

Sport Commitment, Occupational Commitment, and Intent to Quit Among High School Sport Officials

Christopher R. Barnhill¹
Damon P. Andrew¹

J. Michael Martinez¹
Wes Todd²

¹*Louisiana State University*

²*Auburn University*

This case study sought to examine the issue of attrition among high school sport officials by exploring turnover intentions through the lenses of occupational and sport commitment. A questionnaire was distributed via email to high school sport officials in a suburban region in the southeastern United States. The data were analyzed via hierarchical multiple regression, revealing that affective occupational commitment and sport commitment are negatively correlated predictors of occupational turnover intentions. Implications for practitioners and avenues for future scholarship are conferred.

High school sport participation steadily increased in the United States throughout the last quarter century. During the 2015-16 academic year, nearly 7.9 million students participated in high school athletic competitions (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2016). With record participation, local conferences and state athletic associations must carefully manage limited resources (NFHS, 2016). Budgets

are tightening for many schools and state athletic associations (Wolf, 2015). Budget constraints of state athletic associations place strains on increasingly scarce resources as the number of teams and contests expand to meet the influx of athletes. Quality sport officials are a particularly important and scarce resource for state athletic associations (Solutions to Referee Shortage, 2016).

Sport officials play important roles in maintaining game quality and participant safety (Ridinger, 2015). Unfortunately, for many high school athletic associations, attracting and retaining sport officials is becoming increasingly difficult (Associated Press, 2015). In some states, shortages are severe enough to cause concern among administrators regarding the ability to cover athletic contests (Solutions to Referee Shortage, 2016). As experienced referees withdraw from the profession, due in some part to lack of pay and increased time commitment (Livingston, 2016), the quality of officiating is negatively impacted. Experience is one of the most important indicators of officiating quality (Lirgg, Feltz, & Merrie, 2016). As high school sport participation continues to grow, the need for quality officials will escalate. Therefore, it is important to understand why officials leave the profession.

Amateur sport in the United States includes youth, high school, club, recreational, and intercollegiate levels of competition. Officials in amateur levels of sport often enter the profession for reasons other than pay. For most, officiating is a hobby or secondary source of income (National Association of Sports Officials, 2001). Others are drawn to the profession as a way to stay involved in sport or because they enjoy the act of officiating contests (VanYperen, 1998). These notions of involvement and enjoyment, as well as elements of personal investments of time, are related determinants of an official's

commitment (VanYperen, 1998). Occupational commitment, defined by one's level of commitment to a selected profession through continued membership (Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 1997), and sport commitment, defined as a psychological state of one's desire to continue sport participation (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, & Keeler, 1993), are cited as factors indicative to one becoming a sport official (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, 2015; Wolfson & Neave, 2007). Although scholars have explored various antecedents of turnover intentions of sport officials (Bernal, Nix, & Boatwright, 2012; Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; Gray & Wilson, 2008; Hancock et al., 2015; VanYperen, 1998; Warner, Tingle, & Kellett, 2013), the relationship between occupational commitment, sport commitment, and intentions to leave among officials has remained relatively underexplored.

Very few studies have examined the relationship between commitment and intention to leave amongst sport officials. Those that have done so only focused on the issue from a sport commitment perspective (e.g., Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; VanYperen, 1998). Gray and Wilson (2008) also explored commitment and subsequent outcomes among sport officials, using organizational commitment, sport commitment, and role commitment in their model. However, role commitment was measured using exploratory means and not the full occupational commitment model. It

is in this research gap that the present case study seeks to contribute to the literature, by examining both occupational commitment and sport commitment as latent influences on turnover intentions among sport officials.

Scholarship exploring turnover intentions of employees and volunteers, both associated and not associated with sport, suggested strong support for occupational commitment as a predictor of turnover intentions (e.g., Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Turner & Chelladurai, 2005). Relatedly, sport commitment has also been indicated as a factor related to turnover intentions of employees, athletes, and volunteers involved in sport (Cuskelly, 1995; Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; Scanlan et al., 1993; VanYperen, 1998). The purpose of this case study was to explore the role of occupational commitment and sport commitment on sport officials' intentions to stay or leave the sport officiating occupation. Specifically, this case study explored the effects of affective, continuance, and normative occupational commitment, as well the effects of the individual components of the sport commitment model (Scanlan et al., 1993) on turnover intentions of high school sport officials in a suburban United States city.

Theoretical Framework

Commitment theory serves as the theoretical foundation for the case study. Scholars suggest that commitment, operationalized as the persistence in a

course of action (Scanlan et al., 1993), is attitudinal in nature and is generally comprised of affective attachment, perceived costs and obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Occupational Commitment

In the context of organizational management, of which sport management shares many similarities, commitment theory has largely focused on individual attitudinal commitments to work and the various antecedents and outcomes (e.g., Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Morrow, 1983; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Morrow (1983) introduced several foci of these attitudinal commitments, including personal values, organizations, and one's career. Of these foci, one's commitment to the organization has been a major topic of inquiry (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Meyer and Allen (1991) introduced the three-component model of organizational commitment, and this model continues to serve as a foundation for most managerial commitment related studies (e.g., Cunningham & Sagas, 2004; Rocha & Chelladurai, 2011; Turner & Jordan, 2006). Later, Meyer et al. (1993) extended this model to focus on one's commitment to an occupation. Essentially, the authors argued that in some sectors, such as those of nursing and law, attitudinal commitment to the profession or occupation, is distinctly different than being committed to a specific organization (Meyer et al., 1993).

