Management of Ethical Problems in Sport Within the Justice Framework

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Abstract

Sport is a social environment in which the occurrence of ethical problems constitutes a rather frequent phenomenon. Thus, better ways of managing such problems are sought. The present study moves towards this direction, starting with a description of the ethical problems occurring in sport and their possible causes. Then, issues concerning the ethical problems occurring are discussed, aiming at their better management. In this discussion, issues such as the ethical climate to be promoted by sports organizations are touched upon, along with the determination of organizational justice which allows the management of moral issues by all members of sports organizations.

Keywords: sport; management moral problems; justice

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Introduction

Sport is an environment which constitutes part of the greater social environment, and an area in which a large part of society actively participates as athletes, referees, coaches, players, supporters, fans, et cetera. At the same time, sport is one of the factors promoting the development of human culture. This effect of sport in everyday life is evident in the interest shown by the media, for example, the headline grabbing of sports news in the newspapers, the TV time dedicated to sports news (e.g., independent broadcasting, sport events promotion).

Behaviors adapted by all this human resources who participates in sports, which is rather numerous indeed, are expected to represent an important subject to study. This is due to the fact that the explanation of such behaviors greatly contributes to better human resources management, as well as the prediction of organizational behavior (OB), which is the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and groups in the organization; their satisfaction, commitment, performance, and so on (Doherty, 1998).

Shea (1996) reported that human moral behavior can be established, if the individuals' moral thought is assessed, by studying what is considered as right and wrong, good and bad. Studying what is right and good is the subject of ethics (Dragona-Monachou, 1995). The study of ethics was approached by means of two principally theoretical models: internalization and constructive. The internalization model, mainly, through the psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1965) and the theory of social learning (Bandura, 1969), equates moral development with gradual internalization of moral values and criteria of a specific society. In this case, it could be maintained that each athletic organization or team constitutes a small society in which different moral values and criteria predominate and children learn what is right depending on what is considered right within this specific context (Brummett, 2003; Host, Brugman, Tavecchio, & Beem, 1998; Proios, Doganis, & Proios, 2006).

The constructive model, which is expressed through the cognitive-developmental theory (Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932), maintains that moral development is the outcome of the individual's experiences acquired within its context, that is by comparing and conveying what the individual itself perceives as moral (right), always depending the influence of its context. In addition, this model maintains that individuals belong to

different moral maturity levels, something which is the cause of different behaviors within the greater framework of morality. For instance, a set of activities is developed within sport, performed in the framework of implementing specific rules. This can teach children what is right or wrong for a whole range of issues, something that can apply in their everyday life.

Ethics is a set of principles/ values or standards of human conduct that govern the behavior of individuals and groups. Moral values are concerned exclusively with behavior (Rokeach, 1973). In addition, moral values are categorical, universal and structured in compliance with the concepts of justice and equity (Turiel, 1983). In sport, the selection of principles/ values which govern the individuals' actions is greatly facilitated by the fact that they have already chosen the principles governing the organization and function of each sport. Thus, according to the principle of justice, participation in a game leads to the requirement for example a player to play in compliance with the rules and exhibit mutual respect (to treat others the way we want to be treated). While according to the principle of equality, an individual (e.g., a sport manager, coach) who is responsible for a number of other individuals has, among others, to ensure equal opportunities among them.

Furthermore, moral principles, even nowadays, have a profound impact on several modern management fields, such as human resource management. However, even though ethical problems in organizations are related to society, the potential impact of organizational culture on individuals' ethical behavior has not yet been thoroughly investigated (Doherty, 1998; Sims, 1992).

As already mentioned, sport is an environment in which behaviors are exhibited. The description of moral problems anticipated by the participants in sport (e.g., sport managers, members of sport organizations, coaches, and athletes) and lead to the exhibition of several behaviors constitutes the main purpose of the present study. Another purpose is the discussion of issues concerning moral problems aiming at their better management by sport managers and members of sport organizations. Such issues are the ethical climate to be promoted by sports organizations, as well as the determination of organizational justice which allows the management of moral issues by all members of sports organizations. Finally, an aim of the present study is also to discuss to a certain extend the findings of the review of literature, thus ending to specific proposals for the better management of ethical issues in sport.

