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Does All Work and No Play Make Me a Winner? Institutionalized Perceptions of Hours Worked and Athletic Program Success

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The belief that more hours worked equate to higher levels of success has been institutionalized within sport. However, research has yet to interrogate this taken for granted notion. The current study examined the relationship between hours worked and athletic department success. Data were drawn from college coaches and athletic administrators in the United States and consisted of self-reported work hours, team postseason appearances, Directors' Cup points, and Directors' Cup rankings to determine if higher work hours were predictive of success. This study also examined the moderated effects of work/family conflict between gender and number of hours worked. The findings show no relationship between work hours and program success for both coaches and administrators. Additionally, men reported higher work hours and individuals with higher work-family conflict reported working fewer hours. This work challenges the institutionalized notions of proper work orientations within sport organizations and provides implications for both theory and practice.

Keywords: institutionalization, collegiate sport, gender, work hours

When teams are not meeting expectations of success, coaches and athletic administrators tend to work longer hours beyond the traditional “full-time” expectations with hopes that increased work hours will yield more favorable performance outcomes (Carlton, 2021; Warkenthien, 2022). In some instances, this approach seems to be quite effective. For instance, Duckworth and colleagues (2007) found committing more hours to one’s work was positively correlated with career success. However, increased work hours can result in increased workaholicism, lower job satisfaction, poor mental health, and feelings of burnout (Eason et al., 2022; Graham & Dixon, 2017; Huml et al., 2021; Lee & Chelladurai, 2017; Taylor et al., 2019). This puts sport employees in paradoxical situations where they must signal conformity to the dominant view that more work hours equate to higher levels of success but then risk numerous negative outcomes for personal well-being.

The institutionalized work orientations in the sport industry are centered on the notion that more hours worked signals higher commitment to success. This is consistent with long held views that personal sacrifice and loyalty to one’s work is desirable and, indeed, the legitimate view of occupational success (Mueller et al., 1992). While empirical research is scant on coaches or administrator work hours, there are ample statements made by coaches about working late into the night and believing more hours will help improve their team’s performance (e.g., Carlton, 2021). The pressure for success, and for committing more time towards work, is apparent with the significant turnover rate within the industry. The average NCAA Division I athletic department has an attrition rate of 48%, significantly higher than similar industries, such as higher education and traditional corporate industries (Huml & Taylor, 2022). Although it is apparent that sport employees may indeed conform to expectations of “hard work”, there is minimal evidence linking excessive work hours to increased organizational successes or employee performance.

Examining the relationship between hours worked and sport organizational success is important for multiple reasons. First, increased work hours can yield negative outcomes for employees (e.g., Collewet & Sauerman, 2017), so it would be beneficial to see how work hours are related to success within sport organizations. Such knowledge would help sport employees and organizations evaluate if increased work hours are worth the negative outcomes on employee well-being. Second, it is important to interrogate the rationality of institutionalized norms and structures within sport organizations. Institutional norms tend to be learned through repeated organizational processes mimicked from exemplars (Haunschild & Chandler, 2008). By illuminating institutional norms that may be irrational, it may provide further leverage for changing less productive institutionalized work expectations. Third, athletic department divisional differences are strongly associated with funding support and labor supply within the department (e.g., Jones & Black, 2021). This could imply that employees at lower division schools believe they can make a bigger difference for their athletic department by committing more hours than Division I employees. Finally, as society has shifted focus towards worker well-being, it is important to illuminate harmful working environments that are devoid of evidence suggesting those environments are more productive.

Thus, with this study, we examined the relationship between hours worked and athletic department success. Specifically, we focused on college coaches and athletic administrators in the U.S. We drew data from self-reported work hours, team postseason appearances, Directors’ Cup points, and Directors’ Cup rankings to determine if higher work hours were predictive of success. Additionally, we examined the moderated effects of work/family conflict between gender and number of hours worked. Our findings show a lack of a relationship between work

hours and program success for both coaches and administrators. Additionally, our moderated regression found men reported higher work hours and individuals with higher work-family conflict reported working less hours than others. In sum, our work challenges the institutionalized notions of proper work orientations within sport organizations and provides implications for both theory and practice.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is rooted in the notion that work arrangements in the sport industry have become institutionalized. Institutionalization is considered “the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rule like status in social thought and action” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). Conformity to institutionalized rules is essential for organizations and/or people to be perceived as “legitimate”, wherein their actions are viewed as correct and desirable by internal and external stakeholders (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995). Being perceived as legitimate is important because it means entities may have greater access to resources but, perhaps just as importantly, are shielded from excessive scrutiny (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). We argue that the notion of more work hours being equated to higher levels of performance in sport organizations is institutionalized. Therefore, it is unsurprising when coaches or administrators experience negative outcomes related to performance measures (e.g., the loss of too many games, poor revenue generation, lower ticket sales) that they would respond by increasing the number of hours they work. This conformity to institutionalized notions of work is designed to signal legitimacy to those evaluating their performances. This institutionalization creates unspoken pressures on employees to respond with greater work commitment. The concern becomes that work commitment can create several negative effects for employees and a lack of positive benefits for the employee or employer.