Occupational commitment is defined as, “a psychological link between a person and his or her occupation that is based on an affective reaction to the occupation” (Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000, p. 800). Lee et al. (2000) suggested occupational commitment is an important construct because occupations represent a significant focus for many individuals and provide meaningful links to organizational membership. Similar to organizational commitment, prior scholarship suggested occupational commitment is related to several behavioral outcomes of interest to managers, including those of job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Lee et al., 2000). In essence, occupational commitment is positively related to an employee’s job satisfaction (Wang, Sang, Li, & Zhao, 2016), and negatively related to turnover intentions to both the organization and the career (Weng & McElroy, 2012).

The Multidimensional View of Occupational Commitment

Utilizing the previously validated multidimensional organizational commitment framework (Meyer & Allen, 1991), Meyer et al. (1993) developed the multidimensional view of occupational commitment. The multidimensional view conjectures that individuals may be committed to occupations emotionally, obligatorily, or through necessity. Meyer et al. (1993) defined affective occupational commitment as a strong desire to remain in one’s profession. Translating to the high

school sport official population, affective occupational commitment would represent one’s desire to remain an official of high school sports because it is something the individual wants. Additionally, Weng & McElroy (2012) suggest that affective organizational commitment is heavily influenced by career choices and changes due to one’s experience. This also could be explained in the sport officials’ context, as that is a profession in which attitudinal factors, such as sport enjoyment and personal investments, influence participation.

A second, distinctively different dimension of occupational commitment, normative occupational commitment, represents an individual’s sense of obligation to their occupation (Meyer et al., 1993). In other words, normative occupational commitment represents the feeling that one ought to remain a sport official or that they owe a debt to the profession. In the examined population, normative occupational commitment would be represented by feelings that one should officiate high school athletics. The final dimension in the Meyer et al. (1993) model is continuance occupational commitment. Continuance occupational commitment is the recognition of costs associated with leaving one’s occupation.

Sport Commitment

Sport commitment has been viewed as an extension of commitment theory, exploring how commitment to sport affects

one's actions and behaviors. Sport commitment (Scanlan et al., 1993) is comprised of five separate constructs: sport enjoyment, involvement alternatives, personal investments, social constraints and involvement opportunities. Three of the five constructs relate to the previously mentioned constructs of occupational commitment, including affective (sport enjoyment), perceived costs (involvement alternatives), and normative (social constraints). Due to the distinct qualities of sport participation, Scanlan et al. (1993) added two other constructs of personal investments (investments and activities to participate that come at the expense of other activities) and involvement opportunities (value that comes from continued involvement). Utilizing a sample of youth baseball players, Scanlan et al. (1993) found each dimension was unique, but contributed to the participants' general commitment to their sport.

Turnover Intentions

Turnover intentions can be defined as the level of desire one has to leave their organization or occupation (Blau, 2007; Blau, Tatum, & Ward-Cook, 2003; Martin, 1979). In contrast to actual turnover, which may be hampered by various constraints or barriers to exit, the turnover intentions construct relates to employees' feelings of wanting to end their relationship with their employer or occupation. Turnover intentions are a strong predictor of

withdrawal behaviors (Blau, 2007; Moore, 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993).

Scholarly research has long focused on the motives of employees in various functions and industries (Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999) and on the various stages of the career (Smart & Peterson, 1997) as they relate to employee occupation. These stages include motivation to begin or change a career (Smart & Peterson, 1997), environments and factors that influence one staying in that career (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and, ultimately, what culminates in the employee's exit from the career (Dingemans & Henkens, 2014). Likewise, this has been an area of interest in the sport management literature in recent years (Cunningham, Sagas, & Ashley, 2001; Martinez, Miller, & Koo, 2016).

Occupational Commitment and Intentions to Leave Sport Based Occupations

Within sport organizational settings, research exploring organizational commitment is abundant (e.g., Engelberg-Moston, Stipis, Kippin, Spillman, & Burbidge, 2009; Martinez et al., 2016; Turner & Chelladurai, 2005), yet few sport scholars incorporate multidimensional occupational commitment variables into their models. Many that have done so choose to focus only on the effects of affective occupational commitment. Within sport organizational settings, affective occupational commitment is predictive of occupational turnover intentions. Two

studies (Cunningham & Sagas, 2004; Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005) explored the effect of affective occupational commitment on sport management students' intentions to enter a sport industry occupation. Both studies indicated a positive relationship with affective occupational commitment and intentions to enter sport-based occupations. Neither included variables related to occupational turnover intentions.

Conversely, occupational turnover intention was a dependent variable in Turner and Chelladurai's (2005) study examining occupational commitment of National Collegiate Athletic Association football coaches. Their results mirrored prior research from other disciplines. Affective occupational commitment was inversely related to occupational turnover intentions. Similar results were found when exploring the role of affective occupational commitment in volunteer coaches (Engelberg-Moston et al., 2009).

Studies exploring continuance and normative occupational commitment of sport-based employees are limited. One study (Turner & Chelladurai, 2005), explored the relationships between normative occupational commitment, continuance occupational commitment, and occupational turnover intentions of college coaches. Within the context of college coaches, normative occupational commitment was found to have an inverse relationship with occupational turnover intentions, whereas continuance

occupational commitment was positively related. However, caution must be exercised before generalizing results from Turner and Chelladurai (2005) to high school sport officials. Although both occupations fall within the amateur sport context, factors such as pay and organizational ties may impact variables differently between college coaches and high school sport officials.

