

IS FAIR PLAY LOSING VALUE IN GRASSROOTS SPORT?

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KEYWORDS: Fairplay, gamesmanship, cheating, victory, fun, school sport.

ABSTRACT: The objective of this study was to analyse the relationship between the attitude towards fairplay, gamesmanship and cheating in young athletes from the Balearic Islands. The sample included 35 football, basketball and handball teams with a total of 1172 young athletes (949 boys and 223 girls) with an average age of 13.03 years, (Range 10-16; SD = 1.62 years) in the novice, juvenile and cadet categories during the 2016-2017 season. The Predisposition to Cheating in Sports Questionnaire (CDED, for its name in Spanish) and the Fair Play Attitude Scale (EAF) were administered. The results showed that our young athletes value sports positively as fun. Gamesmanship, as it is not delimited and regulated, is accepted progressively, especially in football. Cheating, on the other hand, was not commonly accepted. Gamesmanship, Cheating and Hard play correlated positively with the factor of victory and negatively with fun. Regarding gender, men obtained higher results in the so-called antisocial behaviors of sports, while women obtained higher results in pro-social sport behaviors.

Sport has become a representative fact of society since it is conceived as an adequate means for personal and social development of positive values. In the age of school sports, the fair play phenomenon or the lack of it, is a relevant issue today (Ponseti et al., 2012).

Fair play supposes an attitude of total involvement during the game. According to Vallerand, Brière, Blanchard and Provencher (1997), sportsmanship includes: "the full commitment to sport participation, which explains to what extent athletes make the maximum effort, recognize mistakes and try to improve their skills" (p 199).

At present, the culture of fair play is worried about creating good relationships, have fun and avoid winning at all cost. In any case, it is not incompatible with competitiveness, it includes it but with certain premises. Firstly, from the recognition of the mistakes themselves in an attempt to improve the process, the result and the mechanisms used. Secondly, understanding that sport success should not be translated exclusively as victory, but teaching a complete reading of the game, which values effort and personal improvement, concerned about analyzing the level of game developed and appreciates the links established with partners and opponents. Thirdly, they propose to practice sports with the aim of enjoyment, from an altruistic perspective in which fun is a proper value.

Sport also leads to antisocial behaviors such as cheating. According to Agüero-San Juan (2015), for cheating to occur in sport, there must be intentionality in the performance, predisposition to gain advantage in relation to the objectives of the game and transgression of the rules of the game.

Therefore, the social environment in which our young athletes develop is susceptible to external influences, mainly those that

come from the coach and peers, becoming a fundamental pillar in explaining the behavior, emotions and cognitions of the athlete (Halliburton and Weiss, 2002). Consequently, prosocial behaviors and personal qualities that are desirable for athletes can be achieved through the correct orientation of sports practices (Ponseti, Cantalops and Muntaner, 2016).

Literature suggests that the promotion of a motivational environment oriented towards mastery is related to fun (Liukkonen, Telama, and Biddle, 1998) and fair play attitudes (Stephens and Bredemeier, 1996). For example, Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre and Treasure (2003) explained in a recent study that young footballers who perceived a motivational environment oriented towards mastery, demonstrated higher levels of fair play behavior.

Therefore, the role of coaches, teachers and peers has a direct influence on young athletes through their behavior and interactions that are created. It is easy to believe that young athletes have a greater knowledge of the concepts of gamesmanship, fair play by observing the way in which their coaches handle sport situations (Strand, 2014). In fact, some authors (Monson 2006, Ziegler 2006) go a step further and affirm that sportsmen develop characteristics such as gamesmanship, cheating or a poor fair play according to the imitation of their coaches behaviour.

A recent longitudinal study showed that, while the ego-oriented motivational environment generated by the coach at the beginning of the season did not predict the deceitfulness, the ego environment generated at the end of the season did predicted cheating and, although the use of gamesmanship during the start of the season was not predicted by the motivational environment, it could be predicted by examining the ego environment generated

by coaches and partners (Ntoumanis, Taylor and Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2012).

The study of sportsmanship and fair play, although analysed long ago, is still a current issue. Numerous researchers accentuated the need that physical activity and sports in general of an ethical treatment demands today (Kavussanu and Spray, 2006; Lamonedá, García, Córdoba, and Vizuete, 2014). In addition, scientific literature presents only a few studies on the acceptance of antisocial behavior such as gamesmanship and cheating on behalf of the players (Ponseti, Cantallops, Borrás and García-Mas, 2017).

