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Abstract

Moral behavior in sports is one of the most important issues that concern sportspersons. The aim of the present study was to examine whether the ethical work climate that prevails in non profit sport teams is related to moral behaviours (sportspersonship). Two hundred and fourteen students of three sport schools (n = 126 males, n = 88 females), aged between 12 - 18 years, from ten different sports (both individual and team) have been used in this study. The students filled in the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ; Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988) and the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientation Scale (Vallerand, Briere, Blanchard, & Provencher, 1997). The results revealed the presence of a caring climate in non profit sport teams. Moreover, it was found that the individual climate is positively related to the four dimensions of sportspersonship, while the machiavellianism climate is negatively related to the dimension respect for rules and officials.

Key Words: Ethical climate, Sportspersonship, Non profit sport.
Sport is an “industry” which comprises several types of sport organizations (both profit and non profit ones). The innate characteristics of sport, represented by each sport organisation, affect the participants’ moral growth in different ways (Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields, & Cooper, 1986; Tucker & Parks, 2001). For this reason, the ethical work climate, which prevails in all organizations, is very important as it can be related to different forms of moral behaviours (Cullen, Victor, & Stephens, 1989; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994).

The ethical climate in sport organizations has been established as a notion which describes the prevailing viewpoint of this very organization concerning rules, values and behaviour (Schneider, 1975). Generally, the notion of climate has been widely accepted as the means for interpreting the behaviour of an organization, and more specifically moral behaviour, (Morgan & Volkwein, 1992; Olson, 1995; Trevino, 1990). In addition, the climate has been considered to be the informal interpreter and judge of an individual’s organizational behaviour (Malloy & Agarwal, 2001). More specifically, (as maintained by Malloy & Malloy, 2001) many researchers have suggested that the ethical climate in organizations influences the moral conduct of membership (Cohen, 1995; Schneider, 1975; Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988).

The ethical climate construct has been examined in (profit) organizations by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) combining the theoretical constructs of cognitive moral development, ethical theory and locus of analysis. They were based on Kohlberg’s and colleagues (Higgins, Power, & Kohlberg, 1984; Kohlberg, 1984) findings, indicating that an individual’s cognitive ability to reason through moral dilemmas is developmental. Within this theoretical framework for the examination of moral climate, Victor and Cullen (1988) proposed five distinct types of organizational ethical climate: instrumental, caring, law and code, rules and independence. The instrumental climate encourages self-servicing, economically driven behaviour on part of the individual worker. The caring climate is the one indicating a concern for joint welfare of the individuals or the organization as a whole. While a rule oriented climate suggests an orientation towards compliance on firm level; the law and codes climate is indicative of compliance to a more broadly defined code of ethics (i.e., profession or state). The independence climate emphasizes guidance from the individual employee’s personal values and ethics. The instrumental climate falls within the egoism category, caring falls within benevolence, and law and code, rules, and independence all fall within the principle category of ethical theory. These dimensions were determined using the three major classes of ethical theory (egoism, benevolence, principled ethical grounding), combined with three areas of organization analysis (individual, local, and cosmopolitan). Victor and Cullen (1988) studied this $3 \times 3$ matrix. Using principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation they found that there were five distinct ethical climates.
However, the distribution of locus of analysis has not yet been confirmed in any study of non profit sport organization (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999). Specifically, the above-mentioned authors found that in the not-profit sector, there seems to be an absence of perceptions of ethical climate concerning the organization itself (i.e., the local locus of analyses). Agarwal and Malloy (1999), making use of the framework and the gauge for the measurement of perception concerning the ethical climate of Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988), concluded in five dimensions (individual caring, Machiavellianism, independence, social caring, law and code) of ethical criteria and locus of analysis. Malloy and Agarwal (2001, p. 201) referred that, a Machiavellian climate is perceived as being a competitive and careerist environment where the stronger survive. An individual caring climate is perceived as the members being personally concerned with the individual’s well being. The climate described as independence allows for individual freedom and responsibility within the organizational setting. Social caring refers to an organization where members perceive that this organization is concerned with the welfare of the commonwealth and not just with its own survival. Finally, law and code refers to a structured organizational climate driven by formal policy and procedure.