Research on Sport Officials

While not a major focus of sport management literature, prior research has utilized sport officials as an area of examination. According to Ridinger (2015), research on sport officials and referees generally falls into the following categories: entry into the profession (e.g., Furst, 1991); stress and burnout (e.g., Taylor, Daniel, Leith, & Burke, 1990); and ultimately, retention (e.g., Titlebaum, Haberlin, & Titlebaum, 2009). While this case study does not focus on occupational entry, stress or burnout specifically, it is concerned with commitment and turnover, which are important aspects of retention. Past scholarship suggested elements of commitment to the sport (Gray & Wilson, 2008) and to the occupation (Furst, 1991) are both important among sport officials. Thus, it is prudent to explore both areas of commitment, as well as the selected outcome of turnover, within the present case study.

Occupational commitment and sport officials. Sport officials, unlike traditional employees, may be only loosely tied to an

organization. Some high school officials are scheduled through conferences and state associations, while others are scheduled through referee associations to which they belong. However, these officials often receive paychecks from host institutions prior to contests. In situations where an individual's relationship with the organization is non-existent, prior studies found officials are drawn to the profession through their commitment to sport and the occupation (Bernal et al., 2012; Warner et al., 2013).

Occupational commitment has been shown to affect turnover intentions of sport officials, though research design and theoretical models have varied across studies. Warner and colleagues (2013) did not explicitly utilize occupational commitment variables in their qualitative study regarding attrition of sport officials, yet themes related to on-court and off-court factors allowed for inference from an occupational commitment perspective. Koslowsky and Maoz (1988) relied on a unidimensional measure of occupational commitment to examine attitudinal differences between two types of sport referees – soccer and track and field. The authors found that soccer referees are more committed and received greater enjoyment from the occupation, than their counterparts in track and field.

Contemporary organizational behavior research has demonstrated occupational commitment to be a multidimensional construct (Blau, 2003; Irving, Coleman, &

Cooper, 1997; Meyer et al., 1993; Snape & Redman, 2003). Only one study has explored occupational commitment of sport officials utilizing the Meyer et al. (1993) conceptualization. Gray and Wilson (2008) explored retention of track and field officials in Canada utilizing all occupational commitment dimensions as predictor variables. Differing from other occupational commitment research, none of the dimensions were found to significantly impact the officials' intentions to continue.

Sport commitment and officials.

Originally developed to examine sport commitment among athletes, scholars have adapted the construct to other members of sport-based organizations, including sport officials. VanYperen (1998) utilized the model of Scanlan and colleagues (1993) to explore intentions to leave among referees in Europe. Utilizing a sample of 420 volunteer volleyball officials, the authors found that turnover intention mediated the link between enjoyment and involvement alternatives – both elements of sport commitment – and subsequent stay/leave behavior. Overall, VanYperen's (1998) model explained 50% of the variance in officials' intentions to stop officiating.

Similar research exploring intentions to stay among rugby officials in Australia indicated sport enjoyment and involvement opportunities were significant predictors (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013). Cuskelly and Hoye (2013) predicted that perceived organizational support would also be an important predictor variable. Yet, perceived

organizational support was not significant once sport commitment variables were added to the model, indicating sport commitment a primary factor influencing respondents' intentions to remain in the profession. Conversely, Gray and Wilson (2008), utilized an alternative scale to explore the role of sport commitment. Their survey of 80 track and field officials in Canada utilized a single item that asked participants to rate their commitment to the sport of track and field.

Although one could argue that Gray and Wilson's (2008) item is most closely related to the sport enjoyment dimension of Scanlon et al.'s (1993) scale., here are no items in the multi-dimensional scale of sport commitment that directly resemble the item in Gray and Wilson's (2008) study. The participants in Gray and Wilson's (2008) study were highly committed to track and field ($M = 6.24$ on a seven-point scale), yet they found no significant relationship between their sport commitment item and turnover intentions.

Turnover among sport officials.

Motivation to enter the sport officiating occupation is influenced by love of sport and intrinsic rewards associated the activity (Hancock et al., 2015). Once established within the occupation, passion for sport remains a primary factor for officials who choose to continue (Bernal et al., 2012). Other factors that influence employee retention include feelings of pride and competency (Parsons & Bairner, 2015).

Scholarship exploring officials' motivations to stay or leave the profession generally falls into two areas. One area focused on the role of the association in retaining officials. Training, organizational support, and mentoring have all be shown to be important factors in retention of sport officials (Ryan, Sosa, & Thornton, 2014; VanYperen, 1998; Warner et al., 2013; Wicker & Frick, 2016). Conversely, the other area of scholarship explored the role of commitment variables in occupational withdrawal. Studies exploring the role of sport commitment or occupational commitment on occupational turnover intentions include Bernal et al. (2012), Cuskelly and Hoye (2013), Gray and Wilson (2008), Koslowsky and Maoz (1988), VanYperen (1998), and Warner et al. (2013).

Hypotheses

Although the literature has explored aspects of occupational commitment, sport commitment, and turnover in various combinations, the relationships among all three constructs has received little attention from researchers. Inferences made from the entire body of knowledge may indicate a more complex relationship between occupational commitment, sport commitment, and turnover intentions than what has been explored in the individual studies.

