



Consistency is Key: Intercollegiate Athlete Perceptions of the Justice of Team Disciplinary Decisions

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Introduction

Organizational Justice:

- Organizational justice concerns employee perceptions of whether organizational practices are fair or unfair³
- Classically viewed as a two-component model consisting of distributive and procedural justice³
- Perceptions of organizational justice influence attitudes, emotions, and behavior³

Punishment and Perceptions Justice:

- Punishment is used by organizations to reduce undesirable behavior in the workplace while reinforcing accepted behavior.¹
- Punishment can deter misconduct in both the punished individual and observers⁵
- Justice perceptions related to punishment focus on severity, appropriateness, and consistency⁵
- Inconsistent use of punishment may lead to perceptions of unfairness and preferential treatment leading to negative employee emotions, attitudes, and behavior²

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a: Punishment consistent with team rules will be perceived as more fair to the punished athlete than will conditional punishment.

Hypothesis 1b: Punishment consistent with team rules will be perceived as more fair to teammates than will conditional punishment.

Hypothesis 1c: Consistent punishment will be more likely to deter future violations by the punished athlete than will conditional punishment.

Hypothesis 1d: Consistent punishment will be more likely to deter future violations by teammates than will conditional punishment.

Hypothesis 2: Punishment for severe violations will be perceived as more fair to the punished athlete than will punishment for violations of moderate severity.

Hypothesis 3a: Severe punishment will be more likely to deter future rule violations by the punished athlete than will punishment of moderate severity.

Hypothesis 3b: Severe punishment will be more likely to deter future rule violations by teammates than will punishment of moderate severity.

Hypothesis 4a: Autocratic procedures will be perceived as less fair to the punished athlete than will group procedures.

Hypothesis 4b: Autocratic procedures will be perceived as less fair to teammates than will group procedures.

Method and Analysis

Participants:

- $n = 204$ intercollegiate athletes (187 female, 17 male, $M_{age} = 19.7$, $SD = 1.39$) recruited from an intercollegiate athletic tournament

Procedure:

- Participants were provided with a 13-item questionnaire, and were asked to recall a critical incident regarding a punishment decision made for their team.
- Items asked participants to describe the violation, punishment, and who made the punishment decision in an open-ended format.
- Violations and punishments were coded according to a calibration study conducted previously⁴. Consistency was coded as either (2 = Consistent, 3 = Inconsistent).
- Participants then responded to 7 items addressing perceptions of procedural and distributive justice to the player, team, and fans, as well as if they believed the punishment would deter future misconduct by the individual and teammates.

Analysis:

A 2 (Violation Severity: moderate vs. severe) x 2 (Punishment Severity: moderate vs. severe) x 2 (Consistency of Punishment: consistent vs. not consistent) x 3 (Punishment Decision Maker: team captains/teammates vs. coach vs. both) factorial ANOVA was conducted.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Due to the number of comparisons conducted, a Bonferroni correction was used to adjust the studywise error rate. To meet inclusion criteria, effects had to be significant at the .007 level.
- In order to ensure results were also practically significant, only effects which accounted for $> 5\%$ ($\eta^2 > .05$) of the total variance were retained.

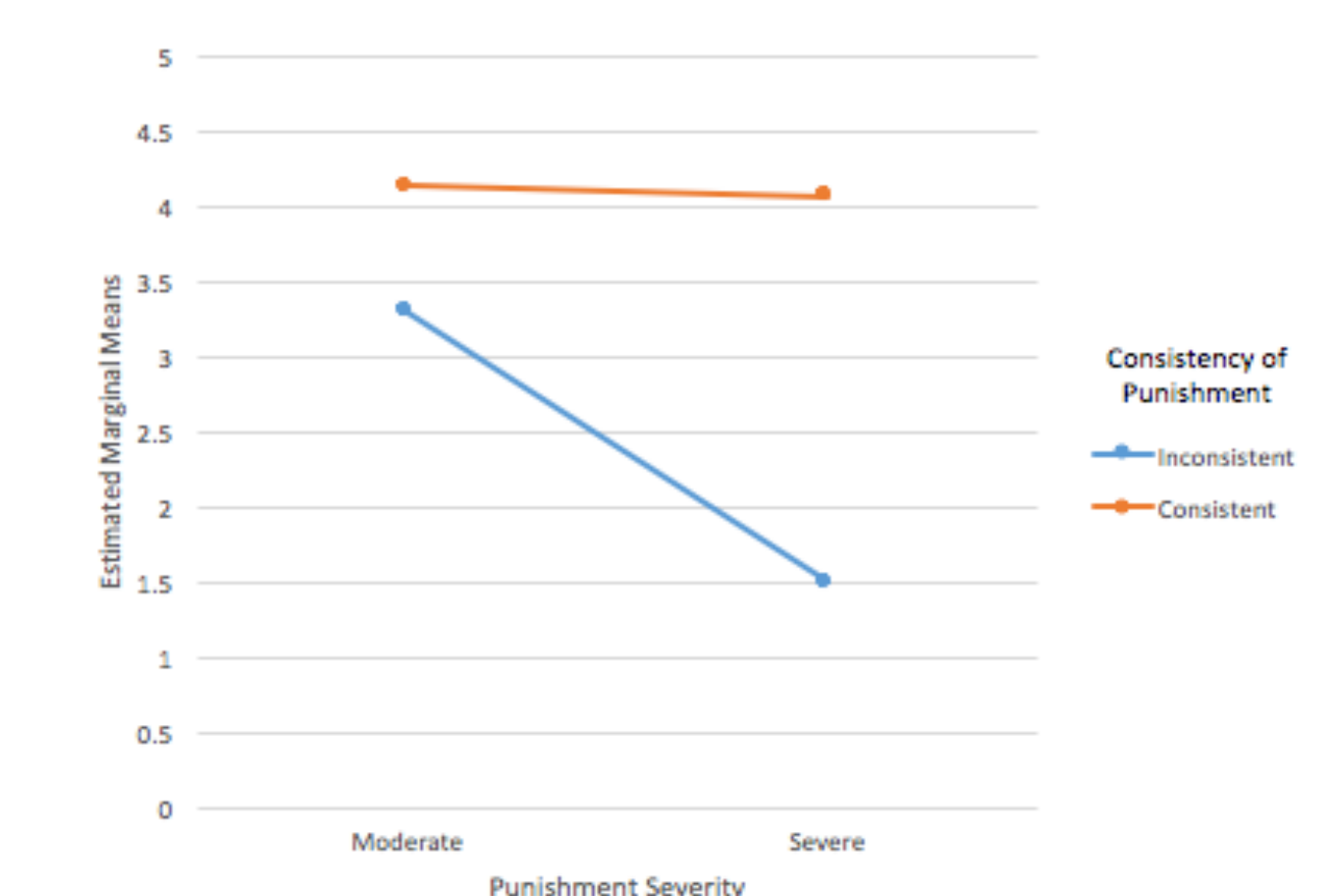
Results

Table 1
Perceptions of Distributive Justice to Punished Athlete

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Consistency	14.763	1	14.763	21.50	>.007	.137
Punishment Severity * Consistency	8.127	1	8.127	11.837	>.007	.08

Table 2
Perceptions of Distributive Justice to Team Members

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Consistency	15.878	1	15.878	16.671	>.007	.11



Discussion

- Full support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b
- Partial support for Hypothesis 2
- No support for Hypotheses 1d, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b
- Results suggest that the consistency of punishment with team policy has a significant influence on justice perceptions

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