To date, the research concerning the ethical work climate according to the literature has generally focused on profit organizations (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999), while in the case of non profit organizations the research was not thorough enough (Deshpande, 1996; Malloy & Agarwal, 2001). Agarwal and Malloy (1999) in an effort to explain such a lack of interest claimed that by all probability, this is due to the fact that in non profit organizations – because of a deficiency of non-distribution constraint – individuals are led to unethical behaviours. More specifically, they maintained that the members’ moral behaviour in this sector is rather a mandate typically to serve (i.e., the rule of behaviour is consistent with values such as benevolence and caring). However, nowadays in amateur sport the phenomenon of profit distribution has taken the form of wages for athletes and coaches, therefore this lack of interest should not exist.

According to the literature, Malloy and Agarwal (2003) claimed that a whole range of factors have been found to affect ethical climate. These factors have been gender, age, moral education, organizational factors, ethical codes, company policy, the level of moral development and the organizational commitments, as well as the nature and frequency of moral dilemmas. However, the authors maintained that it has not been examined whether these conclusions are valid within the framework of non profit organizations. Recently, Proios, Athanailidis, and Arvanitidou (2009) have studied the perceptions concerning the ethical work climate of 142 members of non profit sports clubs in relation to the goals (either of development or performance) of the teams. Initially, the authors found that the team members were “caring”
oriented. They also found that among the team members confusion prevailed concerning whether the ethical climate they cultivated corresponded to a principled (or independence, rules and procedures, or law and professional code) work climate – based on universal ethical principles such as honesty, justice and fairness – would support ethical actions by sport participants. Others studies (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999; Malloy & Agarwal, 2001) revealed that the members of the non profit sector apprehended that the cosmopolitan norms prevail in their organizations. Agarwal and Malloy (1999) reported that “individuals in the not-for-profit sector may perceive ethical climate as more supportive towards personal growth and wellbeing and towards social responsibility than to the organization in which they work and/or volunteer” (p. 10).

It has been previously mentioned that the ethical climate in organizations influences their members’ moral behaviour. Kohlberg and his colleagues identified the moral atmosphere as a critical influence on people’s moral behaviour (Higgins, Power, & Kohlberg, 1984; Power & Reimer, 1978). The moral behaviour in sport has been studied, mainly, through a dimension of ethics called “sportspersonship”. Sportspersonship is a concept difficult to define (Malloy, Ross, & Zakus, 2000). This is because not all types of behaviour have been thoroughly clarified in relation to this concept. In spite of this difficulty, great efforts have been made in the past to define sportspersonship. For example, Shields and Bredemeier (1995) defined sportspersonship in the sport context, as the virtue of coordinating the play impulse with the competitive impulse in the light of moral goals. Gough (1997) claimed that sportspersonship cannot be viewed outside the framework of moral behaviour in sport. Apart from the debate as to the definition of “sportspersonship”, the term itself is often used in the evaluation of moral behaviour (e.g., Dunn & Dunn, 1999).

Vallerand and colleagues (1996, 1997) proposed a five-fold conceptualization of sportspersonship. First, it is posited that sportspersonship consists of expressing concern and showing respect for the rules and officials, regardless whether one gets penalized by them during a competition. The second orientation is interpreted as expressing concern and showing respect to the opponent. For instance, the athlete would refuse to win by default, should the opponent be late or injured. The third orientation deals with the acceptance of the implicit social conventions underlying in sport (e.g., being a good loser). The fourth orientation deals with the quality of personal commitment to sport. Standing and hard training sessions are representative of this particular orientation. In opposition to the above, the fifth orientation concerns a negative approach to the participation in sport and manifests itself by a “win at all costs” attitude. The athlete would then have the tendency to break the rules and resort to aggression.

The role of moral atmosphere prevailing in a team is crucial in the shaping of moral behaviours in sport (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). The moral atmosphere or ethical work climate in sport refers to the characteristics of the sport
environment that can be determinant of the performance of the moral actions performed by the participants (Weiss & Smith, 2002). Research has shown that when a team accepts aggressive and deceptive behaviours, such behaviours can be well expected by the athletes (e.g., Stephens, 2000, 2001; Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996; Stephens & Kavanagh, 2003). Guivernau and Duda (2002) examining the relationships and moral atmosphere of a team of 194 European football players (both males and females, aged between 13-19 years) with aggressive behaviour, found that the athletes’ perceptions of their team’s aggression norms emerged as the most consistent predictor of their self-described likelihood to aggress. Shields et al. (2007) examining the personal and social correlates of poor sportspersonship found that self-reported poor sport behaviours were best predicted by perceived coach and spectator behaviours, followed by team norms, sportspersonship attitudes, and the perceived norms of parents and coaches. Similarly, Smith (1979), Stuart and Ebbeck, 1995) and Guivernau and Duda (2002) found that the parents’ moral influence is also significant.

