

MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE CREATED BY OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACTORS AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS IN YOUTH SPORT

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Abstract:

The main aim of the study was to examine the relationship between youth athletes' perception of antisocial behavior and motivational climate as well as their opinion regarding antisocial behavior of their significant others. The participants were 1,897 young male and female athletes, ranging in age from 11 to 16 years, who played in basketball, handball, football, or volleyball teams. The results revealed that intention, judgment, and performance of antisocial behavior were negatively related to the mastery climate created by other significant actors ($p < .01$), and that they had a positive relationship with the performance climate created by the significant others ($p < .01$). Furthermore, players who perceived others' antisocial behavior measurement as positive scored higher on intention, judgment and performance of antisocial behavior themselves ($p < .01$). Thus, the results demonstrated the importance of considering the influence of peers, parents and coaches when examining antisocial behaviors in youth sport.

Keywords: *coach influence, peer influence, parents' influence, achievement goal theory, unsportspersonlike*

Introduction

The dimension of antisocial behaviors refers to behaviors intended to harm or disadvantage the recipient (Sage & Kavussanu, 2007); they are a consequence of development of different personality factors that are created in several contexts such as family, school, sport, etc. (Shields & Bredemeier, 2007). These types of behaviors sometimes promote conflicts in sport (Kavussanu, 2006), so it would be relevant to create solutions that decrease these types of conduct. Due to the social nature of sport, and hence the social interaction among teammates, coaches and parents, both prosocial and antisocial behaviors are likely to occur among players. Thus, it is important to note the use sport as an educative instrument that promotes socially acceptable behaviors among children and teenagers.

Numerous authors have pointed out the necessity of studying the motivational aspects related to morality in sport with the purpose of transforming such aspects into an effective tool to prevent antisocial attitudes (Boardley, Kavussanu, & Ring, 2008; Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Guivernau & Duda, 2002; Kavussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003; Miller, Roberts, & Ommundsen, 2005). Some authors like Kavussanu, Seal, and Phillips (2006) and Boardley and Kavussanu (2009) have already shown the

importance of social environment of participants for prosocial behaviors during the game. Thus, the motivational climate created by other significant participants such as teachers, coaches, peers and parents is considered a crucial factor in antisocial behavior (Kavussanu, Roberts, & Ntoumanis, 2002; Shields & Bredemeier, 2007).

Understanding of the relationship between motivational climate and moral variables is based on many empirical research studies. Young footballers' perception of a mastery climate has been associated with prosocial behavior (Kavussanu, 2006; Sage & Kavussanu, 2008) and sportspersonship (Miller, et al., 2005; Ntoumanis, Taylor, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2012; Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre, & Treasure, 2003). Furthermore, a mastery climate has also been positively related to sportspersonship in female volleyball players (Gano-Overway, Guivernau, Magyar, Waldron, & Ewing, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important to note that no relationship has been found between mastery climate and the moral reasoning levels (Ommundsen, et al., 2003).

On the other hand, the performance climate in young footballers has been associated with low levels of sportspersonship (Miller, et al., 2005; Ommundsen, et al., 2003; Sánchez-Oliva, Leo, Sánchez-Miguel, Amado, & García-Calvo, 2012),

moral reasoning (Kavussanu & Spray, 2006; Ommundsen, et al., 2003), game rules acceptance (Boixados, Cruz, Torregrosa, & Valiente, 2004) and greater intention, judgment and performance of antisocial behaviors (Kavussanu, 2006; Sage & Kavussanu, 2008). However, no relationship has been observed between performance climate and antisocial behaviors in scholar basketball players (Kavussanu, et al., 2002) and young female volleyball players (Gano-Overway, et al., 2005).

Athlete's perception of a mastery climate promoted by other significant actors will not lead only to prosocial and sportspersonship behaviors, but it will generate a decrease in antisocial behaviors (Palou, et al., 2013; Sánchez-Oliva, et al., 2012). Several research studies have demonstrated that players involved in a mastery climate had significantly lower scores in intention, judgment and performance of antisocial behaviors (Kavussanu, 2006; Ommundsen, et al., 2003; Sage & Kavussanu, 2008; Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2003; Stornes & Ommundsen, 2004).

