The Influence of Emotion in the Management of Amateur Football Organizations

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This article is oriented to the analysis of organizational and emotional variables in amateur sporting organizations. The general objective is to analyze the influence of organizational variables such as service quality, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership and emotional variables such as affective commitment, emotional attachment investment, and emotional attachment dividend to predict the credibility that members of amateur sporting organizations perceive, as well as their degree of identification and loyalty. The opinions of 203 members of Chilean amateur football teams [169 men and 34 women, with ages between 18 and 68 years (mean = 32.75 years, DT = 9.92)] have been analyzed through a self-completed questionnaire. To reach the objectives, two types of differential but complementary analyses, in the form of hierarchical regression models (from hereon, HRMs) and qualitative comparative analysis (from hereon, QCA), were performed. The results obtained suggest that the organizational variables are better predictors than the emotional variables in all of the cases. In the same way, the inclusion of the emotional variables improves the predictive capacity of the proposed models to explain identification and loyalty, but not in the case of credibility. In general, the variables considered seem to explain 37% of the credibility, 56% of loyalty, and 65% of identification. On the other hand, considering the results of the QCA, no variable turned out to be necessary. However, different combinations of variables (conditions) were observed that were able to explain between 47 and 91% of the cases of the variables analyzed. In general, based on these results, it was observed that the emotional variables were important in interaction with other organizational ones since they are present in the three combinations that most explain identification and loyalty and are also present in the three combinations that most explain credibility. This study contributes to the literature by supporting the importance of managing emotions in order for sporting organizations to be more successful.

Keywords: affective commitment, emotional attachment, emotions in sport management, leadership, loyalty, organizational identification, service quality, sport management
INTRODUCTION

Emotions can be a source of conflict within an organization, as they can also be an element capable of promoting the generation of social capital, trust among members of the same team, and a common purpose to follow (Llanos-Contreras and Jabri, 2019; Chang, 2020). Emotions are the result of the formation, interruption, or renovation of affective links and are considered a central element that allows for reinforcing the connections between people (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). Therefore, the managing of emotions would be critical in strengthening the effects of organizational management in the performance of an organization or team. In this way, emotions are a basic driver that must be kept in mind in contemporary society, as well as in sporting organizations. People are connected, and for this reason, the decisions they make affect others in the organization, influencing their own emotions and actions related to behavioral decisions such as credibility, loyalty, and identification (Rodriguez-Pomeda et al., 2017).

For their part, credibility, loyalty, and identification of the members of an organization inform about the behaviors associated with the commitment of the people with an organization and influence the stability and success of the teams (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; Del Barrio-García and Prados-Peña, 2019). Credibility increases the levels of trust of the stakeholders and is fundamental in sustaining lasting personal relationships (Connelly et al., 2011). Loyalty is related to the psychological commitment of the members of an organization (Jacoby, 1971), and the identification with the organization is associated with high levels of positive feelings such as belonging (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011). A better position concerning these three indicators is undoubtedly desirable, and understanding which aspects must be managed is central to achieving it.

The literature about management of emotions in sporting entities has advanced in understanding these elements from a commercial perspective in organizations with high levels of professionalization (e.g., Rodriguez-Pomeda et al., 2017). The importance of emotions in the willingness to align oneself with a determined club has been researched as has the identification of the fans with their club (Dwyer et al., 2015). The literature has also advanced in the comprehension of aspects of organizational management and leadership in the performance of elite sports (Arnold et al., 2015). However, little is known about the influence of organizational and emotional aspects in sporting organizations when these are not professional.

Among the organizational factors that influence the behavior and commitment of the people with an organization or team are found styles of transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Peng et al., 2020). Another organizational variable that is relevant for this case is the service quality, and among the emotional variables, there are affective commitment, emotional attachment investment, and emotional attachment dividend (Calabuig Moreno et al., 2008; Dwyer et al., 2015). For their impact in the sporting and social success of these entities, it is important to understand how these organizational and emotional variables influence credibility, identification, and loyalty, as well as their relative importance for this effect. In order to advance in the comprehension of this phenomenon, this study seeks to respond to the questions of how organizational variables (service quality, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership) and emotional variables (affective commitment, emotional attachment investment, and emotional attachment dividend) influence credibility, identification, and loyalty in members of amateur sporting organizations and which of them are more important in explaining the variables of interest.

To respond to this question, three prediction models were tested in two steps. In the first step, considering the organizational variables (service quality, transactional, and transformational leadership) and, in the second, adding the emotional variables. This allowed us to test, on the one hand, if the organizational variables significantly predict the variables of interest and, on the other hand, if the inclusion of the emotional variables improves the predictive capability of the models significantly. Besides, a comparative qualitative analysis was developed to know if there exists a necessary variable which must always be present to produce the expected result and which variables, or interactions of variables, are sufficient to reach the expected result.

This article is developed in this way; what follows is a theoretical discussion about the organizational and emotional variables being studied and their potential impact on the variables of interest, then we inform about the methodological aspects of the study with the following section showing the results obtained from the analysis of the data. The last section discusses the results and presents the main conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

The perceived service quality is a factor that has been used to explain behavior and organizational performance at a business level and also in the context of sporting organizations, as well as in events (Calabuig et al., 2014) and services (García-Fernández et al., 2018). The perceived service quality has to do with the fulfillment of expectations and the level of satisfaction of users-members of sporting entities (Grönroos, 1984). Both the way the club offers services and the functioning of the organization on an internal level (accesses to the stadium, parking, cleaning, quality of the playing field, repair services, and fan control) must be taken into account, as both aspects contribute to the satisfaction of the fans (Nogales, 2006). These are the attributes used over and over again by users-members to refer to the quality of the service and their satisfaction with it (Kelly and Turley, 2001).

There is literature that relates the perceived service quality (Castillo-Rodríguez et al., 2019) with different organizational variables such as value (Oriade and Schofield, 2019) and satisfaction with a sporting organization (Theodorakis et al., 2019; Vuong et al., 2020), as well as the relationships between them and the future intentions of the users (Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019) which are essential for the success of an event and/or service in the sporting sphere. Along the same lines, it would seem that the service quality influences loyalty and the level of participation of the members of sporting clubs (Alexandris et al., 2017), as well as in the perceived credibility of the entity (Alguacil et al., 2018). In the same way, the existing literature suggests the existence of a positive relationship between the perception of the