

Analyzing Sportsman Intentions to Stay in a Team from Branding and Talent Management Perspective in China: Mediating Role of Player Recruitment Strategy, Sports Team Climate and Career Success

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Abstract

The most important goal of successful human resource management of a sports organization is to ensure the intention of the players to stay in the organization and to attract talented players from outside. The basic purpose of the current study is to explore the impact of sports employer branding orientation and talent management on players' intention to stay along with the mediating impact of effective recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success. In other words, this study has been designed to understand the ways through which the retention and attraction levels of talented players can be increased. For this purpose, data has been collected from 394 players that are playing for different football clubs in China. The results indicate that player branding orientation has a positive but an insignificant impact on players' intention to stay. However, the impact of the other independent variable i.e. talent management has a significant and positive impact on player intention to stay. As far as the mediating variables are considered, it has been found out in the results that all the mediating variables i.e. effective recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success have significant mediating impact in both cases i.e. in the relationship between sports employer branding orientation and player intention to stay; and in the relationship between talent management and player intention to stay. Various theoretical, practical and policy-making implications of this study have been thoroughly discussed by the researcher in the concluding sections.

Keywords: Branding Strategy, Talent Management, Intention to Stay, Recruitment Strategy, Sports Team Climate, Career Success, China

Introduction

When the term talent management is discussed, it does not only entail the recruitment and acquiring of highly talented employees but it is also about the effective management and the retention of the highly talented staff recruited and hired (Zhao, Xia, He, Sheard, & Wan, 2016). This is done in the form of different kinds of facilities and the environment provided to the staff which makes sure that the staff is retained and stays loyal to the organization (Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013). In the context of sports organizations, the human resource management have goals of building player base, players engaging and players sustaining; these goals are crucial for these organizations (Tumasjan, Kunze, Bruch, & Welp, 2020). In a sports organization, policies and practices of human resource management (HRM) guide the talented players to enhance their capabilities and strengthen their qualities. On the other hand, sports organizations give many incentives to attract both domestic and international players. These incentives include high sports organization value, sports team climate, branding of the players, among others. Such factors enhance the sustainability of advantage for competitive environment (Koster & Mayer, 2016). In the field of marketing, the orientation of brand is considered

an approach around which the processes of organizations occur and revolve around development, protection and creation of brand identity. This type of protection, development and creation of identity attracts talent and ensures that the players retain their intention to stay in the sports organizations which provides them these facilities (Tumasjan et al., 2020). On the basis of brand marketing concept, the building of players' base is formed which in the perspective of HRM can be termed as players' branding (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). The branding of players (Banerjee, Saini, & Kalyanaram, 2020) have aims at both the internal and external level in which the branding view of the firm is clearly promoted =, showing a desirable image of players Tumasjan et al. (2020). In the global marketplace, companies must stay competitive with an important goal to retain and attract talent in the right places (Bonneton, Schworm, Festing, & Muratbekova-Touron, 2019). Furthermore, attractive and positive image is reinforced by the branding of players, and undoubtedly these factors facilitate the role of player branding in creating potential of the player for improved performance. In competitive advantage terms, a number of factors are present for the reputation of a player or team, and the branding of players is one of them.

In the long term, the relationship of players that build with

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their employer is understood as intention to stay in the sports organization. Intention to stay is an inverse concept of intention to quit or intention to turnover (Johari, Tan, Adnan, Yahya, & Ahmad, 2012). Ultimately, management of talent encourages foreign talent to come and get benefit as well as ensure their intention to stay in respective area. According to research, talent management includes a series of commitments from the side of an organization to the players, which when fulfilled (H. Chen & Zhang, 2013), become a reason for a player to stay (Osborn & Zunker, 2015). However, a group of consultants that was McKinsey gave 'war for talent' that means a number of players are coping with the so-called phenomenon because term qualified talent is scarce. As a result, it can be concluded that a major challenge for economies and companies all over the world is talent management (TM) (Cuesta-Santos & Valencia-Rodríguez, 2018). For human resource management (HRM), differentiator becomes Talent and in organizations, the HRM is undertaking strategic functions in order to manage talent (Ashkanasy, Troth, Lawrence, & Jordan, 2017). Positive affective climate at the workplace always leads to positive aspects related to intention like job satisfaction and organization commitment (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). This aspect in the context of sports players might indicate that a positive sports team climate leads towards increased intention of the players to stay. It is emotional attachment in which sports employer branding orientation enhance which as a result attract foreign talent with intention to stay (Knight, Menges, & Bruch, 2018). If the culture and the climate of the sports team is exactly according to the sports employer branding goals (Z. Chen et al., 2017), it can result in player satisfaction, according to (Li, Huang, & Wang, 2011) and might result in a higher chance of the player to stay in the same organization. Job climate is supposed to be a reflection of the sports employer branding (Keane & Wen, 2013).