Moral problems in sport

Nowadays, developments in sports reveal several ethical problems arising from the current sports practice, comprising a number of high-profile scandals, such as match fixing and illegal betting in soccer and cricket, and corruption of sport managers. Such scandals have been extensively reported in the mass media, analyzed in scientific literature (e.g., David, 2004; Forster & Pope, 2004; Giulianotti, 2006; Hong, 2006; McNamee & Fleming, 2007; Morgan, 2006) and were contradicted in political documents (e.g., E.U. and U.N. documents: Oxford, 2010; UNICEF, 2010).

A plausible explanation for the occurrence of scandals can provided by the investigation of OB, that is attitudes and behaviors of individuals and groups in the sport organizations. For example, if the OB of an organization oriented to the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB is defined as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, 1988, p. 4). More specifically, the behaviors of the members of sports organizations can be oriented to the interests of the other members or the organization as a whole (Rocha & Turner, 2008). Scandals are actions entailing benefits, mainly to individuals; thus, it could be assumed that scandals are related to OCB oriented to the others (individuals). Behaviors oriented to individual interests lead to fraudulent actions and are considered "parasitic" to the moral actions (Loland, 2002). Contrary, if the behavior is oriented to the organization as a whole behaviors characterized as moral can be expected, such as sportsmanship (a willingness to stand less than ideal circumstances without complaints), civic virtue (a wiliness to take part in and to be concerned about one's organization life), and helping behaviors (such as altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading) (Rocha & Turner, 2008).

Apart from the above mentioned behaviors, another set of behaviors is also exhibited in sport, which could be described as less extreme and which have been analyzed and described as inappropriate, poor or malpractices. More specifically, such behaviors refer to the athletes cheating, taking doping, being aggressive and intolerant and about trainers, coaches and parents putting exaggerated pressure on young athletes for their own egocentric reasons cetera. (e.g., Parry, 2004).

According to Dixon, Turner, Pastore and Mahony (as cited in Dixon, 2000) there are four theoretical approaches concerning the emergence of transgressive behavior, and especially the problem of rules violation (Dixon et al., 2003). They initially reported

that, based on gamesmanship perspective, rules violation occurs due to the strong emphasis on winning than competing at the highest level (Eitzen, 1988; Simon, 1991). Furthermore, based on the individual disposition theories which suggest that people have differing levels of integrity and moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1978; Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994), they claim that such differences urge some individuals to violate the rules and some others not. Moreover, they maintain that rules violation can be apprehended by means of the economic cost benefit analysis (Sperber, 1990; Zimbalist, 1999).

The above mentioned reports describe negative aspects of sport, which should concern the sport officials. However, there are reports underlining the positive aspect of sport, which should be taken into consideration by sport managers, so as to promote a pleasant environment. In particular, sport is considered a field in which virtues can be developed (Shields & Bredemeier, 2001). These researchers, in an attempt to support the role of sport as a character shaper, referred to sources like Plato's writings, as well as the contemporary statements of politicians, teachers, and theologians. Sport, apart from a social environment in which moral virtues (e.g., honesty, respect, fair play) can be developed, is also a training area which generalizes life skills (e.g. learning through competition, pressure management, cooperation with others) (Weiss & Smith, 2002). Furthermore, Arnold (1999) maintained that when sport is anticipated as a human practice (action) it constitutes is a form of moral education because the virtues, assisting and supporting sport as a practice, are pivotal to the moral education of the individual.

The literature review leads to two conclusions. First, sport is an environment in which several moral problems appear, leading to negative behaviors. Such behaviors can be classified into two categories: that of extreme behaviors, under which several scandals come, i.e. actions towards the personal or collective interest (rewards); and that of less extreme behaviors, under which mainly the violation of the rules of the games comes. Second, it is assumed that sport is an environment in which, apart from the negative behaviors exhibited prosocial behaviors can also be cultivated.

