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The Values Associated with the Sport: Analysis and Evaluation of *Sportspersonship*

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Abstract

There is a general opinion that social and moral values play an essential role in learning sports among children and teenagers. This article identifies some of the values associated with sports. Based on a content analysis of the Code of Sports Ethics of the Council of Europe, the values associated with sportspersonship have been categorized: Commitment, Enjoyment, Respect, Fair Play and Participation. Using this categorization, the article describes the development of an instrument designed to assess sportspersonship in young athletes: the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Questionnaire (MSQ), consisting of 21 typical performance items which show an adequate internal structure. Lastly, in light of developing future training programs to reinforce positive values, an analysis was performed on the relationships between the different categories of values, gender and type of sport.

Keywords: sport initiation, sportspersonship, youth sport, fair play.

Resumen

Dada la importancia que los valores sociales y morales juegan en el proceso de aprendizaje deportivo en la infancia y adolescencia temprana, el objetivo de este trabajo es identificar los valores asociados a la práctica deportiva. Sobre un análisis de contenido del Código de Ética Deportiva del *Consejo de Europa*, se definen los valores de *commitment*, *enjoyment*, *respect*, *fair play* y *participation*. A partir de esta categorización, se describen la construcción y las propiedades del *Cuestionario Multidimensional de Deportividad* (CMD). Compuesto por 21 ítems de rendimiento típico, el CMD presenta una adecuada estructura interna e invarianza factorial con respecto al sexo. Con el fin de desarrollar programas de formación que puedan potenciar valores, se analizan las relaciones entre las dimensiones postuladas, el sexo y la modalidad deportiva.

Palabras clave: iniciación deportiva, deportividad, deporte infantil, fair play.

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Introduction

In the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), explicit reference is made to a child's right to practice sport in a safe and healthy environment under the supervision of competent adults. This declaration of intent, which materialised in the Code of Sports Ethics of the Council of Europe, represents a commitment by European sport authorities not only to promote physical fitness and enjoyment but also to encourage respect, tolerance, equality and sportspersonship (Iturbide & Elosua, 2012).

However, there is no consensus among the scientific community on the most effective formula for developing training programmes that nurture values associated with sport. As pointed out by Gutiérrez, Carratalá, Guzmán and Pablos (2010), there are discrepancies in both how to define the values of sportspersonship and how to develop and transmit them. In fact, the lack of a theoretical framework consistent enough to integrate the training needs of young people and the educational aspirations of families may be one of the primary reasons behind the current proliferation of programmes geared to fomenting sportspersonship (Martín-Albo, Núñez, Navarro, & González, 2006).

A retrospective review of the topic shows an initial period in the 1980s, when scientific research focused evaluating attitudes, interpreting attributions and estimating perceived competence. In the 1990s the first systematic studies were published on the evaluation and cultivation of sports-related values, the most noteworthy by Lee (1993, 1996) as part of an international research project on the ethics in sports among young athletes.

Since that time, research on sportspersonship has been scarce, and at times based on very rudimentary instruments (Gómez-Mármol, De la Cruz, & Valero, 2014; Sáenz et al., 2014). Moreover, the absence of a universally accepted definition of "sportspersonship" and the lack of consensus regarding its inherent values, leads us to speak more of fair play than sportspersonship (Simón, 2015).

In this regard, Gómez-Mármol and Sánchez-Pato (2014) claim that sportspersonship is an ethical ideal made real by following the rules of the game, respecting opponents, and a committing to fair play; thus, a one-dimensional focus is insufficient. Sportspersonship, they claim, is an ideal of ethical conduct that gives meaning to fair play behaviors, while fair play is identified with particular behaviors characterised by respect for rules, maintaining equal opportunities and impartiality.

This focus, which considers values as desirable goals that serve as peoples' guidelines in life, brings us closer to the educational dimension of sport, a dimension which beyond acquiring psychomotor skills (Sallis et al., 2012), producing adaptive mental schemes (Kulinna, Brusseau, Cothran, & Tudor-Locke, 2012) and creating healthy behavior habits (González & Portolés, 2013), seeks the integral training and development of people (Gómez-Mármol & Valero, 2013). Sport, as Dorado (2012) contends, is the perfect scenario for establishing interpersonal relationships and learning values, which as they consolidate, are reflected in social behaviors such as solidarity, cooperation and teamwork.

