

MANIPULATION OF SPORT COMPETITION: AN EXAMINATION OF INDIVIDUAL DECISION MAKING AND MORAL BEHAVIOR DEVELOPMENT

Konstantinos Konstantinidis

Candidate Dr., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Dimitrios P. Panagiotopoulos

*Professor of Sports Law, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,
Attorney-at-Law (Supreme Court) President at the Anti-doping first disciplinary
committee of the National Anti-doping organization of Greece, Greece*

Introduction

The fundamental principles of Olympism indicate “respect for universal fundamental ethical principles”¹. However, the sport community worldwide struggles to keep sports clean. Corruption in international sport is the major concern which threatens the integrity and accountability of sport as a whole. The last few years, there has been a considerable effort from both the academic and sport community to identify and specify the issue, to analyze the casual factors and to produce policies and measures to address it. This study aims to highlight the importance of individual decision making which is taking place in the sport context by examining the process of moral behavior development on one hand and on personal and interpersonal factors on the other.

Corruption

Modern world has to fight against concepts and practices which concern and threaten the historical democratic notions whose mission are to safeguard the accountability, justice, and equity of the institutions, in order to make them strong and prosper in favor of the society. One of the major threats is corruption, which definition is problematic and academics have been attempting to capture it since a long time. Even if it is suggested that the concept of corruption depends on the perspective under which is examined², the below term from *Transparent International*, adequately illustrates the present state of the term as:

1. International Olympic Committee (2019). *Olympic charter*. International Olympic Committee, p.11.

2. Hodgkinson, P. (1997), The sociology of corruption-some themes and issues. *Sociology*, 31(1), 17-35.

“the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be classified as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs.”³

Moreover the concept of corruption includes many unethical and illegal behaviors, such as embezzlement, forgery and coercion⁴. On the contrary, there is the legal type of corruption where corruptors operate under the tolerance of the law and ignorance of the shareholders⁵. However, even if a corruption activity can be hidden behind a so seemed lawful implementation and thus favored by legal cover, at its foundation is regarded a moral dilemma since it is a process which requires a response based on and affected by individual moral principles⁶

Sport Corruption

Sport as one of the oldest and most essential social institutions with excessive public interaction, could not have stayed unaffected by corruption. In fact corruption is not a modern phenomenon in sport, since its first record goes back to 338BC Olympic Games, when *Eupolos* from *Thessalia* was accused to have bribed three of his competitors so as to let him win in a fighting event⁷. From the 19th century and while the evolution of the media helped in spreading the news easier and broader, more and more cases of corruption were revealed. Nowadays, the international and commercial nature of sport and its ongoing development have formed a quite appealing environment for individuals with not necessarily naive or sporty intentions to engage in the sport industry and attempt to take advantage against it. There are two main types of corruption in the sport world. The first one deals with the actions which affect a sport competition and is called: “*competition corruption*”:

“any illegal, immoral or unethical activity that attempts to deliberately distort the result of a sporting contest for the personal

3. <https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption>

4. Gorsira, M., Steg, L., Denkers, A., & Huisman, W. (2018), Corruption in organizations: Ethical climate and individual motives. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(1), 4.

5. Kaufmann, D., & Vicente, P. C. (2011), Legal corruption. *Economics & Politics*, 23(2), 195-219.

6. Garrigan, B., Adlam, A. L., & Langdon, P. E. (2018), Moral decision-making and moral development: Toward an integrative framework. *Developmental review*, 49, 80-100.