Management of ethical problems

The origin of the ethical problems is mainly, volitional, cognitive, and social (Dubois, 2008). The same author maintained that, we often know the right thing do; thus the only dilemma arising is volitional: will I actually do what is right? Such dilemmas can be tough when individuals have competing interests or powerful motives for doing other than what is right.

It has been argued that sport is a social environment where moral dilemmas arise (Bredemeier & Shields, 1994). According to Presland (1999), a moral problem occurs when there are two or more values or ideals but they do not conflict with each other. In sport, since rule-governed, many of the moral decisions concern the rules. Athletes must decide whether to use illegal, performance-enhancing drugs, whether to surreptitiously violate the rules of play, whether to commit a strategically advantageous intentional foul, and so on (Bredemeier & Shields, 1994).

The effective management of ethical problems requires that organizations ensure that their managers and employees know how to deal with ethical issues in their everyday work lives (Sims, 1992). Then, it is attempted to describe issues, such as the ethical climate that should be cultivated in sport organizations, as well as the particulars of justice that all members of sports organizations should be aware of, so as to manage moral issues.

Ethical climate

The ethical climate in sport organizations has been established as a notion which describes the prevailing viewpoint of this very organization concerning rules, values and behavior (Schneider, 1975). Generally, the notion of climate has been widely accepted as the means for interpreting the behavior of an organization, and more specifically moral behavior, (Morgan & Volkwein, 1992; Trevino, 1990). In addition, the climate has been considered to be the informal interpreter and judge of an individual's organizational behavior (Malloy & Agarwal, 2001). More specifically, (as maintained in Malloy & Agarwal, 2001) many researchers have suggested that the ethical climate in organizations influences the moral conduct of membership (Cohen, 1995; Schneider, 1975; Victor & Cullen, 1987).

Ethical climate is theoretically based upon three classes of ethical theory: egoism, utilitarianism, and deontology (Victor & Cullen, 1987). Knowing the characteristics of each form of ethical climate can contribute to better management of OB. As it was established by several studies, ethical climate can be expressed in five dimensions (Wimbush, Shepard, & Markham, 1997) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Dimensions Ethical Climate Work.

Dimension	Description
Caring	Sincere interest in each other's well-being, as well as workgroup's constituencies.

Rules	Insisting on strict observance of rules and mandates of their organization (or subunits).
Law and code	Insisting on strict compliance with codes and regulations of their profession or government.
Independence	Strong guidance by personal moral beliefs.
Instrumental	Attention focused on the interest in oneself, first and foremost, even to the exclusion of the interest of the interest of others who may be affected by decisions.

In sport, ethical climate or atmosphere refers to the characteristics of the sports environment that can play a decisive role in the performance of moral actions on part of the participants (Weiss & Smith, 2002). Researches indicated that sport, and especially non-profit (amateur) sport, promotes a "caring climate" (Proios, Athanailidis, & Arvanitidou, 2009; Proios, Giannitsopoulou, & Efraimidou, 2010). This means that when a benevolent (social and individual caring) climate pertains in sport teams the organizational members of those teams can be lead to exhibit a sincere interest in the athletes (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994).

Thus, an ethical work climate can be expected to positively affect the occurrence of moral behaviors. Indeed, the ethical work climate is a condition that can affect the athletes' sportspersonship behavior (Proios et al., 2010). More specifically, Proios and his colleagues maintained that a positive relation between the benevolent climate shaped by the managers of nonprofit sport teams and the athletes' moral behaviors, as they are expresses by the dimensions of sportspersonship (Proios et al., 2010). Other studies have maintained similar results, such as a positive correlation between the organizational citizenship behavior in sport and sportsmanship behaviors (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Bommer, 1996), a relationship between manager trustworthiness and citizenship behaviors (e.g., Chiaburu & Lim, 2008; Mayer & Gavin, 2005), and a negative relation between benevolent climates and unethical behavior (Peterson, 2002). Contrary, the ethical work climate is a state greatly affected by factors such as coaches and / or teammates (e.g., Guivernau & Duda, 2002; Smith, 2003), parents (e.g., Smith, 1979; Stuart & Ebbeck, 1995), and coaches, teammates, parents and spectators (Arthur - Banning, Wells, Baker, & Hegreness, 2009; Shields, LaVoi, Bredemeier, & Power, 2007). On the contrary too, whenever a team accepts aggressive and deceptive

