

**THE EFFECT OF TEAM SPORTS  
ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Introduction:**

One of the most frequently made assumptions about sports is that participating in team sports is good for the character. Specifically, cooperating within the team, competing against other teams, engaging in the discipline necessary to perform at one's maximal level and having the goal of winning, are said to exert positive effects on young people's character in the area of moral development (Newman & Newman, 1979).

Unfortunately, developmental notions of how moral thinking and moral behaviour are acquired and refined by youngsters

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have not incorporated this notion about the effects of team sports into their theories of research. However, by reviewing the three basic viewpoints on the development of moral behaviour, it can be seen that each has implications about the veracity of this assumption. For example, the moral development theories of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1969) assert that moral thinking and conduct arise as an invariant sequence of biological growth. Those things which team sport may teach a child in the area of morality, according to these theories, cannot be learned by the child until he or she reach the appropriate biological age

On the other hand, the social learning perspective of moral development, disagrees with the assertion arising from the Piaget and Kohlberg views. According to Bandura (1977), a child learns and develops his or her capacity for thinking and behaving morally through his or her life experiences, and depending upon the nature and type of experiences.

The implications of each of these views of moral development have for the assumption that team sport affect moral development can be delineated as follows. If Piaget and Kohlberg are correct, then we would expect that children who are members of team sports would, on some standard test of moral development, show the same amount of development as children who are not members of team sports, in other words, the variety of things available for learning as a function of playing team sports would be grasped by the children only to the extent that any youngster of that same age could grasp from any of his/ her life experiences.

However, if social learning theorists like Bandura are correct, then it could be expected that the modeling behaviors, the child's ability to observe his peers and coaches working as a team to achieve a goal, could be expected to exert their effects. In this case, if the assumption that team sports helps to build moral character is a correct assumption, we would expect that

children who are members of them sports would, on some standard test of moral development, have higher scores than children who are mor members of team sports.

An examination of the above expectancies should provide general insight into the veracity of one of our society's major assumptions about sports as well as provide data base for including the affects of this assumption in the development of moral reasoning and moral behavior.

### **Statement of the problem:**

The puorse of this study is to investigate whether participation in team sports is associated with significant gains in secondary school student's moral development.

### **Review of the Literature**

Insight into this study's undertaken problem is provided by examining the existing research on moral development. Of this research in general, Labarb (1981) provides the following definitions:

Most of the research attention in moral development is directed

toward the development of moral resoning and moral conduct. Moral resoning involves how the child learns and adopts rules and standards by which moral decisions and actions are made.

Moral conduct refers to actual behavior in situations demanding some moral of ethical act.

Since Kohlberg's model of moral development incorporates and modifies Piagetian notions, insight into both may be found by examining Kohlberg's basic model.

Fecinated by piaget's use of determining a child's level of

moral development though providing the child with stories involving moral dilemmas and examining their responses, Kohlberg (1963) developed a description of six stages of moral reasoning. Before examining each of these stages, it should be noted that for Kohlberg a child must pass each stage in an irrevocable sequence and that he can only do so through developing maturational processes. If he is not biologically mature enough to pass through one stage into the next, he will not despite the experiences he is offered learn moral refinements.

Kohlberg's six moral stages may be briefly summarized as follows:

Stage 1 : The physical consequences of an action are used to determine whether it is good or bad.

Stage 2: Goodness or badness of a rule is decided on the basis of whether it allows for a mutual exchange for obedience. For example, children at this stage will say things such as, " You shouldn't steal something from a store and the store owner shouldn't steal things that belong to you ."

Stage 3: The right action is the action that will impress others." Your parents will be proud of you if you are honest."

Stage 4: The right action is the action that maintains social order. Fixed rules must be obeyed." It's against the law and if we don't obey laws, our whole society will fall apart.

Stage 5 : Rules need to be obeyed, but not blindly, rather there should be some amount of mutual agreement between authorities who make the laws and the individual who must obey them.

At this stage, the rights of the individual are viewed as

needing protection." Under certain circumstances laws may have to be disregarded-- if a person's life depends on breaking a law , for instance."

Stage 6 : Moral decisions should be based on consistent applications of selfchosen ethical principles." You need to weight all of factors and then try to make the most appropriate decision in given situation. Sometimes it would be morally wrong not to steal."

Unlike Piaget and Kohlberge, social learning theorists explain the development of morality though the learnig mechanisms of reinforcement, punishment and imitation. In this view, a child's progression through the different stages of moral reasoning depend on the " morality" that is exhibited to him or her by his or her parents, teachers, and significant others.

