

The relationship between organizational structure and effectiveness in Belgian soccer clubs.

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Context

The concepts of organizational structure and organizational effectiveness have played a central role in organizational theory. Kimberly and Rottman (1987) suggested that structure directly affects an organization's effectiveness. Although these topics were studied well in general business literature, the application of these concepts in sports literature is relatively sparse. The available studies focused on sport federations or the American athletic departments. However, research on the sports club, which is the most applied organizations structure in Europe, is lacking. This study examined the relationship between organizational structure and organizational effectiveness in Belgian soccer clubs.

Methods

A questionnaire was developed focusing at organizational structure and effectiveness. Three dimensions of organizational structure- centralization, specialization and formalization- are acknowledged in organizational theory (Pugh et al, 1968) and sport management (Kikulis et al, 1995a, 1995b; Cunningham & Rivera, 2001). Centralization refers to the level of decision making: decentralized versus centralized. Specialization concerns the vertical or horizontal differentiation of the organization, the extent to which roles are assigned according to purposes. Formalization is the extent to which rules, procedures and instructions are formally established in written rules and regulations.

Five accepted effectiveness models were implemented in this study. The goal model defines effectiveness as the extent to which the organization accomplishes its goals (Cameron, 1981). The system resource model of Yuchtman & Seashore (1967) focuses on the ability to obtain the scarce and needed resources from the environment. The third model, the internal process model pays attention to the internal communication, information flow and processes within the organization (Cameron, 1981). The human relations model focuses on the well being of its members (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983). The last model, the multiple constituency model defines effectiveness in terms of the degree to which the needs and expectations of the strategic constituencies are fulfilled (Connoly, 1980). The questionnaire was based on the existing literature on organizational effectiveness and structure, and applied to the sports club. The sample consisted of 46 Belgian soccer clubs of which 34.8% are national and 65.2% are provincial clubs.

Results

Results of an exploratory factor analysis supported the three dimensions of organizational structure. The total variance explained was 65.7%. Chronbach Alpha's were all above .70. No significant correlations were found between the three dimensions of organizational structure, confirming its relative independence.

Internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) for the dependent variables was satisfactory, except for the goal model. Due to different goal achievement in youth and seniors, the goal model needed to be separated. Based on content validity, the multiple constituency model was also split. Internal consistency estimates are presented in table 1.

Pearson correlations between the independent and the dependent variables are presented in table 2. There was a significant correlation between centralization and the internal process model. Specialization and formalization were significantly correlated with the multiple constituency model² and the multiple constituency model (total). Formalization also correlated significantly with the internal process model.

This means that a higher level of decision making and more written procedures are positively associated with a higher degree of communication and information flow. Second, the higher the task specialization within the organization the more the needs of the strategic constituencies are fulfilled.

Table 1: Reliability estimates (Chronbach's alpha)

| | α |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Organizational structure | |
| Centralization (4 items) | .76 |
| Specialization (3 items) | .78 |
| Formalization (5 items) | .83 |
| Organizational effectiveness | |
| Goal model 1 (1 item) | - |
| Goal model 2 (1 item) | - |
| System resource model (3 items) | .65 |
| Multiple constituency model | .69 |
| Multiple const model 1 (4 items) | .67 |
| Multiple const model 2 (11 items) | .71 |
| Internal process model (3 items) | .65 |
| Human relations model (3 items) | .79 |

Table2: Pearson correlations between dimensions of organizational structure and organizational effectiveness models.

| | Goal Model1 | Goal Model2 | System Resource Model | Multiple Constituency Model2 | Multiple Constituency Model1 | Multiple Constituency Model (total) | Internal Process Model | Human Relations Model |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Centralization | .156 | -.052 | .158 | .112 | -.112 | -.072 | .454** | -.049 |
| Specialization | .261 | .276 | .129 | .435** | .199 | .337* | .223 | -.163 |
| Formalization | .128 | .281 | .121 | .345* | .224 | .332* | .395** | .148 |

** $p \leq 0.01$ level, * $p \leq 0.05$ level

Discussion

The model indicates that highly centralized and formalized soccer clubs have also a high level of information and communication management. Thus soccer clubs with well organized internal information flows have strong top management and lots of written procedures. Soccer clubs with a high degree of specialization are more likely to satisfy its constituencies. An explanation could be that highly specialized soccer clubs have a responsible (or a department) who's task is to take care of the stakeholders of the club. Although not significant there is a negative correlation between 2 dimensions of structure – centralization and specialization- and the human relations model indicating that highly specialized tasks and a high level of authority could be bad for the well being of its members.

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