Organizational Culture in Sports Organizations Analysis

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Executive Summary

Corporate culture has a great influence on the effectiveness, performance, and success of organizations. Therefore, sports organizations that impact society and the economy in several ways need to be characterized based on their formal and informal culture. In this regard, the following report presents an analysis of the characteristics, manifestations, and significance of the organizational culture. The primary focus has been put on the influence of leaders on the culture as well as their effective role in aligning it with the specific needs of the modern sports environment.

Introduction

Sports play an essential role in improving society and the economy because sports organizations bring several benefits to millions (ICSA, 2018). However, like all other corporate organizations, sports organizations also face many challenges and crises. This requires them to adopt a strong culture and essential support in all kinds of circumstances (ICSA, 2018). Organizational culture is the assimilation of different beliefs, values, assumptions, norms, symbols, actions, and language patterns shared and protected by all members. This way, the culture provides an identity to the organization as well as its members in the light of interpretation and comprehension of such an acquired body of knowledge. Furthermore, this understanding of the culture directly influences the organization's productivity, growth, learning, and innovation at all levels (Eskiler et al., 2016). Cultural assumptions also determine the scope of an organization according to which it sets its objectives and goals.

Therefore, sports organizations need to establish a culture that helps them align their strategies with their desired objectives while promoting a specific set of values to evaluate their performance (ICSA, 2018). It can manifest itself in several ways by affecting the overall identity and success of the organization. For instance, if the organizational culture does not support the involvement of staff members in the decision-making, managers can adopt an autocratic style of leadership that hinders creativity and innovation, and thus, organizations can face high-profile failures which not only affect their progress but also the sport (Henriksen, Storm and Larsen, 2017). According to Belzer (2015), the Arizona Diamondbacks provide the best example of organizational culture because they provide their employees tremendous opportunities to convey their ideas and feelings to the top management and contribute to decision-making.

In this regard, it is crucial to understand the different ways in which culture manifests itself, especially

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in sports organizations, and why it is important. The following report highlights the significance of organizational culture and presents an in-depth discussion of the culture itself and leaders' influence on its norms.

Manifestation And Significance Of Organizational Culture

Characteristics and Manifestations

Organizational culture is often referred to as an organization's psychological assets. It is historically determined, socially constructed, and very difficult to change. Furthermore, it contains several underlying and unquestioned assumptions that define the behaviours of the organizations. It also implies that the preferences and actions of most members of organizations are not based on their individual decisions but are also influenced by the organizational culture. Moreover, their behaviours are also determined by different norms, beliefs, values, and assumptions rather than being restrained by authority, formal rules, and the norms of rational behaviour. This further signifies that the organization's personality, characterized by organizational culture, should promote performance and motivation and not just focus on rewards and sanctions.

Identification

Culture is a very prominent entity that has a strong influence on the direction of sports organizations. To make the cultural identification process convenient to understand, Schein (2010) highlights four elements of culture, i.e., stability, breadth, depth, and integration. The "stability" is dominant when culture and all the associated values are permanent and extremely difficult to change or transform despite changes in the top management. According to Leung et al. (2005), the stability element makes the assimilation of new members very easy and quick in the organization. The breadth factor relates to the presence of culture at all functional levels of the organization and also ensures group synergy. Similarly, when cultural values become embedded in all kinds of decisions and their conscious implementation is disregarded, it leads to the depth of culture. Thus, this depth element also provides significant support in effectively orienting new personnel in the team. Finally, the integration element refers to the strong cohesion of values, behaviours, and rituals. All these elements together sustain and improve the strength of organizational culture.

Manifestations

There are many ways in which culture can manifest itself. The most observable yet indecipherable is the regularity of the members' behaviours when they interact with others. Specific examples include the language they use, traditions and customs they practice, and rituals that they employ in varying

situations. Similarly, the values, broad policies, ideologies, and rules that organizations publicly announce and follow to achieve their desired goals are a manifestation of their culture. Moreover, workplace policies that are generally communicated to team members and stakeholders outline the characteristics of the culture. Organizational culture, especially in sports organizations, is also specified by physical layouts and the interaction procedures of the members, stakeholders, and outsiders among themselves. All of these factors are quite visible. However, culture can also manifest itself in several other ways that are hard for others to perceive. For example, habits of thinking guide perceptions, mental models, shared symbols and meaning, including ideas, images, and feelings. These are the less visible manifestations of culture.

