

9-1-2024

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Recommended Citation

Doh, Paul Yuseung; Do, Chanwook; and Kim, Minjung (2024) "Exploring the influence of company sport club involvement on employee outcomes," *Journal of Applied Sport Management*. Vol. 16 : Iss. 3.<https://doi.org/10.7290/jasm16bhlj>Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm/vol16/iss3/4>

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Exploring the Influence of Company Sport Club Involvement on Employee Outcomes

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of company sport club involvement on employee outcomes, including cultural intelligence (CQ), organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and task performance. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of self-determination theory and spillover theory, the research examines how participation in company sport clubs enhances intrinsic motivation and promotes positive workplace attitudes and behaviors. Data were collected from 320 employees in Korea who were involved in various company sport clubs. Structural equation modeling analysis confirms significant positive relationships between company sport club involvement and CQ, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and task performance. The findings underscore the significance of integrating company sport clubs into organizational culture to foster employee well-being and productivity. Human resource managers and organizational leaders can leverage these insights to enhance employee engagement and organizational performance.

Keywords: company sport, organizational behavior, cultural intelligence, employee well-being

Sport plays a significant role in contemporary society and is increasingly recognized by organizations for its potential to enhance employee wellbeing and productivity (Wilson et al., 2004). Participation in sport improves physical health, mental wellbeing, and social connections, collectively contributing to employee wellbeing and productivity (Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Pronk & Kotte, 2009). In the United States, numerous companies, particularly major technology corporations like Microsoft, demonstrate their dedication to employee wellbeing by encouraging participation in internal sport clubs and external leagues (Walls, 2016). A notable example of company sport clubs is the Richardson Corporate Challenge in Richardson, TX. This annual event features a 10-week Olympic-style competition featuring 25 sports, with more than 600 employees from 40 companies participating (Richardson Corporate Challenge, 2023).

Acknowledging the benefits of sport, Kim et al. (2024) proposed the concept of *management through sport*, categorizing company sport activities and their organizational influences. Company sports vary by organizational support, location, and competitiveness, resulting in four archetypes: intramural leagues, company sport clubs, company team sport leagues, and casual activities (refer to Kim et al., 2024, for a detailed overview). Among these activities, company sport clubs have garnered attention for engaging sedentary employees in physical activities while fostering positive workplace attitudes and behaviors (Brinkley et al., 2017).

Company sport clubs are defined as employee-organized groups within a company where participation is voluntary (Kim et al., 2024). Motivations for participation vary, including personal preferences, organizational support, and social factors like enjoyment, socialization, and skill improvement (Beaton et al., 2011; Brinkley et al., 2017). Differentiating between affective and cognitive involvement in company sport clubs is essential. Affective involvement refers to employees' emotional attachment and enjoyment (Beaton et al., 2011). In contrast, cognitive involvement involves awareness and understanding of the benefits of participation (Kim et al., 2024). For example, employees with strong affective involvement likely exhibit higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment than those who participate primarily for health benefits (i.e., cognitive involvement).

Given this background, the purpose of this study was to empirically investigate the influence of company sport club involvement on various employee outcomes, including organizational commitment, cultural intelligence (CQ), job satisfaction, and task performance. Our model utilized two theoretical frameworks to elucidate the mechanisms of company sport clubs. First, self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests they enhance intrinsic motivation by fulfilling the core needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Second, we anticipated that this increased motivation not only promotes CQ and organizational commitment but also enhances job satisfaction and task performance. This aligns with the spillover theory (Zedeck, 1992), which posits that positive experiences in one domain, like company sport club involvement, can permeate into other facets of employees' lives, such as the workplace.

Consequences of Company Sport Club Involvement

Cultural Intelligence

Rooted in multi-loci intelligence theory (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986), CQ refers to an individual's capability to thrive in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003). CQ is a dynamic state-like construct that can be cultivated over time (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Company sport clubs, through regular activities and interaction with diverse colleagues, provide a conducive environment for cultural learning and intercultural skill improvements. Fang et al. (2018) posited that exposure to diverse communication settings and physical locations contributes to CQ development. Thus, involvement in company sport clubs can foster employees' CQ by facilitating interaction with colleagues within the organization.

