PROCEEDING
OF
THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION
"Striving For World Sport Achievements Through Sport and Physical Education"
Faculty of Sport Science, Yogyakarta State University
Yogyakarta, May 24, 2011

In Cooperation:

Yogyakarta State University
ISORI DIY
Ministry of Youth and Sports
Republic of Indonesia
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**Prof. Dr. H. Rochmat Wahab, M.Pd, M.A. (Rector of Yogyakarta State University)**

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IMPACT OF SPORT PARTICIPATION ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: A MYTH OR REALITY?

By:
Joko Purwanto
Yogyakarta State University

Abstract
This paper is a review of references of research results related to physical activity and its impact. Many published research evidence showing that involvement in physical activity, in all levels, have an impact on the cognitive, psychological, physical, and social domain. This evidence has been widely recognized throughout the world. Some evidence suggests that involvement in physical activity associated with the development of character. The emergence of these statements, particularly in Indonesia, that the exercise will shape one's character, caused the author feel confused. The reason is: (1) there is no consistency in the findings of studies that have been done related to this case, (2) the development of character will not happen automatically if someone does a sport, (3) development of a person's character will occur when physical activity, including sports, done deliberately with the proper design of activities aimed at the building of one particular character.

Keywords: Sport Participation, Character Development.

Introduction
Have you read about how well a person's character? Or, did you ever read about sports shape a person's character? I believe that you will rarely find! Why? In Indonesia, it can be caused by several things: 1) is the lack of attention to the experts, particularly in the field of sports, and experts in other fields related to sports - such as experts in the field of psychology, social expert, an expert in the field of education - related to with character, 2) the research is very rare to be found in libraries and other sources related to the relationship between sports and character formation; 3) research results, especially from abroad, is associated with negative things from the sport, often ignored as supporting evidence for studying the relationship between sport and character development.

Ironic, almost every day, we often see either directly or through broadcast on television and written in magazines and newspapers, the conduct of their players sport - including athletes, coaches and club administrators, spectators and sports fans, supporters - demonstrate behaviors in the field that does not reflect a "person of character." Fights between players from both teams that competed, the players and coaches as well as official chasing, beating and kicking the referee and assistant referee for the decision taken both the "deemed" wrong; spectators and supporters who shouted berate, pelting the players and officials in field due to their dissatisfaction over the course of a match.

Evidence of that can also be found in the resonance associated with the "character" which "new" appears in the middle of 2010, where the plan "Character Education" will be held at all levels of education in Indonesia, ranging from elementary school through college. Although he was made a year ago, this plan remains a discourse and no real action from programs designed to be applied in the field. This could mean that so far the government is less sensitive and concerned with social developments that occur in society, including education and sports in the world of Indonesia. The emergence of several cases that exist in society - which almost certainly happen every day - like fights between students and students; clashes between residents and community organizations,
clashes between students, student, community, civil society organizations with the state apparatus (police, soldiers, government employees), brawl between supporters after watch the game, is proof that the government can be said to not be able to understand and resolve problems that exist in society. As recognition Megawangi Ratna (in Ade June Panjaitan, 2008) feel sad to see poor moral condition of society at the beginning of reforms in 1998. Post-patriot 1997/1998, the Indonesian nation filled with anger, resentment, scorn, and a sense of suspicion. He believes there is something wrong with the education system has been implemented in this country. National education system has failed to instill good character for students.

“Sport build character.” This is said so often that it has become a cliché in some societies. The widespread belief that sports build character raises interesting sociological questions: When did this belief originate? How has it been maintained? Why do so many people accept it without question? Is it true? (Coakley, 1994:92).

The belief that competitive sports build character has inspired social and behavioral scientists to do many studies of athletes. Researchers have been eager to see if there were really differences between athletes and other people, and if any differences could be attributed to character building dimensions of sport participation. However, the studies have produced inconsistent findings and have not been able to prove that participating in competitive sports has any character building effects (Coakley, 1994:93).