According to Koster and Mayer (2016), the attractiveness of employer is not a universal concept as it changes with different country-contexts on the basis of cultural variations within the workforce. Hence, the differences occur between the applicants and recruiters which ultimately creates perception differences between recruiters and potential applicants for sports employers in which they present a key challenge as to the attractiveness of a player; and such challenges operate across different countries such as China. Although now sports employer branding is universally becoming important for firms in all countries, the concept of non-universal which is attractiveness of sports employer purports to call for a strategy of adaptation in international sports employer

branding (Almıaçık, Almıaçık, Erat, & Akçin, 2014). Moreover, the ability to attract and help retain sportsmen or players has not been adequately studied in the existing literature, especially in the consideration of talent management, job subjective career, and team climate which becomes critical in branding of sports employee for their retention and intention to stay in the team. In addition, team attraction has become a significant factor in the process of recruitment, due to which sports employer become satisfied and decide to live in that region. Since sports organizations can only select and hire those players that are de facto applying for place in the team, there is still limited research done either in the academic field or practical field on the attraction factors for foreign players that increase the players' base of China. This is so because, for China, recruitment comes in competitive field due to which it attracts more foreigner players. There is dire need to understand the knowledge of brand orientation of sports employer, total management with mediating role of sports team climate, subjective career success and effective player recruitment efficiency on intention to stay; this ultimately enhances the attraction factors for foreign players. This study has the following objectives;

1. To examine the impact of sports employer branding orientation on player intention to stay in the team
2. To explore the impact of talent management practices on player intention to stay in the team
3. To analyze the mediating impact of effective player recruitment strategy between sports employer brand orientation, talent management and intention of players to stay in the team
4. To analyze the mediating impact of sports team climate between sports employer brand orientation, talent management and intention of players to stay in the team
5. To analyze the mediating impact of subjective career success between sports employer brand orientation, talent management and intention of players to stay in the team

The significance of the study is that it clearly explains the factors that will attract talented foreign players and increase the player base of China. Increase in orientation of sports employer brand along with talent management enhances the player's intention to stay in the team. Stakeholders in the Chinese sports sector can benefit from this study as it can help their management departments make decision regarding direct investment in talented foreign players and formulate the sports branding orientation and talent management to attract, select, engage, develop and retain the right player base. In addition, this study also enhances the knowledge and

understanding of researcher regarding factors that attract foreign talented players to China.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the understanding of the relation between the dependent and independent variables can easily be understood with the “organizational equilibrium” theory (Flink, 2017; Jarrett & Vince, 2017; Shishkin, 2018; Zanjani, Abdolabadi, Niksokhan, & Sarang, 2018). The drivers that control the voluntary turnover of the players and the management of the organization through various ways including talent management and also the sports employer branding orientation (Flink, 2017; Froese, 2017; Shishkin, 2018; Zanjani et al., 2018). The two main drivers that are included in this are desirability and the ease of movement. The desirability of movement is dependent upon the attitude of players as well as the internal opportunities that result in increased player’s satisfaction (Amin, Arshad, & Ghani, 2017; Froese, 2017; Koekemoer & Crafford, 2019; Moon & Choi, 2017; Shishkin, 2018). According to the organizational equilibrium theory, the assumption is that the satisfaction of players, working environment of the team, behavior and coordination among the players and the line management result in increasing players’ satisfaction (Hänggli & Hirschi, 2018; Shockley, Ureksoy, Rodopman, Poteat, & Dullaghan, 2016; Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019; Spurk, Keller, & Hirschi, 2019; Xie, Xia, Xin, & Zhou, 2016).

Employer Branding Orientation and Intention to Stay

The employer branding orientation is an important factor for determining employees’ intention to stay in an organization (Paula, Sousa, & Quesado, 2016) (Lin, Chiang, & Wu, 2018; Tumasjan et al., 2020). Employer branding cannot be limited to hiring the competent employees but their talent management and development is also the responsibility of the employer and it will eventually increase the level of satisfaction experienced by the employees (Paula et al., 2016; Tumasjan et al., 2020). This employee satisfaction reduces the intention of the employees to quit the job and ensures the continued association of employees with the company. This aspect in context of sports players might be taken in such a way that through proper sports employer branding orientation, the intention of the players to stay in the team or sports organization might increase.

A number of studies in the literature (Lin et al., 2018; Paula et al., 2016; Tumasjan et al., 2020) have provided fundamental practices that are helpful for the introduction

of positive employer branding. These fundamental practices include setting up global standards along with the tailoring of local practices, regular sessions for promoting orientation and its stretching, establishment of the clear ownership and seamless experience of the employees regarding their job requirements (Leng & Chin, 2016) (Abraham, 2019; Chinomona, Dhurup, & Joubert, 2017; Woon, Tan, & Nasurdin, 2017). In addition to these, the use of advanced technology and power data for the optimization of the working performance is also helpful for improving the employer branding orientation. These practices then help the employees work in a comfortable and competitive working environment, which eventually increases their satisfaction and intention to stay at the firm (Chinomona et al., 2017; Othman, 2019; Shanker, 2018; Woon et al., 2017). Thus, based on the literature studied, the following hypothesis has been generated:

H1: Employer branding orientation has significant impact on Intention to Stay

Talent Management and Intention to Stay

The intention of employees is significantly affected by the organizational behavior towards them and along with the behavior of the employer, the role of talent management is also equally instrumental in this regard. According to several research studies (Kim & Ausar, 2018; Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018; Naim & Lenka, 2017a, 2017b; Naim & Lenka, 2016; Redditt, Gregory, & Ro, 2019), the market has become more competitive and that is why employees must develop their best talents and skills. When employees show passion towards their work, the organizational duty to have proper talent management policies for employees intensifies (Cheng, Nielsen, & Cutler, 2019; A. Gupta & Singh, 2018; Unsal-Akbıyık & Zeytinoglu, 2018; Valeau, Paille, Dubrulle, & Guenin, 2021). It has also been observed in a number of studies that the need to have competitive talent is necessary for organizations so that they can perform well in a competitive market. Literature studies have shown that the talent does not have to be the one that needs the employer, in fact, it is rather opposite and the employer needs talented people (Chinomona et al., 2017; Leng & Chin, 2016; Othman, 2019; Woon et al., 2017). Thus, the companies must look for the effective talent management of their employees and their satisfaction related to working conditions. If the sports organizations manage the talent possessed by them appropriately, it might enhance the intention of the players to stay in the team and continue with that sports organization.

Talent management involves the procedures and commitments in which the firm, first of all, hires an employee on merit and then provides all of the possible

conditions to the employee so that he remains loyal and committed to the organization. (Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio, 2017; Friday & Sunday, 2019; Murillo & King, 2019; Tash, Ali, & Ahmazadeh, 2016) According to talent management policies, this includes a series of commitments from the side of an organization to the employee, which when fulfilled, become a reason for an employee to stay. Thus, on the basis of the literature studied, the following hypothesis has been generated:

H2: Talent management has a significant impact on intention to stay

Mediating Role of Effective Recruitment Strategy

The need for recruitment increases when the employees are in shortage or have left the company. The recruitment process itself is time-consuming and costs a huge sum of amount of the company (Musker, Short, Licinio, Wong, & Bidargaddi, 2020) (Brown, Adeboye, Yusuf, & Chaudhary, 2018; Kayrouz, Dear, Karin, & Titov, 2016; Sorrells, 2017). That is why it is important for organizations to have a proper recruitment strategy, which will help the organization have a control over its employees. This will also ensure that the organization does not disappoint its employees in terms of its services. According to several research studies (Chinomona et al., 2017; Leng & Chin, 2016; Woon et al., 2017), the employer branding orientation has a significant impact on the intention of the employees to stay at any organization. However, the role of effective recruitment strategy is also mediating in this relationship. This is because of the proper awareness of the employees about the job duties, during the time of recruitment, and thus, hiring only compatible employees for the job becomes easy (Cheng et al., 2019; Leng & Chin, 2016; Valeau et al., 2021; Woon et al., 2017). The usage of effective recruitment strategies to recruit the sportsmen and players by an organization related to sports might be a result of proper sports employer branding and talent management which might enhance the players' intention to stay.

According to (Lin et al., 2018; Paula et al., 2016; Tumasjan et al., 2020), the commitments of an organization with the employee, involved in the talent management procedure may result in the increase or the decrease of the intention of the employee to stay in the organization. The effective recruitment strategies make sure that talent management is done in such a way that highly talented foreign assets are retained and that they remain committed (Collings & Isichei, 2018; De Boeck, Meyers, & Dries, 2018; Khoreva, Vaiman, & Van Zalk, 2017; Maheshwari, Gunesh, Lodoros, & Konstantopoulou, 2017; Rathee & Rajain, 2019). For retaining the talented employees at the organization, the employers must ensure best talent

management practices. A number of research studies (Collings et al., 2017; Friday & Sunday, 2019; Kaliannan, Abraham, & Ponnusamy, 2016; Tash et al., 2016) have supported the idea that the effective strategic planning for the recruitment of employees benefits the firms in a number of ways including the hiring of talented employees and retaining them at the organization by proper management of their talents (Chinomona et al., 2017; Leng & Chin, 2016; Valeau et al., 2021; Woon et al., 2017).

H3a: Effective recruitment strategy has a significant mediating role between the relationship of employer branding orientation and the intention to stay

H3b: Effective recruitment strategy has a significant mediating role between the relationship of talent management and the intention to stay

Mediating Role of Sports Team Climate

The climate at the workplace is directly related with employer branding as well as the employee's intention to stay in an organization (Lin et al., 2018; Paula et al., 2016; Tumasjan et al., 2020). The climate of the workplace should reflect the image of the employer that was shown to the potential employees as a result of employer branding at the time of the recruitment of the employees. If the culture and the climate of the workplace is exactly according to the employer branding, it can result in job satisfaction and might result in a higher intention of the employee to stay in the same organization and to stay committed to their job (Cheng et al., 2019; Chinomona et al., 2017; Othman, 2019; Unsal-Akbıyık & Zeytinoglu, 2018; Valeau et al., 2021). The job climate is supposed to be a reflection of the employer branding. In case of sports and players, a better and positive sports team climate can be developed through effective branding of the sports employers and talent management of the players in the team with the motive to raise their intention to stay in that organization.

