The Moral Disengagement in Sports: The Role of Gender, Sport Type and Moral Development Stage

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Abstract: The purpose of the present study was to examine potential predictors of moral disengagement behaviour in gender, sport type and morality development level in Turkish athletes. Four hundred twenty eight athletes from Turkish different sports voluntarily participated in this study. MDSS consists of 32 items and six subscales, which are conduct reconstrual, advantageous comparison, nonresponsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization and attribution of blame. As a result, Females displayed higher levels of moral disengagement than males, and soccer players had higher levels of moral disengagement than volleyball. Finally, morality development stage was again negatively related to moral disengagement, Post conventional Morality Stage Athletes players had higher levels of moral disengagement than Good Interpersonal Relationships Stage Athletes.
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1. Introduction

Antisocial behaviors often exist in sport domain although it accepted as a means of developing some moral values such as loyalty, faithness, and collaboration (Boardley and Kavussani, 2007). On the one hand sports can be joyful and bring achievements to participants, but on the other hand it can cause ills because of those who break the rules and display aggression toward other participants). In a recent study of 803 youth-sport participants, nearly 10% confessed to cheating, 13% admitted trying to injure an opponent, 31% acknowledged arguing with an official, 13% acknowledged having made fun of a less-skilled teammate, and 27% disclosed acting like "bad sports" (Shields et al., 2005). According to Hodge and Lonsdale (2011) stated that as a fundemental socialization factor, sport has an expressive role to play in this regard. İn sports, the terms prosocial and antisocial behaviors have been used to mention to the farsighted and inhibitive sides of decency. Prosocial behaviors have been delineated as acts intended to help or benefit another person whereas antisocial behaviors are acts intended to detriment or debit another individual instance, verbally hearing a teammate and physically bullying an opponent are prosocial and antisocial behaviors in sport, respectively.

Moral disengagement is the choosy use of psychosocial maneuers that allow a person to transgress moral standards without experiencing negative aspect. Thus reducing constraint on future negative behavior (Bandura, 1999, 2002). The Notion of moral disengagement has recently been examined with respect to prosocial and antisocial behaviors in sport (Boardley & and Kavussani, 2007, 2009, 2010; Corrion et al., 2009). The eight mechanisms of moral disengagement are moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, dehumanization, attribution of blame, distortion of consequences, and diffusion of responsibility. These eight mechanisms are explained by Bandura, (2002) and Bandura (2002) have offered sport examples for each mechanism. Moral disengagement has been strongly related with antisocial behaviors in sport (Boardley & and Kavussani, 2007, 2009, 2010; Corrion et al., 2009) and inversely associated to prosocial behavior in team sports (Boardley & and Kavussani, 2007, 2010; Corrion et al., 2009). Long et al. (2006) revealed that young (M = 16.5 years)elite athletes employed moral disengagement to reduce personal liability for antisocial behaviors (Hodge and Lonsdale, 2011). A favorable academical structure for concluding antisocial behavior in sport is Bandura's (1991) social cognitive hypothesis of moral thought and action. According to this hypothesis, individuals evolve moral standards, which constrain through evaluative self-reactions. For instance, people feel guilty when their actions offend their moral standards, so they retrain the ways that result in negative impact. Nevertheless, without expertising self-sanction through the selective use of eight psychosocial fields, known as mechanisms of moral disengagement, people are able to violate their ethical standarts. These mechanisms reduce or eliminate evaluative self-reactions, by that means decreasing posterior self-command on future transgressive actions. These mechanisms located into four sets. The first of these sets is reproachable to administrate by cognitively reconstruing it so it is not commanded as immoral and contains ethical defense, euphemistic labeling, and favorable comparison (Bandura, 1999).

Moral justification contains socially and personally ethical and socially worthy aims; protecting team honour is an example. Euphemistic labeling is the selective use of language that cognitively cloaks reprehensible activities as harmless or less harmful (Bandura, 1999). In sport, athletes may talk of "letting off steam" when in fact they act aggressively (Boardley & and Kavussani, 2007).

Advantageous comparison contains comparing less culpable with more culpable (Bandura, 1999). The second set operates by diminishing the performer's function in harming others and contains sublimation and diffusion of liability (Bandura, 1999). In sport, sublimation of liability appears when athletes view aggressive acts as resulting from coaches' social pressures or referees' decisions. An example of diffusion of liability is when players attribute liability for their antisocial behavior to their teammates, which can appear when all members are involved in decision-making about antisocial practices. The third set includes only one mechanism and centers on the consequences of one's actions by disregarding or misinterpreting these conclusions (Bandura, 1999), for instance, when athletes disaffirm the seriousness of the opponents' injuries (Boardley & and Kavussani, 2007). The fourth set contains bestializing, which involves divesting victims of human qualities and may appear in sport when aggressors describe their opponents as animals and spreading feelings; this set also contains affection of guilt, which appears when people view themselves as faultless victims that were made to engage in hurtful acts by forcible incitement (Bandura, 1999), for instance, when players blame the victim for their own behavior (Boardley & and Kavussani, 2007). Several investigations assists the link between moral disengagement and antisocial or transgressive behaviors (Traclet et al., 2011).

