

EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES WITH JOB INSECURITY: A CASE OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL COACHES IN THAILAND

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Abstract

Purpose The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between organizational culture in terms of work practices and psychological empowerment among professional football coaches who tend to face high level of job insecurity condition.

Methods This study employed a survey among 127 Thai professional football coaches. Measures were adopt from previous studies and were back-translated. Structural Equation Model (SEM) was utilized to test hypothesis.

Results Results show that organizational culture conceptualized by five work practices is positively and significantly associated with football coaches' perception of psychological empowerment. Specifically, only work practice of autonomy is found to be positively and

significantly associated with psychological empowerment.

Conclusion We conclude that organizational culture tends to affect psychological empowerment positively. In particular, work practice of autonomy has tendency to affect psychological empowerment in a positive manner. The results, in addition to insights regarding the context of organizational culture and empowerment in the football management area, have implications for those attempting to encourage their staff to feel more persistent and intrinsically motivated toward insecure and pressure job conditions.

Keywords: Football Coach / Job Insecurity / Organizational Culture / Psychological Empowerment

Introduction

Professional football coaching job has been considered to have and will continue to have job insecurity. The job tenure of the coach is not as long as in other business sectors (Bridgewater, 2010; Dobson and Goddard, 2001). When a team fails to achieve the football performance, it is normally the coaches who are held primarily accountable, and they often end up holding a dismissal notice (Nissen, 2016). In the modern football context, frequency of coach dismissal seems to be higher than ever before (Nissen, 2016). Nissen (2016) also found that coaches are likely to experience a dismissal in their careers. Moreover, football coach role in the modern day is one of chronic insecurity and the recent trend has been to dismiss the coach midway through a season in an attempt to improve performance (Dobson and Goddard, 2011).

Apart from the job insecurity, coaching job is also highly pressured by other factors such as uncertainty of outcome, short tenure, and the product and sporting outcome are out of control (Bridgewater, 2010; Dobson and Goddard, 2001). Perception of psychological empowerment is one of the psychological tools which can help them to cope with the situation as empowerment practice could enhance employees' self-efficacy (Conger and Kanungo, 1988).

While research in the area of organizational behavior has identified the importance

of organizational culture and psychological empowerment for organizational performance (Seibert, Wang, and Courtright, 2011), but how organizational culture affects psychological empowerment among professional football coaches in which job insecurity seems to be a vital issue is still questionable. Moreover, even though previous studies conducted in sport organization context, the sample mainly comprised operation managers and employees or members in sport and leisure centers in which their job insecurity is not the issue as in professional football coach context (e.g. Ogbonna and Harris, 2014; MacIntosh and Doherty, 2010; MacIntosh and Doherty, 2005).

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between organizational culture in terms of work practices—autonomy, external orientation, interdepartmental coordination, human resource orientation, and improvement orientation—and perception of psychological empowerment among employees with job insecurity condition such as professional football coaches in Thailand.

Literature Review

Special Characteristics of Professional Football Industry

Football in Thailand started many years ago. It has gone through several critical changes and has improved dramatically in terms of professionalization and commercialization. Professional football clubs have several easy

quantifiable goals such as profit making, security, attendance or revenue, playing success, and status in the league (Dobson and Goddard, 2001). However, Dobson and Goddard (2001), citing Sloane (1971), and Foster, Greyser, and Walsh (2006) argue that maximizing profit is not the sole or even the most important objective of professional football clubs especially in the European football clubs. More importantly, they suggest that match winning or playing success is perhaps the most important goal of all clubs which stakeholders such as chairmen, directors, managers, players and spectators care about most. Foster, Greyser, and Walsh (2006) add that owning the football clubs might be owners' personal passion, in which football club management is not their priority.

There are many other unique features of professional football. For instance, Hamil and Chadwick (2010) postulate that the nature and uniqueness of football comprises uncertainty of outcome, a product-led industry, collaborations of fans and customers to create the football product, socioculturally embeddedness, limited control over their product, different performance measurement, distinctive relationship with broadcasters and media, and fan loyalty.

Apart from the distinctiveness of professional football, the management of football is also very complex and different from other business sectors (Bridgewater, 2010). The differences can be seen in many aspects such as work tenure of the leaders, managing in a

goldfish bowl, lack of control over outcome, and a result-oriented business.