7. Maennig, W. (2005), Corruption in international sports and sport management: Forms, tendencies, extent and countermeasures. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 5(2), 187-225.

material gain of one or more parties involved in that activity.”⁸

The second type of corruption in sport describes any corruption activity regarding administrative issues and is called: “*management corruption*”:

“issues in the governance , organization and management of sporting organizations, like bribes, illegal payments, cronyism, but does not impact on the outcome of the game.”⁹

Corruption practices in sporting action include doping, management frauds, and transfer of adolescence players, hooliganism, and match-fixing¹⁰. The aspects of corruption in sport are several and severe, while, under these circumstances and according to confirmed cases, almost every individual involved in sport could potentially take part in one of these corruption actions. In fact, studies have revealed that athletes, coaches, trainers, sponsors, agents, managers, referees, executives, sport officials, journalists, bettors, old-players and others are likely to play the role of corruption practitioners.¹¹

Manipulation of sport competitions

Manipulation of sport competitions is a modality in the broader frame of sport corruption, which is evolving rapidly and globally, transforming such practices into an illegal industry¹². This is a consequence of the technology development which offers the acknowledgement of live results and at the same time gives the ability to betting operators around the world to offering live betting 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, making gambling easy to any individual with access on the internet, including illegal gambling as well. Furthermore, due to the exposure and analysis that sport events get, it easier to identify corruptive actions than is in other social activities¹³ Literature and experience have

8. Gorse, S., & Chadwick, S. (2011), "The prevalence of corruption in international sport: A statistical analysis. Coventry: Centre for the International Business of Sport."

9. Jennings, Andrew. (2006). *Foul!: The secret world of FIFA: Bribes, vote rigging and ticket scandals*. London: HarperSport.

10. Spapens, T., & Olfers, M. (2015). Match-fixing: The current discussion in Europe and the case of the Netherlands. *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 23(4), 333-358.

11. Van Der Hoeven, S., De Waegeneer, E., Constandt, B., & Willem, A. (2019). Match-fixing: Moral challenges for those involved. *Ethics & Behavior*, 1-19.

12. Cheloukhine, S. (2013) "Match fixing in soccer: Organization, structure and policing. A Russian perspective." *Match-Fixing in International Sports*. Springer, Cham, 113-132.

13. Boeri, Tito, & Battista Severgnini. (2014) "The decline of professional football in Italy."

revealed two main categories of sport competition manipulation. Match-fixing when the manipulation takes place in order to fix in advance the result of an event, and spot-fixing when it concerns partial events of the competition without affecting the result¹⁴.

Ethical Deviance and Moral Decision-making

Ethical deviance in sport is expressed through a wide range of malpractices, which threaten and harm its nature over time by contradicting formal and informal norms¹⁵. But, above and before all, the triggering action for any kind of ethical deviance is the decision of the individual when the need of responding to any kind of challenging situations comes up¹⁶. Since corruption starts from an individual and potentially affects part of the society, it is highly important to anticipate and highlight the process and the features of moral decision-making and development of moral behavior, which turn to be not only the core part of the problem, but also a critical part of any possible solution. Moral decision making and moral dilemmas have been under thorough academic research from the early 70's and there has been a development of several theories. The Rest's model of moral development constitutes the keystone in explaining how human minds react in moral dilemmas¹⁷. The model separates the generation of moral behavior into four distinct steps, four distinct processes, which they may interact with each other, but still work independently. This model describes how individuals act under the specific conditions they experience. The first component of Rest's model *moral sensitivity* concerns the ability of an individual to understand that the upcoming situation includes a moral issue. In the sport context this could be a response to an unethical offer such as bribery. Three important facts are underlying this step of the model, firstly, the ease or difficulty in interpreting a social situation which in fact is subjective and it would be wrong to think otherwise. Hence, the crucial feature here is the individual's ability to understand that what is at stake has an ethical dimension. Furthermore, this understanding is correlated with the individual's sensitivity which may be completely different from one man to another. Moreover, social circumstances can cause a number of feelings before any rational thinking takes place. It is quite possible in many cases that these emotions may lead the behavior of the individual in the absence of any logical consideration of the

Handbook on the economics of professional football. Edward Elgar Publishing.