However, taking part in sport does not on its own accord ensure the learning and development of values (García-Calvo, Sánchez-Oliva, Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, & Amado, 2012). On the contrary, it can also bring about disadvantages, especially if those responsible for organizing children's sports reproduce a model of professional sport that is competition- and result-oriented, putting the interests of adults over the educational needs of children and adolescents (Pinheiro, Camerino, & Sequeira, 2013).

Martínez et al. (2014) claim that while sports can be used as a driver for behaviors and attitudes, sport in itself does not have intrinsic values; it is neutral by nature, an aseptic thing on which the *environment* exerts its influence. This means that practicing sports, if organized according to models suitable to the age and skills of the participants, can be an effective educational tool. However, if it is focused on early-age specialisation and a reverence for results, it can generate anti-sportspersonship behaviors and truncate the learning process (Durán, 2013). For this reason, speaking of sport-related values tends to generate a certain vagueness and confusion (Hartmann, Sullivan, & Nelson, 2012). The term "value" lacks precision; the scarcity of instruments oriented to assessing values and the appearance of *constructs* difficult to conceptualize, like "countervalues" and "negative values", seem to explain the precariousness of the study of sport-related values in general and of sportspersonship in particular (Sáenz et al., 2014).

The *Rokeach Value Survey* (RVS) is among the instruments most commonly used to assess the values associated with sport. Conceived by Rokeach (1967, 1973), the objective of this scale is to determine which values people prefer or which values they most identify with. The RVS offers an inventory of 36 values, 18 instrumental values relating to modes of conduct such as responsibility, obedience or honesty, and 18 terminal values relating to states of existence such as interior harmony, freedom or happiness. The survey takers then have to rank the values according to how important they are as guidelines in life. The order of preference indicates which criteria they use to select and justify their actions, and to assess both people and situations.

Similar in structure and popularity is the *Schwartz Value Survey* (SVS), a list of 56 values (30 terminal and 26 instrumental) created by Schwartz (1992) which athletes rate on a Likert-type scale. Unlike the RVS, the classification criteria of this scale leans toward the motivations on which the values are based, considered a cognitive response of individuals to three types of basic needs: physiological, social and institutional. This approach to measuring values has been highly criticized, in some cases because the difference between instrumental and terminal values is imprecise, and in others because the distinction between personal and social values has received little empirical verification (Gouveia et al., 2010).

In an attempt to overcome these theoetical and mehodolical shortcomings, Lee, Whitehead & Balchin (2000) created the *Youth Sports Values Questionnaire* (YSVQ), an 18-item list of values (enjoyment, sportspersonship, companionship, compliance, fairness, etc.) to be evaluated by athletes on a 7-point rating scale of importance. This questionnaire showed that the most important values for young athletes were enjoyment, personal achievement and self-worth, while the least important were imitating idols and winning (Lee, Whitehead, Ntoumanis, & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2013).

Lastly, Vallerand, Brière, Blanchard and Provencher (1997) developed and validated the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientations Scale (MSOS), a 25-item questionnaire divided into five subscales (*commitment* toward sport participation; respect for *social conventions*; respect for *rules and officials*; respect for *opponents*, and *negative approach* toward sportspersonship) for determining individual differences in orientation to sportspersonship (Merino, Arraiz, & Sabirón, 2016).

The Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientation Scale has been used in a number of studies on sportspersonship (Can, 2016; De Bofarull & Cusí, 2014; Lamoneda, Huertas, Córdoba, & García, 2015; Monacis, De Palo, & Sinatra, 2015; Pulido, Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, Sánchez-Oliva, & Amado, 2013; Sezen-Balçikanli, 2014; etc.) and has been translated into different languages and validated in different cultures. Many authors, however, have questioned the *negative approach* subscale of the MSOS

because of low internal consistency and deficient factor structure; it has even been excluded, as Lamoneda, Huertas, Córdoba and García (2014) point out, in numerous studies on sportspersonship.

Having set this panorama, the aim of this study is threefold: (a) identify the values that underlie the *sportspersonship* construct, based on the content analysis of the Council of Europe Code of Sport Ethics [annex to Recommendation R (92) 14 on the European Sports Charter (1992)]; (b) develop and validate a measurement instrument that will evaluate individual differences in orientation toward sportspersonship in the identified values; and (c) analyse the relationships between the variables gender and type of sport and between each of the values associated with sportspersonship.

Method

Scale construction

Content analysis

In the first phase, an inductive content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was conducted on the Code of Sports Ethics of the Council of Europe*,* a document in which the EU Ministers responsible for Sport lay out the institutional framework for the practice of sport and sign an agreement to preserve and promote the educational values of youth sport.

