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How Preseason Hope Impacts Fans' Attendance Intentions and Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract

The authors developed a two-factor preseason hope scale and examined the moderation effects of preseason hope and state hope on the chain of effects from team identification and attendance intention to subjective well-being. A moderated moderated-mediation model was tested ($n = 224$). Consequently, attendance intention mediated the relationship between team identification and well-being. The effect of team identification on attendance intention was stronger for those with lower preseason hope and state hope. The effect of attendance intention on well-being was stronger for those with higher preseason hope. Interaction effects by levels of hope were found among the conditional indirect effects.

Keywords: preseason hope, state hope, team identification, attendance intention, well-being

How should sport managers in the front office prepare their preseason communication campaign? Hope is a multifaceted psychological construct researched in various ways such as an optimistic human trait, emotional state, and motivation component (Kashdan et al., 2002). Hope-based marketing campaigns have been frequently employed across diverse sport marketing settings. Marketers intuitively presume that elevating hope can benefit the team community as hope serves as an agency for craving positive experiences (Snyder, 2002). For instance, releasing a hype video on social media is a frequently used tactic to induce positive aspirations among fans. Despite the potentially wide application of hope-based marketing campaigns, conceptualization and empirical examination of hope is limited in the sport management literature. Moreover, there is no survey tool particularly designed to measure and assess the factors of hope before the season begins. To address this research gap, the purpose of this study was to develop a preseason hope scale and examine its roles in the chain of effects of team identification, attendance intention, and psychological well-being.

Review of Literature

Sport fans care deeply about the success of their team based on team identification, which is known as the degree to feeling a psychological connection with the team (Wann et al., 2017). This concept of team identification developed in and out of the game also creates a social connection among fans, and it influences fans' sociopsychological health. According to the Team Identification–Social Psychological Health Model (Wann et al., 2011), higher team identification is positively related to fans' psychological health outcomes such as higher levels of subjective well-being and lower levels of depression, loneliness, and alienation. M. Kim et al. (2017) and Oja et al. (2019) distinguished this type of psychological state as hedonic well-being, the presence of positive emotions (e.g., joy and contentment) and the absence of negative emotions (e.g., sadness and anxiety), whereas eudaimonic well-being involves a sense of purpose, personal growth, and self-realization.

Considering attendance intentions as a proxy for social connection demands, attendance intention may mediate the effect of team identification on subjective well-being. This is because the agency for team success is reflected by market demand for game attendance and team community welfare (Lee et al., 2017; Wann et al., 2017). Thereby, highly identified fans aspire to attend games as soon as the season begins, and such willingness for social connection will result in positive subjective well-being. Despite the accumulating body of research on team identification, attendance intentions, and well-being, the role of hope among these relations is underresearched. The impact of hope is often conflated and generally assumed when conceptualizing cognitive and behavioral models in sport management. Thus, it is imperative to delve into the role of hope in the literature.