The motivational climate is another characteristic of sport environment, the affect of which on moral atmosphere has been previously researched. Examining the relationship between the perceived motivational climate and moral functioning as well as moral atmosphere among competitive young football players, Miller, Robers, and Ommundsen (2005) found that performance climate provides significantly a pro-aggressive moral atmosphere facilitated by the coach and moral reasoning, while mastery climate provides more mature moral reasoning as well as the establishment of an appropriate moral atmosphere. While, Kavussanu and Spray (2006) found that collective norms and perception of a performance climate were correlated with moral functioning variables.

Sport is an area comprising a great number of sports which shape individual unique characters and a set of values (Quito, 1998). This suggests that the moral atmosphere which prevails in the environment of each sport organization can affect the moral decision making (Higgins et al., 1984). The factors that can affect the moral atmosphere are the level of competition in each sport, the nature of each sport (e.g., the level of physical contact), the orientation of the coaches’, the parents’ and the athletes’ motivation climate, the coaches’ leadership style and the moral dialogue which prevails in the team (Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996).

In the Greek amateur (non professional) sport system, the individuals who are members of sport teams are not salaried, thus being characterized as volunteers, in contrast to the teams of foreign countries, where apart from volunteers there are organizational members as well. Malloy and Agarwal (2001) suggested that volunteers are able to influence the ethical perceptions of the organizational members to a greater extent than those of the organizational co-workers. The investigation of the relation between the perceived ethical work climate and moral behaviour, in combination to the inability to determine
the prevailing ethical work climate in non profit sport teams, increases the importance of the present study.

The main aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between the ethical climate prevailing in non profit sport teams and an aspect of moral development; more specifically, the relationship between the perceived ethical climate and the sportspersonship of both male and female athletes. A side aim of the present study was to examine whether there were any differences in the ethical work climate perceived by male and female athletes of non profit sport teams, as far as both individual – such as age and gender – and organizational factors – such as type of the sport – are concerned.

Based on the literature which maintains that the moral behaviour is affected by the ethical climate of the organization (e.g., Deshpande, 1996; Victor & Cullen, 1990; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994), we hypothesized that the ethical work climate prevailing in non profit sport teams would be related to moral behaviours – in particular with an aspect of moral development, i.e. sportspersonship. More specifically, here it was considered that some scales of ethical climate would be related to certain dimensions of sportspersonship. Furthermore, taking under consideration the cognitive – developmental theory, namely that the way of thinking (i.e., the moral principles or values) changes with the individual's development (Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932), we hypothesized that age should affect perception, concerning ethical climate. In the present study a respective hypothesis was made concerning gender as well. This hypothesis was based on the consideration that males and females have a different perception of morality (Gilligan, 1982). In addition, the claim that each type of sport affects moral development in a different way (Tucker & Parks, 2001) has led to the hypothesis that the ethical climate prevailing in sports should also be different.

Method

Participants

In the present study, 214 athletes of three sport schools have participated. Their age ranged between 12 - 18 years (M = 14.32, SD = 1.51). They were 126 males and 88 females, participating in nine different sports: gymnastics (n = 30), volleyball (n = 30), football (n = 46), handball (n = 33), basketball (n = 19), track and field (n = 14), wrestling (n = 15), swimming (n = 13), and weight lifting (n = 14).

Measurements

Initially, the students had to fill in some demographic information, such as their school, age, gender and the sport which they participated in. Then, the
students were asked to express their viewpoint concerning the ethical work climate prevailing in their teams, as well as their disposition towards sportspersonship, by filling in the Ethical Climate Questionnaire and the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientation Scale.