According to one study (Collings et al., 2017; Friday & Sunday, 2019; Kaliannan et al., 2016; Tash et al., 2016), the intention of the employee to stay in the same organization mostly depends on the job climate provided to them. Effective talent management techniques and procedures can result in a higher employee retention rate. The need to have loyal, committed, hard-working and meticulous employees is the need of the time as the business market is becoming more competitive with time. (Gilal, Ashraf, Gilal, Gilal, & Channa, 2019; V. Gupta, 2019; MIHALCEA, 2017; Murillo & King, 2019; van Zyl, Mathafena, & Ras, 2017) Therefore, organizations have to make sure that they have talented and committed employees so that they can work for the organization for a longer period of time as they understand the norms (Davis et al., 2018; Foster, 2018; Hsu et al., 2018; Sathish et al., 2019), regulations and processes

of the organization. That is why organizations tend to look for ways to retain its employees and adopt methods that will motivate the employees to work for the organization (Jabar, Awang, Kowang, & Krishnan, 2019; Johennesse & Chou, 2017; Maheshwari et al., 2017; O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019).

H4a: Effective job climate has a significant mediating role between the relationship of employer branding orientation and the intention to stay

H4b: Effective job climate has a significant mediating role between the relationship of talent management and the intention to stay

Mediating Role of Subjective Career Success

The intention of the employees to stay at the organization is a psychological antecedent of the authentic behavior of the workers. (Amin et al., 2017; Aydogmus, 2019; Dose, Desrumaux, & Bernaud, 2019; Koekemoer, Fourie, & Jorgensen, 2019; Moon & Choi, 2017) This intention to stay or remain at the job is also considered as an immediate determinant to analyze the actions of an individual employee. This intention of the employees to stay at the firm also determines the working attitude of the employees and their job performance (Kim & Ausar, 2018; Milliman et al., 2018; Naim & Lenka, 2017a, 2017b; Naim & Lenka, 2016; Redditt et al., 2019). The ethical behavior of the employer is an important factor in the determination of the employee's intention. According to the literature, the organizational climate is considered important, both practically and theoretically (Dai & Song, 2016; Koekemoer & Crafford, 2019; Koekemoer & Olckers, 2019; Niu, Hunter-Johnson, Xu, & Liu, 2019). This working climate of the organization entails several factors that determine how friendly and easy-to-work environment is

provided to the workers by the employer (Lam, Partridge, & Allman-Farinelli, 2016; Miller-Perusse, Horvath, Chavanduka, & Stephenson, 2019; Sorrells, 2017; Villalobos et al., 2019). Therefore, the employers are considered vital for the maintenance of quality working environment. A well-branded sports employer and well-managed talent by a sports organization might provide the subjective career success to the players, because of which they might intend to stay with that organization in the future.

Another factor identified for the retention of employees is talent management. Literature shows that the organizations that work on the progressive talent management and talent-building of their employees (Cheng et al., 2019; A. Gupta & Singh, 2018; Othman, 2019; Unsal-Akbiryik & Zeytinoglu, 2018; Valeau et al., 2021) have a better chance to learn things and gain talent will encourage the employees to retain at the firm and will also enhance their chances to get promoted (V. Gupta, 2019; Jabar et al., 2019; Johennesse & Chou, 2017; O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019). The greed of getting promotion at work encourages the employees to get involved in talent building activities and to gain more knowledge about the work. (Amiri & Safariolyaei, 2017; Beamond, Farndale, & Härtel, 2016; Kaliannan et al., 2016; Khezri, Niknafs, Aidnlou, Alian, & Eslamlou, 2016; Tash et al., 2016) Therefore, based on relevant literature studied, the following hypothesis has been generated:

H5a: Subjective career success has a significant mediating role between the relationship of employer branding orientation and the intention to stay

H5b: Subjective career success has a significant mediating role between the relationship of talent management and the intention to stay



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Sampling and Population

This study is investigating the factors through which China can increase the proportion of talented international players in the football clubs in China. The unit of analysis in this study are the players from the Chinese football clubs. A sample is a subset of individuals belonging to the population on which the study is carried out. In the current study, the non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling is used. Non-probability sampling technique is chosen because the researcher lacked information regarding the total number of players in football clubs in China. Therefore, the method of purposive sampling has been used. Purposive, judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling is used when the data can be selected from a specific type of respondent only, in this case, the unit of analysis were players of football clubs; thus, the purposive sampling method has been utilized.

This study uses a survey-based questionnaire method to collect data. A structured questionnaire is used to understand the concepts and empirically verify the constructs of this study. Secondary data sources are utilized to compile the questionnaire. The established scales and constructs that have been verified by existing literature were incorporated in the questionnaire. The questionnaires are distributed via e-mail and personal administration. Both methods are employed to increase the response rate. A total of 394 questionnaires are distributed; by applying the item response theory, the criteria of ten responses against each item has been followed. Before the questionnaires are distributed, approval from all relevant authorities are taken. Follow up calls are made a week after the questionnaires are distributed. The data collection process spans across a total of two months. A non-response rate of 10 per cent is observed and 15 per cent of questionnaires have been discarded due to missing values.

Measurement Items

Multiple-scale items are used to analyze the constructs included in the questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) is used to measure the constructs.

- **Sports Employer Branding Orientation**
The general branding scale developed by Wong and Merrilees (2008) has been re-conceptualized and adapted according to the requirements of the present study. The scale had a total of 4 items. Previous studies have had a reliability value of 0.85 for this scale. A sample item is "Sports Employer branding is essential to our HR strategy".

- **Talent Management**

A 16-item construct developed by Stahl et al. (2007) has been used to measure the talent management practices. Each of the 16 items represents a different TM practice. The dimensions of talent development, retention and attraction are focused upon.