Of all the learning mechanism, the founder of the social learning perspective , Bandura argues that modeling is the most important. As Bandura and McDonald (1963) have put it , the general inconsistency so often found in the level which people reach in their moral development can predominantly be explained by the type of modelling they recieved. The authors say that consistency in moral development is observed only in children whose models exhibit consistency in moral conduct across a wide variety of situations.

What Bandura and McDonald mean is that if a child is systematically exposed to situations in which he or she sees adults advocating and behaving in strong moral ways, the child will, through observing and imitiating those models , behave in that way. Thus, if adults are advocating and exhibiting behavior at the 4th or 5th stages of moral development,a child should show some Knowledge of these higher principles even if he or she is of an age whic, according to Piaget and Kohlberg, he / she can

reason on farther than the 3rd moral stage.

If follows then that if team sports and participation in its activities is to help to build moral character, children exposed to these sports would show, on Kohlberg's moral Judgement Scale, significant development.

Given the above, the last section of this review examines Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Scale in order to increase understanding of the study to be investigated.

The Moral Judgement Scale provides respondents with 9 hypothetical moral dilemmas, presented one at a time. The respondent reads the dilemma, makes a decision as to what he or she would do and then states his or her reasons for making the decision . The person givin the test is allowed to ask the respondent questions in order to elicit a full explanation.

Brcsaue of the test's administration, Anastasi (1982 ) reports :

Both administration and scoring need to be more highly standardizerd to ensure comparability of results from different investigators.

Anastasi goes to note that Kholberg needs to improve the scale by providing additional reliability data.

Despite the few flaws in the test , it must be relized that , in the area of moral development research, it is the most frequently used instrument.

Regarding the intended study's use kof the Moral Judgement Scale, one final point must be made . it will be remembered that the literature pertaining to the social learning perspactive held that one of the most potent factors in teaching a child moral reasoning and behavior is the level of morality that abults around him modelled for him or her. Thus, it seems reasona-

ble, in the intended study , to do more than give the Moral Judgement Scale to the sample subjects of children . In order to have some notion of what level of moral development adults are modelling for those children participating in team sport, it would seem to be also necessary to give the Moral Judgement Scale test to these children's coaches. In this way , if results turn out in some unexpected way, this data can be compared with the data observed for the children participating in team sports in order to see if there is some association.

### **Statement of Hypotheses**

Unfortunately, research conducted to test which moral models, Kohlberg or Bandura's, is correct, has found mixed results for both models (Labarba.1981) This means that there is , in the literature, no firm basis for preferring one view over the other. However, Bandura's model serves the added function of describing why Kohlberg has found that data does not always agree with his model. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suspect that the model which will be operating in the intenden study is the social learning model . this hypotheses can be stated as follows:

it is expected that the moral development (as measured by the Kohlberg Moral Judgement Scale) of children who routinely practice team sports will be significantly higher than the moral development of children who do not routinely participate in team sports.

### **Methods**

#### **Subjects:**

The sample for thes study was selected from 10 randomly selected secondary schools in the state of Kuwait. The schools were selected from the five governerates (The Capital , Hawalli, Alahmadi, Aljahrra, and Alfarwaniah). There were a total of 60

maleStudents were randomly selected from a pool of volunteer subjects from third and fourth grade. Of this total, 30 were routinely involved in some form of team sports in the kuwaiti sport clubs and 30 were not routinely involved in some from of team sports.

**Instrument:**

All subjects were required to complete the Moral judgement Scale (Kohlberg 1969, 1974) which was designed to assess one's level of moral development. Anastati (1982) offered the following succinct description of this test instrument:

The Moral judgement Scale utilizes nine hypothetical dilemmas, presented on at a time. A typical example involves a man whose wife is dying of cancer but might be saved by a new drug for which an exhorbitant price is demanded .Unable to raise the money . the husband steals the drug.

The respondent Judges the behavior described and states reasons for his or her judgement... the interviewer elicits fuller exp;anations through probing question (p.551).

Subjects rponses to each of the presented dilemmas are then tailed to yield an overall index of the maturity of moral development the respondent has achieved. This index places the respondent in one of six developmental stages which can then be reduced in categorization to one of three moral levels. These three levels are: (1) The preconventional Level characterized by either a punishment and obedience orientation or an instrumental relativisit orientation, (2) The conventional level characterized by an interpersonal concordance orientation or a "law and order" authority orientation, (3) The postconventional Level characterized by a socialcontract orientation or a universal ehtical principal orientation.