There appears to be no research including all dimensions of occupational commitment and the entire sport commitment model as antecedents of

occupational turnover. Only one study (Gray & Wilson, 2008) included occupational commitment (operationalized as role commitment) and sport commitment in the same model, but an alternative sport commitment measure was used. Likewise, a cursory review of literature reveals that high school sport officials have been excluded from prior research. Because results of commitment studies from other occupations are not generalizable (Irving et al., 1997), one should not assume that high school sport officials would react similarly to others in the sport industry, or officials from other levels of sport. Yet, a majority of literature in both sport and other fields (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; Lee et al., 2000; VanYperen, 1998; Wang et al., 2016; Weng & McElroy, 2012) indicates significant relationships between commitment variables (occupational and sport) with turnover intentions.

Based on the aforementioned literature, we developed two hypotheses. First, we predicted affective and normative occupational commitment would be negatively related to occupation turnover intentions, whereas, continuance occupational commitment would have a positive relationship. This result would contradict Gray and Wilson (2008), which found no significant relationships among occupational commitment and turnover intention, but would be consistent with other explorations of occupational commitment in sport (see Turner & Chelladurai, 2005). Second, consistent with

the work of VanYperen (1998), we predict that all elements of sport commitment would be negatively related to occupational turnover intentions with the exception of involvement alternatives, which would be positively related.

Methods

A case study design was utilized to observe sport officials operating in a singular setting. Eisenhardt (1989) urged the use of case studies in management research to advance theory or provide greater depth of knowledge regarding phenomena that has received little attention from scholars. Although case study results are not generalizable to the general population (e.g., all high school sport officials), theory can be advanced by eliminating potentially confounding variables present across multiple settings (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Participants

The current case study utilized participants who were high school sport officials in a southeastern United States city. A questionnaire was distributed with assistance from a state high school athletic association. The association disseminated links to the survey via email to 253 sport officials. Eighty-four completed surveys ($N = 84$) were submitted for a response rate of 33.2%.

The mean age of respondents was 45.3 years old ($SD = 11.5$) with 14.8 years of experience ($SD = 10.3$). Nearly all respondents were male (Male = 80, 95.2%;

Female = 4, 4.8%). Many of the officials refereed multiple sport including football ($n = 48, 57.1\%$), basketball ($n = 35, 41.7\%$), baseball ($n = 23, 27.4\%$), softball ($n = 16, 19.0\%$), volleyball ($n = 14, 16.7\%$), soccer ($n = 4, 4.8\%$), ice hockey ($n = 1, 1.2\%$). In addition, many in the sample officiated sport at other levels in addition to high school (middle school = 57, 67.9%; recreation = 42, 50.0%; college = 40, 47.6%; professional = 2, 2.4%).

Instrumentation

Data were collected via online surveys distributed to high school sport officials in a suburban town in the southeastern United States. To gain access to the officials, email distribution was conducted with the cooperation of a state high school athletic association, for whom the survey participants officiated contests. To ensure construct validity, survey items were adapted from established scales. Occupational commitment items were adapted from Meyer et al. (1993) by changing nursing related terms in the original scale to terms related to sport officiating. For example, the affective occupational commitment item, “I am enthusiastic about nursing” was altered to “I am enthusiastic about officiating.” The scale has been widely utilized by occupational and sport management scholars and has been the subject of numerous empirical tests establishing its reliability and validity (see Irving et al., 1997; Snape & Redman, 2003; Turner & Chelladurai, 2005).

Sport commitment items were measured utilizing items adapted from Scanlan et al. (1993), which is frequently used to explore commitment of athletes. However, the Sport Commitment Model scale has also been adapted by several scholars to explore sport commitment of sport officials (see Cuskelly & Hoye, 2013; VanYperen, 1998). Our adaptations involved removal of terminology related to participating in a sporting event, which was then replaced by terms related to officiating. For, example, Scanlan et al.’s (1993) scale contains the item, “Do you like playing in Little League this season?” We altered the item to state, “Do you/did you like officiating this sport this season?” Items from VanYperen (1998) were utilized to measure occupational turnover intentions of sport officials.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted utilizing *IBM SPSS Statistics 23*. All variables in the model were measured using Likert type scales (1 = disagree, 5 = agree). Although all items in the survey were adapted from previously validated scales, additional steps were taken to ensure convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to the level of agreement between items measuring the same construct. Discriminant validity is the uniqueness of separate constructs (Campbell & Fisk, 1959). Average variance extracted (AVE) is recommended as an appropriate test for exploring issues related to construct validity

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981). When sample size or other factors prevent AVE from being conducted, Trochim, Donnelly, and Arora (2016) recommend examining inter-item correlations and factor analysis to infer convergent and discriminant validity.

Acceptable convergent validity is represented by inter-item correlations above $r = 0.5$ for items measuring the same construct (Carlson & Herdman, 2012). With the exception of one item in the affective commitment scale, all items met the $r = 0.5$ threshold. The offending item was removed from further analysis. All factor loadings of the remaining items were above the .65 ($N < 85$) threshold recommended by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998). Based on the recommendations of Trochim et al. (2016), convergent validity of the scales could be inferred.

Divergent validity is inferred by low inter-item correlations and low correlations between constructs (Campbell & Fisk, 1959; Trochim et al., 2016). There is no agreed upon threshold, however, inter-item correlations should be lower non-related items than for items proposed to measure the same construct (Trochim et al., 2016). Table 1 highlights correlations between constructs. A strong correlation between normative commitment and continuance commitment was noted ($r = 0.551$), but, inter-item correlations between revealed no cause for concern as correlations were stronger amongst constructs than across constructs. Cronbach's Alphas were generated to determine internal consistency

of the measures. Table 1 illustrates the correlation matrix and contains scale means, standard deviations and Cronbach's Alpha scores for all variables in the model.

