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Paul Yuseung Doh

Texas A&M University, pdoh1209@tamu.edu

Minjung Kim

Texas A & M University - College Station, m.kim@tamu.edu

Brent D. Oja

Louisiana State University, boja@lsu.edu

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A Conceptual Framework of Work Passion and Key Intelligences among Coaches

Paul Yuseung Doh

Texas A&M University - College Station

Minjung Kim

Texas A&M University - College Station

Brent D. Oja, Ph.D.

Louisiana State University

Please send correspondence to Minjung Kim, m.kim@tamu.edu.

Abstract

This study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates work passion and three key intelligences—cultural intelligence, digital intelligence, and emotional intelligence—to enhance coaching effectiveness and psychological well-being in sport. The framework explores the anticipated antecedents and outcomes of work passion and these intelligences among coaches. The proposed framework contributes theoretically by highlighting the role of work passion and integrative intelligences as foundational elements for innovative work behaviors in sport coaching, which ultimately enhancing both coaching effectiveness and psychological well-being among coaches. This framework also offers practical insights for sport organizations to strategically invest in coaching development, promoting adaptive, tech-savvy, and inclusive coaching strategies that meet the demands of today's dynamic sport environment.

Keywords: work passion, coaching effectiveness, cultural intelligence, digital intelligence, emotional intelligence

Understanding how leadership practices contribute to organizational effectiveness has been a central focus within sport organizational behavior and human resource management. Sport management scholars have extensively examined the effectiveness of various leadership styles, with a particular emphasis on emerging frameworks and their impacts on individual, dyadic, group, and organizational outcomes (Chelladurai, 1990; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). This line of inquiry spans diverse contexts, including both on-the-field sport teams and off-the-field administrative management teams (Welty Peachey et al., 2015), with coaching leadership emerging as one of the most rigorously and actively explored areas (Dixon & Warner, 2010). In addition to various coaching leadership styles, other competencies have been introduced to better support athletes and foster a positive team culture.

In particular, given the importance of leadership development for athletes' well-being, Kim et al. (2017) argued that it is essential to consider coaches' developmental and state-like constructs, especially within the unpredictable landscape of the sporting industry. Recent sport management scholars have started to explore such constructs in coaching, including passion (Peixoto et al., 2024). Work passion for sport employees can be understood through two perspectives: harmonious and obsessive passion (Zeimers & Shilbury, 2022). Whereas harmonious passion reflects a voluntary, internal desire to engage in work activities, obsessive passion represents an uncontrollable drive to participate because of the intense enjoyment it brings (Zeimers & Shilbury, 2022). Work passion is one of the most prominent features for augmenting preferred outcomes in sport organizations, such as job engagement, organizational commitment, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and psychological well-being (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016; Oja et al., 2019; Swanson & Kent, 2017).

In contemporary sport settings, where innovative and inclusive approaches are essential, coaching effectiveness can be maximized by fostering additional capacities along with work passion. Given recent demands on coaching, three types of intelligence are expected to play a crucial role in promoting innovative work behavior: cultural intelligence (CQ), digital intelligence (DQ), and emotional intelligence (EQ). Although EQ has been relatively well-explored in coaching studies (e.g., Lee & Chelladurai, 2018), CQ and DQ are newly emerging concepts within sport management. Overall, the purpose of this study is to provide a conceptual framework of preferred coaching capabilities, including work passion and the three intelligences, by considering their antecedents and outcomes.

Theoretical Background

Coaching Capabilities

The multifaceted nature of coaches' capabilities, encompassing leadership style and personal characteristics, influence individual athlete development and team dynamics. Traditionally, coaching leadership has been analyzed through foundational theories and frameworks (e.g., Chelladurai's Multidimensional Model; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), highlighting how coaches' behavioral strategies enhance individual and team performances (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). More recent studies, however, have shifted toward relational leadership, integrating concepts like authentic and servant leadership, which prioritize interpersonal connection and empowerment as core to coaching efficacy (Kim et al., 2017). These relationship-driven leadership approaches suggest that coaching effectiveness extends beyond task-oriented to include other capacities, such as political skills (Magnusen & Perrewé, 2016).

and psychological capital (Kim et al., 2017), which can foster coaches' personal growth and well-being. To better understand developmental capabilities among coaches, this study focuses on work passion and supplemental intelligences to maximize coaching effectiveness and psychological well-being.