The Preconventonal level is considered the most primitive

moral level while the postconventional level is considered the highest level of development. Each subject's index was used to assign him to one of the three moral development levels.

The validity and the reliability of the Moral Judgement Scale are only moderately well researched (Kurtines & Greif, 1974) and Anastasi (1982) suggest that more work needs to be done along these lines before strong faith can be placed in the effectiveness of the scales's assessment. Even though, there were no coefficients available for this instrument, reviewers have considered it one of the best of the few instruments which have been developed to test moral development.

#### **Validity and Reliability:**

Since this Scale is from another culture and in English language, the Scale has been translated to Arabic language by three experts and the percentage of the agreement was 98%, which is high. Also, the Scale has been experimental standardized on 40 third and fourth grade students from secondary schools in the state of Kuwait. The result was yielded validity and reliability in Kuwait society. ( $\alpha = .896$ ).

#### **Experimental Design:**

The design used in this study was the randomized post test only control group design. The primary independent variable was the participation in team sports variable with two levels. Yes and No. The independent measure, however, needs further clarification in order to be fully understood. It will be remembered that the test instrument merely assigns subjects to one of three moral developmental categories, these categories are: (1) The pre-conventional level, (2) The conventional level, and (3) The post-conventional level. This means that the test instrument does not yield numerical scores. Therefore, the number of individuals that fall into each of the moral development categories and then comparing these frequencies with respect to the partic-

ipation in Team Sports variable. What this means is that the Response Categories obtained via the test instrument must be treated as an independent variable and the dependent measure then becomes the observed frequencies . A graphic depiction of this design presented in Table 1 shows, the procedure yields six design cells each of which , when the analysis was finally performed, contained frequency data and had to be handled with a statistical procedure amenable to frequency data. This procedure is further discussed in the Data Analysis Section of this chapter.

**Table (1) : GRAGHC DEPECTION OF EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN**

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MORAL DEVELOPMMENTAL LEVEL	PARTICIPATION IN TEAM SPORTS	
	Yes	No
PRECONVENTIONAL		
CONVENTIONAL		
POSTCONVENTIONAL		

### **Procedures:**

The first procedure of the study consisted of compiling a list of the male secondary schools in the five governorates and numbering the list. Then, using a random numbers table. 10 secondary schools were randomly selected. The principals of these schools were contacted by the investigator and told about the study. All principals agreed to participate in the study.

After gaining permission, the investigator asked and received the fourth class students roster for each school. The investigator then went to the teachers of P.E. and got them to agree to have their students fill out separate sheets of paper asking them to stipulate their grade level, whether they participated or still participating in team sports other than in their P.E. classes activities, and if so, how often they participated.

After receiving this information, the investigator weeded down the list to two groups: (1) those students who did not participate in team sports outside of their P.E. classes , and (2) those students who, participated in team sports outside of their P.E. classes . The list was then cross tabulated by grade level, names were numbered and a random numbers table was used to select a total of 60 subjects . it should be noted that only 6 subjects from each school were also selected.

Once subjects had been selected, the investigator arranged for a time and place for them to take the Moral judgement Scale. The investigator administered the test individually to each subject.

### **Application of the Study**

The study has been applied on 60 male students from third and fourth grade level at the secondary schools in the state of Kuwait between March and May 1990.

## **Data Analysis plan**

Given that the nature of collected data was frequency data, the statistical procedure selected to analyze data was the chi square procedure, a moderately conservative, non - parametric test for differences between frequencies (Linton & Gallo,1975).

The significance level selected for the study's test of the experimental hypothesis was the .05 level.

## **Results:**

The contingency table observed for the two- way chi square analysis performed to test the hypothesis that children who routinely practices team sports would be significantly higher in their moral development than children who not routinely participate in team sports is presented in table 2. The chi square analysis performed on these frequency data was found to be significant (chi square = 6.584,df=2, pless than .05).

in order to uncover the precies nature of finding, it was necessary to perform specific comparison tests for frequency data which consisted of a series of two chi squares known as Ryan's procedure for frequency data. the results of these tests revealed one significant finding . Specifically, those who did not routinely participate in team sports were more likely to be at the preconventional level of moral development while those who routinely participated in team sport were likely to be at the conventional level.