- **Players Recruitment Efficiency**

Players Recruitment efficiency is measured on the basis of two items as suggested by Ulrich (1997) and Muenstermann, Eckhardt, and Weitzel (2009). The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale has ranged between 0.84-0.86 in previous studies. A sample item is "We are satisfied with the average time between the identification of a vacancy and the fill of a vacancy".

- **Sports Team Climate**

Sports team climate is measured on the basis of the Job-related effective well-being scale developed by Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, and Kelloway (2000). The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale ranged between 0.93-0.95 in previous studies. A sample item is "Players in our organization feel enthusiastic in their teams".

- **Subjective Career Success**

The career satisfaction scale developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) and Abele and Wiese (2008) is used to study the effects of subjective career success. The scale consisted of six items. A sample item is "I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for income." The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale ranged between 0.91-0.93 in previous studies.

- **Players' Intention To Stay**

The employee intention to stay is measured on the basis of the three-item turnover scale devised by Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale, and Sumelius (2013). The scale is reverse coded to interpret the intention to stay. The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale has been reported to be 0.86 in previous studies. A sample item is "I intend to remain with the organization for the near future".

Data Analysis Method

The data is analyzed by using two software applications: AMOS and SPSS. The frequency distribution to analyze control variables and missing values, and the tests for descriptive analysis and factor analysis are performed on SPSS. The confirmatory factor analysis, model fitness and structural equation modelling is conducted on AMOS.

Data Analysis

Demographics

The data has been collected from 394 players that are part of football clubs in China. As the objective of the current study is to determine the impact of sports employer branding orientation and talent management on players'

intention to stay with the mediating impact of effective players recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success, data has been collected from players that are part of football clubs in China. As per the demographics of these respondents, it has been found out that 55.1% of the players are males and 44.9% of the players are females. The demographics in regard of educational qualification of the players indicate that the maximum percentage i.e., 46.4% of the players has graduated. In addition, 14.2% players are found to have an undergraduate degree and 29.7% players have a Master's degree. The remaining 9.6% of the players that are included in the respondents in the current study are found to have various other educational qualifications. This clearly indicates that most of the players have higher educational qualification i.e., graduation or higher degrees. Now, the demographic factor of age has been discussed in regard of the respondents of the study. The researcher categorizes the respondents into several classes of ages. The first category belongs to the players having age from 18 to 25 years and the percentage of respondents in this category is 23.4%. The next category i.e., from 26 to 30 years includes the second highest percentage i.e., 29.7% of the players. The third category ranges from 31 to 35 years old players and the percentage of players that belongs to this group is 31.7% which is highest among all the categories. Lastly, there is a category that includes the players aged 36 years and above. It has been estimated that 15.2% of the total respondents belong to this category.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of the data obtained from the

respondents show the overall summary of the data in terms of various tendency measures such as mean, median, mode, variance, standard deviation etc. In a similar way, the information about the skewness of the collected data can also be obtained from descriptive statistics of the collected data. The results of descriptive statistics have been presented in Table 1. First, the maximum and minimum values of the collected data range from 1 to 5, which confirms with the “five-point Likert scale”, which also ranges from 1 to 5. This result of minimum and maximum values indicates the fact that no outlier has been observed in the collected data. This result is crucial as the presence of any outlier in the collected data has the tendency to provide inaccurate results and in case of presence of outliers, the researcher has to improve the quality of data and make it free from the outliers. In addition, the mean values are also important in this regard. It can be seen in the table that the mean value of all the variables i.e., sports employer branding orientation, talent management, players’ intention to stay, effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success ranges around 3. This indicates that the responses of the respondents agree with the statements that are related to all the variables included in the study. Another notable result in the descriptive statistics of the study is that the skewness value for all the variables ranges between -1 and +1, which is considered as the threshold range in this regard. This result indicates that the data collected can be further analyzed through the application of various tests and techniques for the purposes of the study. The detailed results of descriptive statistics can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
EmpBrandOri	394	1.00	5.00	3.2354	1.04386	-.469	.123
TalanManag	394	1.00	5.00	3.3891	1.08357	-.554	.123
EffecRecStr	394	1.00	5.00	3.4560	1.01969	-.387	.123
AffecJobCli	394	1.00	5.00	3.3420	1.11187	-.512	.123
SubCarSuc	394	1.00	5.00	3.5778	1.11338	-.535	.123
EmpIntStay	394	1.00	5.00	3.6218	1.00435	-.584	.123
Valid N (listwise)	394						

Table 2.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.972	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	16967.767
	df	630
	Sig.	.000

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's tests are important tests that indicate

the usefulness of the factor analysis of the variables for the study. As per the requirement, it is necessary that the KMO test value must be close to 1. On the other hand, the significance value of Bartlett's test must be less than 0.05. Under these circumstances, it can be stated that the factor analysis for the current study is beneficial. The results of KMO and Bartlett's test for the current study have been presented in Table 2. According to this table, the value of KMO test is .972 which, as per the requirement, is quite

close to 1. In the same way, the table indicates that the significance value of Bartlett's test is less than 0.05, which is in accordance with the requirements. Thus, it can be concluded that the collected data has factor analysis that is useful for the current study and the data can be used for the application of various tests and approaches in the current study.

Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated component matrix is the test that is applied to all the indicators in context of the variables involved in the study and in this case, sports employer branding orientation, talent management, players' intention to stay, effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success. The factor loading values for all these indicators have been presented in Table 3. It is

evident that the factor loading of almost all of these indicators have a value greater than 0.7, which is considered to be threshold range for the indicators. In addition, the table also indicates the fact that the indicators of the study are placed or sequenced in such a way, which prove beneficial for use in this study. The factor loading values of these indicators also depict that any error that is related to cross loading of the collected data has not been observed as per the results. All these results i.e., within threshold range factor loading value, useful sequencing and absence of cross loading error indicate that the collected data is completely valid to be used in the current study and eligible to be applied various advanced analysis techniques and approaches. The detailed results of rotated component matrix can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3.

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
EB1			.765			
EB2			.766			
EB3			.759			
EB4			.719			
TM1	.774					
TM2	.735					
TM3	.741					
TM4	.762					
TM5	.765					
TM6	.740					
TM7	.702					
TM8	.773					
TM9	.769					
TM10	.791					
TM11	.811					
TM12	.816					
TM13	.833					
TM14	.824					
TM15	.816					
TM16	.825					
ER1						.593
ER2						.757
ER3						.674
AJ1				.664		
AJ2				.693		
AJ3				.746		
AJ4				.698		
SC1		.787				
SC2		.771				
SC3		.783				
SC4		.761				
SC5		.814				
SC6		.803				
EI1					.684	
EI2					.749	
EI3					.665	

Table 4.
Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	SC	EB	TM	ER	AJ	EI
SC	0.914	0.862	0.575	0.929					
EB	0.889	0.668	0.477	0.656	0.817				
TM	0.922	0.772	0.623	0.720	0.691	0.879			
ER	0.885	0.719	0.623	0.738	0.645	0.789	0.848		
AJ	0.903	0.700	0.599	0.758	0.645	0.721	0.748	0.837	
EI	0.826	0.614	0.599	0.758	0.647	0.695	0.717	0.774	0.784

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

The convergent validity test has been conducted on the collected data to determine how the constructs of the study relate to each other. The composite reliability and average variance extract values are most used for the identification and measurement of the convergent validity of the constructs of the study. The results of convergent validity have been presented in Table 4. The values of composite reliability and average variance extract for all the variables of the study i.e., sports employer branding orientation, talent management, players' intention to stay, effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success have been given. The threshold value for composite reliability is greater than 0.7 while the threshold value for average variance extract is greater than 0.5. As per the table, it is quite clear that the value for composite reliability for all the variables is greater than 0.7 and the value of average variance extracted is greater than 0.5, thus fulfilling both the conditions successfully. As far as divergent validity is concerned, this test is conducted to gauge the extent to which the constructs of the study are unrelated to each other or whether they can provide explanation for the other constructs in a significant way or not. The results of discriminant validity have been presented in the same Table 4. According to these results, all the variables that are involved in the current study i.e., sports employer branding orientation, talent management, players' intention to stay, effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success are unrelated to each other, thus signifying the validity of the collected data. The detailed results of both convergent and discriminant validity have been tabulated in Table 4.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis has been conducted to assess whether the proposed hypothetical model by the researcher is fit for use in current study. There are various indicators that are analyzed in this regard such as CMIN/DF, GFI, CFI, IFI and RMSEA. All these indicators have their respective threshold ranges which are the

ultimately compared with the results obtained by the confirmatory factor analysis. The threshold range of CMIN is less or equal to three. In the same way, the threshold range of GFI is equal or greater than 0.80. The threshold range of CFI is equal or greater than 0.90. The threshold range of IFI is equal or greater than 0.90. Lastly, the threshold range of RMSEA is less or equal to 0.80. The results obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis indicate that the values obtained for all the indicators i.e., CMIN/DF, GFI, CFI, IFI and RMSEA are within the threshold range as required. In this regard, the value obtained for CMIN is 2.428, for GFI .820, for CFI .952, for IFI .952 and finally for RMSEA, the obtained value is .060, all of which fall within the threshold range, thus indicating that the theoretical model proposed by the researcher is completely fit for use in the study. The detailed results of confirmatory factor analysis are given in Table 5.

Structural Equation Modeling

In the end, the structural equation modeling (SEM) test has been conducted to determine the impact and its direction i.e., positive or negative, of one variable over the other. As the current study is conducted with a view to explore the impact of sports employer branding orientation and talent management on players' intention to stay with the mediating impact of effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success, the results of SEM have been presented in Table 6, accordingly. The results indicate that sports employer branding orientation has a positive but insignificant impact on players' intention to stay. It can be stated that with an increase of one per cent in sports employer branding orientation, the players' intention to stay will increase by 9.9% but this increase will be insignificant. However, the impact of the other independent variable i.e., talent management has significant and positive impact on players' intention to stay. In other words, with an increase of one per cent in talent management, the players' intention to stay will be increased by 13.6% significantly. As far as the mediating variables are considered, it has been found that all the

mediating variables i.e., effective players recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success have a significant mediating impact in both cases i.e., in the relationship between sports employer branding orientation and players' intention to stay; and in the relationship between talent management and players' intention to stay.