As recently stated, (Palou et al., 2013) it is much more likely to find acceptance in the members of a team than a team member being cunning (make an opponent nervous or confound them) than cheating, which implies the violation of rules. Both being cunning and trying to deceive the opponent is more easily accepted when the player's disposition is ego-oriented (García-Mas, Fuster, Ponseti, Palou and Olmedilla, 2015).

Hence, considering the aforementioned argument, the main objective of this study is to analyze an extensive sample of players from three contact sports and assess the relationships between players' attitudes with regards to fair play, gamesmanship, cheating, fun and victory, in addition to the most significant differences of each variable according to gender.

Methods

Participants

The sample includes 35 competition teams from the Balearic Islands; football, basketball and handball with total of 1172 young teenagers (949 boys and 223 girls). These athletes were between 10 and 16 years ($M = 13.03$ years, $SD = 1.62$). Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample in this study.

Instruments

The Predisposition to Cheating in Sports Questionnaire (CDED, Ponseti et al., 2012) was based on the questionnaire about attitudes towards decision-making derived from morality in youth sports (AMDYSQ-1, Lee, Whitehead and Ntoumanis, 2007). This base questionnaire is aimed at studying their attitude towards cheating in sports.

A backtranslation system was used by experts from the two scales "Acceptance of cheating" and "Acceptance of gamesmanship" of the AMDYSQ-1 to obtain a cheating disposition questionnaire like CDED.

It consists of six items and is composed of two subscales of three items each: predisposition to the Acceptance of Cheating and predisposition to the Acceptance of Gamesmanship by measuring each of them with a Likert scale of five points (from 1 = *totally disagree*, to 5 = *totally agree*).

In its first utilization (Ponseti et al., 2012), the CDED questionnaire obtained a reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .78, while the Cheating Acceptance subscale had a value of .74, and the Acceptance of Gamesmanship obtained a value of .63. In the same study, the correlation between the two subscales of the CDED was of .57, which supports a relative independence (albeit with a higher value than the original studies of the AMYDSQ-1 scale) of the Acceptance of Cheating and the Acceptance of Gamesmanship, but does not allow them to be dissociated completely.

Scale of fairplay attitudes (EAF). Boixadós (1994, 1995). It consists of 22 items that form 3 subscales to assess the attitude of football players against hard play, victory and fun, in situations related to football. The alpha internal consistency indices take values of .74, .66 and .60, for each of the hard play, victory and fun subscales respectively (Boixadós, 1995). The structure of this questionnaire is made up of a Likert scale with a response from 1 to 5, based on these values: 5 = *Strongly agree*, 4 = *Agree*, 3 = *Neither agree nor disagree*, 2 = *Disagree* and 1 = *Strongly disagree*. The EAF is validated in different researches (Boixadós, Cruz, Torregrosa and Valiente, 2004; Palou, Borrás, Ponseti, Vidal and Torregrosa, 2007; Ponseti et al., 2017) where this scale is applied to football teams and professional soccer teams.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from federations, clubs and parents to start the study and participants were informed of the confidentiality of the data, agreeing to participate voluntarily in the study. The questionnaires were administered halfway through the season, 30 minutes before the start of mid-week training in the areas provided by the clubs, in the presence of one of the researchers to resolve any possible doubts. The average time for completing the questionnaires was approximately 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

An average was calculated for each participant according to the answers given. Next, an analysis of the descriptive statistics of the items of the questionnaire was carried out, evaluating the significant differences between the variables, ANOVA and a correlation study was performed with the SPSS 21.0.

Results

Taking the data presented in Table 1 of the previous section as a starting point, it is observed that, in general, soccer has a presence of more than half of the sample between boys and girls. Another remarkable fact is the majority presence of the male gender in the three sports analyzed. Finally, the presence of the sample in the various categories has a similarity.

Table 2 shows the main differences between the means of the different scales of the questionnaire that were used.

Young athletes value the fun variable with a high score. It

Table 1. Descriptive statistics based on sport, category and gender.

	Sport	Novice	Juvenile	Cadet	Total
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Boys	Football	171 (28.3 %)	203 (33.5%)	231 (38.2%)	605 (100%)
	Basketball	116 (46.5%)	61 (24.5%)	72 (29%)	249 (100%)
	Handball	15 (15.8%)	49 (51.5%)	31 (32.7%)	95 (100%)
	Total	302 (31.8%)	313 (33%)	334 (35.2%)	949 (100%)
Girls	Football	16 (76.2%)	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	21 (100%)
	Basketball	51 (36.4%)	51 (36.4%)	38 (27.2%)	140 (100%)
	Handball	9 (14.5%)	28 (45.2%)	25 (40.3%)	62 (100%)
	Total	76 (34.1%)	81 (36.3%)	66 (29.6%)	223 (100%)

Table 2. Differences of means of the results of the CDED, EAF questionnaires and their subscales according to the sport practiced.