behaviors, these kinds of behaviors are to be expected by the players (e.g., Stephens, 2001; Stephens & Kavanagh, 2003).

It should be also noted that the ethical climate in non-profit sports teams is affected by the type of goal they adopt (Proios et al., 2009). This view is further supported by the findings of the study which has revealed the relation among commitment, organization and ethical climate (Cullen, Parbateeah, & Victor, 2003). It should also be mentioned that a relation between ethical climate and behavior is expected when the criteria for ethical decision making correspond to the empirically derived dimensions of the ethical climate (Wimbush et al., 1997). For instance, if the dimensions of the ethical climate, which are affected by the decisions – both political and practical – made by the organizational members of a sport team, support the decision making on the basis of respect of all mankind (characteristic of the caring climate), then all the athletes of this very team are expected to be more ethical.

Organizational justice

The term organizational justice refers to the people's perceptions of fairness in organizations (Greenberg, 1987). As evident by the term "organizational justice", when the members of the organizations fully apprehend how justice works, they can better manage ethical problems. This is because justice has been suggested as an appropriate concept to explain situations such as aggression, interpersonal relations and functioning of organizations (Greenberg, Mark, & Lehman, 1985).

According to the principle of justice, an individual is required to make what he/ she should, as defined by the rules of an institution (Rawls, 1971). In this case, sport in general is an "institution"; it is "a public system of rules which defines offices and positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities, and the like" (Rawls, 1971, p. 55).

In the literature on social justice, interest is focused mainly on distributive and procedural justice. Both are important predictors of workplace attitudes and behaviors. Procedural justice favorably affects evaluations of organizations, authorities, and rules and is positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993; Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997). Distributive justice has a particularly strong effect on workers' satisfaction with their pay and on turnover intentions (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987). However, in sport another form of justice quite often applied is the retributive justice (Greenberg et al., 1985, Lumpkin et al., 2003). In addition, it should be noted that there is a report on the existence of another form of justice, the interactional

justice, which shows similarities with the procedural justice, while the distinction between these two forms of justice is scarcely supported (e.g., Cropanzano & Prehar, 1999; Moorman, 1991). This is a reason for not going into detail on the interactional justice in the present study.

Each of the above mentioned forms of justice is found in moral reasoning and decision making in sport. For example, the federation of each sport has the book of regulations comprising the acceptable and unacceptable actions during the game (procedural justice). If such guidelines or rules are violated, penalties as prescribed in the regulations (retributive justice) are imposed. Moreover, also within a group there may be specific rules to be followed by athletes so as to enable them compete representing their team (procedural justice) and penalties imposed to those who do not follow them (retributive justice).

Procedural justice

Procedural justice is the perceived fairness of the processes utilized within the organization to achieve outcomes or the allocation of resources (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1997). For example: Who gets all profit? Why? How was it decided? In some cases, procedural justice is determined by the interest to follow the statutory procedures (see Kohlberg, 1984). When distributions are seen as unfair, the fairness of the process used to make those distributions can have an impact on both perceptions and behavior (Greenberg, 1990, 1993; Greenberg & Lind, 2000). For example, a player may exhibit limited performance if he/ she feel wronged in a case of reward by the team; thus, fairness of the process has to be used in order to differentiate the player's perception from his / her behavior.