The purpose of this analysis is to detect categories related to values that distinguish sportspersonship as an ideal of ethical conduct and fair play as a behavior characterized by respect for the rules, maintaining equal opportunities and impartiality.

This tentative list of categories is then revised and filtered process by a panel of ten sports psychology specialists and two experts in methodology. The procedure used is the Delphi method adapted to the content validation study (Gil-Gómez de Liaño & Pascual-Ezama, 2012). After three iterations, an agreement is reached on the values that make up the sportspersonship construct:

- Enjoyment. Free and spontaneous expansion of body and mind as a result of active participation in sport (entertainment, recreation and well-being).
- Respect. Positive attitude toward sport and athletes which integrates notions of friendship, respect, tolerance and good sportspersonship.
- Commitment. Commitment toward sport participation, achievement of personal excellence and cooperation with fellow athletes.
- Fair Play. Observance of and compliance with social conventions and rules, stance against violence and cheating, and impartiality.
- Participation. Genuine desire to participate in competitive sports, giving your maximum effort even when you know you will lose, not giving up, being honest and thinking about how to improve.

Item construction

After defining the substantive model to support the scale and the five value categories that comprise sportspersonship (*enjoyment, commitment, fair play and participation*) the items pertaining to the categories were generated. The result was a total of 35 typical performance items with a graduated response scale representing five categories: Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Almost Always and Always.

Content validation

After constructing the first set of items, the scale was filtered using content analysis to study the relationship between each item and the hypothetical dimensions (Elosua, 2003). Two rating scales were constructed for this task, one to assess the concordance between item content and the theoretically related category, and another to assess the relevance of the item content with respect to the dimension it represents. The relevance scale offers three response choices (Low - Medium - High). The aim is to verify whether the items are correctly or incorrectly assigned to the proposed category and confirm the relevance of the item content with respect to the category.

The assessment questionnaires were then administered to a team of five sports psychology specialists, three men and two women, none of whom were involved in determining the items. The degrees of congruence and relevance were estimated and the items with the lowest values were eliminated. After the first filtering process, the resulting scale contained 26 items.

Participants

The incidental sample used in this study consists of 739 young athletes from the Basque Autonomous Community and Navarra across 80 teams and eight types of competitive sports: football, basketball, handball, judo, swimming, hockey, rowing and Basque *pelota*. The athletes fall into three age categories, 12-14 (42.5%), 14-16 (35.1%) and 16-18 (22.5%), with an average age of 14.24 years (SD = 2.00). These categories were chosen because they span the age range of 12 to 18, a time in which young people increasingly quit participating in sport activities (González, 2013).

The group consists of 252 females and 487 males. The distribution by gender and sport type is not independent (Table 1), as there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables [$\chi^2(3) = 53.55$, $p < .01$].

Of the 739 participants, 714 completed all of the questionnaire items; there are only 29 missing data, which according to Little's test are missing completely at random (MCAR) [$\chi 2(296) = 333$; $p = .0681$]. All available data is included in all of the analyses.

Table 1

Distribution of Athletes by Gender and Sport

	Female	Male	Total
Football	75	276	351
Basketball	112	112	224
Handball	36	48	84
Other	29	51	80
Total	252	487	739

Procedure

Interviews were arranged with all of the participating teams during which they were informed of the details and aims of the research, and presented with a written document describing the Project. The parents or guardians of the participants were asked to sign an informed consent form. Once collaboration was formally established, personnel specifically instructed for the task administered the questionnaires.

Data analysis

After constructing the questionnaire, the internal structure was evaluated by means of an exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999), and a confirmatory factor analysis carried out by a robust maximum likelihood estimation procedure (Bollen, 1989; Curran, West, & Finch, 1996).

The sample was randomly divided into two halves. After confirming the factorial model, the configural and metric invariance are assessed across gender as a necessary step before comparing observed means. Model fit of confirmatory models is evaluated with the chi-square test statistic, the RMSEA, and the CFI. The cutoff points are set at 90 for the CFI and at .06 for the RMSEA (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Invariance is rejected if the difference in the CFI values of two nested models is greater than .01 (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Lastly, the relationships between the sportspersonship dimensions are analysed in relation to gender and sport.

Results

Exploratory factor analysis

After assessing the sampling adequacy by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Index (KMO = .83) and Bartlett's test of sphericity [$\chi^2(595) = 2090.91$; $p < .001$], internal structure of the 26 items is examined over a subsample of 352 athletes. In the search for a simple structure with 5 factors, the results suggestwe eliminate 5 items with cross saturations greater than .30. The optimum solution (see Table 2) is a 21-item factor matrix.