Work Dynamics

Work Effort. Organizations constantly try to extract more effort from less resources. One common approach is to influence the organization’s labor force to further commit to their job (Ng & Feldman, 2008). This commitment can take different forms, such as extended work hours, more job responsibilities, limited time off, or a more efficient employee approach. Asking employees to give more effort to their job could be an easy “solution” for managers compared to receiving increased resources when faced with increasing demand for output (Ng & Feldman, 2008). While it may be easier for managers to encourage their employees to commit more hours to their job, it raises a compelling question about (a) whether increased employee effort is beneficial for the organization? (b) does more work create negative outcomes for the employee? and (c) what motivates employees to invest more time into work?

Organizations can benefit from employees investing more time into work during small periods of time, often during an established “busy season”, increased motivation for employees such as financial bonuses, or during an important organizational moment, such as a new product launch or weathering a crisis (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). During these times, employees may seek a more productive period of work effort with limited negative outcomes for the employee, such as burnout. Organizations can tap into employee loyalty and pride during these moments for their benefit (Mueller et al., 1992; Ng & Feldman, 2008). Most studies, however, have found evidence supporting decreasing organizational returns when employees increase their work hours over long periods of time (Collewet & Sauermann, 2017; Shepard & Clifton, 2000). Employees’ productivity has a u-shape relationship with workload,

increasing to a certain point and then progressively decreasing as the organization asks for more hours (Brüggen, 2015; Pencavel, 2015). The great majority of studies have found negative outcomes for employees working more hours. Longer work hours have shown to have several negative health employee outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes (van der Hulst, 2003), in addition to workplace injuries increasing as work hours rise (Dembe et al., 2005; Vegso et al., 2007). Longer work hours have also shown to increase the employee's likelihood of workaholism (Huml et al., 2021), decreased employee motivation to continue seeking internal promotions (Huml et al., 2023), increased conflict between work and family (Sturman & Walsh, 2014), and burnout (Shirom et al., 2010). The medical industry, similar in extreme work hours of the sport industry, has found long shifts increase employee fatigue and reduce the employee's sleep recovery (Lockley et al., 2007). With the established literature on athletic department employee work commitment already established as excessive and potentially counter-productive (Darvin, 2020; Huml & Taylor, 2022), empirical research within the management literature showing several negative implications from employees increasing their work hours (Duckworth et al., 2007), and the established institutional norms within the industry, we have crafted the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1 (H₁): In-season and out-of-season work hours will not be statistically correlated with higher winning percentage for coaches (across all NCAA divisions).
- Hypothesis 2 (H₂): In-season and out-of-season work hours will not be statistically correlated with post-season appearances for coaches (across all NCAA divisions).
- Hypothesis 3 (H₃): H₃: In-season and out-of-season work hours will not be statistically correlated with higher Directors' Cup scores for athletic administrators (across all NCAA divisions).
- Hypothesis 4 (H₄): In-season and out-of-season work hours will not be statistically correlated with improved Directors' Cup standings for athletic administrators (across all NCAA divisions).

Work Culture. The sport industry has been well-established for having a demanding environment for their employees (Graham & Smith, 2022; Huml et al., 2021; Lee & Chelladurai, 2017). For many employees, there are heightened expectations for arriving early and leaving late, frequent travel, unconventional work hours such as evenings or weekends, and frequent public event attendance to interact with external stakeholders (Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Darvin, 2020). The sport industry can also have heightened expectations of "presenteeism", or an expectation to be physically in the office, therefore harming the career prospects of those with flexible scheduling, on parental/family leave, or are out sick (Weight et al., 2021). Those afforded the opportunity to work remotely or have a hybrid schedule have reported how working from home made them aware of many of the negative sport industry work norms within their profession (Huml et al., 2023). There are also expectations of skipping major family events, such as weddings or kids' sporting events, to support the organization (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). The demanding work culture of sport can be so severe that it's shown to transition positive work

involvement (i.e., work engagement) into toxic overwork, such as workaholism (Huml et al., 2021). These work demands create pressure on the employee through family conflict; as the employee is forced to be at work more often, they must adjust their outside responsibilities, resulting in less engagement with family and/or familial responsibilities (Graham & Dixon, 2014). This can create animosity from spouses and a lack of connection between parent(s) and children.

