

## CORRELATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE FAIR PLAY DISPLAYED IN COMPETITIONS AND THE ATHLETES' BEHAVIOUR

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**ABSTRACT. Introduction.** Fair play represents an ensemble of displayed moral qualities and attitudes, in order to perform sports activities in a climate favourable for sports performances, competition, supporters and athletes. Sport, by its purpose, represents the athletes' capacity of winning honestly, by respecting their opponents, teammates, supporters, etc. Education in the spirit of fair play is done by the coach in collaboration with the athlete, based on the moral knowledge and values taught by family and school. The athletes with an adequate level of fair play displayed in trainings and competitions determine a proper behaviour and an easier social integration, starting from the observation that "well-raised persons" are significantly easier to accept than persons situated at the other extreme, from the perspective of behaviour in this case. The objective of our investigation consists of identifying the correlations between fair play in competitions and fair play displayed in the society. The research methods used within the study were the method of bibliographic study, the observation method, the survey method, (within which we applied the questionnaire for fair play) and the SPSS method of analysis and interpreting the results. **Results and discussions.** Results have demonstrated that the athletes displaying fair play behaviour in competitions have proper behaviour, by respecting the moral norms and values imposed by the society. **Conclusions.** The study confirms that fair play conduct is based on the moral dimension that must be controlled and learnt (as the case may be) in trainings, competitions and in social relationships outside arenas and gymnasiums. Thus, the athlete will represent a model for young people, for the future athletes, and he will integrate easily in the society, both while practicing sport and mostly after wrapping up the sports career and integrating in various fields of activity.

**Keywords:** *Sport; fair play; competition; moral conduct; social integration*

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**REZUMAT. Studiu corelativ dintre fair-play-ul manifestat în competiții și conduita sportivilor. Introducere.** Fair-play-ul reprezintă un cumul de calități morale și atitudini manifestate, în vederea desfășurării activităților sportive într-un climat favorabil performanțelor sportive, competiției, suporterilor și sportivilor. Sportul, în funcție de finalitatea sa, reprezintă capacitatea sportivilor de a câștiga în mod cinstit, respectând adversarii, coechipierii, suporterii, etc. Educația în spiritul fair-play-ului se face de antrenor în colaborare cu sportivul, având la bază un fundament al cunoștințelor și valorilor morale din familie și din școală. Sportivii care dețin un nivel adecvat al fair-play-ului și îl manifestă în competiții și antrenamente, determină o conduită adecvată și o integrare socială mai bună și mai facilă pentru acesta, plecând de la considerentul că „oamenii binecrescuți” sunt mult mai ușor de acceptat decât cei care se află la polul opus, din punct de vedere al conduitei în acest caz. Obiectivului investigației noastre constă în identificarea corelațiilor dintre fair-play în competiții și fair-play-ul manifestat în societate. Metodele de cercetare utilizate în cadrul studiului au fost metoda studiului bibliografic, metoda observației, metoda anchetei în cadrul căreia am aplicat chestionarul pentru fair-play și metoda de analiza și interpretare a rezultatelor (SPSS). **Rezultate și discuții.** În urma rezultatelor s-a demonstrat că sportivii care manifestă o conduită fair-play în competiții, manifestă o conduită adecvată, respectând normele și valorile morale impuse de societate. **Concluzii.** Studiul confirmă că la baza unei conduite fair-play, sta o bună fundamentare a dimensiunii morale care trebuie să fie controlată și învățată (după caz) în antrenamente, competiții și în relațiile sociale dinafara stadioanelor și a sălilor de sport. Astfel, sportivul va reprezenta un model pentru tineri, pentru viitorii sportivi și se va integra cu ușurință în societate, atât pe parcursul practicării sportului cât, mai ales după încheierea carierei sportive și integrare în diverse domenii de activitate.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Sport – fair-play – competiție - conduită morală - integrare socială*

## Introduction

*The issue of sports training made it necessary to systematize and interpret data on the practical, methodical, organizational and prospective aspects. Gradually, a set of knowledge, notions, concepts, principles, methods and rules specific to performance athletes was established. Hence, sporting training has become an instructive and educative process with particular physical and mental formative valences; its objective is to value the human aptitudes as much as possible in order to obtain sports performance, which involves high moral and intellectual features. The sports competition includes the behaviour of athletes and it embodies the biopsychosocial unit of the personality as an expression of the individual in competitive conditions.*

Sport is an activity with social character; its institutionally organized unfolding brings us in the presence of others. Hence, it invites us to communication, interaction, thus determining us to develop social relating skills (sport is an important means of socialization), as well as specific attitudes. Sport is in theory an ideal activity for "training" social behaviour. It represents a defined social field, governed by relatively strict rules and by regulatory norms for sanctioning deviations and for punishing deviant behaviour. Unlike the acquisition of abstract rules in other fields, sport provides a learning method with more experiential, applicative focus.