Unfortunately, most of the research on this topic has been based on three faulty assumptions (McCormack and Chalip, 1988, in Coakley, 1994:93). First, researchers have mistakenly assumed that participation in competitive sports involves a unique set of human experiences that are equally shared by all athletes, and that these experiences have a powerful character-shaping potential. Second, the researchers have mistakenly assumed that athletes passively internalize all the “character-shaping lessons” they are exposed to when they participate in competitive sports. And third, researchers have mistakenly assumed that competitive sports involve certain character-shaping experiences that are not available to people in other activities and other setting.

In other words, according Coakley (1994:93), the researchers have generally ignored that: (a) sports can be constructed in different ways in different situations, (b) people who participate in sports can have a variety of different experiences, and (c) sport experienced taken on different meanings, depending on the circumstances and relationship associated with participation. Furthermore, researchers have ignored the fact that competitiveness and achievement values can be learned in everything from video games to junior high math classes in the United States and many others countries. Therefore comparing the character traits of people who participate in sports with the traits of those who do not participate in sports is not a very fruitful research approach. This is why the research finding have been so confusing and offer no proof that competitive sports provide special character building experiences.

If fact, a survey of numerous studies in the sociology of sport led to the following conclusion back in 1978:

There is little, if any, valid evidence that participation in [organized] sport is an important or essential element in the socialization process, or that involvement in sport teachers or results in ... character building, moral development, a competitive and/or cooperative orientation, good citizenship, or certain valued personality traits. (Loy et al., 1978, in Coakley, 1994:93)

Since this conclusion was made, there have been no studies that would contradict it. However, it needs to be emphasized that just because we have found no automatic connection between participation in competitive sports and character development, we should not conclude that sports participation has no effect on people's lives. Sports do affect the live of many people in many different ways, but sport participation itself does not automatically lead to the development of particular character traits.
Discussion

Morality is a ubiquitous construct within all spheres of life. Regardless of one's culture, race, political doctrine, or social strata, moral issues play a key role in human behavior (Sage, 2006:1). Specific interpretations of morality reflect the adopted theoretical perspective but a broad description is provided by Arnold (1994; in Sage, 2006:1): Morality is said to involve concern for others as well as one's self and the differentiation of right from wrong and good from bad. Although the concept of morality is universally recognized, values and behaviors are determined by the context. One context of particular relevance to the study of morality and of significant importance to all cultures is sport.

Traditionally, sport has been heralded as a vehicle for character development, a concept inherently linked to morality. However, detractors from the notion that sport participants benefit from social and moral development argue that if you want to build character, try something else (Ogilvie & Tutko, 1971, in Sage, 2006:1).

Theoretical Perspectives of Morality

Morality refers to the way people choose to live their lives according to a set of guidelines or principles that govern their decisions about right versus wrong, and good versus evil. As youths' cognitive, emotional, social development continue to mature, their understanding of morality expands and their behavior becomes more closely aligned with their values and beliefs. Therefore, moral development describes the evolution of these guiding principles and is demonstrated by ability to apply these guidelines in daily life (Oswalt et al., 2010).

The first of three theories of morality that dominate the sport literature is social learning theory. Proponents of the social learning paradigm (Bandura, 1977; in Sage, 2006:2) define moral behavior as action that conforms to social norms learned through interaction with socializing agents (Bandura, 1986, in Sage, 2006:2). For example, cooperative, aggressive, or altruistic behavior is shaped through modeling and reinforcement from significant adults and peers. According Sage (2006:2), the underlying concepts of social learning models include classical and operant conditioning where punishments, positive, and negative reinforcements are used to teach and modify behavior.

The second theory of morality is structural developmental theory. The structural developmental theorists (Haan, 1977, 1991; Kohlberg, 1976, 1981; Piaget, 1965; Rest, 1984, in Sage, 2006:3) consider how individuals reason and judge behavior. Morality is defined in terms of judgments on the appropriateness of behavior (Bredemeier & Shields, 1998, in Sage, 2006:3). The moral reasoning structure, that determines what is right and wrong behavior, develops through stages by processes of cognitive maturation and social interaction. As such, individuals are active participants in interpreting morality by interacting with others.

The third paradigm, social cognitive theory, is a more holistic approach to the study of morality than previous perspectives. Bandura (1986, 1991, 1999, in Sage, 2006:4) continues to focus on overt behavior but extends previous social learning theory by acknowledging personal factors such as moral thought and affective responses. The contention is that personal factors, environmental influences, and moral behavior operate interactively in a reciprocal way, termed triadic reciprocal causation.