Establishment

The establishment of culture within a sports organization is a very important step because it directly influences its strength. Therefore, Schein (2010) has outlined six essential triggers to provide an effective tool for sports management. In this regard, first, it is the primary responsibility of individuals who can influence the direction of the organization and peer behaviour, either formally or informally, to embrace the core values of the culture. Secondly, this influence needs to be strengthened through various formal and informal means. This is evident from the research study of Johnson et al. (2013), where they observed the strong placement of formal and informal leadership, which contributed to the strong team culture and consequently the higher success rate of the team. The third factor is the response of leaders to different uncertain situations, crises, and challenges that organizations face on their way towards achieving their goals. For Schein (2010), it is a great opportunity for leaders to demonstrate the importance of cultural values and uphold them to effectively address the challenging times. Next is the recruitment of new members in a very strict manner to ensure that the team's desired values are embraced. Finally, the last factor is the reinforcement of cultural values by rewarding a suitable expression of the required culture.

Values

The cultural values are as important to comprehend as the establishment of the culture itself. These values are represented by most of the members of an organization. However, these values vary significantly from organization to organization. As indicated by Cole and Martin (2018), the winning values for Barcelona are different from those of Bayern Munich. This factor is prominent in all kinds of organizations, not only sports organizations. As Cole and Martin (2018) pointed out, the business values of Apple's success are fundamentally different from those of Microsoft, although they both serve the same needs of the consumers. However, it is also possible that these values can change with time in reaction to different dynamic changes in the environment in which sports organizations work. Therefore, Cotterill (2013) observed that the constant presence of cultural values within organizations helps them achieve success consistently, regardless of what those values are.

Culture plays an essential role in the success of sports organizations. According to Schein (2010), culture is simulated with a specific set of values. They determine the individuals' behaviour and influence the desired outcomes positively or negatively. Therefore, a conscious understanding of culture is important to ensure its positive influence because the negative, informal culture leads to excessive corruption at all levels within an organization (Campbell and Göritz, 2013).

Leader's Influence on Culture

The influence of leaders can be both formal and informal within an organization. The formal influence is expressed through legitimate power, but the informal influence is very hard to identify and characterize. In this regard, Cole and Martin (2018) mention the standards for establishing somebody as the informal leader of the team. These include harmony, liking, coordination, and participation. Harmony is the extent to which members sincerely play their roles in creating a positive environment, while liking is the perception of members about each other regarding how much they feel supported. Coordination is the members' efforts in organizing the group, and participation is the level of active engagement in hands-on tasks.

Thus, these criteria provide crucial support to rank the team members based on the quality and influence of their informal leadership, which can further assist in the alignment of formal and informal leaders. Any misalignment of these potential influences can result in the ineffectiveness of the organizational culture, risking the organization's success. Therefore, Johnson et al. (2014) reported that the All Blacks enjoyed the most successful period of their history from 2004 to 2011, when the desires of formal and informal leaders were aligned perfectly.

The structure of leadership is also an important component of an organization's culture. Cosh, Fu, and Hughes (2010), in their study investigating the effectiveness of organisational culture, reported that the flat structure of leadership has been a promising factor for an organization's better performance and consistent success in England. Furthermore, organizations that intentionally adopt a flat structure have a greater ability to innovate because of decentralized decision-making, which allows team members to contribute as effectively and actively as the top management. In this regard, Cole and Martin (2018) claimed that the informal collective leadership and flat hierarchy were the most prominent factors behind the successful season of The Turbos in 2014.

However, leadership style is another factor in the conscious influence of culture. Players are always satisfied and determined to work under a coach who exhibits transformational leadership (Ibarra and Scoular, 2019). This is also supported by the findings of the empirical survey of Obgonna and Harris (2000), where they concluded that leadership style is a central factor for influencing culture in corporate organizations in the UK, while transformational leadership was found to be the strongest element for their success. Similar results about the effectiveness of transformational leadership compared to autocratic, democratic, and situational leadership were reported by Cole and Martin (2018) when they investigated the underlying factors behind the success rate of The Turbos.

It is very significant to deliberate the components and values of a particular culture before attempts are made to establish it. Moreover, informal and formal leaders have a great influence on culture, and thus, it is crucial to align them with the most appropriate perspective about culture. It has further been well established that the flat structure of leadership is an effective way to establish culture because it promotes collective leadership (Frontiera, 2009). Similarly, the transformational style of leadership is perceived as the most appropriate style to influence, transform, and establish the organizational culture.