The sport work culture has been especially pervasive for women within the industry. The sport working culture has shown to push more women out of the industry as they progress higher into management (Weight et al., 2021). Indeed, recent work (Angrisani et al., 2020; Taylor et al., in press) found that women were more influenced by the presence of an overwork climate than their male colleagues. Women in the study reported willingness to leave an organization (i.e., athletic department) in search of lower levels of overwork climate in attempts to better balance work and family responsibilities. Blatant sexism has been reported by women professional sport managers, who feel their organizational contributions are diminished by men and general interactions with colleagues are sexualized by administrators (Hindman & Walker, 2020). At times, these women decided against speaking up or even blamed other women for issues unfairly targeted against them as a means of surviving their workplace cultures (Hindman & Walker, 2020). Many women working within the industry, especially those in decision-making roles like coaches, feel intense pressure to over-commit to their job to be taken seriously but also felt guilty to maintain their roles in the household (Bruening & Dixon, 2008). These gender dynamics within the sport industry raising compelling questions about how work-family conflict work as a moderator between hours worked and program success for women employees. Therefore, we have created the following research questions:

Hypothesis 5A (H_{5A}): There will be no statistically significant difference related to work hours between women and men coaches.

Hypothesis 5B (H_{5B}): There will be no statistically significant difference related to work hours as moderated by the coach's perceived work-family/family-work conflict.

Hypothesis 6A (H_{6A}): There will be no statistically significant difference related to work hours between women and men administrators.

Hypothesis 6B (H_{6B}): There will be no statistically significant difference related to work hours as moderated by the administrator's perceived work-family/family-work conflict.

Method

Participants

The dataset consisted of over 4,000 college sport employees. However, for the purpose of this project we only included coaches ($n = 708$) and athletic administrators ($n = 1104$, $N = 1812$). Within the coach sample, 56.07% ($n = 397$) self-identified as men with 42.66% ($n = 302$) identifying as women; one person preferred to self-describe and 8 participants did not report their

gender identity. Ages within the coach participant sample ranged with 22 to 80 years with a mean of 37.32 years. Tenure within college athletics ranged from less than a year to 56 years with a mean of 12.45 years. Within the administrator sample, 58.51% ($n = 646$) self-identified as men and 40.22% ($n = 444$) identified as women with one person preferring to self-describe and 13 participants who did not report their gender identity. Ages within the administrator sample ranged from 22 to 70 years with a mean of 38.89 years. Tenure within college athletics ranged from less than a year to 45 years with a mean of 13.54 years. See Table 1 for demographic information broken down by division. Participants were coded as coaches or administrators because of stylistic and day-to-day differences related to their work experiences. Coaches have a greater likelihood of having significant time commitments right before and during their sport(s) season. Coaches also have a greater autonomy over their schedule and decision-making. Athletic administrators have a more constant schedule, as in-season/out-of-season is not as influential on their weekly work hours (Darvin, 2020; Graham & Dixon, 2017). Administrators are also more dependent on departmental needs when constructing their weekly schedules. Because of these dynamics, we decided to assess them as different groups (Graham & Smith, 2020).

We also decided on separating based on division for several reasons. While there are varying standards across sports, there is a consistent increase in sport participation allowable for Division I student-athletes comparative to Division II and III athletes. For example, NCAA Division I (2023a) allow more games and a longer season for men's and women's basketball than is allowable for NCAA Division II and Division III member institutions (e.g., NCAA, 2023b). Going further, while NCAA Division II and III schools will participate against Division I institutions in rare occasions, these are overwhelmingly separate entities and performance across divisions is often separated from any postseason eligibility formulas or considered "exhibitions". Lastly, Division II and III often have more progressive policies of providing athletes with mandated time away from their sport, such as the Life in the Balance initiative (e.g., Huml et al., 2016; NCAA, 2023b). These policies are often non-existent in Division I. Because of these separate governing policies, the lack of competition across divisions, and the expectation of differing work hours based on in-or-out-of-season work hours, we believed it was best to keep Division I separate when completing our analysis.

