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Relationship Between Discrete Emotions and Moral Content Judgment in Sport Settings

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The purpose of the present study was to provide new knowledge on the relation between emotions and morality by investigating the relation between discrete emotions and moral content judgment in sports. The participants were 363 athletes (179 male, 184 female) who were involved in competitive sport at the time of data collection. Their age ranged from 18 to 23 years ($M = 20.01$, $SD = 1.38$). All participants were undergraduate sport-science students at a Greek university and were involved in several sports. The subjects filled in two questionnaires: Moral Content Judgment in Sport Questionnaire and Sport Emotion Questionnaire. The results supported a rather vague relationship between discrete emotions and moral content judgment.

Keywords: emotion, moral judgment, sport

INTRODUCTION

Moral Judgment

Moral judgment is a moral functioning, based on moral principles. The study of moral judgment in the greater social environment attracted quite intensely the interest of researchers. However, such interest in the field of sport seems to be rather limited.

For the development of moral judgment, several theories have been formulated over time supporting that moral judgment/action is the result of two main processes: rationality (e.g., Kant, 1789/1959) and emotion (e.g., Hume, 1739 & 1740/1969). In the first case, studies conducted focused on rationality and cognitive development (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932/1965; Turiel, 1983). They supported that moral development is the result of moral reasoning and "higher cognition." However, Kohlberg's theory was criticized for not dealing with the way morality in women **is** perceived (Gilligan, 1982). In particular, Carol Gilligan claimed that Kolbergian's hypothetical dilemmas, which frame moral problems in terms of competing rights, force some people to resolve hypothetical dilemmas in ways foreign to their natural modes of thinking. She also claimed that Kohlberg's method of coding these dilemmas does not sufficiently recognize

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the adequacy or maturity of these alternate modes as well as that women and girls are more likely to use these alternate modes of thinking than men and boys (Gilligan, 1982).

To study moral judgment in sports, a scale has been recently developed aiming to evaluate moral content judgment (Proios, 2010). This new approach of moral judgment is interesting because sports are dominated by prescriptive judgments referring to legitimacy judgments on the rightness or wrongness of specific actions. Prescriptive judgments from a structural perspective are aspects of moral content rather than structure (Shields & Bredemeier, 2001). Proios (2010) used the elements, one of the components of moral content (issues, norms, and elements) to study moral content based on the cognitive-development theory. Elements inform us about the deeper reason or motive for the specific choice in decision making (Nisan, 1984). The components of elements are normative order, fairness, egoistic utilitarianism/consequences, social utilitarianism/consequences, and harmony-serving consequences, which constitutes one of the categories of moral content judgments (for more details, see Proios, 2010).

Emotions

Apart from the case of rationality that contributes to the development of moral judgment, recently the role of emotions has also been supported. Emotions constitute a significant driving force in moral judgment (Greene & Haidt, 2002), affect how people think and behave, and influence the information people receive. Crocker, Kowalski, Hoar, and McDonough (2004) stated that emotions have personal and social consequences, whereas they can influence motivated behavior in sport and exercise (Berger & Motl, 2000; Biddle, 2000; Vallerand & Blanchard, 2000).