	Football		Basketball		Handball		Total		t(p)	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD		
Fun	4.06	.82	4.11	.68	3.82	.72	40.477	7.61	(< .001)	
Hard Play	2.69	.63	2.48	.64	2.60	.64	26.464	12.610	(< .001)	
Victory	2.64	.70	2.21	.64	2.33	.62	24.570	48.484	(< .001)	
Cheating	2.21	1.08	1.72	.88	1.99	1.02	1.99	1.02	32.180	(< .001)
Gamesmanship	2.92	1.07	2.39	.99	2.40	.96	2.67	1.06	37.671	(< .001)

should be noted that football is the most valued sport in the media in terms of Hard Play, Victory, Cheating and Gamesmanship, even surpassing the total average. A common acceptance of Gamesmanship is extracted from this analysis. Cheating does not obtain high averages. In addition, Table 3 shows a positive correlation between all the values among themselves, except for fun, as a prosocial behavior of the sport that shows a negative

correlation with the other variables, considered anti-social sports behaviors.

Finally, table 4 illustrates the differences between the averages according to gender and the variables analyzed. The highest averages stand out in all values for the male sex, apart from the fun factor where the female sex has a higher average.

Discussion

Table 3. Pearson correlations between the results of the CDED, EAF and their subscales.

	Fun	Hard Play	Victory	Cheating	Gamesmanship
Fun		-.24**	-.27**	-.27**	-.07**
Hard Play			.32**	.33**	.24**
Victory				.73**	.58**
Cheating					.52**

Nota: *p = .000; ** p < .001

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and differences in averages of the results of the CDED, EAF and subscale questionnaires compared to the gender variable.

	Male		Female		Total		t(p)	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD		
Fun	4.04	.79	4.07	.66	4.04	.77	.20	(< .652)
Hard Play	2.63	.64	2.53	.62	2.61	.64	3.83	(< .050)
Victory	2.52	.71	2.19	.58	2.45	.70	37.71	(< .000)
Cheating	2.03	1.03	1.80	.94	1.99	1.02	9.11	(< .003)
Gamesmanship	2.74	1.07	2.42	1.01	2.67	1.06	16.05	(< .000)

The objective of this work was to analyze the relationships between cheating, gamesmanship, victory and fun in athletes of school age. Results obtained allow us to contrast the importance that the fun factor has for our young athletes as a more significant factor and that is directly associated with prosocial behaviors.

On the contrary, there is a tendency to accept behaviors that are commonly referred to as antisocial in sports such as cheating and gamesmanship. According to the extracted analysis, gamesmanship is accepted mostly in situations that suppose an advantage in the limits of the legality of the game and not through physical violence.

Regarding gender, higher values appear in antisocial behavior of the male sex, in contrast to the fun factor where the female sex is higher. These results contrast with a study by Ponseti et al. (2016) where partial correlations between gamesmanship and cheating were analyzed, female basketball players accepted the use of non-aggressive antisocial behaviors more than male players.

Having as a reference point the theory of self-determination (SDT), ego-orientation in young athletes can be a negative predictor of prosocial behaviors such as having fun and a positive predictor of moral indifference towards antisocial behavior in young athletes (Traclet, Romand, Moret and Kavussanu, 2011).

An interesting result was found in a study of football players

where the perception of the motivational environment varied according to gender. Specifically, in a sample of young boys, a greater result of ego-oriented motivational environment was observed compared to girls (Miller, Roberts and Ommundsen, 2004) while in a sample of older youth, not only was a higher value obtained in an ego-oriented motivational environment but also lower values than girls in terms of a mastery-oriented environment (Miller, Roberts and Ommundsen, 2005).

In an investigation in the school environment carried out by Brown (1993), in which he related the orientation of the goal with the perception of social and personal values, he showed that the greater the sporting experience, the more orientation towards victory or establishing superiority to the contrary and greater sports experience, there was a worse sports behavior (fair play and sportsmanship).

Concluding, we would say that sport for young people of school age, responds more to the interests of adults and clubs rather than to the needs of children. Likewise, the moral development of young athletes is weakened when they observe unsportsmanlike behavior in colleagues or professional athletes who, through tricks, cheating or violent behavior, try to achieve success at any price. Despite everything, sport educators think that the positive or negative vision of the participation in sport practice is determined and depends on the orientation that the

organizers of sport competitions provide, the referees, judges, coaches, as well as the role of parents, friends and the general public that attend school competitions (Palou, Borrás, Ponseti, Vidal and Torregrosa 2007).