Table 5.
Confirmatory Factors Analysis

Indicators	Threshold range	Current values
CMIN/DF	Less or equal 3	2.428
GFI	Equal or greater .80	.820
CFI	Equal or greater .90	.952
IFI	Equal or greater .90	.952
RMSEA	Less or equal .08	.060

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The current study studies the impact of sports employer branding orientation and talent management on players' intention to stay with the mediating impact of effective players recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success. The first hypothesis in this regard was that sports employer branding orientation has a significant impact on players' intention to stay. This hypothesis has been rejected as per the results obtained by SEM, which indicate that the sports employer branding orientation has a positive but insignificant impact on players' intention to stay. This result is consistent with the

results obtained in studies conducted in the past (King, So, & Grace, 2013). When the sports organization or specifically a football club has a good reputation in the branding of the players, the players associated with it will have more intention to stay in that club.

The second hypothesis generated by the researcher was that talent management has a significant impact on players' intention to stay. As per the results obtained in SEM, this hypothesis has been accepted as this impact has been found to be significant. This result is similar to the results presented by the studies conducted in the past on similar topics (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). When the sports organization is involved in rational talent management, it will have its players at right positions and posts, where the talents of the players are being satisfied and not wasted.

The next hypotheses were regarding the impact of mediating variables on the relationship between sports employer brand orientation and players' intention to stay. These hypotheses have been accepted as per the results obtained from SEM. The impact of the three mediating variables i.e., effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success has been found to be significant on the relationship between sports employer brand orientation and players' intention to stay. All these results are in accordance with the results from similar studies conducted in the past. (Cho, Johanson, & Guchait, 2009; Iverson, 1992; NEDD, 2006; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999)

Figure 1: CFA

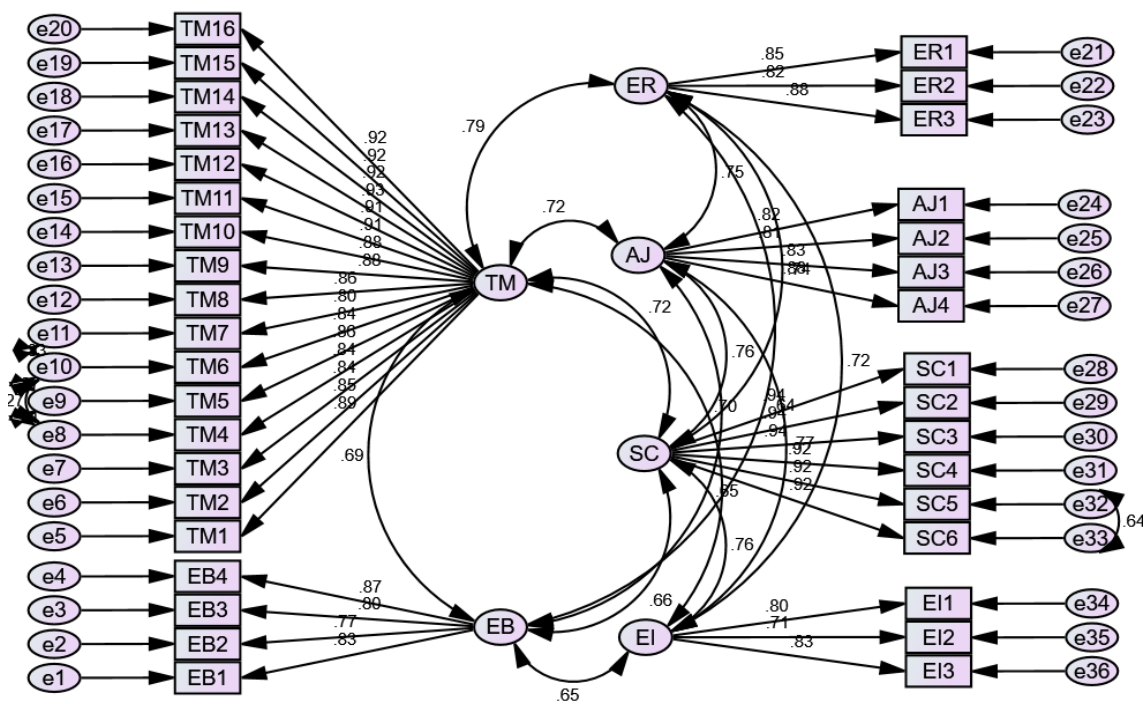


Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 6.
Structural Equation Modeling

Total Effect	TalanManag	EmpBrandOri	SubCarSuc	AffecJobCli	EffecRecStr
SubCarSuc	.548**	.254**	.000	.000	.000
AffecJobCli	.547**	.228**	.000	.000	.000
EffecRecStr	.642**	.152**	.000	.000	.000
EmpIntStay	.496**	.245**	.273**	.270**	.097*
Direct Effect	TalanManag	EmpBrandOri	SubCarSuc	AffecJobCli	EffecRecStr
SubCarSuc	.548**	.254**	.000	.000	.000
AffecJobCli	.547**	.228**	.000	.000	.000
EffecRecStr	.642**	.152**	.000	.000	.000
EmpIntStay	.136*	.099	.273**	.270**	.097*
Indirect Effect	TalanManag	EmpBrandOri	SubCarSuc	AffecJobCli	EffecRecStr
SubCarSuc	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
AffecJobCli	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
EffecRecStr	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
EmpIntStay	.360**	.146**	.000	.000	.000