Sports offer many positive (e.g., joy, hope) and negative (e.g., anxiety, disappointment) emotions (Hanin, 2007; Jones, 2003; Lazarus, 2000b). The significance of most discrete emotions in cognitive outcomes such as judgment and decision making attracted the interest of researchers concerning their assessment (for more information, see Angie, Connelly, Waples, & Kligyte, 2011). Thus, Jones, Lane, Bray, Uphill, and Catlin (2005) developed the Sport Emotion Questionnaire (SEQ) for the assessment of emotions in sport settings. They claimed that at least five emotions are particularly related to sport settings, which cover a range of pleasant (happiness and excitement) and unpleasant states (anger, anxiety and dejection). In addition, the same authors stated that a measured emotion should aim to assess the feelings of an individual regarding the competition that follows. For this reason, SEQ was used to measure precompetition emotions (Jones et al., 2005; Nicholls, Polman, & Levy, 2012). According to Lazarus' cognitive–motivation–relational (CMR) theory, emotions are generated by the evaluation a person makes about his or her environment in relation to personal goals (Lazarus, 1991, 1999, 2000a, 2000b). Furthermore, Frijda (2007) claimed that emotions are aroused when an object, event, or action is appraised and then experienced as pleasant or unpleasant. All the preceding reveals that emotions are products of the assessment of positive or negative situations that precede rather than follow a competition. For this reason, an effort will be made to investigate emotions resulting from cognitive evaluation of situational factors in sport settings. Recent studies on emotions following competition used SEQ (Allen, Jones, & Sheffield, 2010; Dewar & Kavussanu, 2011) and presented well results. Finally, it has been reported that emotions are important across gender (Shweder & Haidt, 2004).

The relationship between morality and emotions in greater society has been thoroughly supported (Krettenauer & Johnston, 2011; Krettenauer, Malti, & Sokol, 2008; Nunner-Winkler, Meyer-Nikele, & Wohlrab, 2007). However, research on the relationship between these concepts in sport is limited. More specifically, researchers focused their interest mainly on investigating the impact of emotions on performance (Cooke, Kavussanu, McIntyre, & Ring, 2013; McCarthy, Allen, & Jones, 2013; Pensgaard & Duda, 2003; Robazza & Bortoli, 2007). Recently, only two studies investigated the relationship between moral variables and feelings presenting though contradictory results. Specifically, the first showed no relationship between moral orientation and anger (Proios, 2012), whereas the second revealed a relationship between moral identity and emotion (Kavussanu, Willoughby, & Ring, 2012).

The present study is an attempt to establish a clearer picture of the relationship between moral content judgment and discrete emotions generated in sport settings. The significance of such investigation derives from the fact that moral reasoning involves a complex integration of affective and cognitive processes that gradually change with age and can be viewed in dynamic transaction across the course of ontogenesis (Decety, Michalska, & Kinzler, 2012), as well as from the fact that moral variables do not work in isolation. Therefore it is important to understand how they relate to and interact with other important psychological processes (Shields & Bredemeier, 2001).

The purpose of the present study is to investigate any possible relationship between moral content judgment and discrete emotions in sport settings. In addition, this study investigates the impact of gender in shaping moral content judgment and discrete emotions. The main hypothesis in the present study is the existence of a relationship between elements of moral judgment and discrete emotions as well as the differences in the content of moral judgments and discrete emotions in relation to gender.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 363 athletes (male, $n = 179$; female, $n = 184$) who were involved in competitive sport at the time of data collection. Their age ranged from 18 to 23 years ($M = 20.01$, $SD = 1.38$). All participants were undergraduate sport-science students at a Greek university and were involved in the following sports: football ($n = 70$), basketball ($n = 53$), track and field ($n = 49$), martial arts ($n = 40$), swimming ($n = 38$), volleyball ($n = 34$), gymnastics ($n = 25$), handball ($n = 25$), and others ($n = 29$).

Procedures

Prior to the beginning of the research, ethical approval and relevant permissions were asked to be provided by the Head of Faculty. Students agreed to participate in the research orally—as adults—and then by filling in the questionnaire. This procedure took place in the classroom (e.g., amphitheatre) prior the session. Then the researcher briefed the students on the content of the questions featured in the questionnaire as well as on the purpose of the present study.

