

Investigation of prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes in terms of moral decision making attitudes

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study is to investigate the prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes in terms of their moral decision making attitudes.

Material: The study group consists of male athletes, aged among 13-17, who are licensed in the infrastructure of amateur and professional sports clubs in Trabzon/Turkey. "Attitudes to Moral Decision-making in Youth Sports Questionnaire (AMDYSQ)" and "Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior in Sports Scale (PABSS)" was used as a data collection tool. Descriptive statistics, MANOVA, and correlation were used to analyze the data.

Results: As a result of the study, while the athletes' prosocial and antisocial behaviors do not show a significant difference according to the sporting year variable, the moral decision-making attitudes of the athletes show a significant difference according to the sporting year variable. In addition, as a result of the correlation analysis, it was observed that there were low and medium positive and negative relations between the sub-factors of the prosocial and antisocial behavior and the moral decision-making attitudes of young athletes.

Conclusions: The present study indicated that good moral attitudes positively contributed to prosocial and antisocial behaviors during the competition.

Keywords: moral attitude, team sports, behaviors, young athletes.

Introduction

Sports become an important sector in recent years, and with the rise of economic conditions, it has led to rapid development in the infrastructure of some team sports. With the increase in the number of teams and players in the infrastructure, competition has increased to a high level, targets have risen and some moral problems have arisen due to the ambition to earn money. Cheating, lying, theft, fraud are the most important ones of these problems. The emergence of these problems has attracted the attention of academics and there has been a serious increase in the recent years in sports ethics research [1-3]. The studies of Bredemeier et al. on the moral development and behavior of young athletes is noteworthy. It has been observed that various aspects of sports and morality. For example, sports and moral reasons [4, 5], the legitimacy of dishonorable movements [6], and aggressive tendencies and behaviors [7-9]. Developed by Lee et al. [10], the "scale of moral decision-making in young athletes", is an important scale to measure the level of cheating and competition of undesirable behavior in infrastructure sports. Cheating means is to break the rules and not get caught, to get an unfair advantage [11]. Competitiveness is defined as in to use the suspicious and possible methods without being caught and to push the limits of the rules in order to reach the desired goal [12].

It is thought that sports play an important role to develop cooperation with teammates [13], providing social interaction and discipline, and aiming to teach teamwork and honesty. It is also thought that, sports play an important role in protecting young people from harmful habits and gaining them ethical and moral

values in young population countries such as Turkey [1]. Although it is common in recent years that sport is a tool that helps explain moral behaviors and has an effect on moral development [14-16] after long-term research and evidence review, Shields and Bredemeier [17] concluded that there is insufficient evidence to establish a causal link between physical activity and moral development.

In the theory of social cognitive moral thought and action of Bandura, he emphasized that behavior, regardless of one's thoughts or motives has consequences for others [18]. For example, verbally abusing or hitting another person should result in some psychological suffering for the recipient regardless of the reasons that led to the behavior [19]. Bandura (1999) [20] also distinguishes between proactive morality, which is the power to behave humanely, and the inhibitive morality, which is the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely. Kavussanu used these two dimensions of morality in sportive research as prosocial and antisocial behaviors [21-23]. By the nature of the sport, Kavussanu claimed that voluntary action to help another person could lead to a wide range of prosocial behaviors (help an injured athlete), as well as the voluntary movement to disadvantage someone else (try to injure other athletes), causing antisocial behavior [14, 24].

It is known that prosocial and antisocial studies are applied in sports branches such as football, basketball, rugby, and hockey which are close contact team sports [25, 26]. When the international literature is examined, it can be seen that there are many studies on this subject [26-28], but there are not enough study in Turkey [29-31]. This results have revealed the necessity to study in this field in Turkey. That's why the aim of this study is

to investigate the prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes in terms of their moral decision making attitudes.

Material and Methods

This study is based on descriptive survey design. Descriptive research explains what already exists and what takes place without an intervention of the researcher to the case [32].