Table 2

Factor Matrix. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items	Par.	Enj.	FP	Res.	Com.
I don't care about results, what matters is participating.	.79				
What matters in sport is participating, not competing.	.72				
I don't mind losing if I'm having fun.	.65				
I don't care about the final score.	.51				
I play sports because I like it.		.76			
I enjoy myself when I play sports.		.75			
I have fun playing sports.		.77			
I enjoy playing sports with my friends		.27			
I play to feel good.		.21			
When a rival has a go at me, I give them a taste of their own medicine.			.79		
I react to provocation.			.83		
I question whether the referee's decision is fair.			.42		
When the other team plays hard, so do I.			.43		
I show respect toward opponents.				.74	
I show respect toward referees.				.61	
When I lose, I congratulate my opponent, no matter who he/she is.				.69	
I try to get on well with my opponents when we're not competing.				.52	
I try to make the same effort in all competitions.					.34
I give it my best for the good of the team.					.73
I look for ways to improve my weaknesses.					.43
I respect the rules of the game					.32

Note. Par = Participation; Enj = Enjoyment; FP = Fair play; Res = Respect; Com = Commitment.

The five categories, *enjoyment*, *respect*, *fair play*, *commitment* and *participation*, explain 44.21% of the total variance, which sequentially represent variance percentages of 19.76%, 12.29%, 7.05%, 3.12% and 2%.

Confirmatory factor analysis

Tables 3 and 4 show the items regression coefficients, standard errors and the correlations between the five factors. The chi-square test of model fit is significant [$\chi 2(179) = 353.63$, $p < .01$], but the rest of the indexes indicate a good fit between model and data: the RMSEA is .05 and the CFI is .91.

Table 3

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Ítems	Par	Enj	FP	Res	Com
What matters in sport is participating, not competing.	.76 (.03)				
I don't care about results, what matters is participating.	.86 (.02)				
I don't mind losing if I'm having fun.	.59 (.04)				
I don't care about the final score.	.53 (.04)				
I play sports because I like it.		.61 (.04)			
I enjoy myself when I play sports.		.71 (.04)			
I have fun playing sports.		.80 (.03)			
I enjoy playing sports with my friends.		.68 (.05)			
I play to feel good.		.44 (.05)			
When a rival has a go at me, I give them a taste of their own medicine.			.72 (.03)		
I react to provocation.			.72 (.03)		
I question whether the referee's decision is fair.			.59 (.04)		
When the other team plays hard, so do I.			.47 (.04)		
I show respect toward opponents.				.79 (.03)	
I show respect toward referees.				.64 (.03)	
When I lose, I congratulate my opponent, no matter who he/she is.				.62 (.03)	
I try to get on well with my opponents when we're not competing.				.54 (.04)	
I try to make the same effort in all competitions.					.53 (.04)
I give it my best for the good of the team.					.65 (.03)
I look for ways to improve my weaknesses.					.55 (.05)
I respect the rules of the game					.39 (.05)

Note. Par = Participation; Enj = Enjoyment; FP = Fair play; Res = Respect; Com = Commitment.

Table 4

Between-Factor Correlations

	Participation	Enjoyment	Fair Play	Respect	Commitment
Success					
Enjoyment	.10				
Fair Play	-.08	.07			
Respect	.52**	.25**	.47**		
Commitment	.28**	.80**	0.0	.56**	
ω	.79	.80	.75	.75	.63

Note. ** $p < .01$.

Six of the nine interfactor correlations are significant (*participation*/*commitment*, *enjoyment*/*respect*, *enjoyment*/*commitment*, *fair play*/*respect*, *respect*/*participation* and *respect*/*commitment*). McDonald's omega (1999) is used to estimate the reliability of each factor (Table 4). The lowest value is obtained in the *commitment* scale (.63) and the highest value, with the *enjoyment* factor (.80). The reliability coefficient for the total scale is .83.

Factorial invariance across gender

The fit indexes for the configural invariance and metric invariance models (Table 5) illustrate equivalence between factor configurations and between the factorial weights in the girls and boys samples. The CFI for the configural model is .90, and for the RMSEA .05; the change in the CFI values between the nested models is null and the $\chi 2$ difference test is not significant [χ^2_{DIF} (16) = 15; p = .52].