Measurements

Moral Judgment

The Moral Content Judgment in Sport Questionnaire (MCJSQ; Proios, 2010) was used to assess the moral content judgment of participants. The questionnaire was used in its Greek version. The instrument started with the statement "Do I believe that my actions in sport are characterized by . . . ." This statement was followed by 25 items related to the five constructs of the moral content elements of normative order (e.g., ". . . interest in the opponents when the latter are in danger."), egoistic utilitarianism/consequences (e.g., ". . . a wish for reward."), social utilitarianism/consequences (e.g., ". . . an interest in the positive consequences for my team."), harmony-serving consequences (e.g., ". . . courage and nerve."), and fairness (e.g., ". . . respect to the opponent."). Participants were asked to answer on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). The MCJSQ has shown evidence of content and construct validity and is considered appropriate for use with adolescent athletes (Proios, 2010). In this study, reliability coefficients for the five subscales were .70 (Normative Order), .79 (Fairness), .68 (Egoistic Utilitarianism), .77 (Social Utilitarianism), .75 (Harmony-Serving Consequences). The aforementioned value (.68) can be considered satisfactory, as this factor comprises less than 10 items (viz., five items; Ntoumanis, 2001; Pallant, 2010).

Emotions

The SEQ (Jones et al., 2005) was used to measure the emotions appearing during the competition. Standardized back-translation procedures were used to develop a Greek version of the SEQ using three independent bilingual translators (Brislin, 1986). The back-translation procedure was repeated iteratively until the original and back-translated English versions of the questionnaires were identical. The SEQ contains 22 items that are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*extremely*). This scale has shown good validity and reliability when used following competition, with internal consistency scores for the five emotions ranging from .77 to .94 and .77 to .91 (Allen et al., 2010; Dewar & Kavussanu, 2011). Participants were asked to read each of the items and indicate the extent to which they experienced each emotion during the round of golf they had just played. The statement was "During competition I usually felt . . . ," and the emotions measured were happiness (four items; e.g., "pleased"), excitement (four items; e.g., "exhilarated"), dejection (five items; e.g., "unhappy"), anxiety (five items; e.g., "nervous"), and anger (four items; e.g., "furious").

To provide further support on the validity of the scale developed by Jones et al. (2005), a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to the sample in this study. The initial model (22-item five factor) demonstrated no acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(129) = 461.8$, $p < .05$, goodness of fit index = .872, comparative fit index = .870, root mean square error of approximation = .084. Based on modification indexes for measurement parameters (i.e., correlations, factor loadings), the items Apprehensive (anxiety) and Excited (excitement) were removed. The final model showed a marginally adequate fit to the data, $\chi^2(40) = 172.6$, $p < .05$, goodness of fit index = .910, comparative fit index = .0893, root mean square error of approximation = .062. The reliability of the SEQ was also calculated using alpha coefficient. Alpha coefficients for happiness was (α = .83), excitement ($\alpha = .58$), anger ($\alpha = .76$), anxiety ($\alpha = .78$), and dejection ($\alpha = .78$), indicating

good reliability for each. The aforementioned value (.58) can be considered as satisfactory, as this factor comprises of fewer than 10 items (viz., three items; Ntoumanis, 2001; Pallant, 2010).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were obtained and preliminary data analyses were conducted to estimate the responses of athletes' on psychological constructs in sport settings. Simple correlations were calculated to test the relationships between variables. Inferential statistics (multivariate analysis of variance [MANOVA]) was used to analyze the extent to which the perception of the athlete's moral judgment and emotions varied with gender. n^2 values were used to control for the level of effect of gender. Finally, a series of hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted in order to investigate the influence of several emotions (predictors) in a sequential way, within a criterion (moral content judgment elements; B. H. Cohen, 2001; Wampold & Freund, 1987). All analyses were completed using SPSS for Windows version 15.0.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 provides means and standard deviations for all the investigated variables. Regarding moral content judgment, on average, participants exhibited higher scores in the element harmony-serving consequences and lower in fairness. They also exhibited high scores in emotion happiness and low in emotion dejection.