*The athlete's training must be understood as a preparation for life, not only for the sports branch practiced, because education is the action of forming the individual for himself, by developing a many-sided interest (Herbart, 1976). At the same time, education is integration: integration of life forces in the harmonious body function, integration of social aptitudes in order to adapt to groups, integration of spiritual energies, through the social and corporal being, for the complete development of individual personality (Hubert, 1965).*

Moral conscience and conduct are acquired based on the continuity in forming moral notions, beliefs and behaviour, by respecting the action unit of emotional factors (school, family, cultural units), as well as the unity between the instructive and the educative process. The behavioural manifestations of the athlete during his training (practice, competitions, social life) reflect his level of education/ moral-volitional training. We refer here to the moral component within the fair play spirit of the athlete, to the perception and application of this concept promoted and supported by all competent bodies in the field. Research had underscored those athletes *exceeding* the average level display tenacity, responsibility, attitude stability and action. *Below* the average level, psychological manifestations include a narrow sphere of interests with a realistic, practical and formal character.

Sport and sports competition are submitted to the moral values of fair play, consisting of respect for the opponent, regardless of religion, ethnic group, race, political colour, etc. Moral education is understood as a passage from morals to morality, as an interiorization of moral norms, rules and – it involves not only a cognitive dimension, but also an affective and a practical dimension (Grigoraş, Stan, 1994). Hence, the optimization of the athlete's training process requires the transformation of training into a constructive process meant to ensure the continuity of its formation; it focuses on mobilizing and properly empowering human resources (Tüdös, 2000). Sports performance does not belong only to the strong, fast or skilful. Without strong will, perseverance, character strength, (i.e. without the moral qualities of personality) an athlete cannot become a champion; moreover, he cannot become a true athlete and a genuine human being.

Fair play represents a whole set of morals, a psychology, a code of unwritten, chivalrous and traditional laws and it constitutes a notion with multiple meanings; it expresses fair fight, observation of written and unwritten rules, respect for the opponent and sportsmanship. In the opinion of Țopescu, sport is not really sport without fair play. There are however factors that influence it negatively, such as the desire to win at all costs, the unleashed passion, the exacerbated prestige, the tendency of being surrounded by the worship aura, the fear of failure, the tempting perspective of material or other types of advantages. All of these aspects make sport turn towards wrong paths and athletes forget about the laws of morals, about the fact that one should be modest after winning and graceful after losing (Țopescu, 2003). The model of educated athlete is characterized by simplicity, modesty and balance. The first meaning of sport is sportsmanship. It accompanies the athlete throughout the active years on the arena and then over his lifetime.

Hemingway contended that sport teaches us how to win honestly and how to lose gracefully; sport teaches us life. But we do not always win. This is why a great athlete knows how to accept defeat with the head up. Beyond victory and participation, there is something more valuable from an ethical and philosophical perspective: the victory upon us.

At the other extreme, the British writer George Orwell wrote as early as in 1948, "Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules." There are many examples in this respect. Let us examine the first-league player who aims near the goal, while the referee says it was a goal. His error can be corrected rapidly if the author admits his own fault, but he does not intend to do so. Another example is the array of athletes who choose all types of substance abuse to boost their exercise and focus capacity, to the detriment of athletes who compete in all honesty.

Years ago, the philosopher Hans Lenk and the sports sociologist Gunter A. Pilz noted that education in the spirit of fair play must not be neglected in a society that tends to become exclusively success-oriented. Education for fair play encourages people to learn how to be calmer and more relaxed, fairer. Most of the times, sport is like life. The painter Vincent Van Gogh said, *look for a glimpse of the sun without pushing the other into the shadow* (Hans-Albrecht Pfisterer, 6 / 2000).

Fair play means respecting the rules, giving up wrongfully obtained advantages, providing equal opportunities, displaying preventive behaviour, respecting the opponents and accepting the others. However, fair play as a fundamental sports and moral attitude is threatened nowadays – not only in sport, but also in other fields of social living. Notwithstanding, we must take into account that fair play provides genuine possibilities for a better orientation in a world full of competitive elements.

The objective of the study consists of identifying the correlations between fair play in competitions and fair play displayed in the society. This objective is meant to assess the instrument we have designed, by highlighting the possible correlations between the two subscales and between them and the fair play scale as a whole.

Hence, we propose here to demonstrate that *there is a direct correlation between the variables fair play in competitions and fair play in general, namely that a higher score for the dimension of fair play in competitions entails higher scores in the dimension of fair play in the society.*

## **Material and method**

The research methods used within the study were the method of bibliographic study, the observation method, the survey method, (within which we applied the questionnaire for fair play) and the SPSS method of analysis and interpreting the results.

