PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SPORT AMONGST ATHLETES

Paulo Jorge Martins, António Fernando Boletos Rosado, Vítor Ferreira
Faculty of Human Kinetics, University of Lisbon, Portugal

ABSTRACT: This study aims to improve our current understanding of the relationship between personal and social responsibility (PSR) and positive and negative attitudes of athletes towards sport within competitive settings. The Portuguese versions of the Personal-Social Responsibility Questionnaire (PSRQ) and Sports Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) were used to measure, respectively, PSR levels and attitudes, both positive and negative, towards sport. A total of 472 athletes of different competitive levels, active in different sports and from different regions of the country participated in the study. The results showed that high levels of PSR correspond to high levels of positive attitudes towards sport competition. Furthermore, results also showed that high levels of PSR have no significant relationship with negative attitudes towards sport competition. Based on the results we put forth a suggestion of possible directions for future additional research on this topic.

KEYWORDS: Psychosocial activities, Positive youth development, Sports

RESPONSABILIDAD PERSONAL Y SOCIAL, Y ACTITUDES PARA EL DEPORTE ENTRE ATLETAS

RESUMEN: Este estudio tiene como objetivo contribuir a la comprensión de la relación entre el desarrollo de la responsabilidad personal y social (RPS) y las actitudes positivas y negativas en deporte en el contexto de la competición deportiva. Utilizaron las versiones en portugués del Cuestionario personal-social responsabilidad y la Cuestionario de Actitudes Deportivas (CADD) respectivamente, para medir los niveles de RPS y las “actitudes positivas” y “actitudes negativas” frente a la competición deportiva. En el estudio participaron 472 atletas de diferentes niveles competitivos de diferentes deportes y diferentes regiones de Portugal. Los resultados mostraron que los niveles altos de RPS están asociados positivamente a los niveles altos de actitudes positivas frente a la competición deportiva. Los resultados también mostraron que los altos niveles de RPS no tienen una asociación significativa con las actitudes negativas. Con base en los resultados se sugieren líneas de investigación futura.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Actividades psicosociales, Desarrollo positivo de jóvenes, Deporte

NIVEIS DE RESPONSABILIDADE PESSOAL E SOCIAL, E ATITUDES FACE AO DESPORTO ENTRE ATLETAS

RESUMO: Este estudo visa contribuir para a compreensão da relação entre o desenvolvimento da responsabilidade pessoal e social (RPS) e as atitudes, positivas e negativas, face ao desporto no contexto da competição desportiva. Utilizaram-se as versões portuguesas do Personal-Social Responsibility Questionnaire (RPSQ) e do Sports Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) para medir, respetivamente, os níveis de RPS e as “atitudes positivas” e “atitudes negativas” face à competição desportiva. Participaram no estudo 472 atletas de diferentes níveis competitivos, de diferentes desportos e de diferentes regiões de Portugal. Os resultados revelaram uma associação positiva entre níveis elevados de RPS e níveis elevados de atitudes positivas face à competição desportiva. Os resultados mostraram ainda que elevados níveis de RPS não têm relação significativa com as atitudes negativas face à competição desportiva. Com base nos resultados alcançados sugerem-se pistas para investigação futura.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Atividades psicosociais, Desenvolvimento positivo de jovens, Desporto

PALABRAS CLAVE: Actividades psicosociales, Desarrollo positivo de jóvenes, Deporte

PALABRAS CHAVE: Atividades psicosociais, Desenvolvimento positivo de jovens, Desporto

ABSTRACT: Sport activity is considered to influence the positive development of young people, namely their personal and social development and their ethical formation. In fact, sport practice is deemed capable of promoting personal and social competencies as a series of life competencies that allow for a successful transition into adult life (Gould, Carson, 2008; Hellison, Martineneck, 2006). As a result, the development of a series of prosocial competencies through sport justifies a great part of the investment made in its promotion. This point of view emphasizes the role of sport in the development of personal and social responsibility, as well as in ethical education and in the creation of codes of conduct inherent to competitive behaviour amongst its practitioners (Escartí, et al., 2012).