Correlations among measures are shown in Table 2. Results indicated that the elements of moral content judgment had a positive correlation with the pleasant/positive emotions (happiness and excitement), except in the case of element normative order. On the contrary, the elements of

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha for All Variables

	Male[a]	*Female*[b]	*Total*[c]	
Variables	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*Cronbach's α*
Moral judgment				
Normative order	7.46 (1.18)	7.82 (0.92)	7.04 (1.07)	.70
Fairness	7.05 (1.28)	7.75 (0.97)	7.41 (1.19)	.79
Egoistic	7.14 (1.50)	7.04 (1.12)	7.09 (1.14)	.68
Social	7.51 (1.07)	7.95 (0.98)	7.74 (1.05)	.77
Harmony	8.14 (0.85)	8.38 (0.67)	8.27 (0.78)	.75
Emotions				
Happiness	2.28 (.87)	2.18 (1.05)	2.23 (.96)	.83
Excitement	2.11 (.65)	2.09 (.76)	2.10 (.58)	.58
Anger	.60 (.74)	.53 (.65)	.57 (.69)	.76
Anxiety	1.70 (.71)	2.14 (.82)	1.92 (.80)	.78
Dejection	.39 (.56)	.50 (.59)	.45 (.78)	.78

[a] $n = 179$. [b] $n = 184$. [c] $N = 363$.

TABLE 2
Correlations for All Variables

Variables	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*
1. Normative	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Fairness	.72**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Egoistic	.25**	.20**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Social	.56**	.57**	.40**	—	—	—	—	—	—
5. Harmony	.53**	.46**	.53**	.61**	—	—	—	—	—
6. Happiness	.03	.07	.17**	.12*	.13*	—	—	—	—
7. Excitement	.09	.15**	.21**	.19**	.24**	.71**	—	—	—
8. Anger	−.25**	−.27**	.01	−.23**	−.14**	.04	.09	—	—
9. Anxiety	.12*	.13*	.01	.07	.08	−.09	.02	.23**	—
10. Dejection	−.07	−.05	−.10	−.17**	−.23**	−.15**	−.16**	.57**	.37**

Note. Statistical significant $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$.

moral content judgment had a negative correlation with unpleasant/negative emotions (anger, anxiety and dejection), with some exceptions (see Table 2).

Differences Between Gender and Subscales of Moral Judgment and Emotions

MANOVAs were conducted to identify any gender differences on psychological variables moral judgment and emotions. A MANOVA is considered to have better performance with highly negatively correlated and acceptable performance with moderately correlated dependent variables in either direction (about .60; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). All variables correlated at .61 ($p < .01$), except the variables of social utilitarianism with harmony-serving, which was .72 ($p < .01$), and happiness with excitement, which was .71 ($p < .01$).

Initially, a one-way MANOVA was performed with the use of five MCJSQ scales (Normative Order, Fairness, Egoistic Utilitarianism, Social Utilitarianism, and Harmony-Serving) as the dependent variables and gender as the independent variable. The multivariate test revealed a significant main effect for gender, Wilks's $\gamma = .882$, $F(5, 357) = 9.52$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .12$. According to J. Cohen (1988), guidelines for interpreting an eta-square value (η^2) is that .01 indicates a small effect, .09 indicates a moderate effect, and .25 indicates a large effect. Therefore, our finding $\eta^2 = .12$, indicates that 12% of the total variance in variables of moral judgment is accounted for by gender differences and as such it can be classified as a large effect. Subsequent univariate analyses showed that gender diversified moral judgment on all scales of normative order, $F(1, 362) = 10.47$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .03$; fairness $F(1, 362) = 34.26$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .09$; egoistic utilitarianism, $F(1, 362) = 10.62$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .05$; harmony-serving, $F(1, 362) = 8.86$, $p < .01$, $n^2 = .02$; and expect egoistic utilitarianism, $F(1, 362) = .74$, $p > .05$.

A second multivariate analysis, with the use of five SEQ scales (Happiness, Excitement, Anxiety, Anger, and Dejection) as dependent variables and gender as independent variable the results indicated significant multivariate effects concerning the gender, Wilks's $\gamma = .908$, $F(5, 357) = 7.21$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .09$. The finding $\eta^2 = .09$ indicates that 9% of the total variance in variables of emotions is accounted for by gender differences, and this can be classified as a moderate effect. Follow-up analyses of variance revealed significant differences only on the subscale Anxiety, $F(1, 362) = 28.62$, $p < .001$, $n^2 = .07$, in contrast with other subscales which did not vary in relation to gender.