The sample for this manuscript is a subset of data from a large data collection that has previously been published (Authors et al., 2019, 2022). However, the current study has a distinct purpose and uses previously unused variables (i.e., hours worked). The previously published work focused on different work concepts (i.e., workaholism, burnout; Clark et al., 2016; McMillan et al., 2003). Additionally, a secondary data collection was utilized to collect data on success of the participant's team coached or athletic department supervised: winning percentage (coaches), team postseason appearances (coaches), Directors' Cup points (administrators), or Directors' Cup ranking (administrators). Therefore, it was not possible to include all findings in a single article in an intelligible and pointed manner (Fine & Kurdek, 1994). Finally, only coaches and athletic administrators were included in the current sample, which differs from previous research utilizing this dataset. Because this was a re-use of the data collection, with secondary data collection from public sources to be included, all participants were re-contacted to provide an overview of the new analysis. The participants were notified of the study's purpose, how their original responses would be included, IRB information and contact information from the host institution, and assurances about how results would only be generalized. Participants were also given the opportunity to opt-out of the study, which would then remove their original responses, from any analysis. During the one week opt-out period, only two respondents requested removal

from the dataset. The researchers reviewed the original data collection and determined they did not complete the original survey. Therefore, no changes were made to the data collection.

Table 1
Gender Breakdown by Position

	Percentage	Number
Gender - Coaches		
Man	55.99%	397
Woman	42.60%	302
Prefer to self-describe	.28%	2
No response	1.13%	8
Gender - Administrators		
Man	58.51%	646
Woman	40.22%	444
Prefer to self-describe	.09%	1
No response	1.18%	13

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using Qualtrics survey software (Qualtrics, LLC, Provo, UT; Seattle, WA). Emails from Division I, II, and III athletic departments' online staff directories were harvested to create a database of employee information (e.g., name, title, email). Email invitations were sent to potential participants containing information about the survey (e.g., purpose), Institutional Review Board information (e.g., benefits and risk factors), and a link to the survey. A reminder email was sent one week later to participants who had not responded. The survey was closed one week after the reminder. Following the completion of data collection, the data was scrubbed for incomplete survey responses and those who incorrectly answered attention check variables. The remaining participants' names, schools, positions, and sports were then found by using the emails from their survey responses. Another round of database cleaning was performed to remove participants with titles of graduate assistant, intern, volunteer coach, and those coaching individual athlete sports (e.g., swimming, cross country). Individual sport coaches were removed because of ambiguity of team success (no balanced winner/loser but places earned in open events). Hours worked data was analyzed and cleaned, with participants being removed if they did not include hours worked data or included impractical data entry options. The most recent five years (or less, depending on their length of tenure) were used for collecting the data on team/program success, with a potential range between 2013 and 2021.

Several complexities within organizational structure, the pandemic, and college sport logistics necessitated us to make decisions to properly code the data. An administrator had to work for at least one full semester during an academic year for that year to be counted towards their tenure. Any seasons that were impacted by COVID through canceled postseasons, canceled or shortened seasons, or seasons switched from fall to spring semester were not included in our analysis. If a participant coached more than two sports, they were classified as an administrator. Only NCAA tournament games were considered post-season tournament games. The overall record to calculate winning percentage only included regular season games.

Measures

The survey included measures on workaholism, work engagement, burnout, and work-family/family-work conflict. As previously mentioned, data on team and athletic department success were also collected. Additionally, demographic questions including gender, hours worked in and out of season, and tenure in college athletics were collected. Hours worked was collected through an open-ended text box. Participants were able to enter separate responses for in-season and out-of-season. For the current study, only measures on work-family/family-work conflict, team and athletic department success, hours worked in and out of season, and gender was be utilized.

Work-family and family-work conflict were measured using scales developed by Netemeyer and colleagues (1996), which are named after each concept accordingly. Work-family conflict assesses the degree to which an employee's work responsibilities interfere with their family responsibilities (e.g., *The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill my family responsibilities*) whereas family-work conflict examines the degree to which an employee's family responsibilities interfere with their work responsibilities (e.g., *I have to put off doing things at work because of the demands on my time at home*). Each subscale contains five questions and is measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Both subscales have previously been established as valid and reliable, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .82 to .90 (Netemeyer et al., 1996) and have been used frequently to assess conflict between work and family within numerous industries including sport (see Dixon & Sagas, 2007).

Success of the coaches' seasons was measured by win percentage and postseason appearances from the five most recent years relative to when they completed the survey. Administrator success was measured by Directors' cup points and rankings. The Directors' Cup is an award given by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) to their member institutions who achieve the greatest success across their sanctioned sports (Learfield Directors' Cup, 2018). The Directors' Cup is individually offered at the NCAA Division I, II, III, and NAIA levels. The average amount of points and the average rankings were calculated to correspond with each participant's employment tenure. The number of varsity NCAA sanctioned sports that each school offered was also noted and considered when looking at the average rankings and points.