The links between moral disengagement and antisocial behaviors in different contexts highlight the need for developing a measure of moral disengagement specific to sport. Thus the purpose of the present study was to examine potential predictors of moral disengagement behavior, including the sub dimensions involving "conduct reconstrual, advantageous comparison, nonresponsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization and attribution of blame". We investigated whether moral disengagement depend on moral development stage, gender and sample representing multiple sport areas. Thus, from an original sample (N = 428) that included participants in four sports, we focused on male and female athletes who participated in the soccer, basketball, handball and volleyball.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

A total of 428 athletes (250 males and 178 females) volunteered their consent to participate. The athletes ranged in age from 11 to 28 years (M = 17.4, SD = 2.93). The sports represented included soccer (N=121:28.3 %), basketball (N=108: 25, 2%), Volleyball (N=101:23.6%), Handball (N=98:22.9%).

2.2. Measures

Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale: In order to measure athlete's general moral disengagement, Turkish Version of Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale (Caliskan, 2013) was used for data collection. The Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale (MDSS) is developed originally by Boardley & Kavussanu, (2007). The instrument includes 32 items and assesses six dimensions (Conduct reconstrual, Advantageous comparison, Nonresponsibility, Distortion of consequences, Dehumanization, Attribution of blame). Example items are: "It is okay to be hostile to an opponent who has insulted your teammate/s" (Conduct reconstrual), "Mocking an opponent is not bad compared to injuring him/her"(Advantageous comparison), "A player is not responsible for acting aggressively if this is encouraged by his/her parents". (Nonresponsibility), "Teasing an opponent does not really hurt him/her." (Distortion of consequences), "It is okay to treat badly an opponent who behaves like an animal" (Dehumanization), Players who get mistreated have usually done something to deserve it. (Attribution of blame) The response scale ranged from 1 (''never'') to 7 (''Very often'').

2.3. Procedure

The relevant permission was initially taken from head coach for athletes to participate. The information about the purpose of this study and how the athletes completed questionnaire were given. Before starting the scales, the athletes were also informed that all responses would be confidential. The questionnaire completed participants who completed the questionnaire were thanked to spend their time for the study.

2.4. Analysis

Means (Ms) and standard deviations (SDs), for MDSS and all subscales variables (Conduct reconstrual, Advantageous comparison, Nonresponsibility, Distortion of consequences, Dehumanization, Attribution of blame) were calculated. In order to test the gender, sports, moral development stages and the MDSS scores of athletes were compared by using MANOVA. Ah t age groups categorized with Kolberg (Bacanli, 2002).

Table 1. Morality stages categorized with Kolhberg

Age Groups	Stages	**Level**
4-5 age	Obedience and Punishment Orientation	Preconventional Morality
6-9 Age	Individualism and Exchange	
10-15	Good Interpersonal Relationships	Conventional Morality
15-18	Maintaining the Social Order	
18+	Social Contract and Individual Rights	Postconventional Morality
	Universal Principles	

3. Results

Results are reported in moral disengagement with athletes' gender, sports and moral development stage. We present mean, standard deviations and MANOVA results included multivariate and univariate statistics whether indicate significance different by demographic variables.

Table 2: Moral Disengagement of male and female athletes in soccer,basketball, volleyball, and handball,.

	Gender		Sports				Moral development		
Subscales	Male n=250	Female n=178	soccer n=121	basketball n=108	Voleyball n=101	Handball n=98	Stage 3 n=188	Stage 4 n=136	Stage 5 n=104
Conduct reconstrual	2.92±1.24	2,92±1.27	3,32±1,21*	2,83±1.20	2,74±1,37	2,85±1.06	2,68±1,21	3,09±1,27	3,20±1,19**
Advantageous comparison	3.08±1.20	3,40±1.96	3,11±1.17	3.05±1.57	3.14±1.71	3.19±1,43	2,97±1,48	3,14±1,44	3,44±1,55
Nonresponsibility	3.10±1.19	3,41±1.40	3,64±1.03***	3,17±1,21	2,90±1.30	2,93±1,19	3,03±1,28	3,11±1,15	3,44±1,15*
Distortion of consequences	2,40±1.34	2,64±1.77	2,84±1.33**	2,57±1,58	2,14±1,34	2,26±1.28	2,08±1,29	2,67±1,55***	2,91±1,30***
Dehumanization	3,72±1.69**	4,64±1.99	3,91±1,61	3,71±1,67	4,01±2,02	3,74±1,66	3,87±1,84	4,07±1,62	3,54±1,72
Attribution of blame	3,26±1.37	3,47±1.65	3,55±1.06	3,32±1,61	3,09±1,57	3,26±1,25	3,27±1,44	3,31±1,37	3,30±1,35
MDSS	3.06±0.94	3.35±1.24	3,42±0.77*	3,08±1,09	2,96±1,09	3,00±0,90	2,95±1,02	3,20±0.95	3,31±0.95*