Hierarchical linear regression was utilized to test the proposed hypotheses. Age, years of experience, and gender values were entered in step one to control for potentially confounding variables. All sport commitment and occupational commitment variables were loaded in step two.

Results

The control variables accounted for 1.6% (adjusted $R^2 = -.02$, $p > .05$) of the variance. After controlling for potential effects related to demographics of participants, occupational and sport commitment variables accounted for an additional 31.2% (adjusted $R^2 = .25$, $F(8, 72) = 4.17$, $p < .001$) of the variance of occupational turnover intentions (see Table 2). Results revealed that affective occupational commitment ($\beta = -0.296$, $p < .05$) and involvement opportunities ($\beta = -0.244$, $p < .05$) were significantly negatively related to occupational turnover intentions. Both hypotheses were partially supported.

Discussion

The purpose of the case study was to explore the effects of occupational commitment and sport commitment on occupational turnover intentions of high school sport officials. Although the model explained 32.8% of the variance in occupational turnover intentions, only

affective occupational commitment and involvement opportunities were significant predictors of high school officials' intentions to leave the occupation. Both had a negative relationship, thus indicating high affective occupational commitment and involvement opportunities reduce intentions to leave the sport officiating occupation.

The results offer similarities and differences between the case study and other commitment research on sport officials. Multidimensional occupational commitment has been explored in numerous sport-based occupations, though the only prior study utilizing sport officials found the effects of all dimensions to be nonsignificant (Gray & Wilson, 2008). Like the prior study, continuance and normative occupational commitment did not significantly predict occupational turnover intentions among high school officials. However, the case study revealed affective occupational commitment to be a significant predictor of occupational turnover intentions of high school officials within the sample. This finding is similar to that found in other management focused fields, including Weng and McElroy (2012), who suggest that affective occupational commitment is further enhanced as one meets career goals and develops new skills. In the sport officiating occupation, career growth in terms of advancement in sport level could be categorized as meeting career goals and developing new skills.

Previous studies exploring sport commitment's effects on occupational

turnover intentions of sport officials have been inconsistent. VanYperen (1998) found all but social constraints to be significant predictors, while Cuskelly and Hoye (2013) found sport enjoyment and involvement opportunities to be the only significant predictors. The disagreement of findings from these two studies provides some justification for the exploration in the present case study. As Patton and Applebaum (2003) argue, case studies provide the opportunity to explore findings not in a generalizable sense, but in explaining "the particular case at hand with the possibility of coming to broader conclusions," (p.64). The current study indicated only involvement opportunities to be a significant predictor of occupational turnover intentions for high school sport officials.

Differences between high school sport officials in the case study and officials from other areas of the world may not be surprising. Relating back to VanYperen (1998), who surveyed volleyball officials, and Cuskelly and Hoye (2013), who examined rugby referees, these differences may stem from the type of sport. Koslowsky and Maos (1998) echo this sentiment as they found attitudinal differences between soccer referees and track and field officials. Considering occupational commitment research has demonstrated the construct to have inconsistent results outside of the observed population (Irving et al., 1997), it stands to

reason the same can be said for sport commitment.

It must be noted that the mean affective occupational commitment response was near the top of the scale (4.76 out of 5), indicating the individuals in our case study were officiating high school athletics due to attitudinal desire. Sport officials generally join the occupation as a hobby or a secondary source of income (Titlebaum et al., 2009). High affective occupational commitment scores are congruent with the notion that this is an occupation of choice or hobby for those involved. The mean normative occupational and continuance occupational commitment response were lower, further highlighting the idea that survey participants were not officiating because they felt they had to do so.

In hindsight, perhaps it should have been surprising if normative or continuance occupational commitment levels were related to occupational turnover intentions for the participants in this case. By nature of the position, high school officials have many other options and are likely tied to another occupation or organization where they have higher normative commitment. Drawing inferences from other fields may help explain this phenomenon. Felfe, Schmook, Schyns, and Six (2008) suggested new forms of employment, such as temporary or freelance workers, has caused people to find work that best fits their personal needs and attitudes. Considering sport officials get into the field largely due to attitudinal desire (Titlebaum et al., 2009),

it makes sense that affective levels were higher than both normative and continuance commitment levels.

Likewise, involvement opportunities are opportunities that are only provided through continued involvement in sport (Scanlan et al., 1993). Officiating at the high school level provides individuals, many of whom may have been former athletes, an opportunity to remain involved in the sport that they enjoy (Bernal et al., 2012). Officiating is one of the few activities that allow former athletes to remain on the field of play. This notion is supported by previous research, such as Gray and Wilson (2008) [track and field officials] and Koslowsky and Maos (1988) [soccer officials], who noted personal connections and past experiences with the sport influenced their involvement.

Limitations

One potential confounding factor that was not controlled for in this study was the fact that all participants in this study were currently involved in high school officiating. Mean responses to the occupational turnover intentions items were near the bottom of the scale, indicating few participants in the survey were interested in leaving the high school sport officiating occupation. The results may have been different if the sample included those who left the occupation.

Another limitation of this study stems from the lack of gender diversity among the sport officials surveyed. Direct access to the

sport officials was not granted by the state high school athletic association who assisted with survey distribution. Furthermore, the assisting association did not track the gender of sport officials to whom the surveys were distributed, nor does it make publicly available the demographics of its member officials.