Amongst the various personal competencies sports practice is susceptible to influence, several authors (Escartí, et al., 2012; Hellison Martineneck, 2006) include the development of personal and social responsibility (PSR). Personal responsibility reflects the level of individual responsibility, which is characterized by personal effort and self-direction in relation to the individual’s own needs. As for social responsibility, it translates both the respect for and the responsibility to take care of others (Hellison, 1988; Hellison, Martineneck, 2006).

Within the specific domain of sport activity, it is considered that the conduct of athletes must be guided by the respect for sportsmanship or fair play, a concept englobing a set of “good-practices”. The latter confers ethical character to training and competition, which constitutes a form of ethical education of its participants and clearly impacts their personal development. Furthermore, some of the direct contributions of sport to the education of its participants seem to result from the respect for the rules of the game, consideration for the adversary, honest competition and the search for fun and pleasure in the game itself (Gonçalves, Silva, et al., 2006). As such, the respect for sporting rules and conventions as well as for the adversary, the relevance of equal conditions amongst its participants, the refusal to attain victory at any cost, the experiencing of both victory and defeat with dignity, and the drive to give one's best towards self-improvement and personal excellence are considered of fundamental educational value.

Several studies suggest that the role of sport practice as an ignitor of social and personal development among youngsters should be examined (Martins, Pedro, 2017; Martins, et al. 2017) with additional empirical evidence still being called for concerning the effects of sport participation on the personal and social development of young people (Bagozzi, Kimmel, 1995; Holt, Sehn, et al., 2012). More to the point, research has pinpointed the need to study the effects of sport practice on several aspects of personal and social development (Bagozzi, Kimmel, 1995; Hellison, Walsh, 2002) including ethical attitudes towards sport (Gould, Carson, 2008).

In fact, being merely exposed to sports does not assure the adherence to a moral and ethical code of conduct, which means that this process should, in turn, constitute a pedagogical concern clearly visible in the process of sportive development and education (Lee, Withehead, 1999). Training should, therefore, be seen as an educational process, taking into consideration one’s personal, social and moral development, connected and complementary to the development of sportive skills (Bagozzi, Kimmel, 1995). Despite this, sport's orientation towards the result and its inevitable pressure to succeed seem to stand highly prominent within the sports’ systems as a whole, and in particular within the youth ranks (Lee, Withehead, 1999; Li, Wright, et al., 2008). Though other variables can be taken into account within the process of personal and social education; sport, as a human organized form of physical activity represents a privileged opportunity for pursuing a humanistic oriented educational process (Hellison, 1973; Lee, Whitehead, Ntoumanis, 2007). Consequently, the need to study the effect of youngsters’ exposure to sports (pertaining the issue of personal and social development) has been rising (Catalano, Berglund, et al., 1999). The promotion of this psycho-social skill, regarded as fundamental in the development of one’s adult personality, has only been analyzed through studies focused on evaluating the impact of programs geared towards the development of this skill within either a school.
Participants and data collection
The present study gathered the participation of athletes from different (a) competitive levels (i.e. elite, national and regional levels), (b) sports (i.e. team sports (n = 313; 60.5%), individual sports (n = 133; 25.7%) and combat sports (n = 71; 13.7%)), and (c) regions of Portugal. Males (n = 365) represented about two-thirds of the sample (77.3%) with a mean age of 16.97 years (DP=4.51). Girls (n=107) represent about one third of the sample (22.7%) with a mean age of 16.03 (DP=2.86).

Before answering the questionnaires, all participants were provided with information on the objectives and methods of the study. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed before athletes began training. After screening and depuration, 472 questionnaires were considered valid for data analysis.