Work tenure of the manager or head coach, who is considered an important leader of the team, in football clubs, tends to be shorter. According to Bridgewater (2010), in the English Premier League, the work tenure of football managers was about 3.2 years in season 1992-93. In season 2008-09, the football managers' work tenure was reduced to about 1.47 years. Furthermore, job security for management in football is very low and the job is high pressured (Bridgewater, 2010). For example, it would be uncommon for a normal business organization to prosper if the leader is changed quickly or every year.

Finally, the football industry is a result-oriented business. The performance in football is obviously measurable. The performance can be easily and publicly seen through league tables, reports, and ranking of players and managers. The differences discussed above can be seen in football management compared to other business sectors. It implies that football management is complex and difficult. Thus, people who manage football clubs should be intrinsically motivated in order to work in an extremely turbulent environment.

Job Insecurity in Professional Football Coaches

Job insecurity refers to "the perception of a potential threat to continuity in his or her

current job” (Heaney, Israel, and House., 1994). It has a profound effect on employees’ job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, trust, turnover intentions, and health (Sverke, Hellgren, and Naswall, 2002). Lee, Huang, and Ashford (2018) state that a unique challenge of job insecurity is on leaders. For example, a coach in a sport team will be fired rather than the entire team when performance is poor. This pattern by which coaches are replaced if the team fails to meet its targets suggests considerable job insecurity for professional football coaches.

Due to the prevalent consequences of job insecurity among football coaches, psychological empowerment is one of the psychological tools helping them to cope with the situation in which it could enhance employees’ self-efficacy (Conger and Kanungo, 1988).

The Relationship between Organizational Culture and Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment refers to a process of increasing the sense of self-efficacy among employees in the organization (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Spreitzer (1995) also defines it as intrinsic task motivation having four dimensions including meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. According to Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011), one of the contextual factors that significantly affects perception of psychological empowerment among employees is organizational culture.

Organizational culture refers to shared values by organizational members in which new members can be taught how to perceive, think, and feel when facing organizational issues (Schein, 2010). Nevertheless, Hofstede (2001) argues that differences between organizations are found in work practices rather than in shared values. Consequently, in this study, organizational culture is defined as shared perceptions of work practices by people within organization and it differs from one organization to organization as suggested by Van den Berg and Wilderom (2004). Hence, organizational culture can be derived from the existing work practices within an organization. Moreover, shared values within the football club cannot be observed and measured easily by the coach whereas work practices are. Thus, this study focuses primarily on organizational culture or cultural traits in terms of work practices that are observable and measurable manifestations of football club’s culture.

A number of researchers have developed prevalent trait-based frameworks including various dimensions of culture. Denison’s model of cultural effectiveness provides the framework for the current investigation. Denison and colleagues’ theory suggest that the most effective organizations are characterized by a strong mission and high levels of employee involvement, internal consistency, and adaptability (Boyce, Nieminen, Gillespie, and Denison, 2015). Previous literature suggests that orga-

nizational culture is positively related to the employees' perception and performance. For example, Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011) found that positive forms of organizational culture such as socio-political support and empowering climate are strongly associated with perception of psychological empowerment among employees. Boyce, Nieminen, Gillespie, and Denison (2015) found that successful organizations have balance levels of cultural traits stated previously. In addition, they conducted longitudinal culture-performance relationships and found that cultural traits have a causal effect to organizational performance. Wilderom, Van den Berg, and Wiersma (2012) also found that organizational culture traits conceptualized by work practices namely work autonomy, external orientation, interdepartmental coordination, human resource orientation, and improvement orientation are positively related to perceived organizational performance.

It is thus proposed in this study that positive traits of organizational culture in terms of work practices that focus on work autonomy, external orientation, interdepartmental coordination, human resource orientation, and improvement orientation influence perception of psychological empowerment among employees in job insecurity condition.

Hypothesis: Organizational culture conceptualized by the five work practices—autonomy, external orientation, interdepartmental coordination, human resource orientation, and improvement

orientation—is positively associated with perception of psychological empowerment among professional football coaches.

Methods

Sample and Data Collection

Self-administered questionnaires were conducted with professional football coaches who are Thai and work for professional football clubs in Thai leagues. At the time of survey during football season 2016, there were 121 clubs with the average size of three coaches in each club. Data were collected by sending questionnaires with the covering letter and a pre-paid and addressed envelope to the public relations department of each club. We have received responses from 127 professional coaches (a response rate of 34.98%).