Although not a part of the primary analysis, the boy's coaches were also asked to complete this study's tes instrument , the Moral Judgement Scale.

Table (2) : CONTINGENCY TABLE OFSERVED FOR CHI SQUARE ANAALYSIS PERFORMED TO TEST THE EXPERIMENTAL HYPOTHESIS.

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**MORAL DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL    PARTICIPATION IN TEAM SPORTS**

	YES	NO	TOTAL
<b>PRECONVENTIONAL</b>	5	14	19
<b>CONVENTIONAL</b>	22	15	37
<b>POSTCONVENTIONAL</b>	3	1	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>60</b>

This procedure was used in case findings did not turn out as predicted. it was thought that in such an event. the coach data might shed fyrther light on results.

However, even though findings were as anticipated , it was decided to analyze these data collected from the coaches of those who routinely participated in sports and compare their level of moral development to that of their students. it was thought that if the comparioon shoud no difference, the finding would support the contention that the boy's moral development arose as a function of the coaches' modelling behavior. On the other hand, if a difference was observed between the moral development of the coaches and the moral development of their students , this finding would tend to support the idea that it was team sports activities themselves which elevated these boys moral development over that of their peers. it should be here noted that some of the boys had the same coaches. Therefore, the total number of coaches providing these data was not the same number as that of the boys, rather, there was a total of 19 coaches.

The contingency table observed for the analysis performed to compare the coaches data and the data of the boys who routinely participated in team sports is presented in Table 3. The chi square analysis performed to analyze these data was found to be signigicant (Chi square= 7.353, df=2,p.05) indicating that ghe moral development levels of the coaches are significantly different than the moral development of the boys who routinely participated in team sports. Once again, the specific comparison test , Ryan's procedure, revealed the natur of the finding . Ryan's procedure showed that the boys were more likely to be at ghe conventional level of development rather than at the post-conventional level while the coaches were more likely to be at the postconcentional level rather than the conventional . This finding indicates that it may not be only modelling behavior whic leads to the increased level of formal development found for the boys who routinely participated in team sports.

TABLE (3) : CONTINGENCY TABLE OBSERVED FOR ANALYSIS PERFORMED TO COMPARE COACHES' LEVEL OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT OT THAT OF THEIR STUDENTS.

MORAL DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL	TYPE OF SUBJECT		
	YES	NO	TOTAL
PRECONVENTIONAL	5	1	6
CONVENTIONAL	22	10	32
POSTCONVENTIONAL	3	8	11
TOTAL	30	19	49

## **Discussion of Finding**

The results of the performed analyses support the study's hypothesis that routine participation in team sport is associated with significantly greater moral development on the part of the participants than the lack of such participation . Findings indicate, however, that children who routinely participate in team sports are elevated only to the conventional level of moral development, on this even though their coaches might acutally be modelling the postconventional level of moral development.

Before proceeding to discuss the connection between team sports activities and the level of moral development attained by those who routinely participated in sports , if seems reasonable to examine in more detail precisely what the conventional level of moral development consists of.

According to Kohlberg (1971) the conventional level of moral development is the middle level . Kopp and Krakow (1982) characterized the conventional level of moral development thus:

As this level, maintaining the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation is perceived as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. The attitude is not only one of conformity to personal expectations and social order, but also of loyalty to it , of actively maintaining, supporting , ans justifying the order, and of identifying with the persons or group involved in it.

Characteristically , the conventional level consists of two stages. in the first stage, good behavior is cinsiderde that which pleases or helps another and consequently is approved of by others. This stage is associated with conformaity and approval via stereatypic actions labled " nice" .The second stage is associated with the " law and order" orientation . In this stage good

behavior is viewed as doing one's duty and showing respect for authority and social order.

In order to fully understand the conventional level of moral development, it is best to view it in terms of some of the reasoning processes children have used with respect to Kohlberg's dilemmas. For example, there is a dilemma presented to children that consists of the behavior of a man whose wife is dying of cancer. In order to live, the wife needs a new drug. However, this drug can only be purchased at an exorbitant price which the man cannot afford. He therefore, breaks into a pharmacist's office and steals the drug. The children are asked to tell whether the man's behavior is right or wrong. Rest (1969) provides the following examples of both stages of conventional level moral reasoning:

First stage of Conventional level:

Pro- Non one will think you're bad if you steal the drug but your family will think you're an inhuman husband if you don't. If you let your wife die, you'll never be able to look anybody in the face again.

con- it isn't just the druggist who will think you're a criminal, everyone else will too. After you steal it, you'll feel bad thinking how you've brought dishonor to your family and yourself, you won't be able to face anyone again.