Participants:

The sample group consisted of 425 athletes, aged between 13-17 years (mean: 14.91; 223 football players and 202 basketball players) who were licensed under the amateur and professional clubs in Trabzon in 2018. They averagely had been playing competitive football for 6.5 years, and basketball for 4.5 years. In recent years, due to the intense interest in basketball except football and the potential for prosocial and antisocial behaviors, athletes who were interested in football and basketball were selected in this study.

Research Design:

After the necessary permissions were obtained from the amateur sports clubs federation of Trabzon (ASCF), it was decided that which clubs were take part in present study. We identified coaches of football and basketball teams, via the internet, contacted these coaches, and asked them to let players participate in the study. Data were collected within 30 min of the end of a football and basketball matches. Players were informed of the purpose of the study, that their participation was voluntary. Their responses would only be used for research purposes and would be kept confidential.

Data collection tool:

In this study, it was used "Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior in Sport Scale (PABSS)", developed by Kavussanu and Boardley and adapted to Turkish by Balçikanlı [33] and "Attitudes to Moral Decision-making in Youth Sport Questionnaire (AMDYSQ)", to measure the moral decision-making attitudes of athletes, which was developed by Lee, Whitehead and Ntoumanis and adapted to Turkish by Gürpınar [34]. "The Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior Scale (PABSS)" is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 20 items and 4 sub-dimensions. The lowest 20 and the highest 100 points can be obtained from the scale. 7 items in the scale consisted of prosocial behaviors and 13 items about antisocial behaviors. It is good to say that the average of questions about prosocial behaviors is above 3 and the questions about antisocial behaviors are below 3. For the 12-17 age groups, the internal consistency analysis results of the scale were found that 0.74 for the prosocial behavior for teammate, antisocial behavior for teammate 0.70, prosocial behavior for opponent 0.71 and antisocial behavior for opponent 0.68.

"Attitudes to Moral Decision-making in Youth Sports Questionnaire" (AMDYSQ) is 9 items, 3 sub-dimensional and 5 points likert-type scale. The sub-dimensions of the scale are acceptance of gamesmanship (I sometimes try to wind up the opposition) and acceptance of cheating

(I would cheat if I thought it would help the team win) which are known as antisocial moral attitudes, and keep winning in proportion (Winning and losing are a part of life) which is known as prosocial moral attitudes. Six of the items for measuring moral decision-making attitudes are negative (1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8) and three are positive (items 3, 7 and 9) meaning. When the positive items are scored, the answer "strongly agree" is scored with 5 and "strongly disagree" is scored with 1. When the negative items are scored, the answer "strongly agree" is scored with 1 and "strongly disagree" is scored with 5. High scores on the scale mean that the students' moral decision-making attitudes are positive.

Statistical Analysis:

After the data were collected, the scales were evaluated by the researcher and the unsuitable ones were excluded from the study. Descriptive statistics, MANOVA, and correlation were used to analyze the data. These statistical analyses were performed via SPSS 23 statistical package program.

Result

The prosocial and antisocial behaviors and moral decision-making attitudes were examined with one-way MANOVA according to the sports year variable.

In order to determine the prosocial and antisocial behaviors of athletes with different sports years, the scale was applied to the athletes and the results can be seen in Table 1 (below).

As can be seen in Table 1 (top), according to the sports year, the mean score of prosocial behaviors against team-mate and opponent is higher than the mean score of antisocial behaviors against teammate and opponent. In order to determine whether the difference among the mean scores was statistically significant, one-way MANOVA was applied to the data and the results can be seen in Table 2 (below).

The scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale were examined with MANOVA (Table 2). The results of MANOVA indicate that the prosocial and antisocial behaviors of the athletes did not show a significant difference according to the sports year variable ($F(8, 838) = .997, P = .437, \text{Wilk } \lambda .981$). This finding indicates that the scores obtained from the linear component consisting of PT (prosocial teammate), PO (prosocial opponent), AT (antisocial teammate) and AO (antisocial opponent) scores did not change depending on the sports year.

In order to determine the attitudes to moral decision-making in youth sport with different sports years, the scale was applied to the athletes and the results can be seen in Table 3 (below).