**Ethical Climate Questionnaire.** The ECQ was developed by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988). The five dimensions extracted by Agarwal and Malloy (1999, 2001) in the not-profit context were used for this study: Individual caring, Machiavellianism, independence, social caring and law and code. For the purposes of the present study, a modified version of ECQ was used to discover shared normative values and beliefs within the sport teams as well as to assess the respondents’ perceptions of how the members of their respective sport teams typically make decisions requiring ethical judgments. In other words, we tried to understand what ethical norms influenced the members of the teams in their ethical decision-making process. The items were prefaced with the heading “In my team…”. Several items were reworded in order to make them more athletes-specific. For example, item “33. Decision makers in this organization are very concerned about what is best for themselves” was rephrased into “... the decision makers are interested in what is best for themselves”, item “30. Decision makers in this organization are actively concerned about the athletes’ and the public’s interests” into “... the decision makers are concerned with the interests of both athletes and the audience”. For each item, subjects responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored from “I strongly agree” (5 points) to “I strongly disagree” (1 point).

**Sportspersonship.** A Greek translation (Pavlopoulou, Goniadou, Zachariadis, & Tsorbatzoudis, 2003) of a version of the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1997) was used in order to estimate the Greek players’ attitudes towards sportspersonship. The scale consists of 25 items, which create five factors, “commitment”, “social conventions”, “rules and officials”, “opponent”, and “approach towards sportspersonship is negative”. The respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree, 5 = I strongly agree).

**Statistical analyses**

Procedures in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 10.0) were utilized for data analysis. Factor analysis with principal axis factoring extraction and oblique rotation was conducted to identify the dimensions of ethical work climate. The AMOS program was used to test the fit of the data to the five-factor model (Arbuckle, 1997). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the association of the dimensions of ethical work climate with age, gender of the members of sport teams, as well as the type of sport of the team. Standard multiple regression analyses were
used in order to estimate the relation between the dimensions of ethical work climate and those of sportspersonship.

Procedure

For the conduct of this study, initially permission was asked from the relevant Physical Education Bureau of Secondary Education. Then, the physical education instructors, competent for each sport, individually collected the forms from the above-mentioned bureau and handed them to the students. The filling in of the questionnaires was held in the training area. Moreover, it should be underlined that no additional explanations, concerning the filling in of the questionnaires, were provided. This means that the athletes were asked to answer the questions based on their comprehension of the issues involved.

Results

Scales analyses

*Ethical climate work.* A confirmatory factor analysis was used, as because there was a priori knowledge of the number of factors of ECQ (Stevens, 1996). A five-factor correlated model was postulated. Four measures of model fit are reported: $x^2$, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). According to Hu and Bentler (1999), for CFI and GFI a cut-off value close to .90 for Mc and a cut-off value close to .60 for RMSEA are needed before declaring a relative good fit between the observed data and the hypothesized model. The results indicate that the five correlated factors model reveals parsimonious fit ($x^2 (90) = 221.1 \quad p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.87, GFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06). Inspection of the standardized residual covariances matrix revealed that three observed variables, “13. It is expected that you will always do what is right for the athlete and public”, “16. There is no room for one’s own personal morals or ethics in this organization” and “17. Decision makers in this organization have a strong sense of responsibility to the outside community” yielded values well above two on many occasions. These large values indicate that the three variables are not being well explained by the proposed model (Bentler, 1995). Thus, the analysis was repeated excluding the three aforementioned items. Although the $x^2$ value was significant, all fit indices indicated satisfactory fit of the model ($x^2 (80) = 128.7 \quad p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.92, GFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.05).

The internal factors’ coherence of the questionnaire was examined by the test of Cronbach alpha. The results indicated a satisfactory validity of the questionnaire. More specifically, the sub-scales reliabilities were: “individual caring”, $\alpha = 0.67$, “independence”, $\alpha = 0.71$, “Machiavellianism”, $\alpha = 0.75$, “so-
cial caring”, \( \alpha = 0.69 \), and “law and code”, \( \alpha = 0.66 \). Although some scales had alpha values were lower than the recommended 0.70 criterion (Nunnally, 1978), it should be noted that alpha coefficients are highly dependent upon the number of items (Cortina, 1993; Schmitt, 1996). A low number of items could partly explain the marginal alpha values of the individual caring scale (2 items), social caring (2 items) and law and code (4 items).

**Sportspersonship.** A principal component analysis was conducted on the MSOS to examine the factorial validity. The items loaded on five factors with eigenvalues greater than unit and accounted for 53.05% of the variance. For the five dimensions of the MSOS, the coefficient alphas were the following: for "commitment" \( \alpha = 0.71 \), for "social conventions" \( \alpha = 0.76 \), for "rules and officials" \( \alpha = 0.67 \), for "the opponent" \( \alpha = 0.66 \), and for "negative approach" \( \alpha = 0.46 \). The low value of the "negative approach" subscale was the reason for its exclusion from the subsequent analyses.