* p<0.0 ** p<0.01 ***p<0.001 significant

According to the results, a scattering matrix was homogeneous (F (53,367397)= 4,428, P=.000). Although Box's M coefficient is significant, when the descriptive statistic table was examined, it showed N of the Super League had a large standard deviation, whilst N of Others League had a small standard deviation. This result indicates that the F test is robust (Table 3).

MANOVA's results indicated a significant difference in the Morality Disangagement among male and female athletes (λ =.944 $F_{7,307}$= 2.579, 2.278, p<.05). Consequently, it was determined that the athletes could be differentiated within the scope of their conduct reconstrual ($F_{1,313}$= 0.295, p>.05), Advantageous comparison ($F_{3,311}$= 1,820, p>.05), Nonresponsibility ($F_{3,311}$= 2,473, p>.05), Distortion of consequences ($F_{3,311}$= 1.096, p>.05), Dehumanization ($F_{3,311}$= 10.678, p<.01), Attribution of blame ($F_{3,311}$= 0.866, p>.05), which reveals that the female athletes express high opinions about Dehumanization subject compared to male athletes.

MANOVA's results indicated a significant difference in the Morality Disangagement among Soccer, Basketball, Volleyball and Handball (λ =.855, $F_{21,876}$= 2,335, p<.01). Consequently, it was determined that the athletes could be differentiated within the scope of their conduct reconstrual ($F_{3,311}$= 3.412, p<.05), Advantageous comparison ($F_{3,311}$= 0.105, p>.05), Nonresponsibility ($F_{3,311}$= 6.084, p<.001), Distortion of consequences ($F_{3,311}$= 3.987, p<.01), Dehumanization ($F_{3,311}$= 0.518, p>.05), Attribution of blame ($F_{3,311}$= 1.471, p>.05), which reveals that the soccer athletes express high opinions about nonresposibility subject compared to,

volleyball athletes, also soccer athletes high opinions about conduct reconstrual, Distortion of consequences, subject compared volleyball athletes.

MANOVA's results indicated a significant difference in the Morality Disangagement among morality development stages (λ =.862, $F_{14,612}$= 3,358, p<.001). Consequently, it was determined that the athletes could be differentiated within the scope of their conduct reconstrual ($F_{2,312}$= 5.633, p<.01), Advantageous comparison ($F_{2,312}$= 2.519, p>.05), Nonresponsibility ($F_{2,312}$= 4,245, p<.05), Distortion of consequences ($F_{2,312}$= 10.810, p<.001), Dehumanization ($F_{2,312}$= 1.829, p>.05), Attribution of blame ($F_{2,312}$= 0.015, p>.05), which reveals that

Athletes in Postconventional morality stage express high opinions about conduct reconstrual, Nonresponsibility, Distortion of consequences subject compared to athletes in Good Interpersonal relationships stage. Also Maintaining the Social order express high opinion about reconstrual, Distortion of consequences subject compared to athletes in Good Interpersonal Relationship stage.

Gender, Morality Development Stage and Sport Type, and Moral Disengagement In this study we again used athletes representing both genders from four sports, representing a wide age range. Similar to the first study, ANOVA test indicated gender, $F_{1, 303}$ = 3.278 p > .05, sport type, $F_{3,311}$ = 3.355, p < .05, morality development stage $F_{3,311}$ = 3.807, p < .05 differences on sport moral disengagement. Females displayed higher levels of moral disengagement than males (M= 3.06 vs. 3.35), and soccer (M=3.42) players had higher levels of moral disengagement than males (M=2.96). Finally, mortality development stage was again negatively related to moral disengagement, Postconventional Mortality Stage Athletes (M=3.31) players had higher levels of moral disengagement than Good Interpersonal Relationship Stage Athletes (M=2.95).