Figure 2: SEM

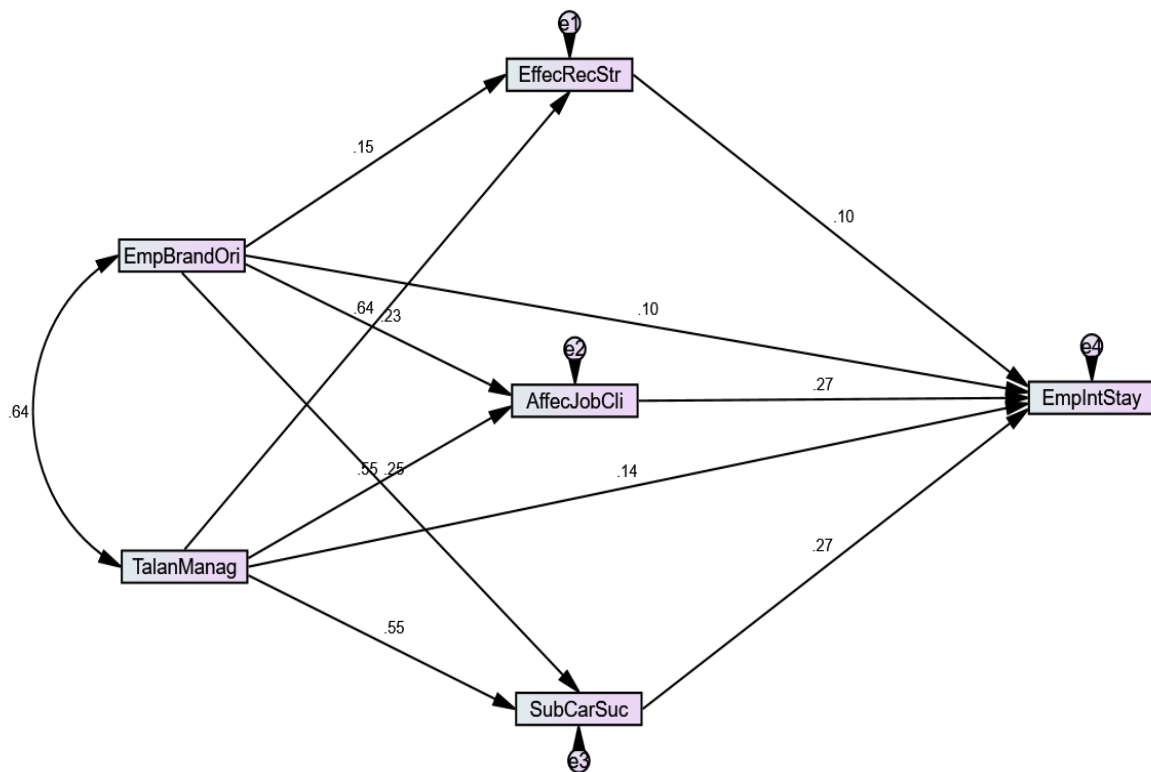


Figure 2: Structural Equation Modeling

The last hypotheses pertain to the mediating impact of the mediating variables on the relationship between talent management and players’ intention to stay. These hypotheses suggest that effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success have a significant mediating impact on the relationship between talent management and players’ intention to stay. In this regard, the results obtained from SEM indicate that these hypotheses have been accepted as the mediating impact of effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success have been found as

significant. There are various studies that have been conducted in the past on related topics, showing the impact of these variables to be significant, which further strengthens the results of the current study (Heslin, 2005; Thompson & Phua, 2012; Yancey, Ortega, & Kumanyika, 2006).

Conclusion

The current study is conducted to determine the impact of sports employer branding orientation and talent management on players’ intention to stay with the

mediating impact of effective players recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success. The results obtained show that sports employer branding orientation has an insignificant impact on players' intention to stay but talent management has a significant impact in this regard. In addition, the mediating impact of effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success has been found to be significant, both for sports employer branding orientation and talent management, in terms of their relationship with players' intention to stay. Thus, it can be concluded that the football clubs of China must improve the management of talent and implement effective player recruitment strategies, sports team climate provision and subjective career success surety in order to retain as well as attract talented players.

Implications

The theoretical contribution of the present study is that it contains meaningful information related to the different variables involved in the study such as sports employer branding orientation, talent management, players' intention to stay, effective player recruitment strategy, sports team climate and subjective career success.

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In addition, this study may also be useful for football clubs and other sports organizations that may obtain insights from this study to improve their human resource practices. They may improve the sports employer branding orientation and talent management to retain and attract talented players. They may also get assistance in implementing effective player recruitment strategies, sports team environment and subjective career success. In this way, the human resource practices of these organizations may improve, and they might be able to retain talented players and attract other talented players from outside as well.

Limitations And Future Research Indications

The first point in this regard is that the sample size of the current study is limited, and it must be increased in upcoming research studies so that more generalized findings can be inferred. As the current study is based on the players from football clubs in China, the similar study may also be conducted in context of some other country or region or group of countries or perhaps in the context of another, non-sports sector as well. This will provide a lot of information regarding the human resource practices in different regions of the world in the context of sportsmen and sports organizations.

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