Measures

All measures were completed by coaches responding to questions on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.” Items in the questionnaire were modified to reflect the football context. Two-process translation, forward and back translation, was performed by two professionals for Thai version.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture was measured by five work practices adopted from Wilderom, Van den Berg, and Wiersma (2012)'s 22-item

scale. The measure has five dimensions of work practices: autonomy, interdepartmental coordination, external orientation, human resource orientation and improvement orientation. Items in the questionnaire were modified to reflect the football club context; e.g. “Coaches in this football club have an opportunity to make their own decisions.” The scale’s alpha reliability in this study was 0.86.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment was assessed by employing Spreitzer’s (1995) 12-item scale. The measure has four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Some items were modified to refer to football; e.g. “My football team job activities are personally meaningful to me.” The scale’s alpha reliability in this study was 0.71.

Table 1 Organizational Culture conceptualized by Five Work Practices.

Variable	Item	Mean	SD	Loading	Cronbach’s α	CR
	Organizational culture				0.86	0.98
Auto	I have an opportunity to make my own decisions.	3.90	0.60	0.79	0.81	
	I have the freedom to deviate from the rules.					
	I implement important management decisions according to what I feel is best.					
	I influence important decisions at work.					
	I have the freedom to plan my own work.					
	I have the opportunity to introduce my ideas before management makes decisions.					
Exter	There is a quick response to new developments in the football industry.	3.70	0.60	0.68	0.80	
	Wishes and needs of football fans are surveyed.					
	New football fans are actively canvassed.					
	An attempt is made to improve the football club’s market position.					
	I am trained on issues that answer football fans’ needs.					
Inter	My football club has an edge on local competitors.					
	Departments within club cooperate with one another.	3.80	0.70	0.81	0.92	
	Departments within club exchange useful information among themselves.					
	Departments within club support one another when resolving problems.					
HR	Department heads within club communicate with one another.					
	Performance appraisals are taken seriously.	3.80	0.70	0.93	0.80	
	I obtain useful information about my performance.					
Impro	New coaches are selected with care.					
	Coaches in this club review critically how they perform their jobs.	3.9	0.70	0.81	0.80	
	I look for opportunities to improve the organization.					
	I take the initiative to improve on my day-to-day tasks.					

Note. Auto = Autonomy; Exter = External orientation; Inter = Internal orientation; HR = Human-resource orientation; Impro = Improvement orientation; CR = Composite reliability; All factor loadings’ $ps < .05$

Table 2. Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment.

Variable	Item	Mean	SD	Loading	Cronbach's α	CR
	Psychological empowerment				0.71	0.95
Mean	The work I do is very important to me. My job activities are personally meaningful to me. The work I do is meaningful to me.	4.30	0.50	0.59	0.63	
Compet	I am confident about my ability to do my job. I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	4.40	0.50	0.98	0.80	
Deter	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job. I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work. I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.	4.10	0.70	0.54	0.88	

Note. Mean = Meaning; Compet = Competence; Deter = Determination; CR = Composite reliability; All factor loadings' $ps < .05$

Data Analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) with IBM SPSS Amos 22 was employed to examine the hypothesis. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify the distinctiveness of two variables: organizational culture and psychological empowerment. The measurement model results indicated a satisfactory and moderate fit to the data (χ^2 (19) = 53.75, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.83$, GFI = 0.91, AGFI = 0.83, NFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.88, CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.12). In accordance with the findings of the CFA, we excluded one dimension of psychological empowerment, "impact", because its loading was 0.39 which is less than 0.50 as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010). An examination of the model was justified. Consequently, our measurement model showed both convergent and discriminant validity.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 127 complete responses were collected. Of the 127 respondents, the majority of the respondents are older than 40 years old (48.0%). The majority of the respondents (71.7) have received Bachelor's degree. The majority of respondents (42.5%) have income over USD 1,500/month. Respondents report an average career tenure of 7.26 years (SD = 4.26). 31.5% of respondents work for clubs in Thai Premier League, 26.0% in League Division 1, and 42.5% in League Division 2 respectively.

Analysis and Test of Hypothesis

Figure 1 presents the SEM results of primary purpose of this study for the organizational culture conceptualized by all the five work practices. The organizational culture in

terms of five work practices can explain 20% of variance in psychological empowerment. The organizational culture is found to be positively and significantly ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < .001$) related to perception of psychological empowerment, in which our hypothesis is supported.

