SportMont

Differences in an Organization's Cultural Functions between High and Low-Performance University Soccer Teams

Kang-Won You[1]

[1]Jeonju University, Department of Sports Coaching, Jeonju, Korea

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyse the differences in cultural functions between high- and low-performance university soccer teams in South Korea. First, this study focused on the cultural functions of university soccer teams, such as managing change, achieving goals, coordinated teamwork, and cultural strength. Second, each cultural function of university soccer teams was investigated in relation to team performance. Using random cluster sampling, 316 players from four high- and four low-performing university soccer teams registered with the Korean Football Association (KFA) participated in the study. The Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire (OCAQ, Sashkin, 2001) was used as an instrument to measure the organization's cultural functions. The results of the study showed that there were significant differences in cultural functions between high- and low-performance teams. High-performance teams were good at adapting changes in their environment, were effective in achieving goals, had coherent and aligned goals and shared values, and agreed on those values. It can be concluded that cultural functions are strong factors that make a difference in team performance.

Keywords: cultural functions, team performance, OCAQ, university soccer teams

Introduction

Guus Hiddink is a phenomenal soccer coach in the South Korean soccer industry. He removed all the scepticism initially originating from successive defeats and established a remarkable outcome in the 2002 Korea and Japan World Cup, which remains the best record in Korean soccer history. The impressive point is that he created an environment in which players do not perceive the hierarchical Confucianism tradition. For example, he set up a rule that when calling an older player, the latter's title should not be used, which is considered rude or awkward in Korean society as a whole. Shaping a new cultural paradigm in the South Korean National Team, he accomplished the best result in Korean soccer history and is considered to be the successful creator of a new organizational culture in the field of sport.

Creating a new culture is not a simple matter. Schein (2010) mentions that organizational culture is the well-established beliefs, values, and assumptions through which organizational members view a situation, and it can shape the identity and behavioural modes of the organization. He also emphasizes that leaders should be insightful in order to communicate as well as create new visions, which will inspire the follower willing to follow the visions. In this sense, Schein (2010) noted that "the unique and essential function of leadership is the manipulation of culture". In addition, he described "culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behavior, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behavior". Slack and Parent (2006) emphasized the "power" element, noting that "those who hold the power in an organization will choose a set of structural arrangements that will maintain or increase their power".

Correspondence:

K.W. You
Jeonju University, Department of Sports Coaching, 303 Cheonjam-ro, Wansan-gu, Jeollabuk-do, Republic of Korea
E-mail: ykwunm@naver.com

Concept of organizational culture

Many organizational culture theorists define organizational culture as the deep-rooted values and beliefs held and practised by members of an organization (Schein 2010). Cultures exist within organizations. Choi (2015) defines organizational culture as the basic value system that organizational members share to adapt to changing environments, and it can affect the behavioural modes of the people in it. Choo and Bae (2016) additionally state that organizational culture is composed of widely shared values, symbols, behaviours, and assumptions. It is about how the business is managed in the system. Culture researchers have not only asserted the importance of a deep understanding of underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010) but also have suggested that sport organizations operate within stable cultures develop their own thick culture rather than adapt to the external environment (Slack & Parent, 2006).

Elements of organizational culture

Culture is composed of several different levels. "Level" means the degree to which a cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer. The level of culture tends to be easy to observe and very difficult to decipher: major levels include artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010).

The level of artefacts is situated at the surface and tangible. It includes phenomena that one can see, hear, and feel when one meets an unfamiliar culture, such as architecture, language, technology, products, artistic creations, style, published lists of values, observable rituals and ceremonies, and similar. (Schein, 2010). Young (2000) asserted that artefacts are quite easy to understand compared to other cultural levels. Artefacts bring immediate insight. Schein (2010) asserted that it is dangerous to infer the culture of an organization from artefacts alone because one's interpretations associated with feelings and reactions always exists.

Champoux (1996) mentioned that there are two different types of values: espoused values and in-use (enacted) values. The espoused values guide what veteran members say in a given situation, and the in-use (enacted) values guide the behaviour of organization members. Schein (2010) referred to espoused values as "a way of dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult event".

When members of an organization are in congruence with espoused values, it can be said that basic assumption is held in an organization. Schein (2010) said basic assumptions are values taken for granted, non-confrontable, nondebatable; therefore, they are difficult to change. Young (2000) explained basic assumptions are "the visible but identifiable reason why group members perceive, think, and feel the way they do about external survival and internal operational issues such as a mission, means of problem solving, relationships, time and space". Nelson and Quick (2003) summarized elements in basic assumptions as "relationship to environment, nature of reality, time and space, nature of human nature, nature of human activity, and nature of human relationships". Alvesson, Karreman, and Ybema (2017) explain that the individual chooses a strategy for action to solve problems using the culture of the organization in which he/she is.