The importance of parents to psychosocial development of their children is retained across late childhood and into early adolescence; however, increased cognitive and social awareness also renders the role of peers quite salient in psychosocial development (Harter, 1998). Regarding the motivational climate created by family, different works have demonstrated a weak relationship between participants' perception of their parents' interest and the involvement level of children (Duda, Ntoumanis, Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005; Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, Sánchez-Oliva, Amado, & García-Calvo, 2013). Interest in sport shown by a family might be particularly important for children. Stuart and Ebbeck (1995) as well as Vallerand, Deshaies, Cuerrier, Pelletier, and Mongeau (1992) have highlighted this issue in their studies, where participants were asked about their perception of how their fathers and mothers perceived the performance of antisocial behaviors. Thus, when athletes perceived that their parents endorsed these unsportspersonlike behaviors, they judged these actions as appropriate and pointed out their intention to perform them.

It could be argued that the most influential individual in athletes' sport experience is the coach (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009). Coaches should create a team environment that promotes prosocial behaviors and deters antisocial behaviors in their athletes, because this environment provides a more positive experience for participants. However, models of coaching effectiveness propose that coaching behaviors influence athletes' attitudes and conduct through their own perceptions (see Smoll & Smith, 1989). Hence, Boardley and associates (2008) found that rugby players who perceived that their coach was effective in character-building

engaged in more prosocial behaviors. Thus, athletes' perceptions of their coaches have been associated with athlete-related outcomes, as was suggested in the coaching efficacy model (Feltz, Chase, Moritz, & Sullivan, 1999).

These suggestions were corroborated by Shields, Bredemeier, Gardner, and Bostrom (1995) as well as Kavussanu and Spray (2006) when they examined the atmosphere created by coaches and peers. They found a correlation between coaches' perception to accept cheating behaviors to win and the performance by athletes.

In accordance with the already mentioned, it is clear that early optimism regarding the character-building power of sports has been overstated or unfounded. Participation in sports does not automatically bring beneficial effects on character (Shields & Bredemeier, 2007). However, it seems to be equally evident that participation in sports is a powerful social experience that may be beneficial under the right circumstances. If sports have positive impact on character development of participants, then coaches, peers and parents' behaviors are crucial to support it. Thus, the main aim of the study was to examine the relationship between youth athletes' perception of antisocial behavior and motivational climate and the opinion of antisocial behavior of their significant others.

Methods

Participants

The participants were 1,897 young athletes playing in basketball (n=284), handball (n=127), football (n=1,356) or volleyball (n=130) teams. There were 1,378 male and 519 female subjects, ranging in age from 11 to 16 years (M=12.49; SD=1.76). The players played their sports in affiliated teams in U12 (n=934), U14 (n=599) and U16 (n=364) age categories. From an original sample of 1,918 questionnaires collected, 21 (1.09%) were removed from further analysis due to invalid completion.

Assessment tool

Peer Motivational Climate. To measure athletes' perceptions of the peer-created motivational climate of their team, the Spanish version of the 21-item *Peer Motivational Climate in Youth Sport Questionnaire* (PeerMCYSQ; Ntoumanis & Vazou 2005) was used, adapted to the Spanish language by Moreno, Conte, Martínez, Alonso, González-Cutre, and Cervelló (2011). The PeerMCYSQ consists of a mastery-involving and a performance-involving higher order dimension, each of which comprises a number of lower order factors. In this study, we were interested in the two higher order dimensions and not in the lower order dimensions (García-Calvo, et al., 2014). A confirmatory factor

analysis (CFA) of our data offered support to a structure with two factors ($\chi^2/df=5.75$; CFI=.96; IFI=.96; RMSEA=.05; SRMR=.04). Internal consistency values were .85 for mastery-involving climate and .84 for performance-involving climate. Participants responded to the items on the stem: "On this team, most athletes...", using a 5-point scale with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). An example item for the mastery-involving climate factor was: "...encourage their teammates to improve their weakness". An example of an item constituting the performance-involving climate factor was: "...try to do better than their teammates".

Coach Motivational Climate. The Spanish version of the *Perceived Coach Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire-2* (PMCSQ-2; Newton, Duda, & Yin, 2000), developed by Balaguer, Guivernau, Duda, and Crespo (1997) was used. This questionnaire consists of 33 items that measure six dimensions of mastery- and performance-involving coach climate. Again, in this study we were interested in the higher order factors. A CFA with our data offered a support to the two-factor structure ($\chi^2/df=8.06$; CFI=.92; IFI=.92; RMSEA=.05; SRMR=.05). Internal consistency values were .87 for mastery-involving climate and .84 for performance-involving climate. Players responded to all items on a 5-point scale with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The stem was: "On this team..."; an example of mastery-involving climate item was: "...the coach tells us that trying our best is the most important thing". Performance-involving climate included items such as: "...the coach pays the most attention to the best players".