The Study of Morality in Sport

The concept of morality (and associated concepts such as sportspersonship, fairplay, etc.) has attracted considerable research interest in the field of sport psychology. One possible reason for this might be the frequent appearance in the media of incidents of pro-social and antisocial behavior in various sports. Another reason may be the lay, yet empirically unfounded, belief that sport participation per se contributes to character building and the development of moral attitudes that can be transferred to other contexts (Shields & Bredemeier, 2007, in Ntoumanis & Standage, 2008:6).

The old adage that 'sport builds character', with character being defined as the consistent display of moral action (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995, in Sage, 2006:6). Historically, sport has been encouraged as a means to
develop moral virtues of respect, loyalty, cooperation etc. Since the 1970's, however, there has been a growing body of evidence suggesting that the only characters being developed in sport are character disorders. Recent research on youth sport participants, their parents, and coaches indicated that significant ethical problems exist in North American youth sport programmes (Shields, Bredemeier, LaVol, & Power, 2005, in Sage, 2006:6). For example, 1 in 10 athletes between the age of 9 and 15 years reported cheating, 13% admitted attempting to hurt an opponent, 31% argued with officials, 13% made fun of lesser skilled athletes, and 27% indicated that they had acted like 'bad sports'. Further, youth athletes reported coaches who encouraged cheating (7%) and hurting (8%) an opponent. A survey on sportspersonship confirms the present moral bankruptcy with reports that high school sports are filled with cheating, improper gamesmanship (i.e., manipulation of the competitive contract), and confusion about sportspersonship (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2004, in Sage, 2006:7).

The nature of sport may have deviated from its traditional values and this has been highlighted in association football. The present thesis focuses on football because of recent anecdotal reports that the game is in a state of moral crisis (Collins, 2003; Fordyce, 2004, in Sage, 2006:7) Further evidence for the changing face of football comes from a grass roots initiative entitled "clean up our game", which aims to 'give us back the game we knew and loved' (The Non-League Paper, 2005, in Sage, 2006:7). The perspective that sport in general is in moral decline could be exacerbated by a media that sensationalizes scandalous incidents at the expense of acts of good will. For many, the enduring memory of the 2006 World Cup in Germany will be the infamous head butt carried out by Zinadine Zidane. The evolution and portrayal of bad behavior are notable issues but of prime importance to sport psychologists is why athletes behave the way they do. Thus, the changing balance between good and bad behavior in sport, and particularly football, has prompted an expanding area of research that seeks to understand the motivation behind athletes' moral behavior. Adding empirical substance to anecdotal evidence and theory may help identify the factors that influence athletes' moral behavior and ultimately reassert the traditional values of sport.

**Contradicitive Finding's**

The relationship between sport and morality is important for many reasons, particularly for those who seek to use sport as a vehicle for moral development. Previous research has revealed contradictory findings (Kaye & Ward, 2010).

Research on ethics and outdoor education is not particularly extensive, however there have been some findings worthy of note and further discussion. It should noted that small amount of research that has been conducted on ethics in outdoor education, has tended to focus on whether programs can enhance the moral development of participants. The findings, however, show weak, if any, effects, and probably suggest that for moral development to occur, it needs to specifically established as a program objective and to have intentional moral development sessions and learning processes structured into the program [http://wilderdom.com/EthicsMoralDevelopment.htm](http://wilderdom.com/EthicsMoralDevelopment.htm)

It is commonly believed that sports can provide excellent educational opportunities for social development (Ewing, 1997; Seefeldt, 1987, in Kaye & Ward, 2010). Moreover, because sports are so highly valued in American culture, many parents expose their children to organized sports at increasingly earlier ages (e.g., Metzl, 2002, in Kaye & Ward, 2010). Sport involvement has commonly been noted to foster the development of prosocial behavior or sportspersonship. Many proponents of the belief that sport is a means of moral development view athletics as a vehicle that teaches and reveals virtues such as truthfulness, courage, self-control, respect, and fairness (Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields & Shewchuk, 1986; Romance, Weiss & Bockoven, 1986, in Kaye & Ward, 2010).