Work Passion for Sport Coaches

One aspect that can help coaches push through the demanding aspects of their jobs is their passion for working in sport. Work passion is defined as one's "emotional and persistent state of desire based on cognitive and affective work appraisals" (Perrewé et al., 2014, p. 146). When one is highly passionate about a given activity, such as work, they have internalized the role as part of themselves, which provides added meaning and a desire to continue to engage in the activity (Curran et al., 2015). When sport coaches recognize how working in sport reflects how they view themselves, they become passionate about their work. Essentially, sport provides a mechanism for coaches to connect with and then prioritize that activity (i.e., working sport) over other life activities, which helps them to continue to work long hours. Thus, because working in sport is fulfilling (i.e., participating in one's passion), working long hours can be enjoyable and not problematic.

Key Intelligence in Coaching

In response to the diverse athlete needs and team dynamics in sport, three forms of intelligence—CQ, DQ, and EQ—are expected to play a crucial role in coaching. First, CQ refers to an individual's capability to adapt effectively in culturally diverse contexts (Earley & Ang, 2003), and it has emerged as an essential competency for employees in globalized industries. Conceptualized as a multidimensional construct with cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions (Earley & Ang, 2003), CQ has been demonstrated to foster positive outcomes in multicultural organizational settings, including improved team cohesion, effective communication, and enhanced job performance (Ott & Michailova, 2018). CQ is particularly relevant in sport as organizations interact with diverse stakeholders, including athletes, coaches, staff, and fans from varied cultural backgrounds (Doh et al., 2024). For coaches, developing their CQ not only enhances interactions with athletes and stakeholders, but also reduces cultural misunderstandings that could affect athlete development and team dynamics.

Second, DQ, defined as the capacity to effectively navigate, utilize, and manage digital environments (Park & Gentile, 2019), is another critical competency in response to the increasing integration of digital technologies within sport industry. DQ includes a range of proficiencies, including digital literacy, safety, and communication (Stiakakis et al., 2019). Research on DQ highlights the importance of these competencies for promoting safe online interactions, personal and organizational data management, and fostering responsible digital behavior within teams (Marnewick & Marnewick, 2021). In sport management, Hill et al. (2024) found that Millennial and Generation Z employees, despite being digitally native, experience technological anxiety, hindering new digital tool adoption at work. This underlines the necessity of DQ for sport employees, particularly coaches, enabling them to incorporate technology effectively into their practices (Qi et al., 2024).

Third, EQ can be defined as individuals' capability to recognize, manage, and utilize emotions effectively (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Comprising facets of emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal,