Analysis

To examine the relationship between hours worked and team and athletic department success, we separated data by NCAA division and position. Thus, separate analysis was conducted for Division I Power 5, Division I non-Power 5, Division II, and Division III coaches and administrators. First, a series of bivariate Pearson correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between hours worked in and out of season and (1) Directors Cup points as well as (2) Directors Cup ranking (administrators). Next, a series of bivariate Pearson correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between hours worked in season and (1) winning percentage and (2) team postseason appearances (coaches). In total, 32 correlations were conducted. Finally, a series of linear regressions were conducted to examine the relationship between gender (IV) and hours worked in season (DV) with work-family and family-work conflict as moderators. In total, eight linear regressions were conducted.

Results

First, we examined the relationship between the employees' work hours and athletic department success. We created a table of average hours worked by (a) each participant category and (b) in/out-of-season grouping, which are provided in Table 2. Reminder that participants include both part-time and full-time coaches and administrators. Results will be organized by division and position, starting with Division I Power Five coaches. Division I Power 5 coaches' work hours were not statistically correlated with team winning percentage and (a) in-season weekly work hours ($R = -.076, p = .427$) or (b) out-of-season work hours ($-.036, p = .711$). Tournament appearances were also not statistically correlated with (a) in-season weekly work hours ($-.137, p = .155$) or (b) out-of-season work hours ($-.109, p = .257$). Division I non-Power Five coaches' work hours were not statistically correlated with team winning percentage and (a) in-season weekly work hours ($R = .062, p = .244$) or (b) out-of-season work hours ($.071, p = .178$). Tournament appearances were also not statistically correlated with (a) in-season weekly work hours ($.082, p = .122$) or (b) out-of-season work hours ($.074, p = .164$). Division II and III coaches' work hours were also not statistically correlated with team winning percentage and (a) in-season weekly work hours ($R = .053, p = .418$) or (b) out-of-season work hours ($-.034, p = .601$). Tournament appearances were also not statistically correlated with (a) in-season weekly work hours ($-.070, p = .289$) or (b) out-of-season work hours ($-.024, p = .713$). These findings confirm hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 2
Coaches' and Administrators' Reported Average Hours Worked

Category	In-Season Hours	Out-of-Season Hours
Division I Coaches (P5)	61.52	43.88
Division I Coaches (Non-P5)	62.50	45.22
Division II + III Coaches	64.24	43.51
Division I Administrators (P5)	58.49	47.50
Division I Administrators (Non-P5)	57.16	44.85
Division II + III Administrators	58.40	42.17

These findings were also consistent with our Division I Power Five athletic administrators. Administrators' work hours were not statistically correlated with Directors' Cup score (in-season = $.009, p = .884$, out-of-season = $.055, p = .364$) and Directors' Cup standings (in-season = $.031, p = .604$, out-of-season = $-.006, p = .919$), respectively. Division I non-Power 5 administrators' work hours were not statistically correlated with Directors' Cup score (in-season = $-.037, p = .410$, out-of-season = $.018, p = .680$) and Directors' Cup standings (in-season = $.038, p = .400$, out-of-season = $-.022, p = .629$), respectively. Similarly, no significant correlations were found in the Division II and III athletic administrators' sample for Directors' Cup score (in-season = $-.047, p = .455$, out-of-season = $-.092, p = .146$) or Directors' Cup standings (in-season = $.015, p = .815$, out-of-season = $.096, p = .126$), respectively. These findings confirm hypotheses 3 and 4.

Table 3

Correlations for Division I Power 5 Coaches

	In-season hours	Out-of-season hours	Winning percentage	Post season appearances
In-season hours	-	-	-.076	-.137
Out-of-season hours	-	-	-.036	-.109
Winning percentage	-	-	-	-
Post season appearances	-	-	-	-

Table 4

Correlations for Division I Power 5 Administrators

	In-season hours	Out-of-season hours	Directors' Cup score	Directors' Cup standing
In-season hours	-	-	.009	.031
Out-of-season hours	-	-	.055	-.006
Directors' Cup score	-	-	-	-
Directors' Cup standing	-	-	-	-

Table 5

Correlations for Division I Non-Power 5 Coaches

	In-season hours	Out-of-season hours	Winning percentage	Post season appearances
In-season hours	-	-	.062	.082
Out-of-season hours	-	-	.071	.074
Winning percentage	-	-	-	-
Post season appearances	-	-	-	-

Table 6
Correlations for Division I Non-Power 5 Administrators

	In-season hours	Out-of-season hours	Directors' Cup score	Directors' Cup standing
In-season hours	-	-	-.037	.038
Out-of-season hours	-	-	.018	-.022
Directors' Cup score			-	-
Directors' Cup standing				-

Table 7
Correlations for Division II & Division III Coaches

	In-season hours	Out-of-season hours	Winning percentage	Post season appearances
In-season hours	-	-	-.053	-.070
Out-of-season hours	-	-	-.034	-.024
Winning percentage			-	-
Post season appearances				-

