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**DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ETHICAL VALUES OF THE SPORT
OF ATHLETES OF SELECTED DISCIPLINES**

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Contemporary sport seems to miss the role that was assigned to it by referring to the idea of sportpersonship (fair play) and pure sport without doping, and despite the activities of the world (IOC, WADA) in the field of education promoting the above ideas, unsportsmanlike behavior and performance enhancement occur and are still developing.

Understanding which of the possible variables (and in what mutual configurations) influence the shaping of a sportpersonship and in the face of doping will help to increase the effectiveness of promoting the above ideas.

Among the studies on the determinants of moral behavior in sport, only a few comprehensively capture the factors shaping the morality of an athlete, his attitudes and behavior.

In Poland, however, there has been little research embedded in any paradigm regarding moral development.

Purpose of the research

The aim of the study was to consider the phenomenon of sports attitudes towards *fair play* and attitudes towards doping by taking into account the influence of factors from three areas of an athlete's functioning based on the sociopsychological theory of Vallerand et al. (Vallerand & Losier 1994; Vallerand et al., 1996). Such a comprehensive approach enables the design of interventions targeting specific risk factors. From personal factors, the gender, age and achievement motivation of the players were examined. Of the sport-related factors, the distinction between individual and team sports and sports with different levels of contact with the rival were considered. The situational factor was the motivational climate. Hypotheses and research questions were formulated regarding the relationship between motivational variables

related to the specificity of the sport and the ethical values of sport manifested in sportpersonship (fair play) and attitudes towards doping, the relationship between attitudes, their dependence on demographic variables and the possible mediating role of achievement goal orientation in the influence of motivational climate on moral attitudes in sport.

Material and methods

The study was attended by athletes competing in competitions at the national and international level, during training camps for individual disciplines at the Central Sports Centers in Spała, Szczyrk and Wałcz in 2019-2020.

391 people took part in a voluntary, anonymous study, including 170 women (43.5%) and 221 men (56.5%). The mean age of the respondents was 20.83 years (SD = 5.31), including: 20.89 (SD = 5.27) in men and 20.75 (SD = 5.37) in women. The number of representatives of individual sports was 218 players (55.75%), and of team sports - 173 (44.25%). The athletes also represented discipline with a low (176; 45.01%), medium (155; 39.64%) and high (60; 15.35%) contact level.

Due to the orthogonality of both dimensions of goal orientation: task-involving and ego-involving, and the motivational climate: mastery (task-involving) and performance (ego-involving), the respondents were divided into groups showing the following levels: high task /high ego, high-task/low-ego, low-task/high ego and low task/low ego - for orientation and climate, respectively.

The following research tools were used in the study, translated, except the PEAS scale, into Polish by the translation-reverse translation procedure:

- 1) Multidimensional Sportsmanship Orientation Scale (Vallerand, et al., 1997a).
- 2) Performance Enhancement Attitude Scale – PEAS (Petroczi & Aidman, 2009) in the Polish adaptation (Sas-Nowosielski & Budzisz, 2018).
- 3) The Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire - TEOSQ (Duda and Nicholls, 1992; Duda, et al., 1995).
- 4) Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire-2 - PMCSQ-2 (Newton, et al., 2000).

Results

The analysis of the differences in the distribution of the studied variables by gender showed that men were characterized by greater acceptance of the use of doping, although in general, the results indicated rather low support for this phenomenon among the respondents.

One of the dimensions of the sportspersonship - full commitment toward sport participation, was also more closely related to men. An analogous analysis carried out in terms of age, additionally also divided into women and men, showed that compared to the younger group (≤ 18), men from the older age group (> 18) to a greater extent recognized two dimensions of the sports attitude: respecting the rules and officials and respect and concern for the opponent. Most of the differences were characterized by a low strength of the effect, whereas those related to doping showed a moderate strength of the effect.

The analysis of variance revealed that all the sportspersonship factors (apart from respect for the opponent) in athletes with a high ego/low-task goal orientation were significantly the weakest. In the case of doping, the same group declared a significantly less critical attitude towards this phenomenon than any of the other groups. When analyzed by gender, in women, differences in attitudes toward doping were found to be nonsignificant. The size of the effect of differences in sports attitudes in women turned out to be close to high, and differences in attitudes toward doping in men were high.

An analogous analysis of groups with different level of the types of perceived motivational climate revealed the most pro-sporting and the most anti-doping in players who perceive the motivational climate as high task/low ego, while the least pro-sporting and most accepting of doping - in players perceiving the climate as low-task/high ego. The effect size of these differences was moderate.

The analysis of variance also showed differences in athletes of disciplines with two, out of three, levels of contact with the rival. There were significant differences in the three areas of positive approach. Participants in medium-contact sports had a higher value for full commitment toward sport participation, while in the case of the respect for social conventions and for the rules and the officials - players of low-contact sports. A similar analysis by sex revealed that differences determined by the level of contact occur mainly in the population of women, in whom significant differences were also found in the general sportspersonship, which was lower in female players with an average level of contact. In the case of men, differences were noted only in commitment. The effect size was poor.

Individual sports players showed a more sportspersonship in all dimensions, apart from commitment. In the case of the latter, the direction of dependence was the opposite. The strength of the effect of the differences found ranged from low (respect for social conventions, sportspersonship) to moderate (respect for the rules and the officials), although the analysis by gender revealed that the given relationships mainly apply to women (with a higher strength of

the effect), in men leaving only differences in terms of commitment and respect for the rules and the officials.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the relationships between theory and empirical arguments and to attempt to identify acceptable causal relationships between variables. According to the best-fit model to the theory, some of the relationship paths assumed in the hypotheses were found to be significant. The sportspersonship was positively influenced by task orientation and mastery climate, negatively influenced by ego orientation and the contact level (more moral attitude among non-contact sports players). A positive relationship has also been demonstrated between the ego climate and the attitude towards doping. The mediation of task orientation on the impact of the mastery climate on sports attitudes was also found. The other found relationships were: the influence of corresponding types of motivational climate on types of motivational orientation, and unexpected: the impact of ego climate on task-involved orientation.