Second stage of conventional level:

pro- if you have any sense of honor, you won't let your wife die because you're afraid to do the only thing that will save her.

you'll always feel guilty that you caused her death if you don't do your duty to her.

con- you're desperate and you may not know you're do-

ing wrong when you steal the drug . But you'll hknow you did wrong after you're punished and sent to jail. you'll always feel guilt for your dishonesty and law breaking .

It will be remembered that the coaches were more likely to be at the postconventional level of moral development . In order to understand this difference between the coaches and the boys who routinely participated in team sports, let us consider the readons offered for judgement of good behavior are : the dilemma at post- conventional level of reasoning.

First stage of post - conventional level:

Por- you'd lose other people's respect, not gain it ,if you don't steal. if let your wife die,it would be out of fear, not out of reasoning it out. So you'd just lose self- respect and probably the respect of others too .

Con- you would lose your standing and respect in the community and violate the law. You'd lose respect for yourself if you're carried away by emotion and forget the long- range point of view.

Second stage of post- conventional level:

por- if you don't steal the drug and let your wife die, you'd always condemn yourself for it afterward. you wouldn't be blamed and you would have lived up to the outside rules of the law but you wouldn't have lived up to your own standards of conscience.

Con- if you stole the drug, you wouldn't be blamed by other people but you'd condemn yourself because you wouldn't have lived up to your own conscience and standards of honesty.

Clearly, the difference between the conventional and the postconventional levels of moral reasoning can be seen in these

examples. whereas the conventional level is almost totally guided by reference to the approval of others, or maintenance one's own principals, the rights of others, and the consequent sense of self- respect or self - condemnation.

Returning to the association between the conventional level of moral development and participation in team sports, said association seems reasonable if one considers the mechanisms involved in team sports. Those who routinely participate in team sports find that others do respond to winners by being impressed and providing approval (i.e.parents, coaches, relatives, etc.) .Also, following rules in order to achieve a goal as a social collective is very much a part of the notion of team sports.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

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The first conclusion of this study is that the results appear to support the notion that team sports build character. However, team sports appear to build character of a particular sort. Namely, the moral character associated with the mild- level of moral development .. at least at the secondary school level . whether this elevation in moral development rises to yet higher stages with increased activity in team sports must be determined by future research.

A second conclusion of this study is that while modeling behavior may play a part in the elevated moral development of boys who routinely participate in team sports, it is not the whole story, and this because the coaches who taught these boys were more likely to be at the post- conventional level of moral development. While this does not necessarily mean that they modeled post- conventional moral development behavior, it seems reasonable to suggest that one's morality is not totally disassociated from one's behavior, and that therefore in some cases these coaches did, in fact, model some amount of post-conventional behavior/reasoning.

What this means, is that the mechanisms involved in simply playing the games were also responsible for the boy's elevated moral sense.

**With respect to recommendations for future studies, several recommendation can be delineated:**

- 1- It is recommended that this study be replicated with different group, i.e. elementary school groups, intermediate school groups, etc. In this way researchers can assess whether this elevation in moral development is consistent over the years.

- 2- It is recommended that future investigators attempt to determine whether team sports are associated with actually elevating moral reasoning processes in those who play sports. One way that such a study might be conducted is to examine group of subjects, preferably adults who have played team sports throughout their lives. If this group, when compared to a group of adults who have not participated in team sports throughout their lives, is predominantly characterized by the conventional level of moral reasoning while the other group is characterized by the postconventional level, there would be reason to believe that team sports limits one's thinking to the conventional level of moral development.
- 3- It is recommended that future investigators attempt to assess whether participation in team sports and moral development are associated with sex differences. This study was limited only to males. It could well be that females who routinely participate in team sports do not show the same pattern as that of their male counterparts. Such a study should include some assessment of the females' coaches moral development as well.
- 4- It is recommended that future investigators attempt to assess whether the association between moral development and team sports varies as a function of the type of sport being played. In this study, all sports (i.e. soccer, basketball, volleyball, water polo, etc.) were lumped together. However, it cannot be denied that sports activities do differ. For example, some are more aggressive than others. It could be that the degree of association between moral and participation in team sports differs depending upon how aggressive the sport is, or upon the extent to which teamwork is called for in order to win.

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