One possible reason for this lack of inclusiveness is the continued struggles female officials have in terms of entry into the profession. Tingle, Warner, and Sartore-Baldwin (2014) explored this issue in a different context, interviewing former female basketball officials. The findings indicate that female officials experienced factors such as lack of mutual respect and poor mentoring. While examining gender differences was not an aim of the present case study, future research should explore the role gender plays in regard to occupational commitment. Finally, it should be noted that a second edition of the Sport Commitment Model (Scanlan, Chow, Sousa, Scanlan, & Knifsend, 2016) was published following our data collection.

Implications and Future Research

Prior research had indicated that passion for the sport and intrinsic rewards associated with officiating led people to the occupation (Bernal et al., 2012; Hancock et al., 2015). The current study indicates the intrinsic rewards associated with being a part of sport remain important. It also indicates the activity of officiating is something that the participants in this study

have a desire to do. For athletic associations, administrators should focus on retention initiatives that build on high school sport officials' desire to be involved with the occupation. Administrative attention also has been shown to influence a related area of research within sport officiating. Kellett and Warner (2011) examined factors that influenced sense of community among sport officials. Among these findings, a lack of administrative consideration – including a lack of career development opportunities – decreased the overall sense of community. Therefore, governing organizations can implement professional development activities – such as instructional clinics and training programs (Mascarenhas, Collins, Mortimer, & Morris, 2005) – that allow officials to build their skills without taking time away from other elements of their lives. At the same time, athletic associations must eliminate activities or distractions that take sport officials' focus away from the act of officiating.

From a practical perspective, results from this case study can be utilized to better inform future sport officials with a more realistic look at the sport officiating occupation – specifically those interested in pursuing a career as a high school sports official. Academically, the implications of this case study provide the opportunity for further exploration of occupational commitment, sport commitment, and turnover intentions in relation to all subsets (i.e., sport leagues and sports) of sports

officiating. Considering the aforementioned discrepancies of findings, future research could examine a more comprehensive examination of attitudinal differences based on sport, extending the work of VanYperen (1998), Cuskelly and Hoye (2013), and Koslowsky and Maos (1988).

Future studies should also explore factors that lead to actual occupational withdrawal. It is plausible that samples of former high school officials may yield different results. For officials who are active, affective occupational commitment and involvement opportunities are important factors in maintaining low occupational turnover intentions. Scholars should explore potential antecedents of affective occupational commitment and involvement opportunities in high school officials. Additional exploration on this topic could also be conducted in relation to gender diversity among sport referees. While there has been an increase in research in the area of sense of community (e.g., Kellett & Warner, 2011; Tingle et al., 2014), occupational commitment could have some related implications. Finally, replication of the current study should be considered. The current study utilized a case study format with a relatively small sample involved with high school athletics in a single community. Future replications should include larger samples from a variety of locations throughout the United States from which broader generalization could be inferred.

Conclusion

Recruiting and retention of qualified sport referees is a problem affecting associations throughout the United States. While this case study did not explicitly address actual turnover, occupational turnover intentions indicate the attitudes officials have toward leaving the occupation. The findings in the present study help provide a better picture of the perceptions of high school sport referees from both sport commitment and occupational commitment. Considering sport officiating is distinct from other occupations, building affective occupational commitment and enhancing involvement can limit occupational turnover intentions, which may lead to less actual turnover.

References

- Associated Press. (2015, November 28). Referee shortage tied to lack of respect. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/sports/referee-shortage-tied-to-lack-of-respect.html>
- Bernal, J. C., Nix, C., & Boatwright, D. (2012). Sport officials' longevity: Motivation and passion for the sport. *International Journal of Sport Management, Recreation & Tourism, 10*, 28–39. <http://doi.org/10.5199/ijsmart-1791-874X-10b>
- Blau, G. (2003). Testing for a four-dimensional structure of occupational commitment. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 76*(4), 469–488. <http://doi.org/10.1348/096317903322591596>
- Blau, G. (2007). Does a corresponding set of variables for explaining voluntary organizational turnover transfer to explaining voluntary occupational turnover? *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 70*, 135-148.
- Blau, G., Tatum, S. D., & Ward-Cook, K. (2003). Correlates of professional versus organizational withdrawal cognitions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 63* 72-85.
- Campbell, D. T., & Fisk, D. W. (1959). Convergent and discriminant validation by the multitrait-multimethod matrix. *Psychological Bulletin, 56*, 81–106.
- Carlson, K. D., & Herdman, A. O. (2012). Understanding the impact of convergent validity on research results. *Organizational Research Methods, 15*(1), 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428110392383>
- Cunningham, G. B., & Sagas, M. (2004). Work experiences, occupational commitment, and intent to enter the sport management profession. *The Physical Educator, 61*(3), 146–156.
- Cunningham, G. B., Sagas, M., & Ashley, F. B. (2001). Occupational commitment and intent to leave the coaching profession: Differences according to race. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 36*, 131-148.
- Cunningham, G. B., Sagas, M., Dixon, M. A., Kent, A., & Turner, B. A. (2005). Anticipated career satisfaction, affective occupational commitment, and intentions to enter the sport management profession. *Journal of Sport Management, 19*, 43–57.
- Cuskelly, G. (1995). The influence of committee functioning on the organizational commitment of volunteer administrators in sport. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 18*(4), 254-269.
- Cuskelly, G., & Hoye, R. (2013). Sports officials' intention to continue. *Sport Management Review, 16*(4), 451–464.