Moral Content Judgment and Emotions

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses (Table 3) were performed to test the ability of positive and negative emotions, felt by athletes during their participation in sports, to forecast the formation of moral content judgment in sport settings. The correlations among predictor and dependent variables were investigated and presented in Table 2. All predictor variables were statistically correlated with moral content judgment variables, except positive emotions with the normative order variable, which indicates that the data were suitably correlated with the dependent variables for examination through linear regression. The correlation between the predictor variables (happiness, excitement, angry, anxiety, and dejection) and the dependent variables (normative order, fairness, egoist consequences, social consequences, and harmony-serving consequences) were all weak to moderately strong, ranging from $r = .12$, $p < .05$ to $r = .27$, $p < .001$.

First hierarchical multiple regression: In the first step, two predictors were entered: happiness and excitement (positive emotions). This model was not statistical significant, $F(2, 360) = 1.86$, $p = .16$, and explained 1% of variance in normative order element. After the entry of negative emotions (angry, anxiety, and dejection) at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 11%, $F(3, 359) = 12.48$, $p < .001$. The introduction of negative emotions explained an additional 10% variance in normative order element, after controlling for angry, anxiety, and dejection $R^2Change = .10$, $F(2, 357) = 19.37$, $p < .001$. In the final model, three out of five predictor variables were statistically significant, with angry showing a higher Beta value ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$) than anxiety ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$) and excitement ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$).

Second hierarchical multiple regression: In the first step, two predictors were entered: happiness and excitement (positive emotions). This model was statistically significant, $F(2, 360) = 4.37$, $p < .05$, and explained 2% of variance in fairness element. After entering negative emotions (angry, anxiety, and dejection) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 16%, $F(3, 359) = 16.29$, $p < .001$. The introduction of negative emotions explained an additional 14% variance in fairness element, after controlling for angry, anxiety, and dejection, $R^2Change = .14$, $F(3, 357) = 19.26$, $p < .001$. In the final model, four out of five predictor variables were statistically significant, with angry presenting a higher Beta value ($\beta = -.42$, $p < .001$) than excitement ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$), anxiety ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$), and excitement ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$).

Third hierarchical multiple regression: In the first step, two predictors were entered: happiness and excitement (positive emotions). This model was statistically significant, $F(2, 360) = 4.37$, $p < .001$, and explained 4% of the variance in egoistic consequences element. After entering negative emotions (angry, anxiety, and dejection) at Step 2, this model was not statistical significant, $F(3, 357) = .74$, $p = .53$. In the final model, one out of five predictor variables were statistically significant with excitement presenting a Beta value of ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$).

Fourth hierarchical multiple regression: In the first step, two predictors were entered: happiness and excitement (positive emotions). This model was statistically significant, $F(2, 360) = 7.08$, $p < .001$, and explained 4% of the variance in social consequences element. After entering negative emotions (angry, anxiety, and dejection) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 12% $F(3, 359) = 9.91$, $p < .001$. The introduction of negative emotions explained an additional 8% variance in social consequences element, after controlling for angry, anxiety, and dejection $R^2Change = .8$, $F(3, 357) = 10.62$, $p < .001$. In the final model, three out of five predictor variables were statistically significant with angry, showing a higher Beta value ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .001$) than excitement ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$) and anxiety ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$).

