Relationship between Individual Characteristics and Attitudes toward Change among
sport managers of Universities

Hamid Janani, Zynalabedin Fallah, Mohsen Hallajy

1Department of physical Education, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran
2Department of physical Education, Gorgan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Gorgan, Iran
3Department of physical Education, Qazvin Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qazvin, Iran

Abstract: The study of the relationship between a selection of individual characteristics and attitudes toward change in sport managers at Islamic Azad University (different branches) shape the main purpose of this research. The research methodology was descriptive-correlate type. The data were collected through a field study. The statistical community of the research included all sport managers of Islamic Azad University (N=210). The statistical sample of the research included 170 managers (sample volume based on Morgan Table) which were selected in random-cluster method out of the research statistical community. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 136 questionnaires were returned. In order to measure the attitudes toward change, the Donham Questionnaire (1989) was used. For determining the validity, the mentioned questionnaire was presented to some professors of the department of physical education, managers and some authorities with expertise in this field and their views about every single question were applied. The internal reliability of questionnaire in a sample group was obtained through statistical method of Cronbach's alpha (0.79) and the time reliability was obtained through re-resting (0.81). In order to analyze the data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized. The results of the research showed that out of the maximum score of (five for change) in the attitude, the total average of examinees was 4.09 with a standard deviation of 0.48. The results of testing the assumptions indicated that there is no significant relationship between individual characteristics of examinees and their attitudes towards change.

Key words: Attitude, Change, Sport Manager, Individual Characteristics

INTRODUCTION

World is changing and the speed of change in our age is much faster than any other time in the human’s life history (Akbari, 2007). Today, change is one of the noticeable and important subjects in managerial discussions. It is such that some believe change is a controversial topic in the management literature. The importance of this subject is due to the fact that an efficient change will increase the survival of an organization in the competitive environment of business (Stadlaner, 2006). The necessity of change and innovation in organization, in particular in developed communities has been recognized but in many developing countries, this role and its significance has not been clarified yet (Khan Mokhtari, B., 2007).

In recent decades, with the growth of different sciences, the speedy development of technology, the growth of new technologies and changes resulting from that, all have given rise to the establishment of new views and attitudes in sports. The establishments of new visions have brought about new missions in organizations including sport organizations and have motivated them. Therefore, change should be placed in managers’ and individuals’ daily agenda. In other words, they should become committed to change as much as they are committed to the objectives and should recognize its necessity as well (Taylor, 2006). The process of change in each organizations is unique depending on differences in the nature of an organization, the nature of the job, work values and culture, style of leadership and management and also individuals’ and most importantly, managers’ attitudes and behaviors. For some people, change will bring about an advantage, pleasure and satisfaction whereas for some others, the same change might cause tension, damage and loss. Change is noticed for solving the problems and challenges of an organization. In the research literature, change has been defined as follows:

Change means breaking the existing structure and creating a new structure (Chonko, 2004). In accordance with the theoretical foundations of attitude towards change, it is under the influence of three components of cognition (knowledge), emotion (attitude) and behavior (Farmahini Farahani, 1999). Blanchard and Hersey (2001) believe that change will succeed when four stages to be materialized, i.e.: increase of individual knowledge, change in individual’s attitude, change in individual’s behavior, and finally change in group behavior.

When sufficient knowledge is at the disposal of an individual, and there are (positive or negative) emotions towards the subject of change, then it is possible to change an attitude. So, attitude towards change which is the
product of evolution of cognitive statutes and individual’s experience seems to be different from change in an attitude which is constantly considered towards a subject or specific subjects. Thus, attitude towards change is the base of change in an attitude.