Choi (2005) summarized culture into five levels. First, things physically manifested and products made as a result of cultural activity (e.g., logo and symbols) are called artefacts.

Second, structural patterns of activities such as decision-making, communication and coordination are reflected through patterns of behaviour. Outsiders can observe those activities, and they help solve basic organization problems. Third, behavioural norms are established through members' beliefs about which are acceptable or unacceptable. Members come to predict norms of behaviour mutually. Fourth, values should be prioritized to certain states or outcomes, such as innovation versus predictabilities and risk-seeking versus risk avoidance. Finally, even organizational members are not directly aware of fundamental assumptions.

The different values or assumptions in an organization can influence the assessment of organizational culture. Therefore, the measures of organizational culture have moved "from a systems theory framework toward qualitative measurement of subjective variables, such as rituals and stories from the workplace" (Colyer, 2000). Furthermore, Schein (2010) stated, "I have not found a reliable, quick way to identify cultural assumptions".

Effect of culture

Nelson and Quick (2003) summarized four basic functions of organizational culture. First, culture enables the members to have a sense of identity that encourages them to be more committed to the organization. Second, culture helps employees better interpret what the events of the organization mean. Third, culture strengthens the values in the organization. Lastly, culture helps in shaping the behaviour of the organization members.

Robbins (1994) asserted that there is a strong relationship between organizational culture and satisfaction, but individual differences moderate the relationship. Figure 1 demonstrates how organizational culture impacts performance and satisfaction. Robbins (1994) argued that satisfaction is highest if individual needs and organizational culture coincide. The strength of organizational culture ranges from low to high. High satisfaction yields good performance. Defining the boundaries of the organization to facilitate individual interaction and limiting the scope of information processing to appropriate levels helps organizations build cultures that create higher performance.

Kotter and Heskett (1992) reviewed three perspectives to see the relationship between organizational culture and performance: The strong culture perspective, the fit perspective, and the adaptation perspective. A strong culture is "an organizational culture with a consensus on the values that drive the company and with an intensity that is recognizable even to outsiders. Thus, strong culture is deeply held and widely shared. It is highly resistant to change". They asserted that strong cultures facilitate performance because, first, all employees share common goals, second, strong cultures generate high motivation, and third, strong cultures can control organizations with no domination of bureaucracy. The fit perspective means that a culture is good only when it fits the organization's strategy. The fit perspective is useful in explaining short-term performance but is inappropriate for long-term performance. The adaptation perspective means that once a culture is established in an organization, it tends to self-perpetuate and be stable. However, this does not mean that culture never changes. Kotter and Heskett (1992) state, "turnover of key members, rapid assimilation of new employees, diversification into very different businesses, and
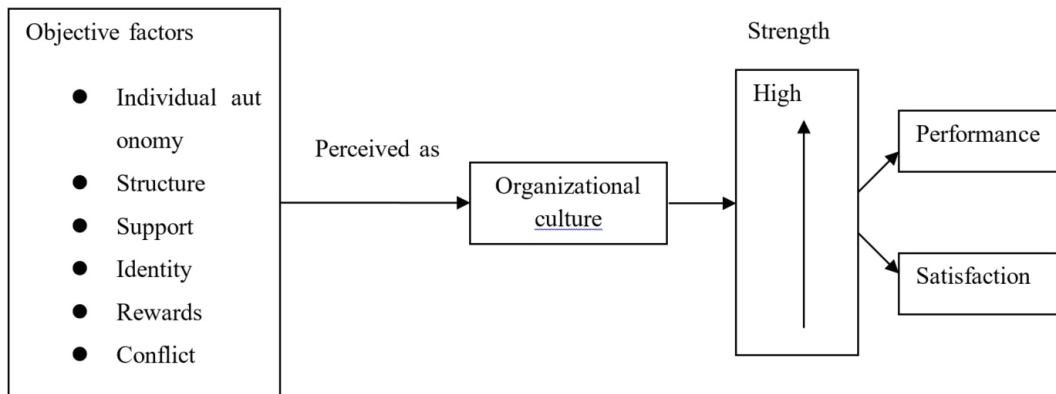
FIGURE 1. How organizational culture impacts performance and satisfaction. Adapted from Robbins (1994)

geographical expansion can weaken or change a culture".

