Research Paper

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The Effect of Athletic Identity on Social Behavior and Aggression in School Basketball Games

Management

KEYWORDS : aggression, antisocial behavior, athletic identity

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the effect of athletic identity on social behavior and aggression during school basketball games as well as whether it could be considered as a prediction indicator for such behaviors. A total of 156 students (86 boys and 70 girls) participated at the study during a school basketball tournament at the premises of Anatolia College. A questionnaire was used to measure athletic identity, pro-social and antisocial behavior and aggressiveness and anger. Statistical analysis was done with SPSS 17. The following statistical analyses were used for results: Student t-test for differences among sexes, mediation analysis for examining the effect of identity on social behavior and aggression and correlation analysis for the effect of identity on antisocial behavior. For the rest of the criteria multiple regression analysis was used. Findings showed that the identity affects antisocial and aggressive behaviors and that it can be considered as a predictive indicator of such behaviors. The study showed significant differences among the two sexes regarding identity, antisocial behavior and aggression with boys showing higher scores than girls.

Introduction

During the last years sports have become a vast area for research and studies on various social, antisocial and aggressive behaviors. According to Ewing (1997) and Seefeldt, (1987) sports offer great educating opportunities and social develops youth. Metzl, (2002) claims that sports are highly valued by society, so that many parents push their kids towards organized sports from a very young age. Participation in sports develops and promotes social behavior and athletic spirit. Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields & Shewchuk, (1986) Romance, Weiss & Bockoven, (1986) support that sports teach morality and develop virtues such are honesty, courage, self control, respect and justice. Nowadays though, according to Hopkins & Lantz, (1999) sports show common anti-athletic behaviors on all levels of competitive sports. Bredemeier & Shields, (2006) claim that sports enhance moral development but often is fed by a series of observed immoral behaviors related to sports such are, aggression, deception and irreverence. Watching sport event or sports news are enough for someone to realize that moral behavior in sports is not always obvious. For the reasons we mentioned above relation between sports and morality is often a discussion topic for contemporary society.

It was already mentioned that sports enhance moral development. It is often observed that sports are related to aggression or deception (i.e. breaking of rules) in order for athletes to acquire an unfair advantage, Lee, Whitehead & Ntoumanis, (2007). According to them deception includes breaking of sports rules and effort in order to avoid detection. The relation between sports and aggression has been studied for decades but researchers continue not to have a complete picture of this relation although many studies have proved its existence.

Researchers in various scientific areas have been trying to improve and understand this relation through studies and methods within sports and society. In the first half of the 20th century many psychologists assumed that participation in sports may avert people from aggressive behaviors. Recent studies though show the exact opposite, i.e. that participation in sport activities is possible to increase aggression. According to Steven Aicinena (2007), aggression is an internal unit based on disappointment and/or instinct and athletes may use aggression in order to show their absolute commitment to sports or to just win the opponent. Sport psychologists differentiate hostile from organic aggression. The primary aim of hostile attack is to evoke physical of psychological damage to someone in order to achieve a specific goal, winning a game. These two forms of aggression are distinct in sports and especially in contact team or individual sports. The appearance of arrogant behavior such is "playing with pain or intentionally injuring the opponent", according to Aicinena Steven (2007) may be "based on the uncritical acceptance of athletes and their commitment to win no matter what" especially in competitive sports.

Many studies such are those of Bredemeier & Shields, (1986) Kavussanu & Roberts, (2001), Miller, Roberts & Ommundsen, (2005) have found that in sports moral maturity is significantly different in boys and girls with girl athletes to show higher moral reasoning and higher scores than boys. Usually these differences on athletic behavior are attributed to the current perception that boys and girls are affected by various social expectations. According to Greendorfer, (1993), sports are a traditionally manly area and are based on the stereotypical expectations for masculinity that are believed to affect men athletes.