In attitude towards change, the discussion is on individual’s attitude and approach towards a change and its nature, whereas in change of attitude, the purpose is to change the individual’s tendency towards a subject or even the change itself. Irrespective of manager’s attitude or understanding towards change, the objective reality is that the existence of change in individual, group and organizational levels in all sport organizations is obvious. These organizations are in a changing process in almost all their features including methods of developing policies, physical plans, cultural programs, methods of work, financial resources, participatory motivations, etc. Managers have some pre-assumptions about the change process and its impact in their mind, which surely has an impact on their decisions to begin the change process or not to begin it. In particular, the image, which managers have in their mind of the damage nature of change, is an important condition for deciding to start a change (Hanna, 2003).

In searching for already-conducted researches on the attitude towards change, the researcher learned that many researches have dealt with the variable of change in individual’s or group’s attitude towards a subject. So, it seems that a few researches have paid attention to the attitude towards change and its nature in managers. However, there are a few researches dealing with the study of staffs’ attitude towards change (Shah, 2010; Iverson, 1996).

The research literature indicates that individuals are the central point of the analysis of change programs success in organizations (Shah, N., 2010). In this connection, there are many variables such as knowledge and skill, social relationships at work, individual’s organizational culture, job risk taking, ability to adapt with change and social supports which are dealing with individuals and can have impacts on change. In total, the study of the relationship and finally the effects of individual characteristics on mental, physical features and performances have been the subjects of many researches (Beidokhti, 2001; Maleki, 2002; Amirhoseini, 2006).

The individual characteristics which hold variable diversity and a broad scope can influence the psychological structures. It seems that the attitude towards change as a view and the individual’s interpretation of different subjects is in connection with some of the individual’s characteristics. The relationship of three components of cognition, emotion and behavior in viewing each subject including attitude towards change can be studied separately with individual characteristics. Which of these individual characteristics is in connection with the attitude towards change and can have impact on it is the challenge of researches including this very research.

It seems that there are many deficiencies in sport of the university. In this regard, referring to some evidences, it will be possible to study this issue from different dimensions. The most important problems in the path of growth and development of intra-university sports in the views of instructors, supervisors and sportswomen who are taking part in national sport Olympiad, include: the shortage of skillful trainers, shortage of budget, lack of support in the side of university authorities, shortage of preparatory camps, management weakness, and lack of students’ motivation (Amirtash, 2004). Also, insufficient knowledge of people and the society of the abilities of this field, low income, lack of harmony between undergraduate courses and needs of the society and jobs are among the reasons which have given rise to unfavorable efficiency and dissatisfaction of graduates of physical education field of study (Alizadeh, 2001).

So, all these problems have made it necessary to reconsider and establish basic and constructive changes in the academic and administrative structure of sport and physical education in universities. Moreover, the type of planning and investment for performing sport activities should undergo a relatively great change. They must be designed in harmony with students’ priorities. Amid this situation, managers have the most important roles and their attitudes will be the main driving force for movement. In this connection, Niva (2004) quoting from Damanpour (1991) states that the managers’ attitude towards change is a determining factor for the staff participation in the change process and its success. Thus, with regard to the mentioned issues and with a belief in this fact that sport managers are the main factors of success of sport in the country, and their method of response and facing the changes (attitude towards change), has an influential role in performing their duties, the researcher has studied the relationship between a section of demographic features (individual) such as gender, age, level of education, work record, teaching history, field of study (which possibly has a role in their tendency towards change), among the managers of physical department educations at Islamic Azad University (all branches in the country).

While showing the rate of attitudes toward change among sport managers of Islamic Azad University (all branches), this research will also respond to this important question, i.e. "which of the selected individual characteristics are connected with the attitudes towards change and what is the rate of this connection in the statistical community?"
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Taking into consideration the subject and objectives of research, the present research is in form of descriptive-correlative one and data has been collected in the field form. The statistical community includes all sport managers at Islamic Azad University (all branches) (N: 210). The sample volume was selected based on the table of the selection of sample volume of Morgan randomly (n=136). The necessary data were collected by using two questionnaires.

