



THE CONCEPT OF FAIR PLAY IN YOUNG BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze enjoyment and fair play attitudes against hard play, gamesmanship, victory and cheating as antisocial behaviors in sports as part of a program of intervention among coaches and athletes. The sample includes basketball teams with a total of 389 young athletes (249 boys and 140 girls) aged between 10 and 16 (the average age of 12.5 years) in the juvenile, infant and cadet categories. During the 2016-2017 season, a questionnaire designed according to the guidelines for the Spanish version following the Fair Play Proceedings (EAF) was administered at two different times. The results show that young athletes consider enjoyment as a key motivation in sports practice. The program proved to be moderately effective as antisocial variables such as gamesmanship and cheating, and recorded a slight decrease in popularity between the two rounds of the survey. The results for hard play and victory, however, showed a less significant decrease after the implementation of the program.

Key words: *basketball, fair play, gamesmanship, cheating, victory, enjoyment and hard play.*

Introduction

Sport has developed contradictory and antagonistic values. On the one hand, it promotes positive values such as fair play, integration, tolerance, and cooperation [1-3]. On the other hand, antisocial behaviors such as cheating or gamesmanship are common on the playing field among athletes of different ages, genders, and levels [4, 5]. These behaviors are often reinforced by various psychosocial factors determined by their environments [5, 6].

Prosocial behavior is understood as voluntary behavior intended to help or benefit another [7] and manifests itself as helping an opponent or congratulating another player. Antisocial behavior, on the other hand, is conceived as voluntary behavior designed to deceive and put the opponent at a disadvantage, e.g., by feigning an injury, causing deliberate delays, or deceiving the referee [8-10].

As a number of studies indicate, prosocial values in sport and desirable personal qualities can be achieved through shaping the

right attitudes [11, 12]. This demonstrates the special role of the immediate environment [8, 13, 14]. Coaches establish themselves as agents in the promotion of prosocial values and eradication of the antisocial ones in sporting competition [15, 16]. A high quality of the training experience is a proven factor in the promotion of fair play attitudes in young athletes [17, 18].

With regard to basketball as a medium contact sport, there are studies which associate habitual sports practice with less mature moral reasoning [19, 20] and with judgments which legitimize aggressive behaviors in sports [21]. In addition, recent studies on medium-contact sports reveal little concern with fair play rules based on the opinions and behavior observed [22], and show that at higher levels winning is given more value and a greater permissiveness towards rough play is acceptable [23, 24].

Currently, the need for implementation of education programs in sports values is beyond doubt [22-24]. The idea behind these

programs is that social interaction can present difficulties and result in hostilities translated into antisocial behavior in competition [25]. Several studies demonstrate the suitability of such intervention programs to improve the motivational climate and promote the improvement of skills [26, 27].

This work is based on the "We Put Values to Sport" program, whose main objective is instilling prosocial mentality and curbing antisocial behaviors, with a focus on the role of the coach in this process.

This study tries to verify the hypothesis that an intervention in the style of communication and

the motivational climate created in a pre-test season will positively affect young basketball players and decrease antisocial behaviors.

Method

Participants

The sample includes Balearic Basketball Federation teams with a total of 389 young teenagers (249 boys and 140 girls). Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample in this study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics according to category and gender

	Novice	Juvenile	Cadet	Total
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Boys	116 (46.6 %)	61 (24.5%)	72 (28.9%)	249 (100%)
Girls	51 (36.5%)	51 (36.5%)	38 (27%)	140 (100%)
Total	167 (42.9%)	112 (28.8%)	110 (28.3%)	389 (100%)

Instruments

The disposition to cheating in sports questionnaire (28) was based on a decision-making questionnaire designed to test moral attitudes in youth sports (6). With the current project, aimed at obtaining a cheating disposition questionnaire CDED test (Cuestionario de Disposición al Engaño en el Deporte), a backtranslation system was used for the two values: the acceptance of cheating and the acceptance of gamesmanship, originally included in the AMDYSQ-1 (Attitudes to Moral Derived Decision-making in Youth Sport Questionnaire). Each value is measured with a Likert scale of 5 points, from 1 (= totally disagree) to 5 (= totally agree).

The scale of fairplay attitudes (EAF), prepared for Boixadós [29] consists of 22 items that form 3 subscales for the assessment of attitudes of football players against rough play, winning and enjoyment, in situations related to football. The structure of this questionnaire includes a Likert scale of responses from 1 to 5. The EAF was validated in a study [30] which applied this scale for football teams and professional football teams.

Procedure

Following a presentation (held in the participating clubs) of the objectives of the program and its implementation at two stages: in the early season (pre-test situation) and at the end of the season after the application of the program intervention, the procedure began. The program consisted of several intervention phases. At the beginning of the season, a training session on fair play was held for several coaches. It covered the areas of adaptive motivational climate and positive communication style. The following step was the CDED questionnaire, administered to athletes, both in the control group and in the experimental group. Subsequently, as agreed with the coaches, audiovisual records of their interventions in training and matches were collected and analyzed with suggestions for improvement in the training styles. Finally, the CDED questionnaire was administered to the control and experimental groups of athletes at the end of the season to assess the effectiveness of the intervention program.

Permission was obtained from the federations, clubs, parents, as well as voluntary acceptance of the program by the athletes

whose data are confidential. The questionnaires were administered before the commencement of a training session in the presence of the researchers to resolve any possible doubts. The estimated time for completion of the survey was about 20 minutes.