Table 8
Correlations for Division II & Division III Administrators

	In-season hours	Out-of-season hours	Directors' Cup score	Directors' Cup standing
In-season hours	-	-	-.047	.015
Out-of-season hours	-	-	-.092	.096
Directors' Cup score			-	-
Directors' Cup standing				-

Next, we wanted to assess the (a) effect of the employee's gender and (b) the moderation of employee's reported work-family/family-work conflict on work hours. The results from the linear regression for Division I Power Five coaches were not statistically significant between hours worked and gender ($F(1, 107) = .853, p = .358$, adjusted $R^2 = -.001$) or for the moderated relationship with work-family and family-work conflict ($F(3, 105) = 1.304, p = .277$, adjusted $R^2 = .008$). The results of the linear regression for Division I non-Power Five coaches were not statistically significant between hours worked and gender ($F(1, 350) = 2.40, p = .122$, adjusted $R^2 = .004$), but were for the moderated relationship with work-family and family-work conflict ($F(3, 348) = 2.77, p = .04$, adjusted $R^2 = .290$). Standard coefficients scores showed that coaches with higher work-family conflict scores ($t = 2.135, p = .033, \beta = .120$) reported statistically lower work hours compared to those with lower scores. This was similar to our findings for Division II and III coaches, who were also not statistically significant for hours worked and gender ($F(1, 251) = 1.26, p = .263$, adjusted $R^2 = .001$), but the relationship was moderated with work-family and family-work conflict ($F(2, 249) = 19.11, p = .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .177$). Standard coefficients scores showed that athletic administrators with higher work-family conflict scores ($t = 7.48, p < .001$) reported statistically lower work hours compared to those with lower scores ($\beta = -.100$). Standard coefficients scores for gender and family-work conflict were not statistically significant. Our coaching results confirm hypothesis 5a but reject 5b.

Alternatively, results for the regression on Division I Power Five athletic administrators were significant for both (a) hours worked and gender ($F(1, 332) = 5.075, p = .025$, adjusted $R^2 = .015$) and (b) moderators of work-family and family-work conflict ($F(3, 330) = 23.711, p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .170$). Both models being significant allowed us to investigate the individual variables. Standard coefficients scores showed that men reported higher work hours than women athletic administrators ($t = -2.253, p = .025, \beta = -.099$). Additionally, standard coefficients scores showed that athletic administrators with higher work-family conflict scores ($t = 7.939, p < .001, \beta = .432$) reported statistically lower work hours compared to those with lower scores. Standard coefficients scores for family-work conflict were not statistically significant. Results for the regression on Division I non-Power 5 athletic administrators were also significant for hours worked and gender ($F(1, 493) = 6.65, p = .010$, adjusted $R^2 = .011$) and moderators of work-family and family-work conflict ($F(3, 491) = 24.099, p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .123$). Standard coefficients scores showed that men reported higher work hours than women athletic administrators ($t = -2.457, p = .014, \beta = -.104$). Additionally, standard coefficients scores showed that athletic administrators with higher work-family conflict scores ($t = 8.035, p < .001, \beta = .353$) reported statistically lower work hours compared to those with lower scores. Standard coefficients scores for family-work conflict were not statistically significant. Results for Division II and III administrators were not statistically significant between hours worked and gender ($F(1, 251) = 1.26, p = .263$, adjusted $R^2 = .001$), but was for the moderated relationship with work-family and family-work conflict ($F(2, 249) = 19.11, p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .177$). Standard coefficients scores showed that athletic administrators with higher work-family conflict scores ($t = 7.37, p < .001$) reported statistically lower work hours compared to those with lower scores ($\beta = .437$). Standard coefficients scores for gender and family-work conflict were not statistically significant. These results confirm 6a but reject 6b.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between hours worked and athletic department success. Previous scholarship on work commitment/hours has been incomplete, but with studies showing employees often experiencing negative consequences from

Table 9
Regression Analysis for Division I Power 5

	B	95%	β	t	p
Coaches					
Model 1	4.82	[-5.10, 13.99]	.089	.924	.358 Adjusted R ² = -.001
Model 2					
Gender	4.41	[-5.23, 14.05]	.088	.907	.366
WFC	4.12	[-.77, 9.02]	.170	1.67	.097
FWC	-.24	[-6.00, 5.53]	-.008	-.081	.936
Adjusted R ² = .008; R ² change = .028					
Administrators					
Model 1	-3.41	[-6.39, -.43]	-.123	-2.25	.025 Adjusted R ² = .012
Model 2					
Gender	-2.76	[-5.54, .02]	-.099	-1.96	.051
WFC	5.54	[4.17, 6.92]	.432	7.93	<.001
FWC	-1.47	[-3.12, .18]	-.097	-1.76	.080
Adjusted R ² = .170; R ² change = .162					

Note: WFC = Work-family conflict. FWC = Family-work conflict.