Parents Motivational Climate. The Spanish version of the *Parental Involvement Sport Questionnaire* (PISQ; Lee & McLean, 1997) developed by Torregrosa et al. (2007) was used. This questionnaire consists of 20 items that measure four dimensions: active involvement (e.g. "Your parents have an active role in the functioning of the club"), support and comprehensive involvement (e.g. "Your parents encourage you for the things you have done correctly, even though you have lost"), directive behavior (e.g. "Before the game your parents tell you how to play") and pressure (e.g. "Your parents press you to train better"). A CFA of our data offered a support to the structure with four factors ($\chi^2/df=11.03$; CFI=.93; IFI=.93; RMSEA=.06; SRMR=.05). Internal consistency values were .77 for parent support, .68 for parents' involvement, .86 for parents' directive behavior and .79 for parents' pressure. Players responded to all items on a 5-point scale with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

Antisocial Behavior. A measure of the footballers' perceived likelihood to aggression from

the *Questionnaire about Intentions and Antisocial Behaviours in Football* (CICAF; García-Calvo, 2006) based on the *Judgements About Moral Behaviour in Sport Questionnaire* (JAMBYSQ; Stephens, Bredemeier, & Shields, 1997) was used to assess the players' potential endorsement of aggressive behavior. The JAMBYSQ assesses several dimensions of moral functioning in relation to issues of playing sport. This assessment tool is comprised of descriptions of several antisocial scenes (e.g. "An opposing player has kicked/elbowed you powerfully during a very important match and then you had the chance of kicking/elbowing him back without the referee seeing you") followed by six questions, measured by responses on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The first question referred to the intention of a player to perform an action: "If you had the choice, would you do it?", with responses on a scale ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (5). The second question asked whether the player had ever performed such a behavior: "Have you ever performed this or something similar?", followed by responses on a scale anchored by *never* (1) and *many times* (5). After this, we asked for a judgment on the correctness of the planned performance: "Do you think that it is correct to do this?", followed by responses on a scale ranging from *No, I do not think it is correct* (1) to *Yes, I think it is correct* (5). Further, we asked for the subjects' opinion about the behavior of their teammates in such a situation: "Do you think that your teammates would do it?", measured by responses on a scale anchored by *any of them* (1) and *all of them* (5). The fifth and sixth questions asked the subjects for their opinion about how their coaches and parents would accept that behavior: "How do you think your coach would accept your behavior?", and "How do you think your parents would accept your behavior?", followed by responses on a scale anchored by *they would not like it* (1) and *they would accept it* (5). Internal consistency values were .84 for antisocial intention, .87 for antisocial performance, .87 for antisocial judgment, .87 for antisocial peers, .88 for antisocial coach, and .91 for antisocial parents.

Procedure

To collect the data we developed a protocol to standardize the collection of data from every participant involved in the research. Firstly, we made contact with the coaches and trainers of different team sports that would compose the overall sample of participants in the study. Through an informative advice, we informed the subjects' parents about this research, its purposes and the proposed use of the obtained data.

The study received ethical approval from the University of Extremadura. All participants were treated according to American Psychological Association ethics guidelines regarding their consent

to participate in the study, confidentiality of their responses, and the subjects' anonymity. Data collection took place in clubs in group settings under the supervision of trained research assistants. Questionnaires were matched over time using a coding system to protect anonymity.

Data Analysis

The statistical program SPSS 19.0 was used to analyse the results. Descriptive analysis of variables was done followed by reliability analysis, correlation analysis and linear regression analysis. To assess the internal structure of the questionnaires used in our study, we conducted exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses with the different items that composed the assessment tools. After conducting these factor analyses, we found an appropriate structure for every scale. Furthermore, as for the reliability analysis, all factors had a high internal consistency ($\alpha > .70$), with the exception of *club involvement* that showed borderline values (.68) which is considered adequate in scientific literature (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Thus, the assessments tools were valid and reliable.

Results

Descriptive and correlational analysis

Table 1 shows descriptive scores for every variable in each assessment tool. Regarding significant others' motivational climate, we can highlight that the participants showed higher scores for mastery than performance climate. The results for intention, judgment and performance of antisocial actions showed very low averages (1.78, 1.47 and 1.44, respectively). Therefore, the players' percep-

tion of the assessment of their antisocial behavior by other significant participants (peers, coaches, parents) in unsportspersonlike conducts showed very low values.

Also, in Table 1 we can see the results of correlation analysis. Mastery climate created by peers, coaches and parents – this issue refers to parental involvement in the club – are found to negatively correlate ($p < .01$) with intention, judgment and antisocial performance. In contrast, the performance climate created by other significant actors was positively associated with intention, judgment and antisocial performance ($p < .01$). Only parents' support was not negatively associated with intention and judgment. Even antisocial performance correlated positively with parents' support (.10).