Conclusions

In general, the surveyed athletes showed rather low support for doping and assigned higher values for task-involved goal orientation and motivational climate, both considered more adaptive characteristics. Declared disapproval of doping may not be reflected in actual behavior, as information on the popularity of its use is largely ambiguous. The discrepancy between attitudes and actual behavior can be reconciled in athletes by psychological mechanisms such as explicit and implicit attitudes, moral disengagement, so-called "bracketed morality", the need for social approval and the need for political correctness.

Most of the hypotheses formulated in the article were confirmed by the data obtained in the study. An association was found between the dominant role of ego-involving orientation and performance motivational climate with less sportsmanship and higher acceptance of doping. The dominant role of task-involving goal orientation and mastery-oriented motivational climate in the manifestation of more ethical attitudes in sport was also demonstrated. It was further shown that task orientation mediated the effect of task climate on sportspersonship. This indicates an important role of task-related internal goal representation in enhancing the potency of task climate effects on more moral attitudes. In general, the thesis of a more pro-sporting attitude in athletes of individual and low-contact sports (which types of sports are mostly the same), was confirmed. The exception was the full commitment dimension, with which athletes in team and medium-contact sports (also largely identical) identified more strongly. In a SEM model contact level also influenced, as a moderator, the relationship with sportspersonship. The

cause of the relationships described above may be phenomena specific to team sports and/or higher levels of contact such as: "warrior mentality" intensifying competition and dehumanizing the opponent, distraction and transfer of responsibility (mechanisms of moral disengagement), stress intensified by the expectations of teammates and responsibility for the whole team, causing recourse to more indigenous layers of consciousness activating lower levels of morality, the desire to dominate the opponent to obtain the admiration of the environment, and the history of particular sports originating from different social strata. Men, as expected showed a more permissive attitude towards the use of doping.

The dominant role of performance goal orientation and performance motivational climate was found to be associated with less sportspersonship and greater acceptance of doping. The lead role of task-based goal orientation and task-involved motivational climate was also shown in more ethical attitudes in sport. In addition, task orientation mediated the influence of task climate on sportspersonship. This points to the important role of the internal representation of task-related goals in enhancing the impact of the task climate on a more moral attitude. Generally, the thesis of more sportspersonship in athletes of individual and low level of contact sports was confirmed. In fact this two types of disciplines are in most cases the same. The exception was the level of involvement with which the players of team sports and those with an average level of contact (in most cases also identical) identified themselves more strongly. The level of contact, as a moderator, also influenced the relationship with sportspersonship in the SEM model. The reasons for the above-described dependencies may be phenomena specific to team sports and/or with a higher level of contact, such as: "warrior mentality" intensifying competition and dehumanizing the opponent, dispersion and transfer of responsibility (mechanisms of moral disengagement), stress intensified by the expectations of competitors and responsibility for the entire team that causes an appeal to more core layers of consciousness activating lower levels of morality, the desire to dominate the opponent to gain the admiration of the environment, and the history of individual sports derived from different social strata. Men, as predicted, showed a more permissive attitude towards doping.

The results also showed dependencies not formulated in the hypotheses. Thus, most sportspersonship was shown by athletes with a high level of both types of motivational orientation, leading to the conclusion that, instead of efforts to weaken ego orientation, similar results can be achieved by strengthening task orientation alone, moderating the potentially debilitating effects of ego orientation. Moreover, a positive correlation was found between the ego climate and task orientation, which suggests that although the performance climate is characterized by relating success criteria to others and valuing the demonstration of normative

skills, it may create conditions for the functioning of the opposite type of goal orientation, in which the individual focuses on the mastery of the task and positively evaluates his or her competence, which typically characterizes individuals with a strong need for competition who are eager to demonstrate their skills.

The hypothesis of a link between sportpersonship and attitudes toward doping was not confirmed. Perhaps the reason was the ambiguous role of doping agents and the movement to legalize doping in modern sport. On the other hand, the fair play has a rather unquestionable moral value. In the causal model that captures the influence of all variables simultaneously, differences in the attitude toward doping proved to be insignificant, as did the mediating role of the ego orientation in the relationship of the task climate with the dependent variables. Predictions regarding the relationship between the type of sport discipline and attitude toward doping also failed. The mediating role of goal orientation in the effect of climate on attitude toward doping and ego-promoting motivational orientation on sporting attitude also weren't demonstrated. The predicted higher approval for unsportsmanlike behavior were also not demonstrated in males, except for full commitment toward sport participation, the only attitude dimension closer to males. In contrast, certain sportpersonship factors, such as respect for the rules and the officials and the opponents, were closer to the older athletes.

The SEM model, explaining the relatively low percentage of variability in athletes' moral attitudes, gives area for research on further correlates that could complement this model as comprehensively as possible.

The results of this study may be a valuable source of information on the achievement goals characteristic of athletes and their environment conducive to the formation of more moral attitudes in sport, and consequently, behavior. This information can be used by athletes, coaches, activists, sports doctors, physiotherapists, sports psychologists and psychiatrists, and institutions promoting fair play and clean sport. It could be useful also in other spheres of an athlete's functioning, such as psychological well-being or "natural doping".

Keywords

Sportpersonship, Fair play, Doping attitudes, Achievement goal orientations, Perceived motivational climate, Athletes