Bredemeier & Shields, (1986) found that in sports moral maturity differs in sexes and sport. Other studies though did not find significant differences in these sub groups (Proios, Doganis & Athanailidis,(2004). With these various results it remains unclear whether if participants develop differences in moral reasoning and behavior in various sport types. Nevertheless the above mentioned studies have not examined athletic identity which is possible to affect the behavior of athletes.

In recent studies of Kavussanu M, Willoughby A, Ring C.(2012) athletic identity was examined to see how this reflects the level of morality and whether it is a determining or central characteristic of the athlete's self and not their athletic identity. What is athletic identity and how is it defined? In sports psychology "athletic identity is used to determine the level on which a person is identified with the role of athlete" Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, (1993, p. 237). Regarding the term athletic identity, according to Kent M. (1998, 2006, 2007) this is defined as the level on which someone is determined as an athlete. The ath-

letic identity is a social construction and is affected by the opinions of friends, family, coaches and the mass media. Regarding its definition there are various views such are: the commitment of someone to sports or "the level of maturity and understanding of an athlete in his/her effort to increase opportunities (e.g. professional or social) and most importantly the level on which someone is determined as an athlete (Kent M 1998, 2006, 2007).

Reifsteck, Erin J.M.S. (2011) called upon athletes to determine the term athletic identity. Some of them that answered the question stated that athletic identity is the continuous effort for excellence in various sports (34%), to be physically capable (17%), to show strong commitment in education and sports (15%), while the rest (34%) stated that athletic identity is the perception of someone that he/she is an athlete. According to those who answered the athlete is characterized "by competitiveness, decisiveness, self confidence, self discipline and dedication to the goal". Some participants also stated that the athletic identity is related to the participation of the team (13%). Many support that athletic identity is the way someone perceives his/her role as an athlete, including goals, values, thoughts and feelings related to sports. Rebecca Symes (2010) finally, separates athletic identity to private-where the person thinks and feels as an athlete- and public athletic identity-where a well known person is recognized by others as an athlete.

Purpose

The aim of the present study was to examine the mediation of athletic identity on the affect of aggression on pro social and anti social behavior as well as to examine the correlation of anger and aggressiveness in students during school games. The study also examined of whether the athletic identity is an indicator for the prediction of such behaviors.

Methodology-procedure

The study took place during a school tournament at the premises of Anatolia College from 28/11 to 2/12/2012. A total of 156 students participated 86 of which were boys and 70 were girls.

Measurement

For the measurement of athletic identity the questionnaire of Brewer et al,(1993) A.I.M.S. (Athletic Identity Measurement Scale) was used. The questionnaire was used successfully for the evaluation of athletic identity of Greek athletes by Proios M. (2012). For measuring of pro social and anti social behaviour the questionnaire of M.Kavussanu (prosocial and antisocial behavior 2006) was used and for the measurement of anger and aggressiveness the questionnaire of J.P Maxwell, E.Moores CAAS (2005) (Competitive Aggressiveness and Anger Scale) was used.

Procedure

Instructions were given to students and then they received the relevant questionnaires for completion. Following the completion of the questionnaires by the participants the questionnaires were gathered in order to analyse the results.

Results

Statistical analysis was done with the use of SPSS 17. Student t-test was used for the differences among sexes. To examine the affect of the identity on pro social behaviour and aggressiveness mediation analysis suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) was implied. Correlation analysis was used for the affect of identity on antisocial behavior. The results of preliminary analysis showed the following: The means, standard deviations, internal consistency indicators and regular distribution variables indicators are shown in Table 1. The correlation analysis results showed that the identity had low and positive relation to anti social behavior and anti social behavior a medium positive correlation to aggressiveness.