H1: Company sport club involvement will positively influence employees' CQ.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to employees' dedication to their workplace (Saks, 2006), reflecting alignment with organizational goals and values (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Participating in company sport promotes camaraderie among colleagues, strengthening their bond with the organization (Kim et al., 2013). Positive experiences in these clubs can lead to emotional attachment, reinforcing organizational commitment (Kim et al., 2024). Therefore, investigating the association between company sport club involvement and organizational commitment is essential for understanding employee attitudes.

H2: Company sport club involvement will positively influence employees' organizational commitment.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction, a positive emotional state resulting from job appraisal (Locke, 1976), positively influences productivity, absenteeism, and turnover rates (Dixon & Warner, 2010). CQ and organizational commitment are intimately connected to job satisfaction. For example, Kim et al. (2019) found that enhancing sport employees' psychological capital, an outcome of CQ, which leverages positive environmental aspects, increases job satisfaction by fostering confidence in task performance. Through cross-cultural adaptations, CQ can enhance job satisfaction by promoting collaboration with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds (Fang et al., 2018). Organizational commitment is another construct influencing job satisfaction (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Kim et al. (2012) found that higher levels of organizational commitment among employees in athletic departments led to increased job satisfaction.

H3: CQ will positively influence employees' job satisfaction.

H4: Organizational commitment will positively influence employees' job satisfaction.

Task Performance

Task performance, defined as skillfully carrying out assigned duties in diverse work environments, is essential for organizational success (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). This is particularly relevant for CQ, as it enhances task performance by helping individuals understand and adapt to cultural nuances (Ang et al., 2007). Employee performance also relies on organizational commitment; committed employees are more likely to dedicate themselves fully, displaying higher task performance (Turner & Chelladurai,

2005). Previous meta-analytical research confirms that elevated organizational commitment is associated with improved task performance across organizational settings (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

H5: CQ will positively influence employees' task performance.

H6: Organizational commitment will positively influence employees' task performance.

Method

Data Collection and Participants

This study used an online recruitment panel to target participants in company sport clubs in Korea. After recruitment, participants received an online survey link via Qualtrics. Survey questions were randomized to mitigate common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Following Hair et al.'s (2018) recommendation for a ratio of 1:5, a minimum of 155 participants was required. Initially, 342 respondents participated; 22 were excluded due to incomplete or inappropriate responses, leaving 320 completed surveys for final analysis.

The study included 111 females (34.7%) and 209 males (65.3%), with a mean age of 39.4 years ($SD = 8.3$). Participants engaged in company sport clubs, including soccer ($n = 109$, 34.1%), badminton ($n = 56$, 17.5%), table tennis ($n = 29$, 9.1%), basketball ($n = 9$, 2.8%), and others ($n = 90$, 28.1%). On average, employees exercised 2.3 times per week ($SD = 1.4$), including 1.4 times per week ($SD = 0.7$) in company sport clubs. Participation in company sport clubs was included in the total exercise frequency. The average number of employees in these clubs was 11.8 ($SD = 8.1$).

Instruments

Back-translation ensured coherence between the original English instruments and Korean translations (Douglas & Craig, 2007). A bilingual author translated the items into Korean, followed by a back-translation into English by another bilingual researcher. An English native speaker then assessed the meaning equivalence, confirming identical meanings between the original and back-translated instruments.

All questionnaires were adapted from previous research. Nine items from Beaton et al. (2011) measured involvement in company sport clubs. CQ was assessed using nine items from Ang and Van Dyne (2008). Organizational commitment was measured with five modified items from Saks (2006), whereas job satisfaction was from three items by Cammann et al. (1983). Five items from Dåderman et al. (2020) were modified to measure task performance. Except for demographic information (gender, age, type of company sport clubs), all self-report items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Data Preparation

Before conducting structural equation modeling, we checked data representativeness in two ways. First, the Qualtrics survey platform controlled univariate outliers and coding errors. Second, we assessed multivariate normality using Mardia's coefficients in Mplus 8. Results indicated significant multivariate kurtosis ($z = 1218.4$, $p < .001$) and skewness ($z = 203.5$, $p < .001$), suggesting a violation of the normality assumption. To address this, we utilized a maximum likelihood mean-adjusted (MLM) estimator, robust

to non-normality. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were then conducted, evaluating models based on global fit indices including the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Acceptable CFI and TLI values are equal to or greater than .90 (Hair et al., 2018), and acceptable RMSEA and SRMR values are equal to or less than .08 (Tabachnick et al., 2007).