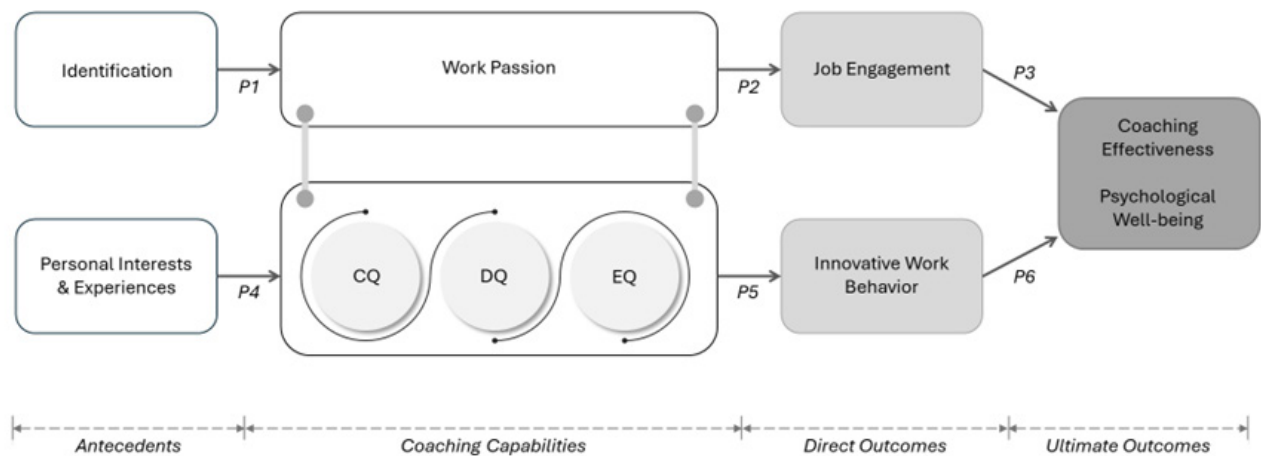
regulation of emotion, and use of emotion (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), EQ in sport settings has been shown to enhance job satisfaction goal orientation and creativity (Lee & Chelladurai, 2018). It promotes prosocial behaviors and emotional regulation, supporting positive interactions and team cohesion (Magnusen & Perrewé, 2016). Additionally, high EQ levels increase engagement and creativity among sport employees (Paek et al., 2022), enabling them to approach challenges innovatively and collaborate effectively.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (see Figure 1) outlines the antecedents of key coaching capabilities that lead to positive outcomes. It proposes that identification fosters work passion, and three core forms of intelligence—CQ, DQ, and EQ—are reinforced by personal interests and experiences. Aligning work passion with these intelligences is proposed to enhance job engagement and foster innovative work behavior, ultimately contributing to coaching effectiveness and psychological well-being.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework of Coaching Capabilities



One's identity and their passion are strongly linked. Curran et al. (2015) explained that passion emerges only when one is engaged in activities that are valued by an individual. As activities (e.g., working in sport) become self-defining, they become part of one's own identity, and this linkage between activity and "the self" creates passion (Curran et al., 2015). In this way, when a sport coach internalizes the role of working in sport (i.e., working in sport is at the core of who they are) they are then able to be passionate about working in sport because doing so reinforces important elements of their identity. As such, a sport coach's identity is likely to enable their work passion (Proposition 1).

A sport coach's passion for their work is also likely to support their innovative tendencies. This is based on the idea that passion is motivational. When an individual is passionate about a given activity, they are more likely to continue engaging in it because they are motivated to do so. Thus, one's passion provides them with the motivation to continue going to work despite high labor demands, but more so passion provides the motivation to go above and beyond what is expected of an employee as it offers in-

creased psychological energy and effort (Curran et al., 2015). Passion's motivational roots, then, provide the rationale for increased innovative work behaviors. This is because those who are passionate about their work are likely to seek and implement improvements to their work environments through innovative behaviors because their work is personally meaningful to them, and they gain satisfaction from improving it (Pollack et al., 2020). As such, passion among sport coaches is likely to increase innovative work behavior (Proposition 2).

Personal interests and experiences shape an individual's engagement with new knowledge and skill development (Kolb, 2014). Individuals genuinely curious about other cultures and engaging in cross-cultural interactions are more likely to develop CQ (Earley & Ang, 2003). Similarly, a strong affinity for technology is highly associated with enhancing DQ (Park & Gentile, 2019). Also, personal encounters with emotional challenges contribute to cultivating EQ, equipping individuals with the necessary capacity for emotional regulation (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Thus, CQ, DQ, and EQ can be strengthened through accumulated interests and previous experiences that empower individuals to adapt to diverse cultural, digital, and emotional demands. In this context, coaches' interests and experiences can build a robust foundation for CQ, DQ, and EQ (Proposition 3).

As a direct outcome of three intelligences, innovative work behavior refers to one's actions to establish creative ideas, processes, or solutions that can address challenges in the work environment (Janssen, 2000). Innovative work behavior enables coaches to adapt and respond to rapidly changing team dynamics. Elevated CQ levels are associated with greater interpersonal trust, adaptability, and reduced conflict, promoting team collaboration (Afsar et al., 2021). DQ enables innovative training practices and data-driven decision-making (Park & Gentile, 2019). For example, coaches with higher DQ can leverage performance-tracking software to analyze player metrics and utilize digital communication tools for seamless coordination with athletes and support staff. High EQ supports creative behaviors through divergent thinking and subsequent problem-solving (Paek et al., 2022). For example, coaches with high EQ could inspire athletes through motivational, empathetic, and innovative feedback to enhance team resilience. Consequently, sport coaches with elevated CQ, DQ, and EQ levels are anticipated to exhibit innovative work behaviors (Proposition 4).