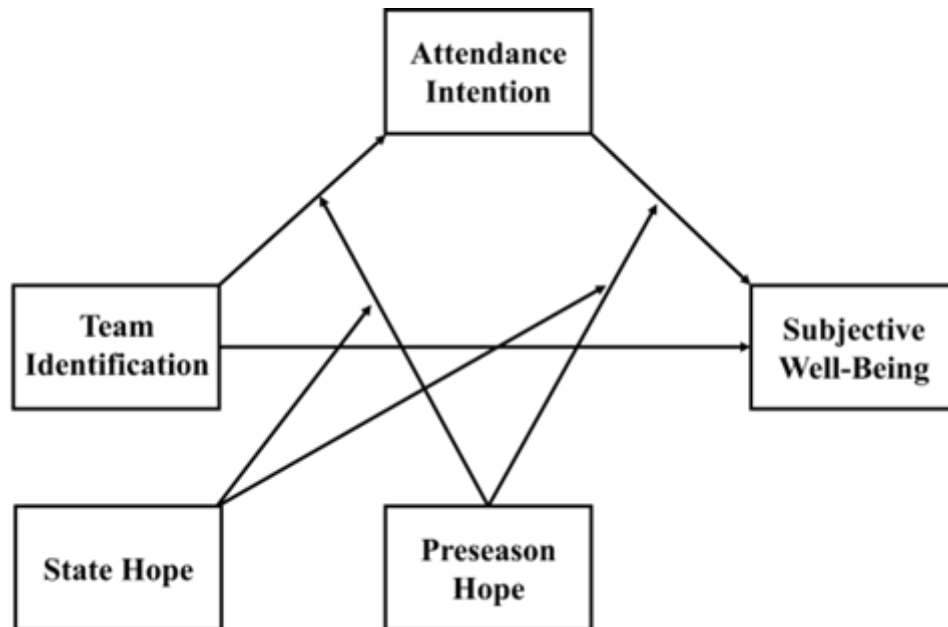
Having both cognitive and affective elements, hope is associated with goal-oriented agency thinking, strategic pathway development, and motivation to deliberately pursue goals (Snyder, 2002). According to appraisal theory (Frijda, 1986), we defined preseason hope as a discrete goal-oriented emotion that involves appraisals of the contextual cues and situations aimed toward a successful season (Bury et al., 2016). Hope can provide a basis for fans' collective action to attend the games and support their teams as a goal-oriented perception and emotion with a motivational element (Cohen-Chen &

Zomeran, 2018). Preseason hope can also serve as a psychological resource element governing an individual's well-being before the season kicks off.

Hope is a multidimensional construct with cognitive (e.g., goal setting and planning) and emotional (e.g., emotions and motivation) components. As a result, people who possess a strong sense of hope are more inclined to pursue activities that they believe will have favorable consequences (Lee et al., 2017). These individuals also tend to encounter positive feelings more often, and they are better equipped to cope with difficult situations and display greater resilience in the face of adversity (Park et al., 2022). Thus, we hypothesized that team identification will influence subjective well-being (H1), attendance intention will mediate the relationship between team identification and subjective well-being (H2), and preseason hope and state hope will moderate the mediation effect of attendance intention (H3). The hypothesized model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Research Model



Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited for the initial development of the preseason hope scale and the main study respectively. For the scale development, a total of 139 undergraduates in a large South-Central university participated in an online survey during the preseason. They were comprised of 52 males (37.1%) and 85 females (60.7%) where two students did not indicate gender, with an average age of 21.21 (SD = 4.51). A total of 224 students took part in the main study through a bulk email system. They were comprised of 77 males (34%) and 145 females (65%) where two persons did not indicate gender, with an average age of 21.88 (SD = 4.42). The study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Development of Preseason Hope Scale

This study referenced Clark and Watson's (2016) scale development procedures to develop a valid and reliable preseason hope scale. First, we generated an initial item pool through a comprehensive literature review and conducted a focus group interview with five college football fans for face validity. Second, to test content validity, three experts in sport management field (two professors and one practitioner) thoroughly reviewed the items by using the Q-sorting method in which the items were sorted until all reviewers agreed. As a result, a total of 13 items of preseason hope were chosen. Third, we conducted an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) from different samples to assess construct validity.

Results of EFA, using Principal Axis Factoring of Extraction Method and Direct Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization of Rotation Method, indicated three factors of preseason hope: athlete roster and performance, diminishing news about the team, and fan service and communication. A second-order factor model, including two-factor scales with seven items (four items for "athlete roster and performance" and three items for "fan service and communication"), was confirmed in the CFA, as one of the factors was eliminated due to low factor loadings and cross-loadings against unidimensionality (Anderson & Gerbing, 1987). An additional CFA was performed to assess the measurement model including other construct measures in the research model.