Results

Measurement Model

Multiple confirmatory factor analyses were performed to evaluate the second-order construct and full measurement. For the second-order construct, we evaluated the measurement model for company sport club involvement ($\chi^2 = 75.32$, $df = 26$, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .04). Factor loadings for every item and sub-construct exceeded the threshold of .05 (Hair et al., 2018). We assessed convergent validity by evaluating construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). CR and AVE values of each latent construct were above the recommended levels of .70 and .50, respectively. Correlations analysis confirmed no multicollinearity or singularity issues, as no relationships exceeded a correlation of .85 (Kline, 2023), finalizing the full measurement model (see Table 1).

Table 1

Constructs, Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Correlations

Constructs	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	1	2 (a)	3 (b)	4	5
1. Company Sport Club Involvement	4.83	.94	.81	.68	1				
(a) Affective	5.30	1.00	.90	.75		(1)			
(b) Cognitive	4.59	1.05	.91	.64		(.67*)	(1)		
2. Cultural Intelligence	4.61	1.01	.91	.60	.59*	1			
3. Organizational Commitment	4.57	1.12	.91	.66	.63*	.45*	1		
4. Job Satisfaction	4.74	1.11	.70	.54	.60*	.50*	.83*	1	
5. Task Performance	4.97	1.00	.92	.70	.63*	.54*	.66*	.63*	1

Note. * $p < .001$

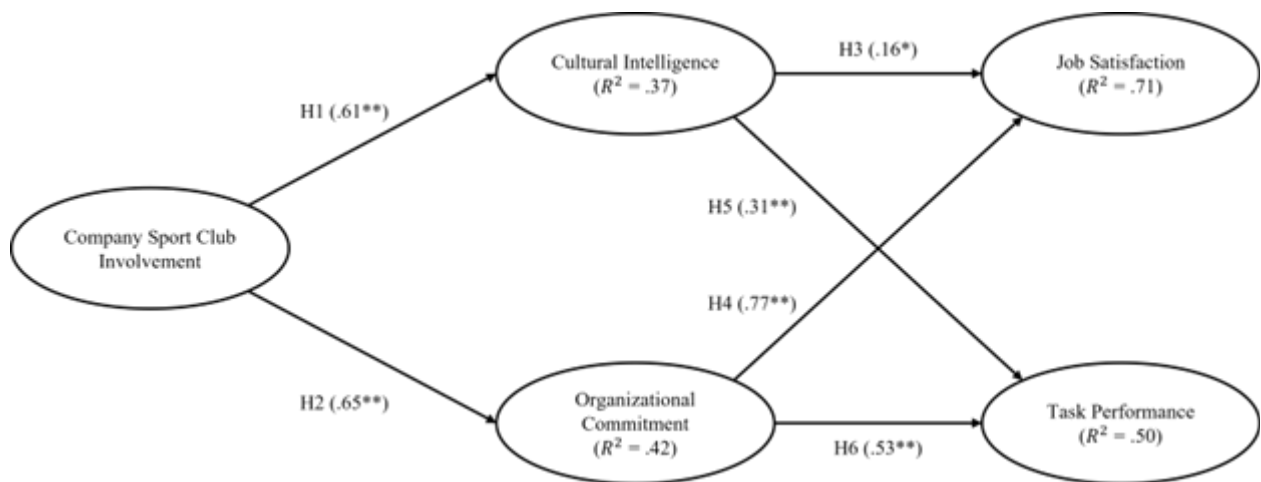
In the initial full measurement model ($\chi^2 = 815.23$, $df = 422$, CFI = .93, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06), a factor loading for the second item of job satisfaction was below .50 (Hair et al., 2018). Previous studies (e.g., Khan et al., 2015; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014) have also reported issues with job satisfaction due to a reverse question. Thus, this reverse item (e.g., In general, I do not like my job) was eliminated from further analysis. The modified measurement model showed an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 699.79$, $df = 393$, CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .04).