Moreover, intention, judgment and antisocial performance also showed high scores and positive relationships with the positive assessment of other significant actors regarding antisocial performance (from .32 up to .69).

Regression analysis

To be able to tell which variables predict intention, judgment and antisocial performance perceived by young players, three linear regression analyses were conducted. In general, the positive assessments of other significant actors were the strongest predictors, accounting for 58% of the variance of antisocial intention, 59% for antisocial performance, and 21% for antisocial judgment.

In Table 2 linear regression analyses with antisocial intention, performance and judgment, each being a dependent variable, can be seen. Antisocial actions positively assessed by peers, parents and coaches appeared to be the factor with the strongest

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients and correlations

	M	SD	α	Antisocial Intention	Antisocial Performance	Antisocial Judgment
Peer Mastery Climate	4.17	.76	.85	-.17**	-.17**	-.18**
Peer Performance Climate	3.37	1.09	.84	.31**	.38**	.25**
Coach Mastery Climate	4.29	.66	.87	-.13**	-.11**	-.09**
Coach Performance Climate	2.23	.99	.84	.14**	.17**	.09**
Parents' Support	2.94	1.15	.77	.01	.10**	.01
Parents' Involvement	4.01	.83	.68	-.16**	-.11**	-.19**
Parents' Directive Behavior	2.85	1.15	.86	.06*	.14**	.04
Parents' Pressure	2.22	1.12	.79	.21**	.29**	.14**
Peers' Antisocial Behavior	2.04	.74	.87	.69**	.61**	.32**
Coach's Antisocial Behavior	1.32	.68	.88	.63**	.69**	.38**
Parents' Antisocial Behavior	1.34	.72	.91	.64**	.69**	.39**
Antisocial Intention	1.78	.78	.84	-	-	-
Antisocial Performance	1.45	.72	.87	-	-	-
Antisocial Judgment	1.48	.82	.87	-	-	-

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Table 2. Coefficients in regression analysis

Variable	β	t	p	ΔR^2
Antisocial Intention				.58
Parents Support	-.07	-3.68	.00	
Parents Pressure	.08	-.19	.00	
Peers' Antisocial Behavior	.47	25.01	.00	
Coach's Antisocial Behavior	.12	3.89	.00	
Parents' Antisocial Behavior	.26	8.60	.00	
Antisocial Performance				.59
Parents Support	-.06	-3.34	.00	
Parents Involvement	.05	2.52	.01	
Parents Pressure	.09	4.27	.00	
Peers' Antisocial Behavior	.30	16.02	.00	
Coach's Antisocial Behavior	.23	7.38	.00	
Parents' Antisocial Behavior	.30	9.82	.00	
Antisocial Judgment				.21
Coach Mastery Climate	-.06	-2.30	.02	
Coach Performance Climate	.06	2.24	.02	
Parents Support	-.17	-6.47	.00	
Peers' Antisocial Behavior	.13	5.02	.00	
Coach's Antisocial Behavior	.08	1.98	.04	
Parents' Antisocial Behavior	.19	4.52	.00	

**p<.01; *p<.05

and most positive prediction in all three cases. Moreover, it is important to note that parents' pressure emerged as a strong positive predictor, and parents' support as a negative predictor of antisocial behavior. Similar results were found for antisocial performance, adding parents' involvement as a positive predictor. Finally, greater differences were found in antisocial intention, because only the parents' support emerged as a negative predictor. Nevertheless, coach mastery climate emerged as a negative and coach performance climate as a positive predictor of antisocial judgment.

Discussion and conclusions

The main aim of the study was to examine the relationship between young athletes' perceptions of antisocial behavior and motivational climate, as well as their opinions on antisocial behavior of their significant others. Firstly, we should emphasize the relationship between the motivational climate created by other significant and antisocial behaviors. A mastery climate created by peers, coaches and parents was negatively related to intention, judgment, and performance of antisocial behaviors. In previous research, Stornes and Ommundsen (2004) demonstrated that players who were involved in a mastery climate had significantly lower scores on intention and performance of antisocial behavior (Ommundsen, et al., 2003; Palou, et al., 2013; Sánchez-Oliva, et al., 2012). Moreover, Kavussanu

(2006) found that mastery climate had negative influence on the performance of antisocial behavior (Miller, et al., 2005). Similarly, Kavussanu et al. (2002) showed that mastery climate created by the coach and peers was negatively associated with intention, judgment and performance of antisocial behavior.