Table 10
Regression Analysis for Division I Non-Power 5

	B	95%	β	t	p
Coaches					
Model 1	-3.60	[-8.16, .97]	-.083	-1.55	.122
					Adjusted R ² = .004
Model 2					
Gender	-3.69	[-8.24, .87]	-.085	-1.59	.112
WFC	3.07	[.24, 5.90]	.120	2.14	.033
FWC	.490	[-2.21, 3.19]	.020	.37	.722
					Adjusted R ² = .015; R ² change = .016
Administrators					
Model 1	-3.45	[-6.08, -.82]	-.115	-2.58	.01
					Adjusted R ² = .011
Model 2					
Gender	-3.10	[-5.58, .62]	-.104	-2.46	.014
WFC	5.48	[4.14, 6.82]	.353	8.04	<.001
FWC	-1.25	[-2.63, .14]	-.078	-1.77	.077
					Adjusted R ² = .123; R ² change = .115

Note: WFC = Work-family conflict. FWC = Family-work conflict.

Table 11
Regression Analysis for Division II & III

	B	95%	β	t	p
Coaches					
Model 1	-1.98	[-5.30, 1.33]	-.078	-1.178	.240 Adjusted R ² = .002
Model 2					
Gender	-2.40	[-5.15, 0.82]	-.085	-1.432	.154
WFC	6.06	[4.47, 7.66]	.471	7.478	< .001
FWC	-1.31	[-2.94, 0.32]	-.100	-1.584	.115
					Adjusted R ² = .196; R ² change = .201
Administrators					
Model 1	-1.637	[-4.51, 1.24]	-.071	-1.122	.263 Adjusted R ² = .001
Model 2					
Gender	-1.73	[-4.35, 0.88]	-.075	-1.305	.193
WFC	4.97	[3.64, 6.29]	.437	7.369	< .001
FWC	-.60	[-2.08, 0.87]	-.048	-.806	.421
					Adjusted R ² = .177; R ² change = .182

Note: WFC = Work-family conflict. FWC = Family-work conflict.

over-commitment, such as burnout and workaholism (Lee & Chelladurai, 2017; Taylor et al., 2019). Specifically, we focused on college coaches and athletic administrators in the U.S. as it is indicative of the institutionalized notion that over-committing to sport professions is necessary for success. Indeed, coaches and administrators tend to project this sentiment with statements such as “Nobody is going to work harder. Nobody is going to prepare better” (Carlton, 2021, para. 4). However, there has been limited research supporting the belief that more hours worked equates to higher levels of achievement.

Our first set of research questions examined the relationship between hours worked and athletic department success. Specifically, we looked at how (a) coaches’ work hours were affecting their team’s success and (b) administrators’ work hours were affecting the athletic department’s success. Our findings were consistent across all groups and regardless of success metric (winning percentage, postseason appearances, Directors’ Cup points, Directors’ Cup standings): working more hours was not significantly related to creating more team or athletic department success. This lack of statistical significance is theoretically compelling for a few reasons. The findings show the institutionalized notion of over-committing to one’s work within the sport industry to be successful are unfounded and may be indicative of ceremonial conformity regardless of technical achievement (see Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The pressures of competition and job insecurity for certain positions within sport, particularly college sport, has likely incentivized employees to commit more time to their position. Our findings, coupled with prior research showing heightened hours in the profession creating several negative employee outcomes (i.e., Huml et al., 2021), suggest both the futility and detrimental impacts of conforming to institutionalized work expectations in sport. In fact, excessive work outcomes seem more likely to increase turnover and even the abandonment of sport careers (Taylor et al., in press; Weight et al., 2021), thereby increasing human resource costs and the loss of institutional knowledge in sport organizations.

Further, we examined the (a) effect of employees’ gender and (b) the moderation of employees’ reported work-family/family-work conflict on work hours. We found NCAA Division I men administrators reported significantly higher number of work hours than women administrators (there was no statistical significance for Division II or III). Our findings align with previous work showing that men tend to work more hours at their chosen profession whereas women are often tasked with extra work duties at the home (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Feldman, 2002). Therefore, our work suggests the institutionalized work arrangements in the sport industry may help explain the underrepresentation of women in upper-level management roles (see Burton et al., 2011).