However, in today's sporting environment, displays of unsportspersonlike behavior in all levels of competitive sports are common (Hopkins & Lantz, 1999, in Kaye & Ward, 2010). Counters to claims that sport enhances moral development are often fueled by a myriad of observed immoral sport-related behaviors, including aggression,
cheating, and disrespect (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006, in Kaye & Ward, 2010). One only needs to watch a sports event or sports news show to see that moral sport conduct is not always apparent. As such, the relationship between sport and ethics is often debated in modern society.

Clearly, findings regarding the relationships between sport participation and moral behavior are relatively inconclusive in the areas of moral reasoning, aggression, cheating, and rule-violating behavior when participant-related differences such as age, gender, level of competition, and level of contact are examined. Against this background of heterogeneous results and partially conflicting claims, it is clear that further study of sport and ethics is warranted. Indeed, consensus in research involving sport and morality is scarce. Furthermore, other aspects of sports ethics have rarely been studied (e.g., disrespect and rule bending). Disrespect includes boasting and taunting in a nonviolent manner (for example, a player doing an elaborate showboat dance in front of the opponent's bench after scoring). While this type of behavior might not be described as "aggressive," it is broadly regarded as unethical. Rule bending includes those actions not technically against the rules of a sport, but that are blatantly dishonest. (For example, on the winning point of the game, a volleyball player touches the ball before it goes out, but the referee misses the touch. The player says nothing.) These actions are not aggressive, nor can they be construed as cheating or violating the rules; nonetheless, rule bending in sport does involve ethical concerns, such as honesty and the violation of the right to a fair competition, and thus warrants exploration (Kaye & Ward, 2010:4).

Although many assume that football builds character, reports suggest that the English game is in a moral crisis (Fordyce, 2003, in Sage, 2006:35). In a recent article, elite English football was described as a society of "different morals, different outlooks...a different planet, in which young men live in a cocoon that they believe absolves them not just from any normal convention of decency but the rule of the law" (Collins, 2004, in Sage, 2006:35). In addition to recent reports highlighting moral decline in football, sports moral literature has tended to focus on the negative aspects of morality (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Kohn, 1986; Stephens, 2000, 2001, in Sage, 2006:35). This attention detracts from the traditional purposes of sport as a means of developing virtues such as fairness, loyalty, and teamwork (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995, in Sage, 2006:35). Whilst empirical evidence supports the incidence of immoral thoughts and actions in sport (see Weiss & Smith, 2002, in Sage, 2006:35), investigations into positive variables are rare.

Investigating negative aspects of morality is important but to support the use of sport as a vehicle for the development of character, research examining positive aspects of morality in sport is crucial. A class of moral behaviors that have received minimal attention in sport are pro-social behaviors. Pro-social behaviors have been defined as behaviors intended to benefit another individual or group of individuals (Eisenberg, 1986, in Sage, 2006:36). Examples of pro-social behavior in sport are helping an opponent off the floor, congratulating an opponent on good play or returning the ball to the opposition. Although pro-social behaviors can be performed for non-altruistic reasons, their defining characteristic is that they have beneficial effects for others and are therefore important in their own right. It is worth noting that Vallerand et al.'s (1997, in Sage, 2006:36) measurement of sportpersonship orientations includes items that are pro-social by definition. However, positive dimensions of sportpersonship reflect a combination of social convention, respectful, and pro-social behavioral tendencies. In contrast, this study focuses exclusively on frequency of pro-social behaviors. Further, an antisocial behavior dimension was included here to refer to behaviors intended to harm or disadvantage the recipient. Examples of antisocial behaviors in sport are faking an injury or trying to injure an opponent to take an advantage. Essentially, these actions reflect unfair play and have negative consequences for others.