Measures
The personal and social responsibility scale is comprised by two constructs derived from Li, et al., (2008) and later validated for the Portuguese research community by Martins, et al., (2015). The first is the construct of personal responsibility, which reflects the basic responsibilities necessary to establish a positive learning environment (i.e. effort and self-direction), and includes 4 items (e.g. “I work hard”, “I define my own goals”). The second is the construct of social responsibility (i.e. respect for others and responsibility to take care of others), also comprised by 4 items (e.g. “I respect others”, “I am useful to others”). All items were measured using a 6-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

The Sports Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ), derived from Lee, Whitehead, et al., (2002) and adapted to the Portuguese language by Gonçalves, et al., (2006), is an instrument that evaluates four attitude-based constructs. Two of the constructs, with four items each, reflect socially positive attitudes regarding ethical conduct in sport (Engagement and Convention). The two remaining constructs, also with four items each, reflect socially negative attitudes regarding sport (Cheating and Anti-sportmanship). All items were measured using a 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The first factor (F1), designated Cheating, is comprised by four items, such as “there is no problem in cheating if nobody notices it” and “if others cheat, why can’t I cheat too?”. The second factor (F2), designated Anti-sportmanship, includes four items, such as “I can disturb the adversary, as long as I don’t break the rules” and “sometimes, I try to deceive the adversary”. The third factor (F3), Convention, is comprised by four items, such as “after winning, I never try to diminish my opponents”. The last factor (F4) corresponds to Commitment, also comprised by four items, such as “I always make the effort, even when I know I am going to lose” and “I always try to excel myself”.

Data Analysis
AMOS 24.0 software (SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL) was used. To examine the psychometric properties of the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted (CFA) by using the method of maximum likelihood (Bentler, 2007). The multivariate normality of the items and the inexistence of outliers, requirements of the confirmatory factor model, were evaluated by form coefficient (skewness and kurtosis) and by Mahalanobis squared distance (D²) respectively (Arbuckle, 2009). Model refinement was based on modification index values by Lagrange multipliers (LM), considering trajectories and/or correlations with LM > 1 ( p < 0.05) as indicators of significant variation in model quality. To estimate the overall adequacy of the model, indicative values of good adjustment for CFI (Comparative Fit Index), GFI (Goodness Fit Index) and TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), indexes higher than 0.9 were considered (Marôco, 2010). The inexistence of outliers and the absence of significant differences of indicators of model fit to the data, whereas values lower than 3.0 indicate a good model fit to data (Arbuckle, 2009; Kline, 2004). For absolute adjustment index it was also considered the value for SRMR (root mean square residual) i.e. when the SRMR is less than 0.08, a good adjustment is expected (Kline, 2004). When the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) adjustment index is lower than 0.06 with non-significant P probability [rmsea ≤ 0.05], it indicates good adjustment of model to data (Schumacker, Lomax, 1996). The internal consistency of constructs was assessed by composite reliability (Hair, Black, Baby, Anderson, 2009), while average variance extracted (AVE) were estimated to assess convergent validity (Fornell, Larcker, 1981). A composite reliability equal or higher than 0.7 and an AVE equal or higher than 0.5 are considered viable and reliable indices (Fornell, Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was established when AVE for each construct exceed the squared correlations between that construct and any other construct (Fornell, Larcker, 1981).

The assessment of the structural model was conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM). In order to examine the relationships between constructs, the significance of structural weights was evaluated using Z-tests, generated by AMOS for model structural fit considering Z > 1.96 and statistical significance with p < 0.05 (Marôco, 2010).

Analysis of first order measurement model
Asymmetry (S) and kurtosis (K) values for each individual item were lower than 3 and 1 respectively, as indicated by Kline (2004) for factor analysis. Moreover, squared Mahalanobis distance (D²) lower than 30 (D² < 30) indicates the inexistence of multivariate outliers (p’ and p’’ < 0.001). The results obtained pertaining the measurement model showcase an acceptable fit to the data [χ²(237)=513.27, (p < 0.001), χ²/ g²= 2.17; CFI= 0.95; GFI= 0.92 and TLI= 0.94; RMSEA= 0.04; RSRM= 0.096]. The p value was significant, and its correlation with the degrees of freedom was considered the value for SRMR (root mean square residual) i.e. when the SRMR is less than 0.08, a good adjustment is expected (Kline, 2004). The values of the CFI, GFI and TLI were in accordance with the criteria of good model adjustment to the data (> 0.90), while RMSEA was lower than 0.06, which also suggests good adjustment (Hair, et al., 2009). The results indicate that each item did load significantly on its construct, that is, the loads of all items were higher than 0.50, while also having adequate individual reliability given that the R² values for each item was greater than 0.25. The latter ranged, in effect, between 0.67 and 0.89, while the Z-test varied between 13.76 and 24.42 (Hair, et al., 2009). The composite reliability was also achieved with values varying between 0.80 and 0.93, thus exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Bagozzi, Kimmel, 1995). Convergent validity was accepted for all constructs, since AVE values for each construct ranged between 0.50 and 0.76, thus observing the minimum recommended of 0.50 (Fornell, Larcker, 1981). Table 1 reports the standardized factor weights, as well as the individual reliability for each item in the fitted model.