Significance

According to Marcu and Buhaş (2014), the sports phenomenon is a very systematized activity that is performed to achieve certain socio-professional objectives in the sports area. In the view of management, sport is an evolutionary part of modern life which is structured on a particular material basis, systems, theoretical principles, laws, and national as well as international authorities and organizations which are aimed to develop and enhance the emotional, material, and biological aspects of the sports' participants and practitioners (Marcu and Buhaş, 2014).

Culture holds great importance in sports organizations as it is the primary formula that ensures their success and survival when members of the organizations accept and adopt a certain set of cultural values (GONZÁLEZ, 2020). These values are also the source of a unique identity for the organizations that differentiates them from each other. Therefore, Colyer (2000) has reportedly said that organizational culture values have a great influence on the performance ability of the organization and strongly affect its effectiveness. Furthermore, highlighting the importance of the organizational culture in Australian sports organizations, he stated that cultural values not only influence the type and quality of the services that they provide but also predetermine them and thus control their success and working environment.

Another factor that makes sports organizations different from other corporate organizations is the active participation of volunteers who work side by side with the paid employees. This also makes it important to understand the culture of sports organizations that promotes the harmony and mutual collaboration of staff members, volunteers, players, and sports management (Colyer, 2000). Therefore, to identify the organizational culture, Colyer (2000) describes its three levels, i.e., artefacts, which are the observable and superficial aspects such as the rituals, technology, stories, and physical features like team colours, songs, logos, etc.; values, which are characterized by the formal and informal behaviour of the members; and finally, the philosophy and underlying assumptions of the organization, which regulate the behaviour patterns.

Therefore, analyzing the organizational culture becomes a crucial step in measuring the performance and effectiveness of the sports organizations as well as recommending changes to sustain their consistent development and innovation (Eskiler et al., 2016). Moreover, the prior understanding of the organization, as Megheirkouni (2017) highlighted, is very important for leaders in sports organizations

to effectively address the challenges which many organizations are facing in the 21st century to maintain a high level of performance in a rapidly and constantly changing sports environment.

For Maitland, Hills, and Rhind (2015), the organizational culture manifests itself in the everyday vernacular in a sport, which tends to reinforce the understanding of the common management organizational problems, explains the coaching behaviour and has a direct influence on coaches, players, and members.

Recommendations And Conclusions

Organizational culture plays a very significant part in the sustainability and accomplishment of organizations because it has a direct influence on the organisation's objectives and goals, its members' behaviours and attitudes, and the overall performance and effectiveness of the organization (Williams, 2019). Therefore, sports managers and leaders need to comprehend the underlying values, rituals, ideologies, and assumptions that identify and differentiate the organizational culture. These also provide them with a helping scale to analyze the performance of the organization and compare it with that of their competitors to propose future strategies accordingly. However, as much as the identification of the culture is important, the ways it is created and manifested are also important to understand. In fact, the organizational culture influences all the activities and even the thinking process of the members who are attached to the sports organizations by any means. This includes coaches, staff members, players, and volunteers who are an integral part of such organizations.

In this regard, the following report has analyzed the creation, establishment, and transformation of sports organizational culture from the perspective of its manifestations in the organizations' core ideologies and the behaviours of its members. It has further been found that a specific set of values is fundamentally required for any sports organization that supports diversity to sustain an effective work environment (Jervis, 2012). The most prominent factor in this regard is the role of leaders who provide their expert services for the consistent development of the organizations at all levels. Furthermore, by providing examples of successful sports organizations, it is inferred that the transformational leadership style is considered the most appropriate style for managers to adopt for creating a collaborative environment. Under such leadership, employees, players, and staff members feel very satisfied and motivated to share their ideas regarding a particular aspect of the organization, and this contributes to effectiveness and creativity.

However, considering the predominant challenges that have emerged due to globalization and digitalization, the existing organizational culture in all sports organizations is not sustainable enough to meet all the current requirements. Therefore, as described in the report, managers and leaders need to constantly focus on the particular conditions of the dynamic sports environment, change cultural values, and innovate the existing models accordingly. For instance, as Smith (2016) indicated, recent developments in information technology require sports management to incorporate relevant

digital technologies in their training, communication, and marketing strategies to attain a competitive advantage.

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