14. James (2017), M. *Sports law*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

15. Coakely, Jay (2014). *Sports in society*. Colorado Springs, CO: McGraw-Hill.

16. Garrigan, B., Adlam, A. L., & Langdon, P. E., Ibid, p.1-3.

17. Rest, J. R. (1986) *Moral development: Advances in research and theory*. New York: Praeger.

facts. At this first step, individuals think over several possible actions and the possible results of these actions. The second component *moral judgment* refers to the decision of the individual regarding which of these actions is ethically right. The core of this step is the process of how people appreciate and distinguish right from wrong. It is very likely that people make decision according to what is social accepted as right or pursuant to their moral beliefs and principles which guide their instinct. The third component of the model, *moral motivation* refers to the values according to which the individual acts. At this part, a weighing between moral and immoral values takes place. In particular, this is the point where, a person shows its altruism and its empathy to what is socially accepted as moral and conscious. However, in order to act like that, someone should drop any personal needs or values which could possible fill or gain. The last component *moral character* involves all actions that should be taken to implement the moral decision. These actions to reach their ultimate goal should be framed by certain character attributes such as determination, assertiveness, perseverance and courage. It is important to mention, that even if these steps seem to be in a logical order and indeed there is a chain connection among the components, these are not in sequence. Although, they work independently if the individual fail in one of the steps then the possibilities of making an unethical decision increase.¹⁸ To illustrate the above model, think that a football player was offered money to fix a match. Moral sensitivity takes place upon the player's realization that this proposal raises an ethical issue. Next, in moral judgment, the player shall decide that match-fixing is unethical based on the principles of fair play. At the stage of moral motivation, the player will decide to play the match with intention to win since this is ethically accepting and not the other way around, aiming to a potential personal financial gain. Moral character component is on when the player acts, either pro-social by informing the authorities or anti-social by fixing the match.

18. Rest, J.R. & Narvaez D. (2014) "The college experience and moral development." Handbook of moral behavior and development 2: 229-45.

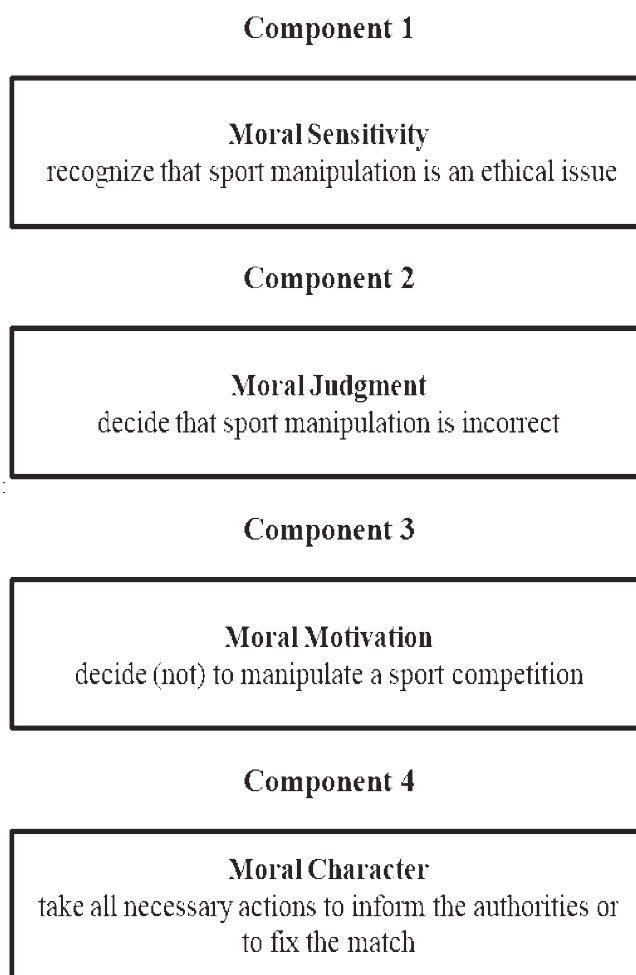


Figure 1. Rest's Model of Moral Development applied in Sport Manipulation Situations

Personal Factors

Individual factors for corruption consist the core of the problem and researchers apart from Rest, have approached the issue from different aspects. The generated conclusions describing these individual factors are personal incentives¹⁹,