Hypotheses Testing

After confirming the full measurement model, structural equation modeling was conducted to test the hypotheses. The hypothesized structural model had acceptable fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 703.84$, $df = 396$, CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .04). The coefficients of two paths for company sport club involvement with CQ and organizational commitment were positive and statistically significant (see Figure 1): paths from company sport club involvement to CQ (H1: $\gamma = .61$, S.E. = .05, $p < .001$) and organizational commitment (H2: $\gamma = .65$, S.E. = .05, $p < .001$). The paths from CQ to job satisfaction (H3: $\gamma = .16$, S.E. = .05, $p = .002$), organizational commitment to job satisfaction (H4: $\gamma = .77$, S.E. = .04, $p < .001$), CQ to task performance (H5: $\gamma = .31$, S.E. = .05, $p < .001$), and organizational commitment to task performance (H6: $\gamma = .53$, S.E. = .05, $p < .001$) were positive and statistically significant in the hypothesized directions. Thus, all hypotheses are supported.

Figure 1

Hypotheses Testing through Structural Equation Modeling



Note. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Results

By employing a theoretical framework of management through sport (Kim et al., 2024), this research examined how company sport clubs influence organizational dynamics, specifically their effects on employees' CQ, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and task performance. A noteworthy finding of this study was the positive influence of company sport club involvement on both employees' CQ and organizational commitment.

Our study confirms that intercultural experiences, company sport clubs in this case, enhance adaptability in culturally diverse environments (Fang et al., 2018). Recurring sport activities and colleague interactions enhanced employees' CQ; our study is the first to reveal this connection. This increased CQ can improve teamwork within the company by fostering better relationships. Employees

who understand and respect cultural differences are more likely to collaborate effectively, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts. Additionally, the positive influence of company sport club involvement on organizational commitment emphasizes the role of sport as a catalyst in fostering camaraderie and strengthening bonds, resonating with existing literature (Kim et al., 2024).

Another finding highlights the positive relationship between CQ, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Employees with higher CQ and organizational commitment had greater job satisfaction. This underscores CQ's role in fostering positive work attitudes (Earley & Ang, 2003) and organizational commitment's role in shaping employees' experiences and perceptions of their work environment (Meyer & Allen, 1997), ultimately enhancing job satisfaction.

In addition, CQ and organizational commitment are key determinants of employees' task performance (Ang et al., 2007). Organizations could equip employees with the competencies necessary to excel in diverse settings and foster a sense of dedication among employees by encouraging them to partake in company sport clubs. Promoting organizational commitment is associated with diminished turnover rates and increased job satisfaction (Meyer & Allen, 1997), enhancing overall organizational performance. Therefore, company sport club involvement can cultivate a motivated and driven workforce.

Managerial Implications

The findings offer practical strategies for human resource managers to integrate company sport clubs into the organization, enhancing collaboration. One approach is organizing a company-wide sports day with team-building activities to promote teamwork and interaction among employees who may not typically work together. Another viable option is hosting interdepartmental sport tournaments and regular fitness challenges that require diverse teams, fostering teamwork among members from diverse backgrounds.

Consistent communication about the organization's advocacy for sport clubs can further solidify employees' commitment. Managers can use multiple channels, including emails, newsletters, and social media, to inform employees about the opportunities and benefits of company sport clubs. In addition, tracking participation and offering incentives, recognition in company newsletters, and ensuring accessible, well-maintained facilities can further encourage involvement.

Human resource departments could consider investing in company sport clubs as part of strategic initiatives. These clubs offer talent management benefits and lower turnover rates. Employees feel valued and connected when organizations support company sport clubs. Providing tangible support like sponsorship and facilities enhances organizational commitment and reinforces employees' sense of belonging. Therefore, sport organization leaders can leverage this knowledge to foster camaraderie and retain top talent.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations, indicating areas for future research on CQ in sport management. First, future studies could examine if the findings from Korea can be replicated in different cultural contexts, such as the United States, considering cultural discrepancies and workplace dynamics. Second, future research can employ the job satisfaction construct without reverse item and explore other forms of sport

involvement for their influence on employee outcomes. Last, investigating moderation factors, such as leadership styles and organizational culture, could further clarify the relationship between company sport club involvement and positive employee outcomes.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that involvement in company sport clubs positively influences employees' CQ, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and task performance. Organizations can enhance employee wellbeing and productivity by promoting a supportive and inclusive environment through sport. The findings underscore the significance of integrating company sport clubs into organizational culture to promote cross-cultural interactions, build camaraderie, and improve organizational outcomes. Future research can further explore these dynamics in diverse cultural settings to validate and expand findings. Human resource managers and leaders can use sport-based initiatives to cultivate a healthy, engaged, and high-performing workforce.

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