Table 5

Factorial Invariance

	χ^2	*g.l.*	CFI	RMSEA	ΔCFI	χ^2_{DIF}	$g.l._{dif}$	*p*
Configural Invariance	565	358	.90	.05				
Metric Invariance	580	374	.90	.05	--	15	16	.52

Relations with external variables

Gender and sportsmanship dimensions

Table 6 shows the mean values for the five sportspersonship categories by gender. In four of the five categories, *participation*, *enjoyment*, *respect* and *commitment*, the averages for girls are greater than for the boys and statistically significant [$F_{participation}$ (1,714) = 30.11, $p < .01$; $F_{enjoyment}$ (1,714) = 6.26, p = .013; $F_{respect}$ (1,714) = 15.77, $p < .01$; $F_{commitment}$ (1,714) = 8.66, p = .003], although the effect sizes are not large ($\eta^2_{participation}$ = .04; $\eta^2_{enjoyment}$ = .01; $\eta^2_{respect}$ = .02; $\eta^2_{commitment}$ = .01).

Table 6

Gender and Sportsmanship Categories

		Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation
Participation	Girl	14.04	3.49
	Boy	12.49	3.62
Enjoyment	Girl	23.00	2.51
	Boy	22.51	2.43
Fair Play	Girl	13.12	3.51
	Boy	13.20	3.52
Respect	Girl	15.67	2.84
	Boy	14.74	3.03
Commitment	Girl	17.34	2.19
	Boy	16.83	2.21

Sport and sportspersonship categories

The mean scores by sport are shown in Table 7. The differences are statistically significant ($p < .05$) in *participation* [$F(3,712) = 6.52$, $p < .01$], *enjoyment* [$F(3,712) = 2.98$, $p = .03$], *respect* [$F(3,712) = 14.20$, $p < .01$], *fair play* [$F(3,712) = 3.44$, $p = .016$] and *commitment* [$F(3,712) = 3.31$; $p = .02$], with effect sizes of $\eta^2_{participation} = .027$; $\eta^2_{enjoyment} = .012$; $\eta^2_{respect} = .06$; $\eta^2_{commitment} = .014$; $\eta^2_{fair\ play} = .014$.

Analysis of the origin of the differences shows significant differences between football and handball in the dimensions *participation*, *fair play* and *commitment.* The arithmetic means obtained by the handball players ($MA_{participation} = 14.21$, $MA_{respect} = 16.13$, $MA_{commitment} = 17.66$) are systematically greater than those obtained by the football players ($MA_{participation} = 12.46$, $MA_{respect} = 14.53$; $MA_{commitment} = 16.83$). The *enjoyment* dimension shows differences between basketball ($MA = 22.29$) and handball ($MA = 23.13$).

It is noteworthy that handball obtains the highest mean values in *participation*, *enjoyment* and *commitment*; only in *fair play* are the means slightly lower although the differences between sports do not reach statistical significance [$F(3,712) = 2.01$, $p = .11$]. The "other" category obtains the highest mean values for *respect*, but no significant differences for this dimension are observed in basketball or handball; only when the mean values for basketball and handball are compared with football do they reach statistical significance ($p = .019$).

Table 7

Sport and Sportspersonship Categories

		Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation
Participation	Football	12.46	3.63
	Basketball	13.24	3.59
	Handball	14.21	3.32
	Other	13.52	3.81
Enjoyment	Football	22.75	2.28
	Basketball	22.29	2.80
	Handball	23.13	2.36
	Other	22.88	2.23
Fair Play	Football	13.48	3.37
	Basketball	13.23	3.54
	Handball	12.69	3.27
	Other	12.19	4.09
Respect	Football	14.53	2.93
	Basketball	14.93	3.22
	Handball	16.13	2.44
	Other	16.53	2.33
Commitment	Football	16.83	2.08
	Basketball	16.97	2.35
	Handball	17.66	2.24
	Other	17.07	2.21

Discussion

In this study we extract and define the underlying dimensions of the "sportspersonship" construct, design a specific instrument – the *Multidimensional Sportspersonship Questionnaire* (MSQ) – and analyse the relationships between the variables gender and type of sport and between each of the sportspersonship categories in samples of young athletes.

The methodology combines a qualitative design using content analysis of the Code of Sports Ethics *Council of Europe* and a quantitative analysis make it possible to construct a questionnaire to measure sportspersonship. Evidence for validating the questionnaire is collected from different perspectives: (a) the content is analysed using groups of experts; (b) an exploratory factor model is estimated, and subsequently confirmed by the structural equations models; (c) metric invariance is tested across gender; and (d) the scale is analysed for sensitivity to differences in sportspersonship associated with gender and type of sport.