Jon, Carolin, and James (2016) describe three dimensions in corporate culture; symbolic reminders (entirely visible artefacts), keystone behaviours (recurring acts that trigger other behaviours and that are both visible and invisible), and mind-sets (attitudes and beliefs that are widely shared but exclusively invisible). They emphasize that behaviours should be regarded as the most powerful factors for real change. To change the cultural situation in the organization by affecting positive influences, changing the most critical behaviours is imperative. Then, the mind-sets will follow. If behaviour patterns and habits are altered, better results will be produced.

Research suggests that organizational culture is a factor that contributes to team performance. However, there has been an apparent lack of information about how a team's cultural functions and their performance are interrelated. Will there be any difference between high- and low-performance teams in organization cultural functions and, if so, how great is the difference? This study investigates whether there are differences in cultural functions between high- and low-performance university soccer teams in South Korea.

Methods

Participants

The population of this study was all the players in 72 teams in the U-league. Considering there were around 35 to 45 players per team, the population was about 2600. Among 72 teams, only 36 teams can advance into the championship competition. After initially advancing, the 36 qualifying teams compete in a single-elimination so that they are narrowed down into 16, 8, 4, 2, and the one final winner. To determine the differences between high and low performing teams, samples of high performing teams were chosen from the teams in the championship competition, and samples of low performing teams were chosen from the players of the teams which failed to qualify for the championship competition.

To ensure better representativeness of the samples, the researcher selected four teams in each of high- and low-performing teams using a random cluster sampling method. The number of participants in high and low performing teams was 157 and 159 each. Out of 350 questionnaires distributed, 332 were collected with 16 incomplete answers, so 316 questionnaires in total were retained for the study. Figure 2 describes the sampling procedure briefly.

FIGURE 2. Selection process of high performing teams and low performing teams

Measurement

Among many methods, the present study used the Organizational Culture Assessment Questionnaire (OCAQ) by Sashkin (2001) as a primary instrument to collect data about team culture because it is efficient in identifying the problems in an organization and helps define desirable organizational culture. It is composed of five factors: managing change, achieving goals, coordinated teamwork, customer orientation, and cultural strength. Each of the five OCAQ scales includes six items, and each item is scored on a 5-point Likert

scale ranging from 5 "completely true", 4 "mostly true", 3 "partly true", 2 "slightly true", to 1 "not true." For the present study, customer orientation was not included because players cannot be regarded as customers to the coach, so only 24 questions were used. The OCAQ was developed in English originally and has never been applied to U-league players in Korea. It needed to be translated into Korean to be administered in a Korean setting. The researcher adapted Song's (2002) version to fit the context of university soccer teams in Korea, and a bilingual expert back-translated them into English to ensure translation equivalence. Through this process, the researcher identified whether there were any disagreements regarding the underlying constructs that were influenced by the translation process.

Data analysis

At first, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to identify a viable factor structure for independent variables. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess reliability. The data were analysed using SPSS 23.0. The t-test method was used to investigate the differences between high- and low-per-

formance teams in the U-league. Statistical significance was set at p<.001.

Results
Exploratory factor analyses and the reliability of the survey instruments

Twenty-four items were chosen to be tested for exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Principle component analysis with VARIMAX rotation was conducted, and the results revealed four factors, which supports the OCAQ as a valid instrument for this study. To verify the degree of intercorrelations among the variables and the appropriateness of factor analysis, the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin were obtained. The Bartlett test of sphericity showed that the result of the EFA was statistically significant, indicating that the correlation matrix had significant correlations among variables. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measured the degree of each variable to be predicted without error. The score of .80 or above is considered to be valid, and the result of KMO showed .907. The construct seemed reliable as Cronbach's alpha for all factors were over .7. Table 1 summarizes the results of the EFA.

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis of OCAQ

Attributes		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Factor 1: Achieving Goals	Q18	**.874**	.248	.157	-.020
	Q2	**.865**	.305	.221	.003
	Q14	**.851**	.170	.081	.014
	Q22	**.844**	.250	.195	-.037
	Q10	**.822**	.261	.137	-.005
	Q6	**.781**	.140	.088	.023
Factor 2: Managing Change	Q21	.275	**.867**	.104	.057
	Q13	.253	**.863**	.090	-.006
	Q1	.288	**.854**	.222	.016
	Q9	.238	**.850**	.140	.055
	Q5	.204	**.783**	.135	-.022
	Q17	.106	**.781**	.180	.016
Factor 3: Cultural Strength	Q24	.177	.134	**.857**	-.045
	Q4	.145	.110	**.827**	-.011
	Q20	.053	.101	**.825**	.008
	Q8	.196	.188	**.821**	-.003
	Q12	.089	.140	**.818**	.018
	Q16	.123	.121	**.763**	-.079
Factor 4: Coordinated Teamwork	Q23	-.008	-.041	-.005	**.892**
	Q3	.036	.042	.003	**.877**
	Q19	-.008	.039	-.024	**.834**
	Q11	-.057	.065	.004	**.808**
	Q7	.021	-.021	.072	**.625**
	Q15	.003	.008	-.140	**.570**
KMO			.907		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			.000 (sig)		
Initial Eigen Value		4.688	4.627	4.333	3.647
Variance (%)		19.535	19.277	18.054	15.197
Cumulative Variance (%)		19.535	38.812	56.866	72.063
Cronbach's Alpha		.943	.938	.917	.858