As can be seen in Table 3 (top), according to the sports year, acceptance of cheating and keep winning in proportion mean scores are higher than acceptance of gamesmanship mean scores. In order to determine whether the difference between the mean scores was statistically significant, one-way MANOVA was applied to the data and the results can be seen in Table 4 (below).

Table 1. Results of prosocial and antisocial behaviors of athletes (sports year, mean, standard deviation)

Scale	Sport year	N	Mean	Ss
Prosocial teammate	1-4	103	4.0437	.72881
	5-7	227	4.0529	.54444
	8 ≤	95	4.0737	.56006
	Total	425	4.0553	.59618
Prosocial opponent	1-4	103	3.3560	1.04607
	5-7	227	3.5066	.79782
	8 ≤	95	3.5509	.83901
	Total	425	3.4800	.87397
Antisocial teammate	1-4	103	1.6777	.65633
	5-7	227	1.7780	.57749
	8 ≤	95	1.7284	.43848
	Total	425	1.7426	.57075
Antisocial opponent	1-4	103	1.8289	.63037
	5-7	227	1.9317	.58726
	8 ≤	95	1.9697	.55054
	Total	425	1.9153	.59096

Note: Prosocial teammate (PT), prosocial opponent (PO), antisocial teammate (AT), antisocial opponent (AO).

Table 2. Analysis of variance of the prosocial and antisocial behavior scores of athletes

Effect	I	F	Hypothesis Sd.	Error sd.	P
Intercept	.019	5480.09	4.00	419.00	.000
Sport year	.981	.997	8.00	838.00	.437

Table 3. Results of moral decision-making attitudes of athletes according to sports year (sports year, mean, standard deviation)

Effect	I	F	Hypothesis Sd.	Error sd.	P
Intercept	.026	5256.48	3.00	420.00	.000
Sport year	.933	4.911	6.00	840.00	.000

Note: Acceptance of cheating (AC), acceptance of gamesmanship (AG), keep winning in proportion (KWP)

The scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of scale were examined with MANOVA (Table 4). The results of MANOVA indicate that the moral decision-making attitudes of the athletes show a significant difference according to the sporting year variable ($F(6, 840) = 4.911, P = .000; \text{Wilk's } \lambda = .933$). However, it is seen that the scores taken by the athletes in the sub-dimension of acceptance of cheating ($F(2, 422) = .117, p = .889$), acceptance of gamesmanship ($F(2, 422) = 9.78, p = .000$) and keep winning in proportion ($F(2, 422) = .010, p = .990$) are significantly different in terms of athletes who has playing competitive 8 or more years. It can be said that those who has playing competitive 8 or more years have adopted acceptance of cheating and keep winning in proportion more than acceptance of gamesmanship.

Correlation results between moral decision-making attitudes and prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes can be seen in Table 5 (below).

Table 5 shows the mean, standard deviation, and

correlations between moral decision-making attitudes and prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes. According to the table 5, it was seen that there was a moderately significant and positive correlation between prosocial opponent (PO) and prosocial teammate (PT) and antisocial opponent (AO) and antisocial teammate (AT). In addition, it was observed that while there was a low significant and positive correlation between acceptance of cheating (AC) and PO, a low-level significant and negative correlation was observed with AC and AT and AO. A low level, significant and positive correlation was observed between acceptance of gamesmanship (AG) and PO, whereas a low-level, significant and negative correlation was observed between the AG and AT. In addition, there was a moderately significant and negative correlation between the AG and AO, but there was a moderate significant and positive correlation between the AG and AC. Finally, there was a low level significant and negative correlation between keep winning in proportion

Table 4. An analysis of the variance of moral decision-making attitudes of athletes according to the sport year

Scale	Sport year	N	Mean	Ss
Acceptance of cheating	1-4	103	4.1974	.97287
	5-7	227	4.2335	.84363
	8 ≤	95	4.2561	.80256
	Total	425	4.2298	.86618
Acceptance of gamesmanship	1-4	103	3.7314	.92303
	5-7	227	3.4361	.85773
	8 ≤	95	3.1825	.86537
	Total	425	3.4510	.89359
Keep winning in proportion	1-4	103	4.2298	.93472
	5-7	227	4.2335	.79193
	8 ≤	95	4.2456	.73772
	Total	425	4.2353	.81557

