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Organizational trust and mindfulness in NCAA Division III athletic departments

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Presentation Proposal Abstract

The drive to have a successful college athletic program is an acknowledgement of marketplace realities; universities are competing for ever scarcer resources. As a result, the desire to be *better than* has led some department personnel and student-athletes to commit unethical, even illegal acts. Recent examples call into question the credibility of college sports. Therefore, understanding organizational dynamics associated with trust and decision-making in athletic departments is important. This study explored the relationship between organizational trust and mindfulness operating in NCAA D-III (non-scholarship) athletic departments.

After a pilot study confirmed reliability and validity of instruments designed for this study, data were gathered using the Athletic Department Mindfulness (ADMS) and Athletic Department Trust Scales (ADTS) and collected from coaches at 59 randomly selected NCAA D-III athletic departments. Factor, correlational, and multiple regression analyses were also performed on the variables from the ADMS and ADTS.

The results indicate that the coaching staff's perceived level of trust in their colleagues and the athletic director has a significant relationship with and impact on department-wide organizational mindfulness (i.e. decision-making).

Athletic directors and coaches who place an importance on trust are: benevolent, competent, honest, open, and reliable. Furthermore, the findings suggest that departments infused with trust are more likely to have personnel who are: pre-occupied with failure avoidance, reluctant to oversimplify, sensitive to the day-to-day, committed to resilience, and defer to experts regardless of their position. The findings may present ways to elevate levels of trust and better incorporate mindful decision-making practices in intercollegiate athletic departments.