The ultimate outcomes of innovative work behaviors include coaching effectiveness and psychological well-being. Coaching effectiveness includes athlete performance, personal growth, and supportive behaviors (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Innovative work behaviors enable coaches to employ adaptive and creative strategies that respond to athletes' needs and challenges (Carmeli et al., 2006). By exploring novel training or technology-driven methodologies, coaches can personalize their approach to better support each athlete's growth. Psychological well-being, involving self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989), is an essential asset for sport employees for positive personal and organizational outcomes (Kim et al., 2017). Innovative work behavior can enhance psychological well-being by fostering a sense of achievement (Janssen, 2000). For example, a sense of achievement allows coaches to face challenges optimistically, encouraging athletes' development through personalized training techniques and support. Consequently, innovative work behavior is expected to enhance coaching effectiveness (Proposition 5) and psychological well-being (Proposition 6).

Discussion

Theoretical Contribution and Practical Implications

This research introduces a novel framework synthesizing work passion with three intelligences to achieve preferred coaching outcomes. By positioning work passion as a foundation, the framework extends insights into how integrating multiple intelligences could foster adaptive and responsive coaching to accommodate contemporary demands. In addition, this research supports sport management scholars in identifying additional components that enhance sport employees' psychological well-being. The conceptual framework also offers practical insights for sport organizations. For example, they can better assist coaches in managing team dynamics and aiding athlete development by fostering work passion alongside CQ, DQ, and EQ. Enhancing these intelligences can improve interactions with other coaching staff and athletes to provide a better organizational environment.

Empirical Application in Future Research

The model informs how passion can be used to inform future studies concerning coach's passion for their work and their innovative work behaviors. The theoretical relationships between these variables are sound, but one element that should be considered is the tendency for passion to become obsessive. Passion is generally viewed as a positive phenomenon because of the enjoyment gained from participating in one's passions, but this does pose a threat of overindulgence whereby working in sport may be too enjoyable for coaches and as a result they sacrifice other life responsibilities. Regarding the model, extra time spent on innovations may very well support their team, but the tenacity to continue working through the inevitable failures of the innovation process may become detrimental to coaches' work-life balance. As such, there could be a hidden "cost" to pay for having highly passionate coaches.

Future research on coaching capabilities in sport management should empirically examine the interactive roles of CQ, DQ, and EQ in fostering innovative work behaviors among coaches. Given the increasing diversity and technological advancements in sport industry, an empirical investigation that quantitatively assesses these intelligences combined influence on coaching effectiveness and psychological well-being would provide necessary insights. To measure these intelligences, researchers might employ validated instruments such as the CQ scale (CQS; Van Dyne et al., 2015), DQ quotient (DIQ; Na-Nan et al., 2020), and EQ scale (EIS; Wong & Law, 2017). Researchers can also examine the moderating roles of team cohesion and innovative climate on the relationship between the three types of intelligences and employee outcomes. As such, empirical validation of this framework could guide sport organizations in developing feasible methods that integrate CQ, DQ, and EQ in coaching, thereby aligning with contemporary demands for holistic and adaptive coaching.

Conclusion

The proposed framework offers a forward-looking perspective on the essential capabilities that modern sport coaches should cultivate to thrive in increasingly complex and dynamic environments. By focusing and integrating work passion with three types of intelligence in sport, the framework reveals how these capabilities, shaped by antecedents like identification, personal interests, and experiences, promote innovative work behaviors essential for coaching effectiveness and psychological well-being. Through

this, work passion and the three intelligences emerge not merely as supplementary capacity but as important enablers of adaptability and innovation to the cultural, technological, and emotional challenges inherent in contemporary sport.

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