When, in the context of organizational justice, the form of procedural justice is chosen then a set of criteria/ rules (procedural methods) should be provided (Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), as presented in Table 2. According to Leventhal (1980) the weight put to procedural rules depends on the situation at hand. For example, he reckoned that individuals pay more attention to the procedural rules that favor their own interests. He also argued that the perception of the level of distributive fairness may be affected by the weight of procedural rules.

Table 2. Criteria/ rules procedural justice.

Criteria/ rules	Description
Decision control	The individuals perceive that they have a say in the final outcome or decision.
Process control	The individuals perceive that they have a say in decision-making procedures.
Consistency	The individuals perceive that decision making is consistent, that is the procedures followed are fair and decisions are characterized by a consistency before people and time. For example, compliance with equality and the same procedures each time under similar conditions to the individuals affected by them.
Bias suppression	The individuals perceive that the one who makes the decision is neutral, that is does not seem to be affected by anything.
Accuracy of information	The individuals perceive that decisions are made on the basis of accurate information, thus minimizing the possibility of a mistake.
Correctability	The individuals perceive that in a decision making process it is possible to correct wrong decisions.
Representativeness	The individuals perceive that they can participate in decision making and be represented in decision-making procedures.
Ethicality	The individuals perceive that these procedures do not violate an individual's personal standard, and are adapted to ethical standards (for example, excluding cheating, corruption, cetera).

In sport and play, the significance of procedural justice is reflected in several ways. Some processes, such as the coin toss to see which team will kick off a football match or the tennis player who will service first, are used to ensure a fair – by all probability – solution for everyone. Furthermore, it could be said that what is most interesting in procedural justice is arbitration. To enhance arbitration before the start of a tournament, referees are selected by placing them in categories based on qualitative characteristics. Such actions are important because procedural injustices due to poor arbitration could lead to violence at the sports grounds (Mark, Bryant, & Lehman, 1983).

Distributive justice

Distributive justice deals with the perceived fairness of outcomes; it has the potential to have strong implications in the organizational context, of which distribution of outcomes is an integral part (Cohen-Charash, 2001). According to Cohen-Charash (2001, p. 280), due to the fact that distributive justice focuses on outcomes, it is predicted to be related mainly to cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions to particular outcomes. Thus, the same author, based on the literature, maintained that when a particular outcome is perceived to be unfair, it should affect the person's emotions (e.g., experience anger, happiness, pride, or guilt), cognitions (e.g., cognitively distort inputs and outcomes of himself/herself or of the other), and ultimately their behavior (e.g., performance or withdrawal).

As already mentioned, the processes of justice are based on criteria. So, when distributive justice is chosen within the context of organization justice, the former should feature mainly three criteria (distribution methods) (Tornblom & Jonsson, 1985, 1987):

- *Equity*: The criterion of this distribution method is contribution, that is most of the resources go to those who contribute more to the organization. Contribution is one of the criteria of distributive justice that have been established to distribute awards to the recipients (Homans, 1961). As far as distributions are concerned, it should be kept in mind that when distributions are unfair this may affect the behavior with the aim to correct the injustice made (Greenberg et al., 1985). Theories of injustice of Adams (1965) and the equity theory of Walster, Walster and Berscheid (1978) maintain that individuals who are exorbitantly or inadequately paid can respectively increase or decrease their performance in order to harmonize with the payment they receive. Individuals who are inadequately paid can restore justice not only by reducing their efficiency but also by attempting to increase their rewards (Walster et al., 1978). Thus, when rewards depend on performance, prior underpayment can actually enhance performance. At the same time, it could be stated that often the driving force behind the gaining of lost rewards is more recognition as well.

- *Equality*: The criterion of this distribution method is equal share of the resources to everyone. Equality is, by all probability, the oldest distributive criterion that has ever been empirically studied. Indeed, equality is anticipated as the primary criterion of distributive justice – the criterion related to most forms of social interaction (Walster et al., 1978).