Descriptive statistics for the first order constructs, together with the respective squared correlations, are reported in Table 2. Discriminant validity is indicated when the estimation of AVE for each construct exceeds the squared correlation between the constructs (Hair et al., 1995). In all cases, AVE values were higher than any squared correlation between all pairs of constructs, meaning that discriminant validity is, therefore, accepted. Based on these results, the scale was considered reliable for a follow-up analysis of the second order measurement model.

53
and “Convention” [β= 0.43; (CI 90%)= 0.34-0.52; p= 0.001] have, respectively, the strongest and weakest association with “Positive attitudes”. Based on these results, the second order measurement model was considered adequate for further analysis, which led to the examination of the structural model.

**Structural model**

The structural analysis model included an adjustment test of the overall model, as well as a test concerning the relationships between latent constructs. The overall assessment of the structural model indicates good adjustment to data [χ²(247)= 616.93, (p < 0.001), χ²/gl= 2.498; CFI= 0.94; GFI= 0.90 and TLI= 0.93; RMSEA= 0.058]. The values of CFI, GFI and TLI respect the recommended criteria of good fit (Hair, et al., 2009). Furthermore, the ratio between χ² and the respective degrees of freedom being lower than 3.0 is an additional indicator of good adjustment. Moreover, RMSEA showed the existence of good fit (Hair, et al., 2009).

**Analysis of second order measurement model**

After the first order model has been confirmed, the second order model was examined. The results obtained demonstrated a good fit to the data χ²(245)= 567.994, (p < 0.001), χ²/gl= 2.31; CFI= 0.95; GFI= 0.91 and TLI= 0.94; RMSEA= 0.054. Paths between second order factors and respective subscales were all significant, with p<.001. Inspection of the path coefficients indicates that Social Responsibility [β= 0.95; (CI 90%)= 0.89-1.01; p= 0.001] has the strongest association with PSR, followed by personal responsibility [β= 0.72; (CI 90%)= 0.65-0.79; p= 0.001] has a stronger association with “Positive attitudes” and, although “Cheating” presents a higher value [β= 0.86; (CI 90%)= 0.81-0.90; p=0.002] . On the other hand, results showed that “Commitment” [β= 0.98; (CI 90%)= 0.98-0.99; p= 0.001] and “Convention” [β= 0.43; (CI 90%)= 0.34-0.52; p= 0.001] have, respectively, the strongest and weakest association with “Positive attitudes”. Based on these results, the second order measurement model was considered adequate for further analysis, which led to the examination of the structural model.
In the context of sport clubs, athletes are not immune to the effects and influences of club culture. More to the point, the organizational environment is a powerful variable in the conduct of athletes. In fact, one of the factors that may influence how athletes react to different ethical dilemmas is, precisely, their specific cultural perspective. Therefore, cultural factors should be included in the explanatory models that look to depict the relationship between PSR and ethical attitudes. The sociocultural context where each individual is integrated, and which is kept as reference, should be considered in practical terms, variables such as the context specific of family and community, friendships and supporting networks are amongst the variables that, in the future, should be elucidated.

Finally, although the instruments used were obtained from the existent literature (Gonçalves, et al., 2006), only attitudes were assessed, i.e. predispositions for action. Therefore, additional research efforts associating this group of attitudes to several other behaviours, namely prosocial, also seem necessary. On the other hand, the construction of more complex models through the inclusion of both new constructs and simultaneous analysis of their respective correlations with prosocial competencies, may contribute for a better understanding of the relationship between PSR and attitudes towards sport. Nevertheless, the current study is already a product of these concerns and is, therefore, geared towards making a modest but decisive contribution in pressing for an urgent debate concerning these themes.

REFERENCES