Analysis of data

An analysis of the descriptive statistics was carried out, evaluating significant differences between the variables, the means and the degree of significance. A Pearson correlation between the results of the CDED, EAF and their subscales was done and a paired T test was conducted with the SPSS 21.0

Results

The data presented in table 1 reveal discrepancies between the sizes of two gender groups, 64% male and 36% female participants. Furthermore, the novice category predominated in the sample (42.9%). Table 2 shows a positive correlation between all the values among themselves, with the exception of enjoyment, as a prosocial behavior of the sport that shows a negative correlation with the other variables, considered anti-social sports behaviors. The highest positive correlation was found between victory and cheating (0.68), followed by the variables of victory and gamesmanship (0.43).

Table 2. Pearson correlations between the results of the CDED, EAF and their subscales

	enjoyment	hard play	victory	cheating	gamesmanship
enjoyment		-.20**	-.21**	-.18**	-.05
hard play			.25**	.29**	.25**
victory				.68**	.43**
cheating					.40**
gamesmanship					

Table 3. Differences between the means of the results of the CDED, EAF and subscale questionnaires in basketball in pre- and post-season test rounds

	Control Group (N=192)			Experimental Group (N=197)		
	<i>Pre X</i> (<i>DS</i>)	<i>Post X</i> (<i>DS</i>)	<i>Sig (p)</i>	<i>Pre X</i> (<i>DS</i>)	<i>Post X</i> (<i>DS</i>)	<i>Sig (p)</i>
enjoyment	4.01 (.71)	4.01 (.71)	.898	3.99 (.70)	4.10 (.67)	.008**
hard play	2.55 (.65)	2.68 (.51)	.033	2.80 (.53)	2.42 (.62)	.000***
victory	2.37 (.53)	2.39 (.59)	.768	2.74 (.68)	2.44 (.55)	.000***
cheating	1.72 (.90)	1.91 (.99)	.061	2.28 (1.11)	1.74 (.87)	.000***
gamesmanship	2.51 (1.07)	2.61 (.109)	.356	2.94 (1.09)	2.26 (.90)	.000***

Table 3 shows the distribution of results obtained in control and experimental groups. There was a difference in inertia between the control group and the experimental one. While the experimental group increased its value, the control group maintained theirs. The latter may have maintained such an acceptance rate due to the effect of the end of the season. This fact can also condition the slight increase in all antisocial behavior categories in the control group.

On the other hand, the experimental group presented a significant improvement in the results that translated into a decrease in acceptance of antisocial behaviors. In fact, gamesmanship and cheating values dropped by more than half a point, while a lower decrease was noted in the categories of hard play and victory.

Discussion

The key objective of promoting the idea of fair play is to encourage young athletes to act on principles of respect and endeavor. Respect is understood as compliance with norms and rules and endeavor as a self-regulation mechanism in sports practice [31].

The results of this study would indicate that the factor of enjoyment has a great importance for our young players, as attested in both rounds of the survey. Conversely, victory, cheating, hard play, and gamesmanship fell significantly after the intervention program.

These results follow the line of previous investigations where the results of an increased evaluation of the enjoyment variable and the decrease of antisocial behaviors in sports, such as cheating and gamesmanship, were obtained [32-34]. For its part, gamesmanship, seen as a complex concept and considered as the acquisition of an advantage within the limits of legality, is used and considered by coaches as part of the game [28]. Furthermore, the complexity of the standards for young practitioners can sometimes become an obstacle to compliance [35].

Following Upton [36], cheating is understood as the pursuit of illicit profit above the standard goals of the sport. It might be concluded that the present study demonstrates effectiveness of the intervention program with regard to this variable.

Basketball as a medium contact sport can, by its very nature, induce transgression of norms with antisocial behaviors such as hard play, gamesmanship or cheating. Contact sports, in which success depends on demonstrating superiority over the opponent, include additional elements that can increase such behaviors [37].

Although basketball may have a higher potential for increased competition aimed at winning at all costs, it is the social context of sports that conditions both performance and patterns of behavior in interactions. The influence that the coach has on achieving positive results in both areas is beyond question and has been confirmed in previous studies [16, 38].

The motivational climate that trainers enhance in young athletes will be decisive in how they subsequently interact with each other, how they understand their training process and what type of motivation (intrinsic or extrinsic) determines their sports behavior. Several studies corroborate the validity of such dependencies [39-41].

There are numerous programs meant to solve ethical problems that base sports face. A common denominator of these is that they are primarily preventive in nature and include reflection, debate, deterrence, awareness and dissemination aimed at the social groups involved [42]. Our program promoted a coaching model which creates a context conducive to positive and proactive behavior that encourages players to act in compliance with the regulations. Several programs have shown positive results in terms of enhancing fair play values [43].

The study had two limitations, which means the results should be considered with caution. In first place, the sample showed an unequal gender distribution. Secondly, this study failed to establish causal relationships between variables despite being a pre-post longitudinal study that offers results on changes that occur spontaneously during the season.

For future lines of research, comparisons of results obtained in different sports clubs with their own training and competitive objectives should be

recommended. Overall, more empirical studies are needed to provide insight into the current state of social and antisocial values in sports and to assess the suitability of coaching intervention programs.

Fair play is essential if sports and sports participation are to be promoted and developed at an early age. The opportunity to teach values through sports should be maximized. Sporting

activity is expected to promote learning for life, positive social behaviors and moral attitudes.

This paper, in short, contributes empirical evidence with a view to improving the quality of sports environments and is motivated by a short-term commitment to enhance prosocial values and to decrease antisocial values in sport.

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Received: August 2020

Accepted: October 2020

Published: November 2020



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