2003) investigated the satisfaction of collegiate coaches. These participants were responsible for fulfilling the head coach positions for their respective teams. Inquiry focused upon elements such as supervision, autonomy, facilities, community support, and compensation. The authors found that the highest levels of reported satisfaction were in connection with autonomy. The lowest reported satisfaction was with compensation, community support, facilities, and supervision.

Dixon and Bruening (2007) conducted focus groups with 41 female head coaches with children to examine the relationship between work-family conflict and their job and life satisfaction. Despite the difficulty the participants faced as a result of trying to juggle domestic responsibilities with occupational demands, participants were generally satisfied with their occupation. The nature of the work and relationships with colleagues and students were factors that allowed the participants to remain satisfied with their work.

Dixon and Warner (2010) interviewed 15 head coaches of intercollegiate sport programs. They found that player-coach relationships, job schedule flexibility, and opportunities to control various aspects of a program contributed to job satisfaction. Work-life balance and salary were job elements with which participants were less satisfied.

Despite the research connected to job satisfaction in the campus recreation and coaching settings, there is a lack of research seeking to explain factors responsible for job satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction among intercollegiate athletics department employees. It has been well established that there are numerous factors that could contribute to job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). The ongoing exploration of factors influencing job satisfaction is important because job satisfaction could impact one's job performance and willingness to remain in a job. When employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to remain at their job (Dixon & Warner, 2010). Furthermore, employees who have a satisfying job experience often experience an enhancement in their overall well-being and are most likely to succeed in their job (Doherty, 1998; Kaltenbaugh, 2009). As a result, ongoing attempts to uncover factors influencing job satisfaction in this setting are worthwhile because every occupational setting is nuanced. Within the intercollegiate athletics setting, the work of administrators differs from the work the coaches do as administrators, as administrators' work is not connected to recruiting and game planning. The work tasks between campus recreation managers and athletics department employees can have similarities (e.g., establishing budgets); however, there is greater pressure upon athletics administrators to find new revenue streams in order to offset increasing operating expenses whereas campus recreation managers are not charged with finding new donors and/or other revenue streams to offset their operating expenses. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into factors that influence job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among intercollegiate athletics department employees.

Method

Participants

Purposeful criterion sampling was the first strategy utilized in order to acquire participants for this study. Within purposeful criterion sampling, all cases must meet some pre-determined criterion of importance (Patton, 1990). A second form of purposeful sampling, homogeneous sampling, was also utilized. Homogeneous sampling includes selecting similar cases in order to describe some subgroup in-depth (Glesne, 2006). Individuals who were employed at intercollegiate athletics departments fit the desired criteria and were selected for this study.

Five individuals participated in this study. Four of the participants worked at NCAA Division I institutions. One participant worked at an NCAA Division II institution. The ages of the participants ranged from 29-58 years. All participants

identified themselves as Caucasian. Two associate athletics directors worked at university “A”; the athletics directors worked at university “B,” “C,” and “D.” The length of time each participant was employed within intercollegiate athletics varied. The athletics directors’ service in this field ranged from 32 to 40 years. The associate athletics directors’ length of service was 8 to 12 years.

Data Collection

Potential participants for this study were located through an initial search of their institution’s athletics department website. The websites from four university athletics departments were examined. Each employee was invited to participate in the study via email. The purpose of the study and time commitment associated with participation was provided. Recipients of this communication were asked to respond with their interest and were informed that follow-up correspondence would occur via e-mail in the event a response was not received.

Three recipients responded to the initial request. The follow-up e-mail was sent approximately two weeks after the initial request. Two additional employees agreed to participate after the follow-up e-mail was sent. These five individuals were contacted a second time via e-mail in order to arrange an interview at a time and date convenient to them.

The data collection method in this study was a semi-structured interview. This method of inquiry was utilized to obtain descriptive data that would allow for a better understanding of the factors participants perceived as reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs. This method of data collection is consistent with the methodology utilized by Dixon and Warner (2010). Qualitative measures were employed in this study for several reasons. By talking with the practitioners instead of utilizing surveys, more specific information regarding the factors driving their job satisfaction and dissatisfaction could be obtained. A second related reason for the qualitative approach was that the participants could describe their experiences in their own words, not within researcher-imposed constructs. Finally, the qualitative approach allowed the researchers to gain insight on the perspective and experiences of the practitioners.