19. Prabowo, H. Y. (2014), "To be corrupt or not to be corrupt." *Journal of Money Laundering Control*.

opportunities for corruption²⁰ and social norms²¹. In fact, personal incentives explanation derives from the three elements of the fraud triangle which are necessary to result “violation of trust” which are: motivation, opportunity and rationalization²², where motivation, in this approach, describes the incentives which are generated by an individual regarding a perceived financial need or desire which is not willing to communicate with others. Moreover, opportunity is associated with the perception of the corruptor on how likely is to get caught, when the possibilities are low then an opportunity to commit a fraud seems more ideal. Finally, rationalization of corruption gives the individual all the necessary justification for his actions. These justifications may vary from satisfying personal arrogance and abolishing any moral hesitation, to feeling that the action is also helping the organization or is something expected to happen.²³ In like manner, empirical research has revealed several antecedents of moral behavior which arrive from different motivational constructs such are a) *goals*, both personal and social, b) *motivation types*, intrinsic and extrinsic, c) *threat of failure*, d) *level of passion*, e) *moral identity*, which is related to how an individual feels about his or her morality, f) *moral disengagement* which refers to the ease of a person to discharge themselves from any responsibility by using several mechanisms, and g) *self-regulatory mechanism* when facing a moral dilemma²⁴. Both approaches mentioned above intend to explain the various elements which may can lead an individual to the development of *anti-social* moral behavior in the general context of sport. Apart, from personal incentives, the abovementioned results from the academic research, opportunity to corruption and social norms confirm the existed and crucial interplay between personal incentives, the organizational and social environments of activity. Opportunity to corruption is notably associated to the environment and describes at which level the environmental circumstances encourage or discourage corruption to occur and fraud behavior to take place. Thus, the way an organization in particular operates, is vital to maximize or eliminate any chance to generate corruptive behavior.²⁵ This is to point out, that a consistent

20.Graycar, A., & Sidebottom, A. “Corruption and control: a corruption reduction approach.” *Journal of Financial Crime*, 2012.

21.Köbis, N. C., Van Prooijen, J. W., Righetti, F., & Van Lange, P. A. “Who doesn’t?”—The impact of descriptive norms on corruption”. *PloS one*, 2015, 10(6).

22.Cressey, D. R. (1950), “The criminal violation of financial trust”. *American sociological review*, 15(6), pp.738-743.

23.Prabowo, H. Y., Ibid.

24.Kavussanu, M., & Stanger, N.(2017), “Moral behavior in sport”. *Current opinion in psychology*, 16, pp.185-192.

25.Graycar, A., & Sidebottom, A, Ibid. p. 5-7.

and thorough examination of the issue should not only include individuals conduct but also organizational, social environment determinants.

Organizational Environment Factors

Regarding organizational context, three major concepts have been revealed by the academic research over the years: ethical climate, ethical culture and the enforcement of a code of ethical conduct²⁶. *Ethical climate* mirrors the organizational climate and it is formed by a number of dimensions which demonstrate “several procedures, policies and practices” within the organization which may bury ethical challenges, and has been proved as the most reliable term to explain how an organization anticipates moral behavior and manages ethical issues²⁷. The study of how ethical climate affect individual behavior has revealed three major paths or personal moral development: “egoist” which is based on a selfish viewpoint of the situation, “benevolent” which focus on the interest of the team or the group and “principled” which reveals the individuals attachment to morals, the Law and the regulations²⁸. On the other hand, *ethical culture* reflects a narrower single-dimensioned concept of the above processes which at the end states what kind of behavior is acceptable and expected²⁹. Finally, *codes of ethical conduct* within the organization aim to inform the employees or the members of an organization of which behaviors are unethical and discourage them from committing any immoral action.³⁰ However, there is a strong debate regarding the effectiveness of these codes and how there are perceived by the members of the organization.