- <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.01.003>
- Dingemans, E., & Henkens, K. (2014). Involuntary retirement, bridge employment, and satisfaction with life: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 35*, 575-591.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *The Academy of Management Review, 14*(4), 532-550.
- Engelberg-Moston, T., Stipis, C., Kippin, B., Spillman, S., & Burbidge, K. (2009). Organisational and occupational commitment as predictors of volunteer coaches' burnout. *Australian Journal on Volunteering, 14*(2), 1-9.
[http://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2113\(08\)60255-2](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2113(08)60255-2)
- Felfe, J., Schmock, R., Schyns, B., & Six, B. (2008). Does the form of employment make a difference?: Commitment of traditional, temporary, and self-employed workers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 72*, 81-94.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F., (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39-50.
- Furst, D. M. (1991). Career contingencies: Patterns of initial entry and continuity in collegiate sports officiating. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 14*(2), 93.
- Gray, C. E., & Wilson, P. M. (2008). The relationship between organizational commitment, perceived relatedness and intentions to continue in Canadian track and field officials. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 31*(1), 44-63.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (1998). *Multivariate data analysis* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hancock, D. J., Dawson, D. J., & Auger, D. (2015). Why ref? Understanding sport officials' motivations to begin, continue, and quit. *Movement & Sport Sciences, 87*, 31-39.
<http://doi.org/10.1051/sm/2014018>
- Irving, P. G., Coleman, D. F., & Cooper, C. L. (1997). Further assessments of a three-component model of occupational commitment: Generalizability and differences across occupations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 82*(3), 444-452.
<http://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.3.444>
- Kellett, P., & Warner, S. (2011). Creating communities that lead to retention: The social worlds and communities of umpires. *European Science Management Quarterly, 11*(5), 471-494.
- Koslowsky, M., & Maoz, O. (1988). Commitment and personality variables as discriminators among sports referees. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 10*, 262-269.
- Lee, K., Carswell, J. J., & Allen, N. J. (2000). A meta-analytic review of

- occupational commitment: Relations with person-and work-related variables. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(5), 799–811.
<http://doi.org/10.1037//0021-9010.85.5.799>
- Lirgg, C. D., Feltz, D. L., & Merrie, M. D. (2016). Self-efficacy of sports officials: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 39(1), 39–50.
- Livingston, J. (2016, September 1). Whistle blown on referee shortage across Colorado: Lack of officials causing nightmare for sports across state. *The Durango Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.durangoherald.com>.
- Martin, T. N. (1979). A contextual model of employee turnover intentions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 22(2), 313-324.
- Martinez, J. M., Miller, J., & Koo, G. Y. (2016). Organizational commitment among frontline intercollegiate athletics employees: An application of the Meyer and Allen three-component model. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 17(4), 539-560.
- Mascarenhas, D. R., Collins, D., Mortimer, P. W., & Morris, B. (2005). Training accurate and coherent decision making in rugby union referees. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19(2), 131-147.
- Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 171.
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1), 61–89.
- Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 538 – 551.
<http://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.78.4.538>
- Moore, J. E. (2000). One road to turnover: An examination of work exhaustion in technology professionals. *MIS Quarterly*, 24(1), 141-168.
- Morrow, P. C. (1983). Concept redundancy in organizational research: The case of work commitment. *Academy of Management Review*, 8(3), 486-500.
- Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. (1982). Organizational linkage: the psychology of commitment, absenteeism and turnover. *Organizational and Occupational Psychology*, 10(3), 2008.
- National Association of Sports Officials (2001). How to get & keep officials. Racine, WI: Author.
- National Federation of State High School Associations (2016, September 12). High school sport participation increases for 27th consecutive year. Retrieved from

- <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/high-school-sports-participation-increases-for-27th-consecutive-year/>
- Parsons, T., & Bairner, A. (2015). You want the buzz of having done well in a game that wasn't easy: A sociological examination of the job commitment of English football referees. *Movement & Sport Sciences*, 87, 41–52.
<http://doi.org/10.1051/sm/2014017>
- Patton, E., & Appelbaum, S. H. (2003). The case for case studies in management research. *Management Research News*, 26(5), 60-71.
- Ridinger, L. (2015). Contributors and constraints to involvement with youth sports officiating. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 1(2), 103-127.
- Rocha, C. M., & Chelladurai, P. (2011). Relationship between organizational support and performance of college coaches: A mediational model. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 11, 301-319.
- Ryan, T. D., Sosa, J. P., & Thornton, M. A. (2014). Influences of training on individual outcomes for high school sports officials. *SAGE Open*, 1–6.
<http://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014532475>
- Scanlan, T. K., Carpenter, P. J., Schmidt, G. W., Simons, J. P., & Keeler, B. (1993). An introduction to the sport commitment model. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 15(1), 1–15.
<http://doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v3nlp90>
- Scanlan, T. K., Chow, G. M., Sousa, C., Scanlan, L. A., & Knifsend, C. A. (2016). The development of the Sport Commitment Questionnaire-2 (English version). *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 22, 233–246.
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.08.002>
- Smart, R., & Peterson, C. (1997). Super's career stages and the decision to change careers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51, 358-374.
- Snape, E., & Redman, T. (2003). An evaluation of a three-component model of occupational commitment: dimensionality and consequences among United Kingdom human resource management specialists. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(1), 152–159.
<http://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.1.152>
- Solutions to Referee Shortage (2016, January 12). *Athletic Management* Retrieved from:
<http://athleticmanagement.com/content/solutions-referee-shortage>
- Taylor, A. H., Daniel, J. V., Leith, L., & Burke, R. J. (1990). Perceived stress, psychological burnout and paths to turnover intentions among sport officials. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 2(1), 84-97.
doi:10.1080/10413209008406422
- Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and