TABLE 3
Hierarchical Multiple Regression

Variable	*R*	R^2	R^2 *Change*	*B*	*SE*	β	*T*
Normative order							
Step 1	.10	.01	.01				
Happiness				−.08	.08	−.07	−.93
Excitement				.21	.11	.14	1.85
Step 2	.32	.11***	.10***				
Happiness				−.05	.08	−.05	−.63
Excitement				.22	.11	.14*	1.99
Anger				−.46	.08	−.30***	−5.78
Anxiety				.25	.07	.18***	3.55
Dejection				.15	.11	.08	1.21
Fairness							
Step 1	.15	.02*	.02*				
Happiness				−.08	.09	−.07	−.92
Excitement				.33	.13	.20***	2.62
Step 2	.40	.16***	.14***				
Happiness				−.05	.09	−.04	−.62
Excitement				.40	.12	.24***	3.32
Anger				−.72	.10	−.42***	−6.97
Anxiety				.24	.08	.16**	3.05
Dejection				.33	.13	.16*	2.50
Egoistic utilitarianism							
Step 1	.21	.04***	.04***				
Happiness				.06	.09	.05	.65
Excitement				.28	.12	.17*	2.33
Step 2	.22	.05	.01				
Happiness				.06	.09	.05	.66
Excitement				.24	.12	.15*	1.97
Anger				.07	.11	.04	.69
Anxiety				.05	.08	.03	.56
Dejection				.20	.13	−.10	−1.48
Social utilitarianism							
Step 1	.20	.04***	.04***				
Happiness				−.03	.08	−.03	−.39
Excitement				.32	.11	.21**	2.90
Step 2	.34	.12***	.08***				
Happiness				−.02	.08	−.02	−.21
Excitement				.33	.11	.22**	3.00
Anger				−.40	.09	−.26***	−4.27
Anxiety				.18	.07	.14*	2.51
Dejection				−.06	.12	−.03	−.50
Harmony-serving							
Step 1	.25	.06***	.06***				
Happiness				−.07	.06	−.09	−1.21
Excitement				.33	.08	.31***	4.20
Step 2	.36	.13***	.07***				
Happiness				−.06	.06	−.07	1.01
Excitement				.29	.08	.26***	3.63
Anger				−.09	.07	−.08	−1.31
Anxiety				.16	.05	.17**	3.13
Dejection				−.28	.09	−.21***	3.23

Note. Statistical significant $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Fifth hierarchical multiple regression: In the first step, two predictors were entered: happiness and excitement (positive emotions). This model was statistically significant, $F(2, 360) = 12.05$, $p < .001$, and explained 6% of variance in harmony-serving consequences element. After entering negative emotions (angry, anxiety, and dejection) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 13%, $F(3, 359) = 10.92$, $p < .001$. The introduction of negative emotions explained an additional 7% variance in fairness element, after controlling for angry, anxiety, and dejection $R^2Change = .7$, $F(3, 357) = 8.84$, $p < .001$. In the final model, three out of five predictor variables were statistically significant, with excitement recording a higher beta value ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) than dejection ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$) and anxiety ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The main subject of the present study was the psychological constructs of moral judgment and emotion. Moral judgment and emotions were investigated as two factors meant to affect human behavior. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the two aforementioned constructs through the content of moral judgment and discrete emotions. In addition, the present study investigated the impact of gender on the shaping of moral content judgment and emotions.

Descriptive statistics results showed that the athletes' worldview has a teleological moral orientation, with their actions characterized by the elements of harmony-serving and social utilitarianism/consequences. Teleological ethics focus on the purposes, aims, or consequences of actions. Harmony-serving consequences reveal that human judgment is characterized by the respect for self, human dignity, service of harmony (perfectionist ethics), whereas social utilitarianism/consequences reveal that individuals make their judgments taking into consideration the consequences of their decision on the team (Proios, 2010). However, scores on the elements normative order and fairness (deontological moral orientation) were high. This reveals that although individuals participating in sport during decision making think about the consequences of their action, they do not reject moral elements such as justice, reciprocity, obedience, and so on.

Regarding discrete emotions, it seems that pleasant emotions (happiness and excitement) prevail among emotions experienced by athletes. Among the unpalatable emotions, the highest score was reached by anxiety, whereas anger and dejection scored rather low. Such a result is probably due to the fact that athletes do not report of depressed mood before competition (Hanin, 2000; Terry & Lane, 2000). However, the assessment of the five discrete emotions in the present study confirms the fact that these exist in the athletes' emotional experience in competition (Gould, 2000; Hanin, 2000; Jones et al., 2005; Martinent, Campo, & Ferrand, 2012; Sève, Ria, Poizat, Saury, & Durand, 2007).