The results point toward an operational definition of the concept of sportspersonship that integrates five categories of values: *enjoyment*, *fair play*, *commitment*, *respect* and *participation*. Compared to the questionnaire designed by Vallerand, Deshaies, Cuerrier, Brière and Pelletier (1996), ours includes two new categories: *enjoyment* and *participation*. Aspects having to do with observing rules, countering violence, and impartiality are combined into a single category (*fair play*); the dimensions related to commitment toward sport participation, achievement of personal excellence and cooperation with fellow athletes (*commitment* and *respect*) are maintained.

As for the incorporation of two new categories, *enjoyment* and *participation*, it is important to point out that enjoyment, is not only underscored in the Council of Europe Code of Sport Ethics, but is one of the most relevant values associated with sport among young athletes (García-Calvo, Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, Sánchez-Oliva, & Amado, 2012). With regard to *participation*, studies by Lee (1993) suggest that making the maximum effort, thinking about how to improve, and not giving up even when you know you are going to lose are very highly rated values. In fact, the competitive tendency – which involves the desire to do better than others, stand out and triumph – is one of the basic ingredients of sportspersonship, an ingredient that translates to attitude: "Know how to win and how to lose" (Jaqueira, Lavega, Lagardera, Araujo, & Rodrigues, 2014).

The results of the content analysis confirm the categories *commitment* and *respect* as fundamental to the "sportspersonship" construct (Duran, 2013; Peñaloza, Andrade, Jaenes, & Méndez, 2013). Involvement in sport (*commitment*) and a positive attitude toward sport (*fair play*) are, in the opinion of Kavussanu (2007), two categories that are essential for understanding sportspersonship and should therefore be included in any study on the subject. Grouping into a single dimension (*fair play*) the attitudes and behaviours associated with observing rules, countering violence, and impartiality can be justified both from the perspective of economy of items and orientation of scale.

Analysis of the relationships between type of sport and sportspersonship categories shows the hegemony of handball over the other sports, and dissention between the two historic team sports: handball and football. In the case of handball, the mean values for sportspersonship are higher in the categories *participation*, *enjoyment* and *commitment*. In contrast, football, is at the opposite end, with lower mean values in *participation*, *respect* and *commitment*. This suggest a sport in which, although enjoyment is an acceptable objective and the rules of the game are generally respected,

commitment toward participation, a positive attitude toward the sport, and the achievement of personal excellence are secondary.

As for the analysis of gender differences, the metric invariance of the questionnaire is worth noting in that the weight of the items, their discriminatory capacity, is the same between boys and girls. Analysis of the differences observed showsthat in four of the five categories, *participation*, *enjoyment*, *respect* and *commitment*, the scores are higher on average for the girls than for the boys; only in the *fair play* category are the scores practically equal. These results seem to confirm the classical hypothesis that when it comes to playing sports, boys are more unsportsmanlike and aggressive than girls (Pelegrin, 2001) and that girls are more supportive and less aggressive (Bredemeier & Shields, 1998; Shields, Bredemeier, Gardner, & Bostrom, 1995). However, the differences are so minimal that any attempt at extrapolating results and formulating consistent hypotheses on young athletes' attitudes and behaviours toward sports is risky.

To properly contextualise this work, its limitations must be taken into account. For example, the meetings took place just before the training sessions, which may have had an influence (social desirability) on how the scale items are rated. Similarly, participants' previous knowledge about the rules of the game is not taken into consideration, which may have determined the scores for the *fair play* category. Moreover, the fact that the particular demands of each competitive situation are not taken into account may be a handicap when generalising results.

For future research it would be interesting to provide such significant variables as practice time, level of competition or familiarity with rules, and to select and use transcultural samples. To analyse the quertionnaire's concurrent validity, it would be useful to verify its relationship with the MSOS developed by Vallerand et al. (1997), the *Fairplay Attitudes Scale* (EAF; Cruz et al., 1996) or the *Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior in Sport Scale* (PABSS) by Kavussanu and Boardley (2009).

In summary, el *Multidimensional Sportspersonship Questionnaire* (MSQ) can be considered a valid tool for evaluating sportspersonship. The results from this study justify its usefulness for establishing individual differences in the values it defines. Moreover, the MSQ could be used for evaluating possible deviations in sportspersonship after conducting campaigns or programmes aimed at promoting fair play in youth sports.

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