**Descriptive statistic**

From the descriptive statistics (Table 1) aspect, it was initially established that the male and female athletes' perception concerning the ethical work climate prevailing in their teams is caring oriented (both individual and social). On the contrary, as far as the law and code climate as well as the independence climate is concerned, it was shown that the athletes were not that confident whether it actually existed in their teams or not; while the Machiavellianism climate was shown that possibly did not exist in their teams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td><strong>Ethical Climate</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual caring</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Machiavellianism</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Independence</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social caring</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Law and code</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.33**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sportspersonship</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Commitment</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Social conventions</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Rules and officials</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Opponent</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\( p < .05 \), **\( p < .01 \).
As far as the sportspersonship dimensions are concerned (see Table 1), it was found that the athletes respected the personal commitments they undertook by participating into sport, while they also accepted the social conventions. On the contrary, they have shown that they surely respect the rules and officials, but not the opponent.

Simple correlations were calculated in order to determine the relationship among the five ethical work climate scales and the four dimensions of sportspersonship (Table 1). The individual caring subscale was positively related to the dimensions commitment \( (r = 0.37, p < 0.01) \), social conventions \( (r = 0.33, p < 0.01) \), rules and officials \( (r = 0.31, p < 0.01) \), and opponent \( (r = 0.20, p < 0.01) \). The Machiavellianism subscale was negatively related to the dimension rules and officials \( (r = -0.22, p < 0.01) \). The independence scale was not correlated to none of the dimensions of sportspersonship. The social caring subscale was positively related to the dimensions commitment \( (r = 0.31, p < 0.01) \) and opponent \( (r = 0.20, p < 0.01) \). Finally, the law and code subscales were positively related to the dimensions commitment, rules and officials, and opponent.

**Differences between Age, Gender, Type of Sport and Types of Ethical Climate**

A series of multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) was used in order to examine the influence of age, gender and type of sport in the Ethical Climate scales (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Initially, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance was performed with the use of 5 ECQ scales (Individual Caring, Machiavellianism, Independence, Social Caring, Law and Code) as dependent variables and the Age as independent variable. The results did not reveal any significant multivariate effect for the age. On the contrary, in the other multivariate analyses, the results indicated significant multivariate effects concerning the gender \( (\text{Wilks' lambda} = .936, F(5,192) = 2.36, p < .05) \), and the type of sport \( (\text{Wilks' lambda} = .693, F(8,189) = 1.78, p < .01) \).

Subsequent univariate analyses (Table 2) showed that gender diversified ethical climate from social caring. Furthermore, the univariate analyses showed that the type of sport diversified ethical climate from individual caring, Machiavellianism and social caring. There followed a subsequent Tukey test for unequal values among the types of sport (Stevens, 1996). The results of the analysis indicated a predominance of the individual caring climate, which prevailed in handball, in comparison to that of wrestling \( (t^2 = .56, p < .05) \). The Machiavellianism climate appeared to highly prevail in track and field, as compared to gymnastics, football and handball \( (t^2 = .94, p < .01, t^2 = .93, p < .01, t^2 = 1.05, p < .001) \), respectively. Finally, social caring climate was proved to be predominant in gymnastics in comparison to basketball \( (t^2 = .63, p < .01) \) and in handball as compared to volleyball, basketball and wrestling \( (t^2 = .49, p < .05, t^2 = .76, p < .001, t^2 = .58, p < .05) \), respectively.
Table 2. *Univariate Analyses of Gender and Types of Sports in 5 ECQ scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Climate</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual caring</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>(1,196)</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machiavellism</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>(1,196)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>(1,196)</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social caring</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>(1,196)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Code</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>(1,196)</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual caring</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>(8,189)</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machiavellism</td>
<td>.862</td>
<td>(8,189)</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>.925</td>
<td>(8,189)</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social caring</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>(8,189)</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and code</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>(8,189)</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ns: no significant

