A-Hero for Sport Employee Creativity? An Empirical Investigation of Psychological Capital

Minjung Kim, University of Mississippi
Brent D. Oja, University of Northern Colorado

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It is critical for managers to consider contemporaneous features of sport employees that are desirable in the rapidly changing and competitive sport environment (Kim, Kim, Newman, Ferris, & Perrewé, 2019; Taylor, Doherty, & McGraw, 2015). One such outcome for sport employees is creativity, as it helps to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Employee creativity has been hypothesized as a coveted and distal evidence-based outcome in the most recent psychological capital intervention model (Luthans & Youssef, 2017). In an attempt to develop sport employee creativity, this study is designed to empirically test the relationships among various sport employees’ characteristics, psychological states, and creative work behaviors. As such, we developed the following hypotheses:

Pride will positively impact sport employee identification (SEI) as it represents self-value based on one’s current job, which would support group membership (Swanson & Kent, 2017; H1). Harmonious passion represents a desire to actively participate at work along with influencing one’s self-concept (Perrewé, Hochwarter, Ferris, McAllister, & Harris, 2014) and so it is likely to support SEI (H2). An expanded psychological capital construct for sport employees, labeled A-HERO with five sub-constructs such as authenticity, hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Oja, Kim, Perrewé, & Anagnostopoulos, 2019), will be enhanced by sport employee identification because identified sport employees value their association with sport organizations and will strive to improve themselves and the organization (H3). Based on the empowerment of A-HERO, sport employee creative work behaviors will increase in sport workplaces (H4).

The target population of this study was sport employees across the sport industry, and the data were collected online by utilizing the Qualtrics cloud-based survey tool. With a final data set of 301 sport employees, we conducted two confirmatory analyses (Brown, 2015) for evaluating second-order constructs (e.g., A-HERO) and then a full measurement model. Given the acceptability of the measurement models, the hypothesized research model was tested with structural equation modeling, and the fit statistics of the hypothesized model indicated acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 2669.04$, df = 496, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .04). All hypothesized paths were positive and significant at the alpha level of .001, supporting H1 through H4 (H1: standardized $\gamma = .46$, SE = .06; H2: standardized $\gamma = .44$, SE = .06; H3: standardized $\gamma = .45$, SE = .06; H4: standardized $\gamma = .50$, SE = .06).

The results showed that sport employees' pride, passion, and SEI were critical factors in enhancing their A-HERO, which positively influenced creative work behaviors in contemporary sport organizations. Theoretically, this study provides empirical evidence in support of A-HERO in the realm of sport management and its positive impact on sport employee creative work behaviors. Regarding practical implications, our results can help sport organizations build internal management strategies for increasing positive psychological states and creative work behaviors, which could lead to a competitive advantage in the competitive sport industry.