In addition to the interest in pro-social and antisocial behavior, moral judgments were investigated in the present study and were similarly distinguished into pro-social and antisocial dimensions. To date, the broadly defined concept of moral judgment has been investigated extensively in sports research as one of Rest's (1984, in Sage, 2006:36) four components of morality (Kavussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001; Ommundsen et al., 2003; Stuart & Ebbeck, 1995, in Sage, 2006:36), as Kohlberg's (1984, in Sage, 2006:37)
deontic (i.e., moral obligation) and responsibility judgment (Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996, in Sage, 2006:37), or as the perceived legitimacy of intentionally injurious acts (Bredemeier, 1985; Duda et al., 1991; Silva, 1983, in Sage, 2006:37). The latter variable has been referred to in the literature as legitimacy judgments, and it has been argued that these judgments constitute moral judgments (Weiss & Bredemeier, 1990, in Sage, 2006:37). Previous research has not distinguished between pro-social and antisocial judgments but this was attended to in the present study by determining footballers' perceived appropriateness of both pro-social and antisocial behaviors (Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001; Ommundsen et al., 2003; Stuart & Ebbeck, 1995, in Sage, 2006:37). The terms pro-social and antisocial functioning were used to refer to pro-social and antisocial judgments and behaviors respectively.

Competitive settings can be pivotal in determining participants' behavior. When a competitive dichotomy of winning and losing is emphasized competitors are likely to engage in negative social behaviors. Indeed, research has shown that in competitive sport environments behaviors such as cheating, breaking the rules, and intentionally injuring an opponent are not uncommon (e.g., Kavussanu et al., 2006, in Sage, 2006:110). However, the popular belief that sport builds character suggests that competition may also support positive social behaviors. Identifying the characteristics of competitive settings that are associated with positive and negative social behaviors is vital in promoting the type of social moral conduct that can benefit the majority of participants.

Understanding how and why sports influence the ethical character of individuals is necessary for coaches and physical educators, especially those who believe sport is a vehicle for moral growth. Research findings on sports ethics could have important implications regarding how sport is best taught and played. The ethics of athletes have been assessed in several ways, including the examination of moral reasoning, athletic aggression, rule violations and cheating, and sportspersonship. Studies that have assessed these various facets of sports ethics observed notable trends across sex, level of contact, and competition level. However, many of these findings have been inconsistent (Tucker & Parks, 2001; Keeler, 2007, in Kaye & Ward, 2010), and the debate continues as to whether sports participation contributes to increased or decreased sportspersonship among athletes.

For nearly fifty years, much of research involves comparisons of the traits, attitudes, and behaviors of people who participate in particular organized competitive sports at a particular time with the traits, attitudes, and behaviors of those who do not. These snapshot comparisons have provided inconsistent and confusing result. This is because "character" is difficult to measure, and researchers have used multiple definitions of character in their studies (Stoll and Beller, 1998, in Coakley, 2001:92). Furthermore, many researchers have based their studies on two faulty assumptions about sports and sport experiences (McCormack and Chalip, 1998, in Coakley, 2001:92). First, researchers have wrongly assumed that all organized competitive sports involve similar character-shaping experiences for all athletes. Second, they have wrongly assumed that the character-shaping experiences in organized sports are so unique that people who don't play sports are at a disadvantage when it comes to developing certain positive traits, attitudes, and behaviors.

According Coakley (2001:92), sport participation is most likely to have positive effects on people's lives when it is associated with the following:
1. Opportunities for testing and developing identities apart from playing sports.
2. Knowledge of the world and how it works.
3. Experiences that go beyond the locker room and the playing field.
4. Formation of new relationships, including relationships outside of sports.
5. Clear lessons about how sport experiences can be used as a basis for dealing with challenges outside of sports.
6. Opportunities for other people to see, define, and deal with a person as more than just an athlete.
7. Opportunities to develop competence and become responsible in activities outside of sports.
Conclusion

Stemming from social learning, structural developmental, and social cognitive theories, the study of morality has flourished in the context of sport. Debate continues as to whether the traditional purposes for sports participation, as a vehicle for character development, have been replaced by breeding grounds for immorality. Detractors from the argument that sport builds character prompted a line of research focusing on the negative aspects of moral thought and behavior.

The emergence of these statements that the exercise will shape one’s character, still questionable. With the belief that this vague, needs further research related to sports and character, the reason is: (1) there is no consistency in the findings of studies that have been done related to this case, (2) the development of character will not happen automatically if someone does a sport, (3) development of a person’s character will occur when physical activity, including sports, done deliberately with the proper design of activities aimed at the building of one particular character.

Reference