Performance climate created by other significant participants, on the other hand, is strongly correlated with antisocial behaviors (according to Guivernau & Duda, 2002; Miller, et al., 2005; Ommundsen, et al., 2003; Shields, et al., 1995; Stornes & Ommundsen, 2004). Thus, the motivational climate created by peers, coaches and parents was positively related with intention, judgment and performance of antisocial actions. These results are consistent with the results of previous research, which have indicated the relationship between unsportspersonlike behaviors and the coach and peers' creation of moral atmosphere that encourage these unsportspersonlike acts (Ntoumanis, et al., 2012; Sánchez-Oliva, et al., 2012; Shields, et al., 1995). Furthermore, Miller et al. (2005) found that players who perceived high-performance climate showed less respect for social rules than those athletes who perceived a low-performance climate (Guivernau & Duda, 2002). Consistent with these results, Ommundsen et al. (2003) revealed that footballers who perceived a high-performance climate and low-mastery climate

had a higher probability to develop antisocial behaviors (Sánchez-Oliva, et al., 2012; Stornes & Ommundsen, 2004).

Regarding the relationship between different antisocial actions, the positive relationship between players' perception about their intention, judgment and performance of antisocial actions, and the positive assessment by significative others (peers, coach, parents) of antisocial behaviors perceived by athletes is highlighted. In other words, when players' perceived that their other significant actors accept antisocial actions, the players showed a higher intention, judgment and performance to perform antisocial behaviors.

These relationships are also found in the linear regression analyses, where the results indicated that the positive assessment of antisocial behavior by the significant others was the strongest predictor of the athletes' intention, judgment and performance of antisocial behaviors. There are several studies (Stuart & Ebbeck, 1995; Vallerand, et al., 1992) that have emphasized the importance of social environment – including parents, teachers, coaches and peers – in the creation of moral action (Ntoumanis, et al., 2012; Sánchez-Oliva, et al., 2012). Stuart and Ebbeck (1995) conducted a study of young basketball players, who were asked about their father, mother, coaches and teammates' perceptions of the athletes' behaviors. This research found that when players perceived that the other significant actors accepted such behaviors in their moral environment, the players judged the actions as appropriate and they indicated their intention to perform them. Furthermore, older athletes, who perceived that other significant actors accepted such behaviors, have lesser intention to develop an antisocial decision (Sánchez-Miguel, Pulido, Amado, Sánchez-Oliva, & Leo, 2014).

It is important to note that in the linear regression analysis, the motivational climate related to parents emerged as a strong predictor. Thus, we can conclude that the acceptance of antisocial acts by significant others and the performance climate created by parents are the strongest predictors of antisocial behaviors. Shields and associates (1995) examined the atmosphere generated by significant others and found similar results. They pointed out the belief that the coach would not sanction cheating

even if it were necessary for winning. Furthermore, Boardley and Kavussanu (2009) suggested that performance climate had a positive effect on antisocial behavior toward teammates.

A limitation of our study was that the findings were correlational, and no causal inferences can be drawn as to the relationships between motivational climate and antisocial behavior. Nevertheless, our results are consistent with theoretical predictions and previous empirical research concerning this topic. Another limitation of this study was that it relied exclusively on self-reports, and thus our findings are to some extent subject to potential influences of shared method variance. Future research in this area would do well to assess objective markers of motivational climate and antisocial behavior (e.g. observation instruments). Thus, the generalization of our findings to population and other sports should be undertaken cautiously because our sample was comprised of people only from a particular country (i.e. Spain).

The main conclusion that we can draw from this study is the necessity for other significant actors to create a mastery climate, because it will decrease the incidence of antisocial conduct performed by young participants. Moreover, we promote the training of other significant actors because players' perception of their antisocial acts is crucial for minimizing the maladaptive behaviors of young athletes. Hence, all socializing agents in a sports context should contribute to make sport an educative instrument that promotes values and prosocial behavior to extrapolate to other domains.

Therefore, to achieve a mastery climate in a sports context, we can use several strategies including the following: promote TARGET (task, authority, rewards, grouping, evaluation, time), developed by Ames (1992); introduce short-, medium- and long-term objectives to encourage this climate and implement conduct intervention programs with main significant actors in the practice of sports (García-Calvo, Sánchez-Oliva, Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, & Amado, 2012; Sage & Kavussanu, 2007). Such programs can contain workshops and exercises in group dynamics with parents and coaches with the aim of promoting positive values of physical activity and sports, and decreasing aggressive and antisocial behavior (Duda, et al., 2005).

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