Adopted Scales

We adopted scales of attendance intention (Y. K. Kim et al., 2011), team identification (James et al., 2019), state hope (Synder, 2002), and subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2009). Confirmatory and discriminant validity were assessed based on Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores and factor correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Results of psychometric assessments and model fit of respective CFAs are reported in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Psychometric Properties of the Measurement Model

Factors and Items	β	CR	AVE
Preseason Hope (PH) I: Athlete Roster and Performance		.84	.58
Highly recruited commits get me excited about OOO football for this season.	.82		
Being in the top 25 percent ranking gives me hope for the season.	.77		
A highly touted player transferring into OOO increases my hope for the season.	.79		
Starting players staying out of the draft increases my hope for upcoming season.	.66		
Preseason Hope (PH) II: Fan Service and Communication		.75	.51
OOO optimism in press conferences gives me optimism.	.79		
Hype videos have an influence on the perception of the upcoming season.	.72		

The Spring Game is an indicator of how well the upcoming season is going to go.	.62		
State Hope (SH)		.83	.56
At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals.	.69		
Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful.	.86		
I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.	.65		
At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself.	.77		
Team Identification (TID)		.91	.59
How important to you is it that the OOO football team wins?	.74		
How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of the OOO football team?	.91		
How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of the OOO football team?	.86		
During the season, how closely do you follow the OOO football team via any of the following: in person, on television, on the radio, on television news, a newspaper, or on the internet?	.72		
How important is being a fan of the OOO football team to you?	.90		
How much do you dislike the OOO football team's greatest rival?	.60		
How often do you display the OOO football team's name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?	.57		
Attendance Intention (AI)		.93	.81
I intend to attend an OOO football game in the future	.77		
I plan to attend an OOO football game in the future.	.96		
I will attend an OOO football game in the future.	.96		
Subjective Well-Being (SWB)			
I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.	.72		
My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.	.63		
I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.	.76		
I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.	.76		
I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.	.64		
I am a good person and live a good life.	.72		
I am optimistic about my future.	.73		
People respect me.	.72		

Note. CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted.

Table 2*Fit Indices of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Models*

Model	χ^2 /df	SRMR	CFI	RMSEA
Two-Factor Models of Preseason Hope				
First-Order Factor	28.80/13	.03	.98	.07 (.04, .11)
Second-Order Factor	28.80/12	.03	.98	.08 (.04, .12)
Measurement Model with Criterion Variables				
First-Order Factor	666.46/362	.06	.92	.06 (.05, .07)
Second-Order factor	669.97/365	.06	.92	.06 (.05, .07)

Note. df = degrees of freedom, SRMR = standardized mean squared residual, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. 90% CI is represented in the paratheses.

Statistical Analysis

For hypotheses testing, we set team identification as an independent variable, well-being as a dependent variable, attendance intention as a mediator, and preseason hope and state hope as moderators respectively (see Figure 1). A moderated moderated-mediation model was examined with the dataset of factor scores from the CFA by using PROCESS macro (Model 72). We employed a bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples to calculate a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval.

Results

The results of descriptive statistics and factor correlation coefficients of each construct are reported in Table 3. Direct, indirect, and conditional indirect effects of all paths of the research model in this study are reported in Table 4. Additionally, Figure 2 shows the result of interaction effects. Support for the hypotheses was mixed, with one being rejected, one being supported, and one being partially supported.