T-test analysis

Table 2 shows the mean scores of cultural functions in high- and low-performance teams. The mean scores were analysed using a paired sample t-test. There were statistically significant differences (p<.001) found for three of the cultural functions: Managing Change (t=3.706), Achieving Goals (t=6.351), and Cultural Strength (t=1.091). No statistically significant differences were found for Coordinated Teamwork

Table 2. Differences in Cultural Functions between High- and Low-Performance Teams

Cultural Functions	High Performance (N=157)	Low Performance (N=159)	t	p
	M±SD	M±SD		
Managing Change	3.840±.710	3.436±1.173	3.706	.000***
Achieving Goals	4.709±.768	3.406±1.090	6.351	.000***
Coordinated Teamwork	2.743±.873	2.794±.905	-.504	.723
Cultural Strength	3.300±.692	3.191±1.029	1.091	.000***

Legend: *** - p<.001

Discussion

Scott (2000) contended that, "a strong positive culture is what separates the most effective organizations from those that are less effective". To this end, this study sought to determine how cultural functions are different according to team performance in high-and low-performing university soccer teams in Korea. In the present study, "performance" meant team rank in the league as this was the most obvious tangible and accessible outcome available. Advancement into championship competition was used as a barometer to separate between high and low performance.

It turned out that there were substantial differences in cultural functions between high- and low-performance teams. As Kotter and Heskett (1992) pointed out, there was a significant relationship between organizational culture and performance. Specifically, high-performance teams were better in adapting to changes in their environment, were effective in achieving goals, had coherent and aligned goals and shared values, and agreed on those values. It can be concluded that cultural functions are strong factors making differences to team performance.

Many sport teams in Korea tend to have hierarchical leader-centred cultures. However, it is suggested from the findings of this study that a strong leader-centred hierarchical culture needs to be ameliorated for team members in order to create better cultural functions of the team, which can trigger change in what has been a more rigid and inflexible university sport team culture in Korea. An organization with a strong, positive culture shares values widely, and it moves in a positive direction, so team identity tends to be high. However, soccer teams in Korea are generally lack of positive shared values by their members. Therefore, they are criticized as being unable to realize their full potential. Many Korean soccer players perform better in European leagues than they do in Korean domestic ones. Why does this happen?

It is suggested that carefully merging multi-levels of cultural functions can create an environment that is more creative, flexible, and considerate for individual differences, which will be more desirable for school sport than simply achieving high rank in leagues. As a researcher and as an administrator in a soccer association in Korea, I suggest that a school sport team does not simply exist for the discipline of sporting technique but also for helping athletes envision their potential for future life through their experience participating in sport. Therefore, achievement relative to winning should not serve as the only goal or outcome. It is also important to acknowledge that a more empowering and considerate environment can be created by positive organizational culture.

As mentioned in the introduction, Hiddink was one of the most famous soccer coaches in Korea because he was influential in helping South Korea win its first World Cup. Many people attribute the unprecedented achievement in the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup to the cultural change caused by his different leadership style. What is noticeable is the fact that ever since he left Shout Korea, it has never accomplished as successful a record as in 2002 even with better soccer infrastructure. There are more fans, soccer clubs, and soccer stadiums, but the internal processes, cultural functions representatively, do not work appropriately. Sport team culture in Korea stills put too much emphasis on controls and conformity to hierarchical communications without shared values or beliefs to shape team identity.

Nowadays, sport organizations do not operate in a stable environment. Players and coaches come and go internationally, and the spectrum of fans has broadened. Kotter and Heskett (1992) argued that leaders in an adaptive organizational culture strongly value people and processes that create useful changes, but leaders in a nonadaptive organizational culture care mainly about immediate group work or products. As Hiddink adapted the culture of the South Korean national representative soccer team and created strong cultural functions with transformational leadership (Kim, 2010), the Korean soccer industry needs to understand the soccer team environment and should create and develop cultural functions that would promote team performance in the long run.

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