- turnover: Path analyses based on meta-analytic findings. *Personnel Psychology*, 46(2), 259-293.
- Tingle, J. K., Warner, S. & Sartore-Baldwin, M. L. (2014). The experience of former women officials and the impact on the sporting community. *Sex Roles*, 71, 7-20.
doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0366-8
- Titlebaum, P. J., Haberlin, N., & Titlebaum, G. (2009). Recruitment and retention of sports officials. *Recreational Sports Journal*, 33(2), 102-108.
- Trochim, W. M., Donnelly, J. P., & Arora, K. (2016). *Research methods, The essential knowledge base* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning
- Turner, B. A., & Chelladurai, P. (2005). Organizational and occupational commitment, intention to leave, and perceived performance of intercollegiate coaches. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, 193–211.
- Turner, B. A., & Jordan, J. S. (2006). Commitment and satisfaction of coaches: Which is more important in the retention and performance of coaches? *Journal-International Council for Health Physical Education Recreation Sport and Dance*, 42(4), 42-48.
- VanYperen, N. W. (1998). Predicting stay/leave behavior among volleyball referees. *The Sport Journal*, 12, 427–439.
- Wang, P., Sang, J., Li, P., & Zhao, J. (2016). How to make a newcomer happy? The mediating role of career commitment on the relationship between unmet expectations and job satisfaction. *Social Indicators Research*, 127, 401-412.
- Warner, S., Tingle, J. K., & Kellett, P. (2013). Officiating attrition: The experiences of former referees via a sport development lens. *Journal of Sport Management*, 27(4), 316–328.
- Wayne, S. J., Liden, R. C., Kraimer, M. L., & Graf, I. K. (1999). The role of human capital, motivation and supervisor sponsorship in predicting career success. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(5), 577-595.
- Weng, Q., & McElroy, J. C. (2012). Organizational career growth, affective occupational commitment and turnover intentions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80, 256-265.
- Wicker, P., & Frick, B. (2016). Recruitment and retention of referees in nonprofit sport organizations: The trickle-down effect of role models. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27(3), 1304–1322.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-016-9705-4>
- Wolf, J. (2015, July 28). As budgets dwindle, high schools and youth sports teams turn to crowdfunding. *USAToday*. Retrieved from:
<http://usatodayhss.com/2015/as-budgets-dwindle-high-schools-and-youth-sports-teams-turn-to-crowdfunding>

Wolfson, S., & Neave, N. (2007). Coping under pressure: Cognitive strategies for maintaining confidence among soccer referees. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 30(2), 232-247.

Tables

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliability coefficients and correlations

Item	M	SD	α	AOC	NOC	COC	SE	IA	PI	SC	IO
AOC	4.76	0.334	0.703	---							
NOC	2.96	0.794	0.830	0.216*	---						
COC	2.86	0.756	0.774	0.250*	0.551**	---					
SE	4.37	0.648	0.964	0.194	0.036	-0.086	---				
IA	2.88	0.757	0.732	-0.032	-0.245*	-0.093	-0.031	---			
PI	4.00	0.563	0.684	0.270*	0.060	0.113	0.219*	0.084	---		
SC	1.77	0.700	0.811	-0.114	0.330**	0.345**	-0.278*	0.020	-0.059	---	
IO	4.18	0.648	0.807	0.305**	0.272*	0.424**	0.098	-0.201	0.248*	0.041	---
OTI	1.54	0.821	0.835	-0.403**	-0.093	-0.144	-0.219*	0.184	-0.265*	0.191	-0.394**

Note: AOC = Affective occupational commitment; NOC = Normative occupational commitment; COC = Continuance occupational commitment; SE = Sport enjoyment; IA = Involvement alternatives; PI = Personal investment; SC = Social constraints; IO = Investment opportunities; OTI = Occupational turnover intentions

* $p \leq 0.05$

** $p \leq 0.01$

Table 2

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Testing the Effects of Age, Gender, Years of Experience, Occupational Commitment, and Sport Commitment on Occupational Turnover Intentions

Variable	B	SE	β
Step 1			
Age	0.006	0.010	0.082
Gender	-0.224	0.439	-0.059
Years of experience	0.002	0.011	0.025
Step 2			
Age	0.003	0.010	0.047
Gender	-0.126	0.389	-0.033
Years of experience	0.009	0.010	0.119
Affective occupational commitment	-0.727	0.279	-0.296*
Normative occupational commitment	0.001	0.136	0.001
Continuance occupational commitment	0.022	0.148	0.021
Sport enjoyment	-0.086	0.134	-0.068
Involvement alternatives	0.154	0.113	0.142
Personal investment	-0.183	0.154	-0.126
Social constraints	0.145	0.133	0.124
Involvement opportunities	-0.309	0.146	-0.244*

Note. Overall $R^2 = .33$ (Overall Adjusted $R^2 = .22$). Step 1 $R^2 = .02$ (Adjusted $R^2 = -.02$, $p = .73$). Step 2 $\Delta R^2 = .31$ (Adjusted $\Delta R^2 = .31$, $p < .001$). * $p < .05$.