4. Discussion

This study was designed to assess what potential predictors of moral disengagement behavior, including the sub dimensions involving "conduct reconstrual, advantageous comparison, nonresponsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization and attribution of blame". We investigated whether moral disengagement depend on moral development stage, gender and sample representing multiple sport areas. Gender was observed that significant differences between female and male athletes in Morality Disengagement. Depends on sub-dimensional factors a significant difference was found in Dehumanization, nevertheless no difference were found among Conduct Reconstrual, Advantageous Comparison, Distortion of Consequences, Nonresponsibility and Attribution of blame factors. The results reveals that the female athletes express high opinions about MDSS and Dehumanization subdimension compared to male athletes. Similar to our results, several studies have stated that girls have higher moral disengagement than boys (Eisenberg, 2000; Ferguson&Crowley, 1997; Lennon&Eisenberg, 1987; Mills & Grusec, 1989; Bandura et al., 1996) and aggressive behaviors (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Knight, Guthrie, Page, & Fabes, 2002). Contrary to our study Bandura et al., 1996 highlighted that boys showed higher levels of moral disengagement compared to girls and a lower decline from ages 14 to 16. Moreover, boys are more likely than girls to become moral disengagers over the course of development, although gender differences do not exist in the earlier years (Bandura et al., 1996). Bandura et al. Besides, males exhibited higher levels of moral disengagement than females. The study concluded that the male's higher levels of aggression may be influenced by the bias to disengage moral selfsanctions from injurious conduct. Ian D. Boardley and Maria Kavussanu (2007) highlighted that men displayed higher levels of moral disengagement than women. Gender differences in moral disengagement do not exist in the earlier years, but before long boys become more facile moral disengagers than do girls (Bandura, 1999). Previous studies have reported that (Bandura, 1999; Bandura et al., 1996, 2001; Caprara et al., 1996), moral disengagement plays in the study of aggressive and violent behaviours. Furthermore, the results indicated a significant difference in the Morality Disengagement among Soccer, Basketball, Volleyball and Handball. Depends on type of sport it was observed a significant difference in Conduct Reconstrual, Nonresponsibility, Distortion of Consequences, however no difference were found among Advantageous comparison and Attribution of blame. Thus, soccer athletes express high opinions about non-responsibility compared to volleyball, handball athletes. Also soccer athletes express high opinions about conduct reconstrual, distortion of consequences compared to volleyball athletes. b Boardley & Kavussanu (2007) and Traclet et al. (2011) assessed in their investigation that soccer players had higher levels of moral disengagement than basketball, hockey and netball players (16). Also, Corrion, Long, Smith, and d'Arripe-Longueville (2009) found that elite basketball players used several moral disengagement mechanisms (i.e., displacement and diffusion of responsibility, attribution of blame, minimizing or distorting the consequences, and euphemistic labeling) to identify their transgressive acts (Traclet et al., 2011). Summing up, moral disengagement level might be

affected type of sport. Similar to soccer such as a competitive sport which includes high contact, athletes are more likely to bullying against opponents and display anti-social behaviours. Also, athletes' perceptions of the behaviour of spectators could be one of the factors which influence athletes' behaviour. In addition, referee decisions may lead athletes to act aggressively once they feel injustice. Specifically, participants often displaced their responsibility for their behaviours on the referees by attributing their aggressive attitudes to bad officiating (Traclet et al. 2011). According to results of our study, it was observed a direct proportional increase from stage 3(10-15 age) to stage 5 (18+). Contrary to our findings, Marinella Paciello et al. (2008) examined the influence exerted by moral disengagement at age 14 and its development during adolescence on physical and verbal aggression and violence at age 20. They assessed that the higher the level of moral disengagement at age 14, the higher the levels of physical and verbal aggression and violence problems at age 20. In addition, results suggested that the more moral disengagement decreased from age 14 to 16, the lower the expected levels of physical and verbal aggression and violence at age 20 for both males and females. For both boys and girls, the developmental model attested to the general tendency of moral disengagement to decline over time. In particular, moral disengagement decreased strongly between ages 14 and 16 and less evidently until age 20. The general decrease in moral disengagement could be specific to the developmental period from early adolescence (junior high school) to adolescence (high school), which is characterized by new challenges related to educational and social role transitions (Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Lupinetti & Caprar., 2008). Once internalized control has developed, people regulate their actions by the standards they apply to themselves and refrain from behaving in ways that violate their moral standards. Thus, it could be suggested that both gender display different attitudes in different phases and in late adolescence males and females are less likely to exhibit lower level of moral disengagement through maturation compared with early adolescence with regards to internalized control development.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to examine potential predictors of moral disengagement behavior in gender, sport type and morality development level. Consequently, Females displayed higher levels of moral disengagement than males and soccer players had higher levels of moral disengagement than volleyball. Finally, morality development stage was again negatively related to moral disengagement, Postconventional Morality Stage Athletes players had higher levels of moral disengagement than Good Interpersonal Relationships Stage Athletes.

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