Interviews were audiotaped and lasted between 40-45 minutes. Participants were interviewed individually. The interview began with a series of pre-formatted, closed-end questions. Examples of closed-end questions included: “How long have you been employed in the profession of intercollegiate athletics administration?”

and “What operating areas have you worked in as an employee within this profession?”

After the closed-ended questions, participants were asked to elaborate on their experiences. Participants were asked to identify examples or incidents in their professional careers in order to determine sources of job satisfaction. The critical incident technique has been utilized in qualitative research studies to obtain descriptive data about significant events in a person’s life (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005; Edvardsson, 1998; Stitt-Gohdes, Lambrecht, & Reddman, 2000). An example of a statement that was designed to encourage further elaboration of a critical incident was: “Please talk about a time when you felt especially good (or bad) about your job and what led you to feel like that.”

In addition to critical incidents, participants were asked to identify other factors that contributed to their job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In these cases, a critical incident was not sought out but rather general aspects contributing to those feelings were of interest. An example of a question in which general reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction existed was: “What elements make you want to stay with (or leave) this job?” The goal of asking these questions was to gain insight into reasons participants perceived as significant in the development of their job satisfaction.

Upon completion of the interview, participants were asked debriefing questions. At this time, participants could ask questions with regard to the study’s purpose and also offer clarification to comments made previously.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Analytic induction was the approach that was utilized in this study to analyze interview data. An inductive approach is utilized when some specific problem, question, or issue becomes the focus of research. When utilizing this approach, the researcher does not attempt to prove or disprove hypotheses held prior to entering the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The primary focus of this research was not to prove or disprove a hypothesis but rather gain insight into intercollegiate athletics administrators’ perceptions of factors contributing to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

After the interviews were transcribed, open and axial coding was utilized in order to sort the interview data into categories. Coding is a method of sorting descriptive data so that it may be more easily referenced and retrievable at a later time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Coding interview data has been utilized in

qualitative research. The coding processes utilized by Dixon and Warner (2010) served as a starting point for this work. Open coding was the first activity in this process. Basic concepts and themes were identified and the data broken down, examined, and compared. During the open coding process, the authors identified keywords and statements that reoccurred in the interviews.

Once these reoccurring keywords or statements from the interviews were located, the next step was to place this content from the interview data into various categories. Axial coding was utilized to reassemble the data that had been broken down during the open coding process. Through axial coding, categories were established and then refined in order to further organize and form a precise representation of the participants' perceptions with regard to factors affecting job satisfaction.

Upon completion of the coding processes, a constant comparative method was utilized. A constant comparative method of data analysis entails the simultaneous process of coding and analyzing in order to develop emerging themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). As data were analyzed, it was constantly reviewed to ensure that the emerging themes accurately reflected participants' responses.

An important component of qualitative inquiry includes establishing trustworthiness (Glesne, 2006). This process entails utilizing various procedures to convince the reader that measures were taken to ensure the material is consistent with what participants actually said and experienced (Patton, 1990). Peer debriefing was utilized in this study in order to establish trustworthiness of the data. This process includes external reflection and input into the researcher's work (Glesne, 2006). Two colleagues experienced in qualitative inquiry examined the transcripts as well as the manuscript and subsequently provided feedback. These individuals confirmed the content in the manuscript was an accurate representation of the content in the interview transcripts.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain insight from athletics administration employees in order to identify factors that have contributed to their job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Two themes responsible for feelings of satisfaction and two themes connected to feelings of dissatisfaction emerged from the responses. The themes related to satisfaction were: (a) student development and achievement and

(b) workplace relationships and environment. The themes related to dissatisfaction were: (a) personnel management and (b) financial pressures /lack of resources.

Student Development and Achievement

The potential to have a positive impact upon the experiences of student-athletes and to build meaningful relationships with this population were important factors related to the participants' job satisfaction. The participants mentioned how the most satisfying moments in their work occurred when they helped student-athletes develop and mature into responsible citizens who could not only make a positive impact upon their university but also upon society at large.

Mike, an athletics director, discussed how observing the maturation of the students was something that helped him feel especially good about his job and the role he played in their development. He stated, "Watching the student athletes mature, watching their success when they perform, and how they deal with pressure or adversity. Also seeing them become good citizens and make the right choices." In his experience, seeing the students develop their athletically related skills served as a source of satisfaction, but their development outside of the participation realm was also of significance.