Table 3*Factor Correlations and Descriptive Statistics*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. PH	1				
2. SH	.43**	1			
3. TID	.63**	.28**	1		
4. AI	.67**	.43**	.60**	1	
5. SWB	.44**	.59**	.33**	.41**	1
<i>Minimum</i>	-4.66	-3.01	-3.76	-3.48	-2.62
<i>Maximum</i>	1.64	1.28	1.33	.45	.77
<i>SD</i>	1.17	.89	1.19	.74	.59
<i>Skewness</i>	-1.20	-.96	-1.20	-2.22	-.89
<i>Kurtosis</i>	1.80	.83	.84	5.30	1.32

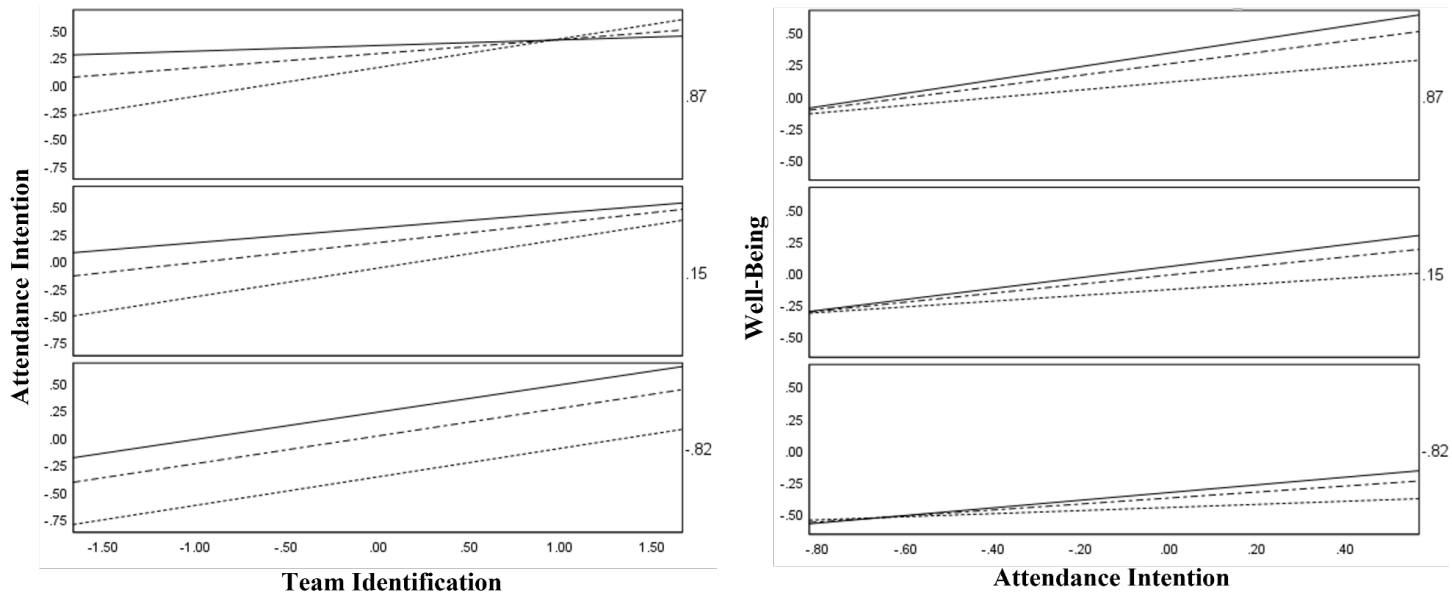
** $p < .01$.

Table 4*Path Estimates of Direct, Indirect, and Conditional Indirect Effects*

Effects		Estimate	SE	95% CI	
				LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effects					
DV: AI					
	TID	.21***	.04	.13	.28
	TID × PH	-.05*	.02	-.10	-.00
	TID × PH x SH	-.06**	.02	-.10	-.01
DV: Well-Being					
	TID	-.00	.03	-.07	.06
	AI	.31***	.08	.15	.48
	AI × PH	.09**	.04	.02	.16
	AI × PH x SH	.01	.03	-.04	.06
Indirect Effects					
	Through AI	.11*	.03	.06	.18
Conditional Indirect Effects by Percentile Groups					
	PH (W)	SH (Z)			
		Low	.03	.03	-.00 .10
Low		Medium	.06*	.03	.01 .11
		High	.08*	.05	.01 .18
		Low	.06*	.04	.01 .16
Medium		Medium	.07*	.02	.02 .11
		High	.06	.03	-.01 .13
		Low	.08*	.05	.01 .21
High		Medium	.06*	.03	.01 .11
		High	.03	.04	-.06 .09