Probably, what we have achieved through this study is to verify that school sports are driven by eminently playful, recreational and fun interests as far as young athletes are concerned. On the contrary, the society induced by "the law of the strongest", inverts the values and promotes progressively accepted values such as gamesmanship or cheating in sports, positively correlated behavior with the victory factor. In addition, this article helps to clarify the most significant differences between the two sexes in relation to the factors studied, following the criterion of selection analysis of contact sports. Although in no case we recommend reducing the practice of these sports, it would be advisable to offer situations within the practice that enhance empathy and a team environment based on individual effort valued independently of the result in addition to minimizing comparison between equals. Surely, these guidelines would reduce the frequency of antisocial behavior in sports, particularly among male athletes.

Also extracted from this study is that sports initiation can be carried out if certain conditions are met, such as understanding sport as a situation where defeat or victory is an inherent fact, a transitory state that is not associated with failure or glory. On the

other hand, as Pinheiro (2014) states, the competitive situation should become a party in which its main actors (athletes) and supporters (coaches, family members) must join in, regardless of the result. A good starting point would be the promotion of Sports education to the population through national or International campaigns on "fair play" (Cruz and Boixadós, 2000).

For future lines of research in this work, it would be convenient to systematize and classify what types of actions should be considered in each sport to qualify them within each variable studied, that is, what is meant by Gamesmanship, Cheating and Hard play in each sport discipline. The different regulation of each sport, despite being three contact sports, makes interpreting each analyzed variable differently. The conclusions that could be extracted would facilitate the analysis of tactics, training and the influence of other psychosocial factors such as family members, coaches, and media that make unscrupulous and deceptive behaviors considered "desirable" by the young athlete (Ponseti et al., 2012).

As limitations of this study, caution should be taken with regards to the unequal distribution of genders in the sample and the impossibility of establishing causal relationships between variables. Consequently, the need to conduct an exhaustive study of intervention programs for the enhancement of fair play behaviors in the different sport disciplines is visible.

¿VA PERDIENDO VALOR EL FAIR PLAY EN EL DEPORTE BASE?

PALABRAS CLAVE: Juego limpio, astucia, engaño, victoria, diversión, deporte escolar.

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar las relaciones entre las actitudes hacia el fairplay, la astucia y el engaño en jóvenes deportistas de las Islas Baleares. La muestra incluyó 35 equipos de fútbol, baloncesto y balonmano con un total de 1172 jóvenes deportistas (949 chicos y 223 chicas) con una edad media de 13.03 años, (Rango 10-16; DE = 1.62 años) de las categorías alevín, infantil y cadete durante la temporada 2016-2017. Se administró el cuestionario de predisposición al engaño en el deporte (CDED, por su nombre en español) y la escala de actitud de fairplay (EAF). Los resultados mostraron que nuestros jóvenes deportistas valoran positivamente el deporte como diversión. La astucia, al no estar delimitada y regulada, va aceptándose progresivamente sobre todo en el fútbol. El engaño, por su parte, no es comúnmente aceptado. Astucia, engaño y juego duro correlacionaron positivamente con el factor victoria y negativamente con diversión. En cuanto al sexo, los hombres obtuvieron resultados más altos en las denominadas conductas antisociales del deporte mientras que las mujeres obtuvieron resultados mayores en las conductas prosociales del deporte.

O VALOR DE JOGOS JUSTO PERDE DESPORTO BASE?

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Fair play, astúcia, fraude, vitória, diversão, esporte escolar.

RESUMO: O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar as relações entre as atitudes em relação ao fairplay, à astúcia e ao engano em jovens atletas das Ilhas Baleares. A amostra incluiu 35 equipas de futebol, basquetebol e andebol com um total de 1172 jovens atletas (949 meninos e 223 meninas), com idade média de 13.03 anos (amplitude 10-16; DP = 1.62 anos) das categorias juvenil, infantil e cadete durante a temporada 2016-2017. Foram aplicados o Questionário de Disposição para o Engano no Desporto (CDED) e a Escala de Atitudes de Fair Play (EAF). Os resultados mostraram que nossos jovens atletas valorizam positivamente o desporto como diversão. A astúcia, por não ser delimitada e regulamentada, é gradualmente aceite, especialmente no futebol. O engano, por outro lado, não é comumente aceite. A astúcia, o engano e o jogo duro correlacionados positivamente com o fator vitória e negativamente com o fator diversão. Relativamente ao género, os homens tem resultados mais elevados nos chamados comportamentos antissociais no desporto, enquanto as mulheres tem resultados mais elevados nos comportamentos desportivos pró-sociais.

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