Stacy, an associate athletics director, also mentioned how the development of student-athletes in several phases of their lives was a significant source of job satisfaction. She said, "I love watching students and student athletes bloom academically, athletically, and learning to give back to those less fortunate." At Stacy's institution, community service among the student-athlete population was a highly valued aspect of the overall experience and watching them develop an appreciation and understanding of the circumstances many less fortunate people deal with was a significant reason behind Stacy's job satisfaction.

Another athletics director, Brad, commented on the development of the student-athletes and identified graduation as the key event that provided him with fulfillment. He stated,

The most fulfilling time is each year at graduation, when our student athletes complete their education and reach the educational goal of graduation. Knowing what they have done for their four years or so, academic, athletically, community service and so on, that is a special moment every year.

Seeing the student-athletes succeed within their academic endeavors and contribute to the communities in which they live was highly valued and served as

one of the main aspects leading toward job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with other findings emerging in research occurring within workplaces where human development is a central focus (Martens, 2004). These participants indicated that the opportunity to impact students' lives and witness their subsequent successes not only within athletics but also in other realms was a major factor contributing to their job satisfaction. The common theme within their statements is that they seemed to derive satisfaction from their jobs if they felt they were doing well at developing human beings who could be successful in several aspects of life (e.g., serving the community, showing maturity, making the most of their education).

Workplace Relationships and Environment

The participants indicated that relationships with colleagues and the subsequent sense of community that developed within their departments served as a source of satisfaction. The following two examples illustrate this factor.

Stacy commented on the positive atmosphere in her department, largely buoyed by the relations and interactions that exist among those who work in the department, as a significant aspect that contributed to her job satisfaction. She said,

The colleagues, the collegial feel, within our department. I truly believe we have developed an environment where people are pulling for each other, you have a victory and everyone is congratulating you, we talk family but I truly believe it is. I preach family first, even ahead of the job, and it's just the environment that we have created and it's successful athletically, academically, and community engagement wise. It's special, and people who come here from the outside, they feel that and they sense it and they like it.

The positive culture within the department was echoed by Brad as one of the major sources of satisfaction in his job. In his perspective, this offsets circumstances such as being understaffed and underfunded. When a positive culture exists, it has positive effects in other ways. He stated,

The most single most satisfying thing is the culture that we have created here. We have really good people, we may be understaffed a little bit, we may wish we had more resources, more hours in our day, but we have really good people so they attract really good people or recruits that are really good people.

These comments were indicative of the important contribution the workplace environment has upon job satisfaction. These results are consistent with

findings that have emerged in other job satisfaction studies. Agho et al. (1993) argued that if individuals work in friendly environments, they would be more likely to be satisfied with and look forward to being at their workplaces. Spector (1997) also supported the notion that work environments determine the level of satisfaction that individuals experience. Consequently, how one perceives the atmosphere of the workplace contributes to the level of job satisfaction that one experiences.

Personnel Management

With regard to factors that have the potential to contribute to dissatisfaction with the job, terminating employees was understandably identified as an action that participants did not desire to engage in but rather understood as a necessary part of the job at times. For instance, Mike expressed the difficulty in having to make personnel changes. These situations were especially difficult when many positive aspects existed in the relationship between himself and the person being terminated. He acknowledged that it is a frustrating part of the job and, consequently, that makes it less pleasant and satisfying. He said,

Having to terminate or not renew a coach's contract. It is a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of lawyers to handle some situations, but the bottom line to me is nobody likes to fire or remove somebody. You know a change needs to be made, but it is tough, especially when you have a good relationship with that person.

Dealing with difficult circumstances in relation to personnel changes were also identified by other participants. Stacy indicated that dealing with personnel issues is one of the more difficult and dissatisfying aspects of the job, especially when there is knowledge that this personnel change will have an effect on others above and beyond the person being terminated. She stated, "Personnel issues that you have to take care of; when you do it, it is tough on you, your staff, the student athletes and on the person you are letting go even if you know it's the right decision."

The gravity associated with terminating one's employment and the potential impact it could have upon others was identified as an aspect of the job that was necessary but not embraced. Understandably, participants did not find satisfaction in removing someone from their livelihood. Although having to make these difficult decisions would not necessarily lead participants to leave their jobs, it was an aspect that made the job less satisfying because of the potential negative impact they knew their decisions could have upon others.