A) Denham questionnaire (1989) was used to measure the attitude towards change which includes three secondary indexes of cognition, emotion and behavior and designed in form of 18 items.

B) Questionnaire of individual characteristics. This questionnaire measures the data related to age, education, work experience, and academic field of study of the examinees.

The above questionnaire is an instrument to measure standard and has been frequently used inside and outside Iran. However, to maintain validity and reliability of the research creditability, once again the validity and reliability of the mentioned questionnaire in the research statistical community were studied. In order to be assured of validity of the questionnaire, after their compilation, the views of 5 faculty members with PhD. degrees in management and physical education were used and their comments were included in the final questionnaire. For checking the reliability of the questionnaire, after preliminary study of 30 member of the statistical community, the method of re-testing (0.81) was used. Also for calculating the internal reliability, the method of Cronbach’s Alpha (0.79) was employed. Questionnaires were sent and received through mail to physical education departments in university branches throughout the country.

In order to analyze the data, the descriptive and inferential data were used. It was such that for describing qualitative features, the percentage and frequency and for quantitative features, the indexes of central tendency and distribution were used. In the section of inferential statistics, for the description of the attitude towards change and its sub-sets, due to the fact that this natural and homogenous distribution had variance (using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (K–S test and Levine's test), the correlative t test was used. For finding the correlation between a selection of individual characteristics and attitude towards change in managers, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

Results:

The results of the research showed that 82.4% of the examinees were men and 17.4% women. 83.8% of the examinees were graduates of physical education discipline and 16.2% people were graduated of other academic fields of study. 0.9% of them held PhD degree, 42.6% with Master’s degree, 43.3% with Bachelor’s degree and 8.1% with Associate in Arts’ degrees (or technicians). Their average age was 36.03 years and their standard deviation was 7.79 years of which the oldest trainer was 56 years old and their youngest one was 21 years old.

The average of work record of the examinees was 11.20 years, and their standard deviation was 7.65 years of which the greatest was with 38 years and the least one with a 1 year of work record. The average of teaching record of examinees was 7.33 years and the standard deviation was 6.99 years of which the greatest was 31 years and the least one with no teaching record.

The score of attitude towards change among the examinees which have been calculated based on their attitudes towards questions related to cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions in form of average and standard deviation are presented in Table No. 1.

With regard to the Table No. 2 and the results (P<0.001 and t=13.138) the hypothesis of equality of the average with the number 3 is not accepted and as the average difference is in positive direction , it can be concluded that it is more than expected level . It can be also said that the managers’ attitudes toward change is more than the expected level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Statistical description of data related to attitude towards change and its sub-sets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: The result of T test related to the managers’ attitudes towards change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Considering the type of scales (nominal, ranking, distance and relative), the Pearson correlation coefficient was used for variables of gender, academic background, field of study, age, work record and teaching history. The results are presented in Table No. 3

Table 3: Correlation between individual’s characteristics and attitude towards change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Field of study</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Work experience</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive dimension</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.121*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional dimension</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>-0.210*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-0.033</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral dimension</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>-0.248*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards change</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>-0.251*</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>0.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

With regard to the standard of interpretation of correlation coefficient, the correlation coefficients between 0.0-0.19 indicate a very weak correlation between the two variables. The correlation coefficients of the variables of individual’s characteristics (with the exception of academic background) and the components of attitude towards change indicate a very low correlation.

With regard to the obtained results, it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between the variables of gender, field of study, age, work record and teaching experiences. There is a significant correlation between the managers’ academic level and components of attitude towards change at the level of α=0.05, however, this correlation or relationship is negative and weak.

**Discussion And Conclusion:**

Attitude towards change in the management world is a systematic and process-based attitude. The process starts from somewhere and ends in somewhere else. In a general view, it can be said that change process composes of certain stages whose infrastructures are software and hardware, but the main infrastructure of every kind of change in organizations is in fact the humans.