Figure 2 presents the results of model 2, when investigating which work practices are related to perception of psychological empowerment. The work practices can explain 27% of variance in psychological empowerment. The work autonomy is found to be positively and significantly ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < .05$) related to perception of psychological empowerment. However, other work practices—external orientation, interdepartmental coordination, human resource orientation, and improvement orientation—are not found significant.

Results of this study partially support our hypothesis. The finding shows that organizational culture in terms of work practices is significantly and positively related to perception of psychological empowerment among employees with job insecurity condition. This seems to imply that professional football club's cultural

traits or practices play an important role for employees' perception. It could affect the coaches' perception toward their job. Positively, it is likely to make them feel psychologically empowered or intrinsically motivated toward their job. The result aligns with previous empirical studies. For instance, Wilderom, Van den Berg, and Wiersma (2012) found that organizational culture in terms of work practices are positively related to perceived organizational performance in banking industry. Also, Seibert, Wang, and Courtright (2011) found from their meta-analysis studies that organizational culture has a positive relationship with employee attitudes.

In sport context, many empirical studies also found positive relationship between organizational culture and employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. MacIntosh and Doherty (2010) found that organizational culture of fitness club/organization is positively related to job satisfaction. Finally, MacIntosh and Doherty (2005) found that organizational culture more directly influences employee attitude and behavior than organizational performance.

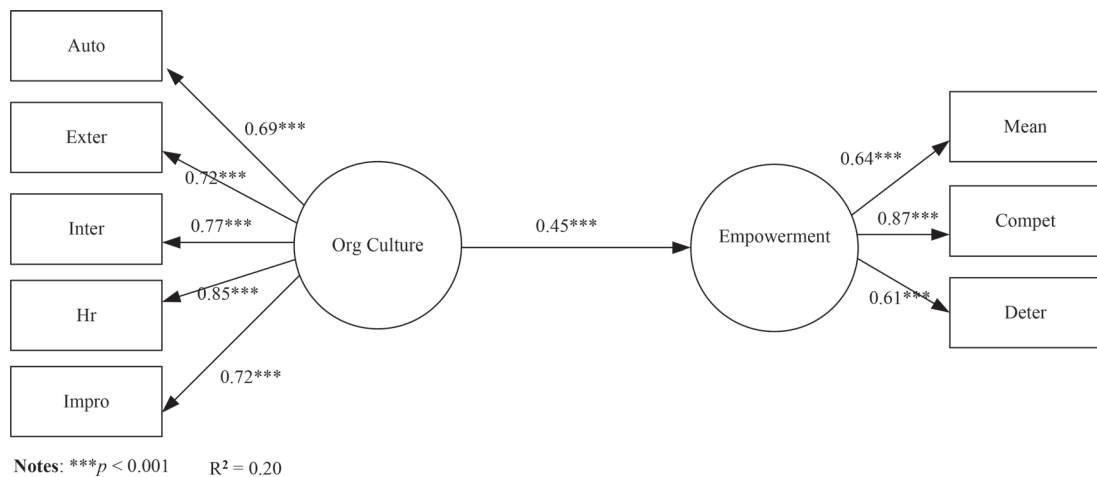
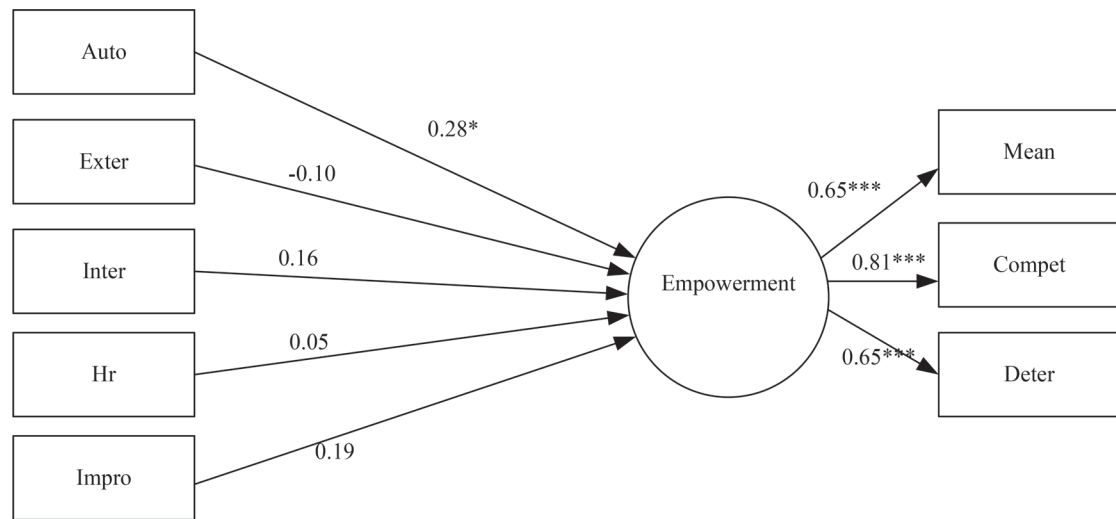


Figure 1 Relationship between Organizational Culture and Psychological Empowerment.