Social Environment Factors

By social environment factors we examine the norms and characteristics that exist on the external level such is country level and which significantly plays an

26.Kish-Gephart, J. J., Harrison, D. A., & Treviño, L. K. (2010), “Bad apples, bad cases, and bad barrels: meta-analytic evidence about sources of unethical decisions at work”. *Journal of applied psychology*, 95(1),1,pp. 1-31.

27.Martin, K. D., & Cullen, J. B.(2006), “Continuities and extensions of ethical climate theory: A meta-analytic review”. *Journal of business ethics*, 69(2), 175-194.

28.Victor, B., & Cullen, J. B.(1988), “The organizational bases of ethical work climates”. *Administrative science quarterly*, pp.101-125.

29.Treviño, L. K., Butterfield, K. D., & McCabe, D. L.(1988), “The ethical context in organizations: Influences on employee attitudes and behaviors”. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 8(3), pp.447-476.

30.Trevino, L. K., & Brown, M. E.(2004), “Managing to be ethical: Debunking five business ethics myths”. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 18(2), pp.69-81.

important role in individuals' moral behavior. Such a factor is the culture of a country involving features like "*power distance*" and "*uncertainty avoidance*" which can enhance or diminish the level of corruption³¹. Moreover, the level of education and its financial and cultural consequences is correlated with the development of corrupt behavior³². Furthermore, gender composition of administrative offices influence the volume and frequency of corruptive attitudes; as far as women are more attached to follow the rules and avoid any immoral exposure, their involvement occur lower levels of corruption³³. At the same page, the country's economy as this derives from governmental policies, bureaucracy performance, as long as social inequalities could drive corruption to high levels, while all those involved are struggling to see the daylight of welfare³⁴. Likewise, trust to the institutions is crucial for the growth of corruption; provided that institutional trust is vulnerable in cases of great power distance and unequal application of the laws, this aspect can be central in peoples' intentions³⁵. As a matter of fact, when the abovementioned circumstances drag on for a long time, then this becomes the new standard in peoples' perception about their social environment and the social norms.

Research has shown that the above group of factors, which are met in personal and shared level (organizational, social), are interrelated and the development of ethical or corruptive behavior is a result of this "*interplay*" among these levels and their elements³⁶. However, the organizational to personal level interplay seem to be stronger and thus organizational factors are proved to be more capable than social factors to influence a person's viewpoint and acts³⁷. For example, a football player is in need for money due to personal reasons and he is receiving an "offer" to fix a match. At the same time the country he is living in, has a very bad reputation as for its transparency level, and is known for its poor

31. Getz, K. A., & Volkema, R. J. (2001), "Culture, perceived corruption, and economics: A model of predictors and outcomes". *Business & society*, 40(1), pp. 7-30.

32. Truex, R. (2011), "Corruption, attitudes, and education: Survey evidence from Nepal". *World Development*, 39(7), pp.1133-1142.

33. Esarey, J., & Chirillo, G. (2013), "Fairer sex" or purity myth? Corruption, gender, and institutional context". *Politics & Gender*, 9(4), pp.361-389.

34. Tanzi, V. (1999), "Governance, corruption, and public finance: An overview". *Governance, corruption, and public financial management*. Manila, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, pp.1-20.

35. Dreher, A., Kotsogiannis, C., & McCriston, S. (2007), "Corruption around the world: Evidence from a structural model". *Journal of comparative economics*, 35(3), pp.443-466.

36. Dimant, E., & Schulte, T. (2016), "The nature of corruption: An interdisciplinary perspective". *German Law Journal*, 17(1), pp.53-72.

37. Gorsira, M., Steg, L., Denkers, A., & Huisman, W., Ibid, p.16.

legal system in cases of corruption. These two facts may lead him to fix a match. However, even though the organization ethical climate is also influenced by the general social environment existed, the perception he has regarding moral issues in the organizational environment he is involved with (Club, League, Association etc.) will play a detrimental role in his final decision. If the organizational climate promotes or does not punish such behaviors, then it is more likely for the player to proceed with the fixing. On the contrary, if the organization climate enhances transparency, and also fiercely penalize such acts, then the player would probably decide not to fix the match and report the bribe to the authorities.