The results of research by Siniteh (2009) showed that an attitude with a tendency toward change and attitudes resisting towards change shape two farthest end of a system in the attitude towards change. In the present research, the results related to the examinees’ attitudes towards change indicated that their attitude towards change was more than expected level (P<0.001 and t=13.138). These results are in agreement with the results of a research by Fallah (2009) who had studied the rate of tendency towards change in educational departments of physical education departments of universities. However, these are not in agreement with the results of a research by Safarbegloo (2005) who had studied the management in secondary schools from the viewpoint of managers and teachers and their comparison with change indexes.

At the same time, according to Chonko (2004), change constantly creates instability, distress and ambiguity because of existing differences in individuals’ life experience, motivational level, social demography, knowledge, attitudes and behavioral patterns. So findings of the present research which show the tendency towards change among managers is of great significance. The significant change will happen in universities when the agents of change (officials and staffs) consider themselves beneficiary in that process. Universities which link with values such as team work, participation, commitment and high levels of merit welcome changes by heart. Oppositely, the universities which have the organizational culture of elite-oriented, merit-oriented trends or leadership value structures will have a negative attitude towards change.

The results of many researches indicate that all organizations in the world are in need to be adapted with changes and they have experienced many changes during recent decades (Hanna, 2003; Scott, 2003). Managers play important roles in individuals’ inclination towards change (Fullan, 2007). The managers’ behaviors have great effects on staffs and effective changes in academic centers will be possible only in close collaboration with managers and staffs (Dixon, 1991). Because of the importance of a successful change process, managers should have necessary skills and staffs should support their managers in the whole stages of change process (Havlik, 2007).

The findings of this research about the relationship between individual characteristics and attitude towards change showed that:

*Gender* has a very weak relationship with change in general and through three cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. This finding indicates that at the level of α=0.05, there is no significant correlation. This finding also confirms that gender has neither a connection with the attitude towards change, nor has an influence on it.
The field of study has a very weak relationship with the attitude towards change in general and through three cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. This finding indicates that there is no significant correlation at the $a=0.05$ level. This finding indicates that neither the field of study has a relationship with attitude towards change nor it can be an effective factor on it.

The level of education has a negative and weak relationship with change in general and in three cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. The level of education is one of the important factors in moving to use the sources, the new and scientific methods of activities in every fields of study. The primary descriptive data on the rate of education of examinees showed that among the examinees, 0.9% were with PhD degree, 42.6% with Master’s degree, 43.4% with Bachelor’s degree and 8.1% with Associate in Arts degree. The results showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between the academic level of examinees and their attitudes towards change. However, Fallah (2009) in a research entitled, “A comparison among the attitudes of managers, faculty members and students towards dimensions of change management in the mangers of physical education departments at Islamic Azad University (all branches) came to this conclusion that there is a positive and significant relationship between the level of education and their attitude towards change. In this aspect, the findings of this research do not comply with the results of the mentioned research.

Age has a very weak relationship with the attitude towards change in general and in three cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. This finding indicates that there is no significant correlation at $a=0.05$ level. This finding indicates that neither age has a relationship with attitude towards change nor it is a factor to effect it.

The work record has a negative and very weak relationship with attitude towards change in general and in there cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. This finding indicates that there is no significant correlation at $a=0.05$ level. This finding also confirms that neither work record has a relationship with attitude towards change nor it is an effective factor on it. The negative direction of the correlation is possibility due to the fact that individuals with high work records resist against any change.

Teaching experience has a very weak relationship with attitude towards change in general and in three cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. This finding indicates that there is not a significant correlation at $a=0.05$ level. This finding also indicates that neither teaching experience has a relationship with attitude towards change nor teaching experience is an effective factor on it. The teaching record is a kind of work record. The findings of the research have been able to show this homogeneity and manifest in a same way (negative direction) in connection with the attitude towards change of both variables.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express his appreciation to the subjects for their participation in this study.

REFERENCES