## **Research methodology**

The research had an exploratory character and it began in February 2016 by collecting information regarding the elaboration and application of the fair play questionnaire; the research ended in August 2016. It was pre-tested on 60 subjects and subsequently applied to 150 subjects. The subjects were athletes, selected according to the following criteria: studies, gender, sports branch, age and sports ranking.

The fair play questionnaire is meant to measure the way athletes think and act in competitions and in social life from the perspective of the aforementioned concept of fair play. The questionnaire comprises a number of 28 items structured on two 14-item subscales: fair play in competitions and fair play in general. The subject chose a number within a five-point Likert scale, which showed the degree to which the subject agreed with that statement. The scoring is done for each subscale or for the scale as a whole, with the mention that some items are reversed.

While pre-testing this instrument on the same sample of 60 subjects, we obtained a 0.87 Cronbach's alpha coefficients of internal consistency overall, while 0.79 for *fair play in competitions* and 0.77 for *fair play in general*. Similarly, a test-retest correlation was not possible in order to assess the stability of results. Cronbach's alpha coefficients show good, high fidelity of the instruments, thus proving that the scale items measure various aspects of the same variables.

## Results and discussions

The analysis and interpretation of results was conducted using the specialized psychological statistics software SPSS. Within the statistical analysis, we determined the bivariate Pearson's correlation between the variables fair play in competitions and fair play in the society, in general.

**Table 1.** Pearson's correlations between fair-play in competitions and general fair-play: descriptiv statistics.

### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
General fair play	107,8267	14,95665	150
Fair play in competitions	53,1733	9,00168	150

**Table 2.** Pearson's correlations between fair-play in competitions and general fair-play:correlations.

### Correlations

		Fair-play general	Fair-play in competitii
Fair-play general	Pearson Correlation	1	,934 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,	,000
	N	150	150
Fair-play in competitii	Pearson Correlation	,934 **	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,
	N	150	150

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to assess the hypothesis, we calculated the bivariate Pearson's correlation between the variable *fair play in competitions*, on one hand, and the variable *fair play in general*. The hypothesis was confirmed for the analyzed variables.

There is a direct significant positive correlation between the variables *fair play in competitions* and *fair play in general* ( $r = 0.934$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Namely, athletes with high fair play behaviour in competitions tend to have high fair play behaviour in general and the other way around, (athletes with low fair play behaviour in competitions tend to have low fair play behaviour in general).

**Table 3.** Bivariate Pearson's correlation between the variables *fair play in competitions* and *fair play in general*

	<i>Fair play in general</i>
<i>Fair play in competitions</i>	N = 150 r = 0,934 p = 0,000

From a qualitative perspective, for the correlations found between the variables fair play in competitions and fair play in general, it can be stated that athletes displaying fair play behaviour in sports competitions will display the same type of behaviour in social life, too. The sports norms, rules and regulations, as well as social norms and social living rules mark the behaviour of athletes who interiorize them and behave according to the same spirit of fair play. It is equally true that when these rules and norms are respected to a lesser extent, the behaviour of athletes is less fair play than that of athletes who respect these rules and norms, both in competitions and in social life. The respect for the others, for the opponents and for the teammates, the acquisition and observation of game rules and social norms lead to the construction of sports conduct in the spirit of fair play, displayed in all life situations.

## Conclusions

The correlations found between the variables fair play in competitions, fair play in the society and fair play in general allow us to state that athletes displaying fair play behaviour in sports competitions will display the same type of behaviour in social life, too. The sports norms, rules and regulations, as well as social norms and social living rules mark the behaviour of athletes interiorizing them and behave in the spirit of fair play.

The attitude and value related structures of personality are constituted within and based on the way an individual related to his environment and they are displayed in his activity and behaviour. The athlete's orientations towards moral values ensure the basis for displaying fair play behaviour regardless of the situation.

The athletes displaying high fair play spirit are more aware of their own feelings and they have a better consolidated sense of the Self. They live and perceive their own feeling of choice regarding their own behaviour, compared to athletes who display low fair play behaviour.

The interiorization of social norms and rules (related to sports and social living) determine the athletes to manifest more autonomous behaviour than those who only know about the existence of these norms and rules, (such behaviour originates in the individuals' intentionality, which is self-determined).

A sports education in the spirit of fair play leads to the construction of the athlete's autonomous personality, to the manifestation of their self-development capacity according to the spirit of fair play.

In sports, conducts determined by the sports branch regulation are learnt and imposed; subsequently, they become abilities and customs in the athlete's conduct, adapted to the moral training of athletes and to the reflection of this training in their conduct. The sports environment provides the possibility of finishing this type of education, thus contributing to a high extent to the construct of morality through the objective proposed – the development of human personality.

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