Note. Preseason Hope level: high = 1.05 (84th percentile), median = .26 (50th percentile), low = -1.11 (16th percentile), State Hope Level: Low = -.82 (16th percentile), Median = .15 (50th percentile), High = .87 (84th percentile).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Figure 2*The Result of Interaction Effects*

Note. Solid line represents high preseason hope level at 1.05 (84th percentile). Dash-dotted line represents median preseason hope level at .26 (50th percentile). Dotted line represents low preseason hope level at -1.11 (16th percentile). Upper box represents high state hope level at .87 (84th percentile). Middle box represents median state hope level at .15 (50th percentile), and lower box represents low state hope level at -.82 (16th percentile).

The direct effect of team identification on well-being was not statistically significant, rejecting H1. The mediation effect of attendance intention on the relationship between team identification and well-being was significant, supporting H2. In terms of the moderated moderated-mediation analysis, preseason hope, which was moderated by state hope, partially moderated the mediation effect of attendance intention. As the two strongest conditional indirect effects were driven by either high preseason hope with low state hope or high state hope with low preseason hope, H3 was partially supported.

Discussion

We developed a preseason hope scale and examined its moderating role along with state hope on a chain of effects from team identification and attendance intention to subjective well-being. Although higher preseason hope intensified how game attendance intention leads to subjective well-being in sports fans, higher team identification and state hope were required to motivate fans to attend games. That is, the roles of preseason and state hope can be examined and managed differently.

As expected, attendance intention fully mediated the relationship between team identification and subjective well-being. In addition, the indirect effects depended on both preseason and state hope. The ordinal interaction effects indicated that attendance intention affected subjective well-being the most significantly for those with higher preseason hope. The disordinal interaction effects showed that maintaining

a higher state hope was more important for those with lower preseason hope to attend games whereas fans with high preseason hope were willing to attend games regardless of their team identification.

Another fascinating result was that the paths from team identification to well-being through attendance intention depended on the degree of preseason and state hope. Specifically, it was not statistically significant when state hope was high and preseason hope was moderate or high, or when state hope was low and preseason hope was low. The effects of each hope leading to well-being are consistent with M. Kim et al.'s (2017) findings regarding the importance of hope to one's well-being as a psychological resource. We found that hoping for the success of the team in the preseason or for one's overall hope can boost fans' psychological well-being in the tested model.

From a managerial standpoint, sport managers can utilize the two-factor preseason hope scale to assess fans' agency leading them to engage with their team in the upcoming season. Raising sport fans' expectations before a season kicks off allows them to participate in sporting events and fan activities more actively in the future. In addition, the scale can be potentially used to anticipate fans' subjective well-being and their intention to attend games.

Our findings showed that both concepts of hope act individually or together as very important factors of sport fans' well-being and participation in potential sporting events. In this respect, managers of sport teams may capitalize on the results of this study in order to stimulate fans' preseason hope. Managers should strategically prepare their preseason marketing plans in accordance with the elements of the two factors of preseason hope. Last, we suggest practitioners operate off-season management more effectively by instilling hope in their fans.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study is not without limitations. First, we collected data from student fans of a college football team. To increase the external and ecological validity, it will be necessary to replicate the model across various sports and teams. Another limitation is that personal traits (e.g., characteristics or emotional state) could lead to a confounding effect (e.g., Do et al., 2022). Thus, cross-validation testing of the scale and model would strengthen the findings of this study. Another suggested research area is whether there are differences across generations. Factors that can attract younger fans warrant scholarly attention (Park et al., 2022). Last, the survey participants in our study were biased toward female participants. Future research should employ gender-balanced investigations or comparisons between male and female participants.

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