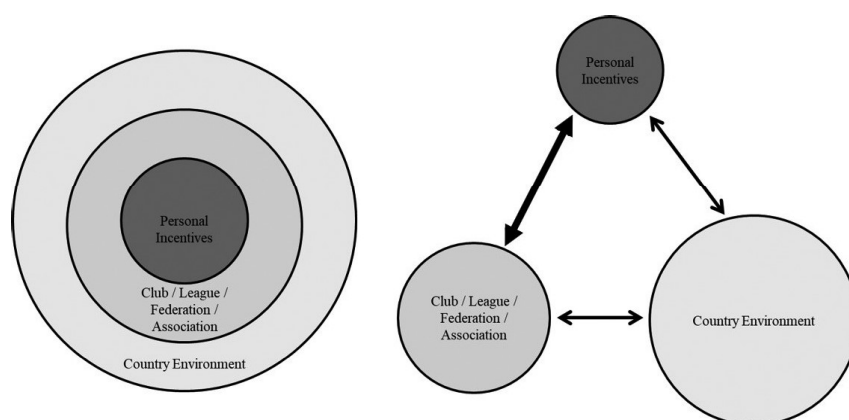


Figure 2. Levels of Corrupt Factors and Interplay in Sport Context

Considerations

As can be seen from the points brought up above, corrupt behavior is a result of personal, organizational and social factors on one hand, and moral development process on the other. Likewise, moral development components and interdisciplinary group of factors coexist, interact and have been proved to be determinant to the production of moral behavior. It is clear that moral behavior is a result of complex mechanisms and mental processes. In the case of *moral sensitivity* social characteristics, such is country profile, as long as organization ethical features are pivotal in individuals understanding of a morally challenging situation. Therefore, in case a country has a history in sport corruption incidents and so is the related organization, it is highly likely for a person to realize what is at stake. Although this can be a starting point but not the rule, since moral sensitivity can be developed, like other skills do, differently to anyone. Again, with this in mind the involvement of social and organizational factors prevail since these environments could aid the involved individuals to improve their ability of

interpreting similar situations. Regarding, *moral judgment* component where the ultimate challenge is the recognition of what is right or wrong, organizational and social level factors play their role since through these disciplines emerges what is accepted or not. In fact, the perception an individual has about the level of morality within an organizational environment can affect their actions. Concerning the components of *moral motivation* and *moral character*, personal incentives and motivational constructs as well as ethical climate, social environment and their so called “*interplay*” is decisive to produce a pro- or anti-social behavior, since in both elements of Rest’s model the above factors have an impact first at a level of principles and second at a level of practice. At the first level, the ethics of the organization and of the country in general shall affect the individual from a principle-based perspective while in the second level, the common practices and their consequences shall influence their actions.

Concluding comments

The above study highlighted the importance of individual decision making and moral development process in cases of match-fixing in particular and sport corruption in general. It is undoubtable that moral development is the heart of the problem in sport competition manipulation, since apart from the behavioral aspect which is obvious; there are also the philosophical and ethical aspects which exist behind and before every conduct. The challenge is whether, sport community is capable and determined, to successfully safeguard sport integrity; granted that sport is a distinct cultural institution with both commercial and social value, significantly unique and special as of its structure, attributes and context. Two major conclusions can be drawn; first, individual moral principles and motivational constructs are the critical issues to deal with, thus, sport governing bodies and other related actors, shall attempt to introduce a new system of values for sport through education and awareness programs for all the people engaging in sporting action. Second, individual’s perception on how ethically the organization and the social environment are, influences moral behavior. Granted that organizational culture can only indirect have an impact on social environment, sport governing bodies shall also develop ethical leadership within their classes so as to enhance ethical climate, and by that promote good governance, accountability and transparency.