Relationship between Type Ethical Climate and Dimensions Sportspersonship

It was hypothesized that ethical work climate can affect the dimensions of sportspersonship. Standard multiple regression analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) were conducted to examine the possible moderating role of ethical work climate in predicting the athletes' sportspersonship. In the regression analyses, the five ethical climate scales were used as predictor variables for each of the four dimensions of sportspersonship. The results indicated a significant relationship between ethical work climate and the four dimensions respect for full commitment ($R = .421$, $R^2 = .153$, $F (5,153) = 7.49$, $p < .001$), accounting for the 15.3% of the variance, respect for the social conventions, ($R = .378$, $R^2 = .143$, $F (5,180) = 5.99$, $p < .001$), accounting for the 14.3% of the variance, respect for the rules and officials ($R = .353$, $R^2 = .124$, $F (5,182) = 5.17$, $p < .001$), accounting for the 12.4% of the variance and respect for the opponent ($R = .251$, $R^2 = .063$, $F (5,174) = 2.33$, $p < .05$), accounting for the 6.3% of the variance.

The standardized beta coefficient (Table 3), revealed a positive effect for climate individual caring on the dimensions respect for full commitment ($β = .296$), respect for social conventions ($β = .370$), respect for rules and officials ($β = .193$) and respect for the opponent ($β = .182$). What's more, a positive effect of climate social caring was found for the dimension respect for full commitment ($β = .218$). Finally, a negative effect of Machiavellianism climate was found for the dimension respect for the rules and officials ($β = -.152$).
Table 3. Standard Regression Analyses of Five Scales Ethical Climate Predicting Sportspersonship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect for full commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual caring</td>
<td>.330</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.296**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social caring</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.218**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for social conventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual caring</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.370**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for rules and officials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual caring</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.193*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machiavellianism</td>
<td>-.120</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.152*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for the opponent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual caring</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.182*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .001

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between ethical climate and sportspersonship as well as to investigate age and gender differences in the ethical work climate athletes of non-profit sport teams, and organizational factors as the type of the sport.

The results of the present study, initially, supported the viewpoint that in non-profit contexts a “caring climate” (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999) prevails. More specifically, they maintained that in non-profit teams a climate of individual caring and social caring prevails, as it results from the scores on the perceived ethical climate of both male and female athletes. This is further reinforced by the findings of another recent study (Proios, Athanailidis, & Arvanitidou, 2009). Thus, it is well understood that the benevolent climates prevalence in sport teams can lead the organizational members of those teams to a sincere interest concerning the athletes (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994).

The results of the present study supported the former hypothesis that ethical work climate affects the athletes’ sportspersonship behaviour. Previous studies maintained the significant influence of a set of factors such as coaches and/or team-mates (e.g., Guivernau & Duda, 2002; Smith, 2003), parents (e.g., Smith, 1979; Stuart & Ebbeck, 1995), and coaches, team-mates, parents and spectators (Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker, & Hegreness, 2009; Shields, LaVoi, Bredemeier, & Power, 2007) in the shaping of moral atmos-
phere. More specifically, the results of the present study revealed a positive relation between the benevolent climate shaped by the managers of non profit sport teams and the athletes' moral behaviours, as they are expresses by the dimensions of sportspersonship. This conclusion is further supported by the results of other studies that revealed a positive correlations between the organizational citizenship behaviour in sport and sportsmanship behaviours (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Bommer, 1996), a relationship between manager trustworthiness and citizenship behaviours (e.g., Chiaburu & Lim, 2008; Mayer & Gavin, 2005), and a negative relation between benevolent climates and unethical behaviour (Peterson, 2002). Wimbush, Shepard and Markham (1997) claimed that a relation between ethical climate and behaviour is expected when the criteria for ethical decision making correspond to the empirically derived dimensions of the ethical climate. For instance, if the dimensions of the ethical climate, which are affected by the decisions – both political and practical – made by the organizational members of a sport team, support the decision making on the basis of respect of all mankind (characteristic of the caring climate), then all the athletes of this very team are expected to be more ethical.

The features characterizing a benevolent climate is the cooperation, the mutual personal affinity and the positive feelings towards the goals (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003), something that can establish a positive affective tone among the organizational members (Wech, Mossholder, Steel, & Bennett, 1998). Then, this climate can affect the behaviours of both male and female athletes. More specifically, the positive correlation of the benevolent climate dimensions, and mainly that of individual caring, with the dimensions of sportspersonship, that was traced in the present study, reveals that the benevolent climate in a sport team can affect the respect to all those commitments that someone makes by participating in sport, the acceptance of social conventions applied in sport, the respect to the rules and officials during a game, and the respect to the opponents. Such a correlation reveals that an ethical work climate in sport teams with benevolent characteristics can lead to moral behaviours revealed by the athletes (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994).