One of the hypotheses of this study was the existence of differences in moral content judgment and discrete emotions gender related. Concerning moral judgment, the results of the present study confirmed the first part of this hypothesis, showing a large effect size (12%) of gender in shaping moral content judgment. In addition, the results support the findings of Gilligan (1979), who stated that there is a difference in moral reasoning (care oriented, justice oriented) in relation to gender and that care and justice imply different ways of judgment, the motives of which have different consequences (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989; Power & Makogon, 1995). Research

findings revealed differences related to gender on prescriptive judgments (e.g., Bredemeier, 1985; Hyde, 1984; Silva, 1983), moral maturity (e.g., Guivernau & Duda, 2002) and moral functioning (e.g., Abrahamsen & Roberts, 2003; Miller, Roberts, & Ommundsen, 2005). Although results revealed differences in the elements of moral content judgment (normative order, fairness, social utilitarianism, and harmony-serving), this was not the case for the element of social utilitarianism. This means that are no differences between the viewpoints of male and female individuals on issues concerning consequences related to the team (e.g., positive consequences for the team, satisfaction of team's wishes, negative consequences on the team; Proios, 2010).

The results also confirmed the second part of the hypothesis, presenting medium effect sizes (9%) of gender in the formation of discrete emotions. This finding further supports the claim that emotions are important across gender (Shweder & Haidt, 2004). By investigating separately possible differences in discrete emotions gender related, these were significant only in anxiety. Regarding anger, a study by Omli and LaVoi (2009) also reported similarities between male and female individuals. These findings lead to the conclusion that gender is a weak factor in controlling emotions. Daniels et al. (2008) stated that gender was a nonsignificant covariate in all analyses except boredom.

Moral judgment and emotions constitute psychological constructs, which characterize behaviors found in sport settings. The results of the present study confirmed the hypothesis that these two concepts are related. The results are further confirmed through several conceptual approaches and empirical evidence that link the concepts of moral judgment and emotions (e.g., Angie et al., 2011; Krettenauer, Jia, & Mosleh, 2011; Malti, Gasser, & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2010; Raghuanathan & Pham, 1999; Tversky, Slovic, & Kahneman, 1990). Furthermore, cross-cultural work has demonstrated that emotional reactions are often the best predictors of moral judgments (Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987).

Moreover, the present study investigated the predictability of pleasant and unpleasant emotions on moral judgments content and showed that the involvement of unpleasant emotions is stronger than that of the pleasant ones. An exception was the noninvolvement of unpleasant emotions in the element of egoistic utilitarianism. This was confirmed by another study that presented a link between moral codes and moral emotions (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). Such finding supports the view that moral emotions are linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of individuals other than the judge or agent (Haidt, 2003). The relationship between morality and moral/unpleasant emotions, up to date, was based on the impact of compassion or guilt feelings on the understanding of the prescriptive nature of the norms of fairness and caring (Nussbaum, 2001). Such results further support what we know so far by revealing the relationship between other moral/unpleasant emotions (anger, anxiety, and dejection) as well as morality. In addition, the results lead to the view that moral emotions and moral cognition are interdependent (Malti & Latzko, 2010). Future research will further strengthen or weaken this point.

The unpleasant emotion of anger is an emotion that can motivate individuals to deal with its causes (Nesse & Ellsworth, 2009). In addition, anger is a moral emotion resulting to a cluster of related but distinguishable emotional reactions to moral violations of others (Rozin et al., 1999). The present study revealed that anger is strongly related to the three elements of moral judgment content, namely, normative order, fairness, and social utilitarianism. Based on this, we can state that athletes at a state of anger, will, by all probability, act contrary to the settings that caused it. For example, their behavior in sport is characterized by obedience to norms, reciprocity, fairness

and concern for others. The findings of other studies support the aforementioned view, stating that individuals belonging to a minority seem to be more sensitive to issues relating to fairness and equality (Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin, & Stangor, 2002; Malti, Killen, & Gasser, 2012).