Our final analysis examined the relationship between work-family/family-work conflict and work hours. Our findings show higher work-family conflict was, indeed, correlated with fewer work hours in each NCAA Division and work group (coaches, administrators). The pressures to conform to institutionalized work expectations likely creates conflicts with employees’ families and has negative consequences such as decreased work satisfaction and more instances of burnout (Taylor et al., 2019). Considering employees’ families often push back on sport industry working demands (Dixon & Bruening, 2007), our work shows the importance of interrogating institutionalized work arrangements in sport. Working more hours is both an insignificant variable in organizational success but can also result in unhealthy family dynamics. In fact, families pushing back on their members working excessive more hours may be an important indicator of employees’ overall well-being and abilities to remain in the sport industry.

Practical Implications

Our research offers numerous practical implications for sport organizations. Primarily, we suggest managers and sport stakeholders need to reconsider expectations of employees dedicating more hours to work tasks. Our evidence suggest it is not beneficial for sport employees nor sport organizations to equate more hours worked with higher levels of success. There may still be a need for employees to engaged in long work hours, but sustained expectations of long work hours are neither sustainable nor beneficial. Managers need to decouple from the institutionalized pressures to both require and dedicate more work hours. They should instead advocate for their employees to leave work at a reasonable time, emphasizing efficiency at work. They also should be flexible with their employees by providing more time off during the traditional work week after evening or weekend events or hybrid work opportunities during less-demanding times.

Further, our work suggests the importance for greater work flexibility, such as remote work, for employees with more family responsibilities (e.g., medical concerns, young children aging parents; Huml et al., 2023). The employees with higher work-family conflict may be at greater risk of negative workplace behaviors or even changing positions/professions (Taylor et al., 2019). Providing more care and support may increase employee engagement and create a more family supportive work schedule. Lastly, the lack of family-work conflict across all groups suggests that employee stress may be rooted within their work experiences, not within their family dynamics. Sport managers and stakeholders should interrogate the commitment being asked of their employees and create more efficient work environments and experiences. Further, managers should also end the pursuit of work-life integration and provide employees more time for family without work interruptions.

One particular concern from these findings is for coaches. Coaches often have greater control over their schedule (e.g., Dixon & Bruening, 2007), with limited oversight from administrators regarding their day-to-day work involvement. Going further, coaches also have power over lower-level employees regarding not only their work hours, but also how much advance notice they are provided on when they are needed, when those employees are working, travel arraignments, and other work-related factors. This power extends to athletic trainers, physical therapists, nutrition, strength and conditioning, sports information, marketing, compliance, and others. They are an integral part of the institutionalization of work commitment happening within sport, particularly within college sport. Our study's findings show that even though they are dedicated, potentially over-dedicated, to their career, this decision is directly affecting many other employees within the athletic department. Therefore, it's especially important for coaches to re-consider their work commitment as a means of improving their team's performance. Our findings show that coaches that are over-extending their work hours are not gaining a benefit from their commitment. But our understanding of their control over other employees' work schedules shows this decision is also damaging to others. This can include providing greater consideration to the many folks dependent on their work schedule, including seeking out more efficient means of performing their job tasks. It also could mean soliciting feedback from these other stakeholders on the best factors, such as travel, can be accomplished with the satisfaction of others.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

Whereas we offer important findings, this study was not without limitations. Team and athletic department success may be a pragmatic approach for assessing the value of employee

commitment but there are several factors complicating our analysis interpretations. Certain individual sports, such as track and field, golf, or bowling, often have tournaments with many teams competing with no expectation of other teams receiving a “loss” if they do not finish in first place. Future research should consider more nuanced measures of organizational success. We mentioned other complications, such as COVID interruptions to regular and postseasons, that make it difficult to assess program and team success. While this limits the application of our findings, we are confident that our approach standardized results to provide meaningful implications. We also focused on the college sport population. The college sport industry has similar demands to the professional and international sport setting, our findings should be limited to similar populations and replicated in these other sport industry outlets. Further, we focused on participant work hours, but future studies could examine more specific employee performance metrics to assess differences related to work commitment. For example, employee work efficiency or work hours variability, such as folks who have peak work hours during in-season activities but also substantial time off during the offseason, are work factors that need future scrutiny. It is possible that there are specific times of the year where heightened work commitment creates long-term dividends, such as recruiting. Therefore, a more nuanced approach may provide a more complex understanding of employee work hours effect. This study also could create important organizational questions to be included in a future study. For example, are organizations with employees at reduced hours worked more likely to have positive employee outcomes compared to others? With the lack of organizational success based on more work hours, this could be an intriguing human resource question.

In summary, our research sought to analyze the relationship between hours worked and organizational performance. We also investigated this in terms of gender dynamics and work-family dynamics. The main takeaway from our research was that hours worked was not correlated with organizational success on multiple metrics. We offered suggestions for how sport organizations could reconsider the institutionalized work dynamics that dictate, erroneously, that more work is equated to more success.

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