However, neither male nor female athletes have shown, according to the scores, that they undoubtedly respect the opponents or the rules and officials. This can be due to the fact that the scores of the climates independence and law and code, which constitute elements of the ethical criterion of principle (Victor & Cullen, 1988), were modest. This reveals that the organizational members of non profit sport teams, actually, make their decisions on the basis of the moral criterion of benevolent rather than the principle, something that is verified by the conclusions of another study (Proios et al., 2009). In addition, such an outcome further reinforces the allegation that the moral framework of an organization is related to the obligations undertaken by this
very organization (Cullen et al., 2003; Oz, 2001; Trevino, Butterfield, & McCabe, 1998). According to Cullen et al (2003), these findings suggest that the ethical climates create a psychological environment that shapes the perceptions, which affect the degree of the obligation that the employee feels towards his/her organization. Thus the athletes, by realizing the interest of the organizational members towards them and towards the team, feel obliged to them and try to satisfy them by having their team win. This usually leads to the superseding of moral principles or values (Lumpkin, 1990), such as not respecting the opponent or the rules and officials.

Another result that has been revealed by means of the present study is the inter-correlations among the several types of climate. This result reinforces the decision made by Agarwal and Malloy (1999), and Malloy and Agarwal (2001) to make use of the principal axis factoring with oblique rotation method, instead of the principal component analysis with varimax rotation method. Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988), as well as Cullen, Victor, and Bronson (1993), in their studies – although they have established a relevant independence among scales – they suggested that, theoretically, there could exist some dependence to one or more of those very scales. They have also maintained that “[w]hile greater scale independence may be desirable to tap the better uniqueness of each type of climate, the theoretical relationships among the constructs does not demand strict independence” (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 62). For instance, (as sited by Agarwal & Malloy, 1999), it is not inconceivable that the ethical dimension of “caring” and “law and code”, from Victor and Cullen’s 1987 study, could be theoretically related. These two dimensions are, in fact, the basis of the ethical theory, rule utilitarianism, which focuses upon the greatest good for the greatest number through the adherence of pre-established rules of conduct (Raphael, 1981).

Although the literature has acknowledged the importance of age in the study of morality, the results of the present study have not shown any significant differences in the perception of ethical climate among the different ages of both male and female athletes. This result has not confirmed our hypothesis that age affects ethical climate and comes in contrast to the claim that age trend data indicate that people develop over time (Rest, Deemer, Barnett, Spickelmier, & Volker, 1986). However, in literature and within the vast social area, there are references which support that age does not constitute such a tenacious factor towards the evaluation of moral judgment (Kracher, Chatterjee, & Lundquist, 2002; Rest, Thoma, Lin Moon, & Getz, 1986). Moreover, Rest et al (1986) have mentioned that “Age trend data indicate that people do develop over time, but it does not indicate why or how – i.e., the causes, conditions, and mechanisms of development” (p. 32). In addition, the weak weight of age as a factor for the evaluation of moral judgment is further verified by Luthar, DiBattista, and Gautschi (1997), who, by examining the findings of
several studies, came to the conclusion that, while the persons' ethical attitudes seem to change with age, yet, no single factor can be identified as causing such a change. As far as sport is concerned, the studies on the moral development of both male and female athletes were exponent. Thus, according to Priest, Krause and Beach (1999) age differences in moral reasoning scores (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Case, Greer, & Lacourse, 1987) or lack of age differences (Beller & Stoll, 1995; Bredemeier, 1994) may reflect cohort differences rather than developmental. However, a recent study in which male soccer players aged from 8 to 25 years participated, revealed a significant effect of age on the cognitive and behavioural components of moral functioning (Romand, Pantaleon, & Cabagno, 2009).