However, the finding of a relationship between anger and moral judgment comes in disagreement to the results of a recent study by Proios (2012) where a relation among anger and moral orientation was not established. Such different findings are probably due to the age difference between the two samples—since there are cognitive-developmental changes in age-related emotions (Crocker et al., 2004; Krettenauer & Eichler, 2006), the different type of sport the participants in the two studies (Proios, 2012), the fact that anger is a multidimensional construct comprising of only cognitive appraisals, action tendencies, physical or physiological reactions, and a subjective "feeling" of being angry (Frijda, 1986), and finally, the fact that the two measurements used different instruments for the assessment of anger.

Although anger was found to be negatively related to the elements of moral judgment, anxiety presented a lower but positive relationship, except in the case of normative order, fairness with social utilitarianism and the element of harmony-serving consequences (perfectionism). The link between anxiety and perfectionism is also confirmed by the findings of a study done by Hall, Kerr, and Matthews (1998). Such a result leads us to conclude that anxiety is an emotion that can lead athletes to act within the framework of duty, obedience, reciprocity, or positive desert, maintaining equity and procedural fairness, as well as the maximization of the impact of prosperity or happiness on all individuals affected (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). Finally, dejection is the unpleasant emotion found to be related with only two elements, those of fairness and harmony-serving consequences, meaning that it is possible that dejection leads athletes to actions of justice and perfectionism.

Although the involvement of pleasant emotions in predicting moral judgment in the present study was lower than that of unpleasant ones, the pleasant/positive emotion of enthusiasm was found to be positively related with all five elements of moral content judgment. Excitement in sport is an emotion on which there are no research data. This does not allow any comparison with the present result. However, excitement as a pleasant/positive emotion would be expected to be negatively related to the elements of moral judgment because mirth, a condition that has to do with enthusiasm, promotes tolerance of deontological violations in moral reasoning (Strohminger, Lewis, & Meyer, 2011). Such discrepancy may result from the fact that positive emotions are functionally distinct (Strohminger et al., 2011), revealing that excitement and mirth can have substantially different consequences for human cognition and action.

Unlike excitement, the emotion of happiness in the present study was found to have some relation with the five elements of moral content judgment. Such result seems paradoxical to some extent, as it has been stated that happiness has a similar impact on anger in human reactions (Garg, 2004).

Limitations

The present study has some limitations. First, it should be noted that the assessment of emotions was based on self-reports for a set of preceding settings/competitions. Up to date, the assessment of emotions concerned the way athletes felt pre- or postcompetition. Also, the sample of this study cannot be considered as representative so as to allow us a generalization of the results.

Systematic future research is necessary. In addition, the results of the present study with respect to the emotion of excitement were only moderately internally consistent.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the present study is considered to offer new knowledge on the relationship between emotions and morality in sport settings. The findings of the study show that the athletes' thoughts are dominated by an interest in human dignity and in their actions related to sport, whereas these reactions are dominated mainly by pleasant feelings. Yet worldview and emotional reactions were revealed to be gender related. Another conclusion based on the present findings is the relationship between emotions and morality and that such a relationship seems to be stronger between unpleasant emotions and moral content judgment. Based on the relationship between the two types of emotions and all elements of moral content judgment, we could conclude that there is a clear relationship between emotions and morality. Such a conclusion is in consistence to the statement that emotions cannot be accepted as a form of moral motivation, as consequences of actions generating from emotions do not determine whether an action is moral (Blasi, 1999). The same author also supported that "the moral meaning of emotions and their capacity to contribute to moral motivation depend on the prior presence of moral concerns, even when emotional responses, in their turn, reinforce these concerns and their effectiveness in guiding appropriate action" (p. 15). Furthermore, Kant argued that emotions are capricious and unstable, passively experienced and unintentional, and therefore unfree (as cited in Blasi, 1999, p. 15).

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