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and correlations between moral decision-making attitudes and prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes (N = 425)

indicators	statistical indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.PT	Pearson Correlation	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
2.PO	Pearson Correlation	,384**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000						
3.AT	Pearson Correlation	,002	,008	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,966	,868					
4.AO	Pearson Correlation	,022	-,001	,549**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,646	,977	,000				
5.HB	Pearson Correlation	,080	,130**	,227**	-,275**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,101	,007	,000	,000			
6.YSB	Pearson Correlation	-,006	,136**	,242**	-,380**	,500**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,908	,005	,000	,000	,000		
7.AKK	Pearson Correlation	,130**	,036	,189**	-,242**	,274**	,088	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,007	,459	,000	,000	,000	,069	
	M	4.05	3.48	1.74	1.91	4.22	3.45	4.23
	SD	.59	.87	.57	.59	.86	.89	.81

Note: ** $p \leq .01$.

(KWP) and AT and AO, while there was a low significant and positive correlation between KWP and AC.

Discussion

The aim of this study is to investigate the prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes in terms of their moral decision making attitudes. In this respect, it was observed that prosocial teammate (PT) and prosocial opponent (PO) averages were higher than antisocial teammate (AT) and antisocial opponent (AO) averages. This result is in parallel with previous studies [26, 28, 35]. These results indicate that young athletes do not tend to support antisocial behaviors in the field.

Other results of the study, the averages of acceptance of cheating (AC) and acceptance of gamesmanship (AG), which are known as antisocial moral attitudes, were

found to be lower than the average of keep winning in proportion (KWP), which is known as the prosocial moral attitude. Ntoumanis and Standage (2009) [3] in his study on British athletes, they stated that antisocial moral attitudes of the athletes in the field were below average. This result supports the present study. The results can be interpreted prosocial moral attitudes are used more commonly in the field. Moreover, as sports years increased, the averages of acceptance of cheating (AC) and keep winning in proportion (KWP), which are the sub-dimensions of the attitudes to moral decision-making in youth sport, increased, while the average of acceptance of gamesmanship (AG) decreased. Gürpınar (2014) [1] stated that, as sporting year increased, AC and AG's averages decreased and KWP's averages increased. Altın and Özsarı (2017) [36] stated that AC, AG and

KWP increased as service time increased from athlete training centers. It can be said that, the type of sports branch, winning pressure and the level of winning prize are thought to be effective for the results. For example, as a popular sport football appeal to wide audiences and create a fan pressure and this may turn athletes to antisocial behaviors. This may cause athletes to resort to tricks to gain victory.

When we look at the results of the correlations between prosocial and antisocial behaviors of young athletes and moral decision making attitudes, all sub-dimensions of the moral decision-making attitudes scale and the antisocial behaviors towards the opponent and the teammate were found to have a moderately negative relationship. In contrast, acceptance of cheating (AC) and acceptance of gamesmanship (AG) showed a low positive and significant relationship with prosocial behavior to an opponent.

As a result of the findings in this study, it is seen that there is a significant relationship between the moral decision-making attitudes of the athletes and their prosocial and antisocial behaviors. Athletes should be informed by their families, teachers, coaches, and

managers to ensure that they do not exhibit an antisocial attitude in competitions. Sports competitions are somewhere where the skills are competing and no one should resort to antisocial behaviors such as cheating and gamesmanship. It should also be emphasized that honesty is more important than winning.

Conclusion

It is important to recognize that this research had several limitations that need to be acknowledged. All participants were sports clubs in Turkey/Trabzon and results cannot be generalized to other countries. Moreover, only two sports were included and results cannot be generalized to other sports areas. Even with these limitations, the current study provides substantial new insights into relations among the variables investigated. As a final conclusion, the present study indicated that good moral attitudes positively contributed to prosocial and antisocial behaviors during the competition.

Conflict of interest

The author declare no conflict of interest.

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