Except age, another individual factor examined in the present study was gender. We hypothesized that the notion concerning ethical climate in terms of gender would be different. This hypothesis was confirmed by the results that revealed significant differences in the perceptive ethical work climate among male and female athletes. The conclusion of a recently conducted study on “care orientation” as a means for explaining the gender differences in ethical decision making, revealed that, at least where a “care” orientation is invited, women judge situations differently from men (Bampton & Maclagan, 2009). These findings further reinforced Gilligan’s (1982) claim that males and females approach the resolving of moral dilemmas in a different way. She contends that men are more likely to consider moral issues in terms of justice, rules, and individual rights. On the other hand, she believes that women tend to consider such issues in terms of relationships, caring and compassion (Gilligan, 1982).

The search for gender differences on moral behaviour or the perception of ethical climate in profit organizations has provided contradictory results (Malloy & Agarwal, 2003). On the contrary, studies on non profit sport teams have proved that the prevailing climate is that of individual caring “feminine” (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999; Proios et al., 2009). The above mentioned disclosure supports the result of the present study concerning the existence of differences on the climate perception depending on gender. This result is justified by the fact that in non profit organizations a caring climate prevails, something that further improves the moral development of females. Thus, it is well understood what the findings of previous studies on sport are due to, i.e. that the females’ level of moral reasoning is higher than that of the males’ (e.g., Bredemeier & Shields, 1984; Bredemeier, 1994; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001).

In the present study and in the framework of organizational factors, the impact of the type of sport on the perception of ethical climate in non profit teams was examined. In sport teams, as in any other team, according to Bredemeier (1997), a moral atmosphere, which constitutes of collective norms that facilitate the shaping of moral actions to all team members, is developed.
The results of this study revealed that every sport team creates a different work climate confirming the hypothesis that the ethical climate among the several types of sports is different. This reveals that the teams’ collective norms on moral behaviour, as they are determined by the organizational members of the teams, represent different values. This finding supports the claim that each type of sports has its own unique character and set of values (Quieto, 1998). More specifically, there are collision sports, contact sports, and non-contact sports or individual and team sports, and it seems that the inherent characteristics of the different types of sports affect moral development in a dissimilar manner (Bredemeier et al., 1986; Tucker & Parks, 2001).

More specifically, the results of the present study revealed differences among the different types of sports as far as individual caring, Machiavellianism and social caring climates are concerned. Differences in ethical climate among sports have been established in previous studies as well (Beller & Stoll, 1995; Priest et al., 1999). Bredemeier and Shields (1986) found that basketball players achieved lower moral reasoning scores than swimmers. They attributed such difference to the likelihood that the players of a team contact sport, such as basketball, are more involved in moral negotiations with the opponents. Miller and Jarman (1988) also suggested that team sports (e.g., basketball) and individual sports (e.g., swimming) have different ethical climates. They, however, indicated another reason for the diversification of the projection of moral responsibility onto the officials in team sports. The findings of this study seem to confirm Miller and Jarman’s observation that team sports and individual sports have different ethical climates.

Finally, from the examination of the relation between ethical climate and several moral behaviours another result found was that the Machiavellianism climate is negatively related to the respect for the rules and officials dimension. This result confirms the claim that an egoistic work climate would support individual’s unethical behaviour (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). Tang and Chen (2008) supported that Machiavellianism has a mediator of the relationship between the love of money and unethical behaviour. A highly Machiavellian individual believes that it is acceptable to use any means, including manipulation, persuasion and deceit, to achieve a desired end (Hunt & Chonko, 1984). High Machiavellians have a lack of concern with conventional morality (lying, cheating, etc.) because they have a utilitarian, rather than moral, view of their interactions with others (Beu, Baidley, & Harvey, 2003). Finally, these results suggest that, when the individuals perceive that in their team there is a caring climate then they are expected to reveal a disposition towards moral behaviour.

The present study suggests that a benevolent climate in a sport team can add to the development of moral behaviour characteristics, such as sportspersonship. The ethical work climate, which mainly prevails in non profit sport
teams, is the caring climate. This climate was found to affect the shaping of moral behaviour. Moreover, when intervening programs are implemented for the improvement of behaviours, they should take under consideration both the athletes' gender and the type of sport as well. Concluding, we support that the organizational members of sport teams could become an important factor for the athletes' moral development. For this reason, it is suggested that the members of organizations should be prepared on moral issues. The decision making process in the context of business ethics can be affected by implicit moral attitudes (Marquardt & Hoeger, 2009), while, the ethical education is a factor that can affect moral behaviour (Mayhew & Murphy, 2009).

References


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