Table 1 (Means, Std.Deviation, Int.Consistency, Reg. Distr. Variables Indicators)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Identity	150	2,40	6,60	4,2419	,97964	,199	,198	-,235	,394
Pro social	150	1,00	5,00	3,7389	,94052	-,767	,198	,089	,394
Anti social	150	1,00	3,70	2,0038	,55496	,616	,198	,728	,394
Anger	150	1,33	4,50	2,4329	,80859	,530	,198	-,816	,394
Aggressiveness	150	1,00	3,17	1,6418	,63850	1,177	,198	,172	,394
Age (in years)	150	14	18	15,85	,992	,592	,198	-,808	,394
Athletic experience	150	2	12	6,66	2,819	-,148	,198	-1,136	,394
Valid N (listwise)	150								

Differences among sexes

Student t-test analysis for independent samples showed the existence of statistically significant differences among the two sexes regarding identity, $t = 7.16$, $p < .001$, anti social behavior, $t = 3.86$, $p < .001$, and anger, $t = 5.06$, $p < .001$. In all three variables boys presented higher scores ($M = 4.76$ for identity, $M = 2.18$ for anti-social behavior, and $M = 2.75$ for anger) in relation to girls ($M = 3.77$ for identity, $M = 1.84$ for anti social behavior, and $M = 2.13$ for anger). No statistically significant differences were found in pro social behavior, $t = .85$, $p > .05$, and aggressiveness, $t = .52$, $p > .05$.

Affect of identity on behavior

To examine the effect of identity on pro social and anti social behavior as well as the mediating role of anger and aggressiveness the intermediation analysis suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. According to this analysis in order for intermediation to exist a. Identity should show a significantly important relation to pro social and anti social behavior, b. Anger and aggressiveness should show effect on pro social and anti social behavior when included parallel to identity and c. the effect of identity on pro social and anti social behavior should show a statistically significant decrease when intermediates are included as independent prediction variables of the dependent variable.

Results of correlation analysis showed that identity is significantly related to anti social behavior but not with social behavior. The first criterion therefore for intermediates is not met regarding pro social behavior and for this reason no further analysis was done. In order to examine the rest of the criteria, multiple regression analysis was used. At the first stage identity was included and at the second stage anger and aggressiveness were included in the analysis. Results showed that identity at the first stage was a significant indicator for anti social behavior, $R^2 = .02$, $F_{(1, 149)} = 5.38$, $p < .05$, $b = .18$, $t = 2.32$, $p < .05$.(Tabele 2).The addition of anger and aggressiveness improved the ability of the model to predict anti social behaviour, $R^2 = .20$, $R^2_{change} = .19$, $F_{(3, 149)} = 14.13$, $p < .001$. From the two variables added only aggressiveness showed a statistically significant contribution to

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the prediction of anti social behaviour, b =.42, t = 5.73, p < .001 (b =.13, t = 1.82, p = .070 for anger). The addition of these variables though did not reduce but increased the predicting ability of the identity (b =.22, t = 3.08, p < .001).

Tabele 2(Results identity as a marker for antisocial behavior)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1,611	1	1,611	5,384	,022[b]
	Residual	44,278	148	,299		
	Total	45,889	149			
a. Dependent Variable: Anti social						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Identity						

Discussion

It is widely acknowledged that sports are highly valued within society. Participation in sports usually favors the development of pro social behavior and athletic spirit. Many supporters such are Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields & Shewchuk, (1986) Romance, Weiss & Bockoven, (1986) state that sports are a mean for moral development and education and reveal many virtues such are honesty, courage, self control, respect and justice. All mentioned above make parents to direct their kids towards organized sports from a very early age (Metzl, 2002). This is the reason why the relation between sports and aggressiveness is rather important for those who wish to use sports as a mean for expansion and moral development. The results of the present study showed that identity affects anti social and aggressive behaviors as well as that it can be a prediction indicator for such behaviors. The study certified statistically significant differences among the two sexes in identity, anti social behaviors and anger with boys showing higher scores than girls. The present study also showcases a question: why is it that although athletic identity affects the behaviour of athletes is more related to anti social and aggressive behaviours instead of pro social ones? This question could consist a subject for investigation for future studies.

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