Financial Pressures/Lack of Resources

It was common for participants to express frustration with limitations of time, human resources, and finance that prevented them from accomplishing all of the objectives they had for their department. Having an extensive “to do” list and a limited amount of time in which to accomplish it was expressed by Brad. He said, “Frustration comes in not being able to do more than you are doing. Mostly that there is only 24 hours in a day, I don’t get through everything that I want to.”

The pressure to not only meet expectations but also to deal with expectations perceived as not especially realistic was identified as a factor that participants expressed dissatisfaction with. Pressure to meet objectives set by others who may not have a realistic understanding of what could be accomplished given situational factors and limitations was a source of frustration that emerged from the participants’ statements. For example, Mike stated,

Unrealistic expectations of how much that you can actually get done, how much you can increase attendance, how much money you can really raise, what corporations are willing to pay to be a corporate sponsor, all those kinds of things.

The external pressures in this profession include expectations to generate more revenue and increase attendance. To do it with limited staff and limited financial resources to support these initiatives appeared to cause dissatisfaction within this group of participants. Their dissatisfaction stemmed from the conditions that inhibited meeting those expectations. Furthermore, there seemed to be some sense of dissatisfaction with regard to the resources they were given to succeed. As a result, it seemed that satisfaction was at least partially dependent upon a match between the allotment of resources and the expectations others possess.

Implications

Circumstances that affect job satisfaction in this profession should be critically examined on an ongoing basis. Continued critical inquiry on this topic is needed because of the effect it could have upon an organization as well as the experience of the individual employee. Ross et al. (2014) stated,

Employee job satisfaction is an essential element in human resource management that provides administrators with a better understanding of their employees and a gauge as to how content they are with their jobs. For any manager of human resources,

recognizing job satisfaction components can aid in creating an atmosphere that maximizes strengths and increases productivity. (p. 70)

Understanding the job elements that contribute to job satisfaction and subsequently lead to other positive employee outcomes are worthwhile because they could help upper level management, such as athletics directors, enhance the workplace. For example, employees who have high quality relationships with their colleagues report this occurrence as significant to their job satisfaction; therefore, creating opportunities for employees to develop those relationships could help attract and retain quality employees. Finally, it could be helpful in reducing employee turnover and minimizing costs associated with recruiting and training new employees. As a result, it is important to be aware of how various job elements contribute to job satisfaction so that attention can be placed upon developing and retaining those employees.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Directions

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into factors that influenced job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among intercollegiate athletics department employees. Numerous factors were identified by the participants with regard to job satisfaction. Student achievement was a significant determinant of satisfaction. Whether it was watching students develop over their time at the university or actively helping students achieve their goals and ambitions, helping students become successful in their college careers and helping them develop as good citizens and representatives of the university were major sources of satisfaction.

In addition, the culture of the workplace and relationships with co-workers were significant sources of satisfaction. Participants repeatedly mentioned that the relationships they enjoyed with their co-workers contributed to their satisfaction with their jobs. The informal, welcoming culture was also significant and was mentioned repeatedly.

Conversely, there were frustrating aspects that led participants to be at least somewhat dissatisfied with their jobs. First, dealing with personnel changes in the form of dismissals was one aspect that participants found unpleasant. In addition, ongoing financial pressures and doing “more with less” was another factor that led toward stronger feelings of dissatisfaction.

As with any study, there were limitations to this work. Although this study provided in-depth information, the information was collected from a small quantity

of employees who were employed in one setting within the vast sport management field. Within this one setting, participants represented a total of four universities. Therefore, the findings from this study are not intended to represent the experiences of employees above and beyond those who were interviewed for this study. Future studies will need to expand the size and breadth of the sample.

Another potential limitation is that single interviews were conducted with each participant. It is possible that participants' perspectives will change over time. For example, participants who did not see certain aspects as problematic at this time might feel differently in the future. A suggestion for future research is to conduct longitudinal studies. These could reveal changing perspectives over the course of a career.

In closing, further examination of perspectives and experiences of current employees could be beneficial to those who are interested in pursuing a career in this profession. By learning from those who are already employed, individuals who possess an interest in entering this profession could be better prepared for the challenges and circumstances they might encounter. Conducting ongoing critical inquiry within these settings with additional practitioners could be useful in uncovering additional elements that contribute to one's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with his or her job.

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