Distribution based on the principle of equality ensures that an outcome is fair when the recipient receives the due percentage of the total amount reported to exist. According to Tornblom and Jonsson (1985) the choice of the principle of equality must be accompanied by equality of opportunity, equality of results, and equality of treatment.

In sports, individuals are often awarded not according to the level of their team competition but rather according to their own performance. Also different is the subsidy given by each federation to its teams; such subsidy is determined by each team's classification in the respective league.

Needs

The criterion of this distribution method is the needs of individuals; that is, most deserving are those with fewer resources. The existence of fairness criteria other than equity and equality, such as the needs, has been supported by several researchers (e.g., Deutsch, 1975; Sampson, 1969). According to this distribution method, under certain conditions, individuals have the resources depending on their needs. That is, individuals can consider as fair only the outcome that favors those with the greatest need (Linkey & Alexander, 1998).

Retributive justice

Carr and Hartnett (1996) defined retributive justice as "a means of punishing those who illegitimately infringe the rights and freedoms of others" (p. 28). Retributive justice or, to put it simply, punishment concerns the task of penalties on rule violation (Greenberg et al., 1985). Just as the function of greater society is guaranteed by laws entailing different penalties for offenders, the same way sport has a similar system of punishment, in which referees, judges, or linesman enforce the rules set by the federation of each sport.

The penalties used in sports fall into two distinct categories: (1) those used for the restoration of equality, and (2) those used as a deterrent (Brickman, 1977). For example, a penalty designated to restore equality could aim at preventing a football player from performing a free throw (e.g. running a foul); while, with a view to deterrence, it could be a penalty given for an unsportsmanlike foul. Generally, penalties as a deterrent are designated to prevent offenses as the ones mentioned above and are stricter than those aiming at restoring justice after rule violations.

The literature review of this part of the paper leads to the conclusion that first the resolving of moral problems is a matter of the individual's psychological characteristics that can be directed by others (i.e. to be learned); second, it is also concluded that an

appropriate means for the resolving of moral problems and exhibition of prosocial behaviors is the domination of an ethical climate work in sport organizations and teams. Furthermore, another conclusion is also that when the members of all sport organization are familiar with issues justice them moral problems are better managed and prosocial behaviors are exhibited.

Discussion and Conclusion

Sport is presented as an environment in which participants anticipate a number of moral problems during decision making. Unfortunately, the way in which sport functions nowadays is considered to lead to decision making/ behaviors which do not comply with the traits of ethics. However, these moral problems are issues that can be anticipated with appropriate training of all participants in sport. This is because the ethical climate work dominating sport teams seems to positively affect athletes so as to exhibit acceptable behaviors. In this case, such climate is cultivated by the members of the sport team, such as managers, coaches and parents. However, the above mentioned individuals should be properly prepared for such a task.

Proper preparation of the above mentioned individuals should aim to their actions from their position, i.e. how to implement sport and social institutions. The design of a program of studies, depending on its target group, should take two components into consideration: individual itself and, sport and social institutions. As concerning the term "individual", it could be pertained that each individual constitutes a separate entity belonging on a separate level of moral development – it apprehends what is right and what is wrong depending on its stage of moral reasoning –and that each individual makes decisions based on different motives (moral) –they can either entail elements of justice or be utilitarian (for more details refer to Proios, 2010). While the term "sport and social institutions", refers to the constituents of the organization and function of sport and society in general. For example, sport comprises institutions and rules institutionalized by a number of people and accepted by other participants in sport. The element of universal acceptance of the rules reveals that they comprise elements of justice and are required to be applied by everyone.

Finally, the present study also underlines the pertinence of moral elements in sport. This is because sport is a source of culture producing behaviors. For this reason, each state should show special interesting this social environment which exhibits education elements. Thus, we propose each state to properly train staff to undertake the training of the individuals who manage issues concerning sport, regardless position. In

addition, we also propose sport federations to require from their organizations/ teams to properly train their staff and impose rules comprising elements of ethics. By proper training, i.e. development of knowledge concerning issues of ethics we could anticipate a satisfactory culture.

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