When investigating which work practices are related to perception of psychological empowerment, only one of the work practices, “autonomy”, is found to be significant. It could imply that when the coaches have freedom or high level of control over their work, they are likely to feel psychologically empowered or intrinsically motivated toward their job. In other words, if club executives do not interfere coaches’ work such as player selection, playing strategies and etc., the coaches are likely to be highly motivated to do their work intrinsically and persistently. This finding is consistent with literature in business and football management.

Previous empirical studies found that organizational performance improved for those business units that effectively employed autonomy work practices (Wilderom, Van den Berg, and Wiersma, 2012). Football management literature also suggests that football managers/coaches need strong support and autonomy from their executives. Ferguson and Moritz (2015) indicate the important things football managers need in managing the team such as owners with a long-term vision, enough financial resources, no micro-management, and freedom for team selection.



Notes: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$ $R^2 = 0.27$

Figure 2 Relationships between Work Practices and Psychological Empowerment.

In contrary, other work practices are not found to be significantly related to perception of psychological empowerment in this context. This could be due to many special characteristics of professional football management. For instance, match winning or playing success, not business-profit maximizing, is an important goal of the football clubs in which chairmen, directors, managers, players, and spectators mostly care about (Dobson and Goddard, 2001). Moreover, it could also be that football coaches mainly work in the training ground with the players. Consequently, their tasks are mainly in management on the pitch. They rarely cooperate with other staff in the back office. Thus, their involvement with those work practices in the club is relatively low. Accordingly, majority of football clubs in Thailand are owned by wealthy

people. Thus, owning the football clubs might be their personal passion, in which football club management is not their priority (Foster, Greyser, and Walsh, 2006).

Additionally, sport clubs sometimes refuse to adopt the sort of business practices that will assist sporting enterprises to prosper or achieve their sporting potential because their main focus is sporting success rather than business success (Skinner and Stewart, 2017). In addition, it is not easy to change the culture of a sporting enterprise, since sport is by nature a conservative institution, values its traditions and history highly, thus values and practices in the organization are mainly based on the way things were done rather than modern business practices to improve the organization (Skinner and Stewart, 2017).

Contributions and Recommendation

This paper makes several contributions to understanding of organizational culture and psychological empowerment among employees in job insecurity condition. Our overall contribution is that we had built and tested a conceptual model that uniquely integrated organizational behavior with the job insecurity context represented by professional football coaching job. The empirical research in organizational behavior in professional football coach dramatically scares. Football is seen as a highly close social world and it is extremely difficult to access to professional football players and managers/coaches (Kelly, 2008; Nissen, 2016). Thus, this study is one of its kinds that contribute to the empirical study in organizational behavior in football management in Asia.

In terms of practical contribution, management can preclude or reduce the negative effects of job insecurity such as attitudes toward job, organization, and career, performance and behaviors at work, and health and well-being by employing positive organizational work practices in order to increase perception of psychological empowerment. Furthermore, football club owners/executives can use the results of the study to motivate their coaches by trying to create high levels of cultural traits or practices conceptualized by positive work practices. More specifically, work autonomy, which is one

of the work practices, should be emphasized by club owners in order to intrinsically motivate (psychologically empower) football coaches toward their insecure and high pressure job. Executives should not interfere coaches' work but rather allow them to use their expertise in football coaching by giving them support and freedom.

Limitations and Future Research

Further studies are encouraged to check the robustness of our findings in other areas and/or with larger sample size. Future research should also attempt to uncover other work practices that may be apparent in the job insecurity condition; particularly those that may be influenced by executives. Such practices may have an even greater association with employee attitude, and perhaps with employee and organizational performance. This study used a survey design to collect data at a single point in time. Thus, inferences regarding the causal direction of the variable relationships should be taken into careful consideration and reverse causality should not be ruled out.

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