



Consequences of prosocial and antisocial behaviors in adolescent male soccer players: The moderating role of motivational climate

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examined (a) whether prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors are related to athletes' enjoyment, anger, effort, perceived performance, and commitment; (b) the mediating role of anger, enjoyment, and perceived performance on some of these relationships; and (c) whether any of these relationships are moderated by motivational climate.

Design: Cross-sectional.

Method: Adolescent male soccer players ($N = 358$, M age = 14.48 yrs) completed questionnaires assessing the aforementioned variables. The results were analysed using structural equation modelling (EQS 6.1; Bentler, 2003).

Results: Prosocial teammate behavior was positively related to effort, perceived performance, and commitment and these relationships were mediated by enjoyment. The relationships between prosocial teammate behavior and perceived performance and commitment were mediated by effort and perceived performance, respectively. In contrast, antisocial teammate behavior was positively related to anger and negatively related to effort and perceived performance. Mastery and performance climates moderated the relationships between prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors and enjoyment as well as perceived performance, with a stronger relationship at higher levels of the climates.

Conclusion: The findings highlight the potential consequences of prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors and the importance of coach-created motivational climate in adolescents. Future research in sport should employ objective measures to capture actual teammate behaviors.

Prosocial and antisocial behaviors have received much research attention over the past two decades (see Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017). Prosocial behavior is voluntary behavior intended to help or benefit others (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998), for example helping a player off the floor or congratulating another player after good play, while antisocial behavior is behavior intended to harm or disadvantage others (Sage, Kavussanu, & Duda, 2006), for example, verbally abusing or trying to injure another player. Both prosocial and antisocial behaviors take place in sport (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009), and a large number of studies have examined antecedents of these behaviors (see Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017). Recently, researchers have started to investigate consequences of these behaviors for the recipient (e.g., Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2017; Al-Yaaribi, Kavussanu, & Ring, 2016).

Research pertaining to prosocial and antisocial behaviors has been guided by the social cognitive theory of moral thought and action (Bandura, 1991). This theory proposes that the social environment (e.g., significant others, peers) plays an important role in shaping

individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions; the person and social environment function as interacting determinants affecting each other bidirectionally. Bandura (1991) also argued that one should determine the morality of the conduct by considering the consequences of behavior for others. For example, one's transgressive acts can have negative consequences for the recipient, regardless of the thoughts or motives for committing such acts. Bandura (1999) has also distinguished between two aspects of morality, proactive and inhibitive, which pertain to the power to act humanely and refrain from acting inhumanely toward others, respectively. In the context of sport, the terms prosocial and antisocial behavior have been used to refer to these two aspects of morality (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009).

1. Consequences of prosocial and antisocial behavior for the recipient

Past research (e.g., Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Kavussanu & Boardley,

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2009) has examined prosocial and antisocial behaviors toward teammates (e.g., congratulating or verbally abusing a teammate) or opponents (e.g., helping an injured opponent and criticizing an opponent). These behaviors could have consequences for the recipient. The present research focused on prosocial and antisocial behaviors directed only toward teammates, because these behaviors, particularly the prosocial ones, can have consequences for motivation and subsequent performance of the recipient and the team (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009). In addition, one has more contact with teammates than opponents, therefore teammate behaviors should have more lasting consequences for the recipient.

The potential consequences of prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors have been investigated in two cross-sectional studies, both of which employed adult athletes. In the first study, Al-Yaaribi et al. (2016) asked soccer and basketball players right after a match to report the frequency of their teammates' behaviors toward them, and their own enjoyment, anger, effort, and perceived performance during the match; participants also indicated their commitment for playing for their team. The results showed that perceived prosocial teammate behavior was positively related to the recipient's effort, performance, and commitment, both directly and indirectly through enjoyment. In contrast, the recipients of antisocial teammate behavior reported more anger, less effort, and poorer performance. Antisocial teammate behavior was also indirectly related to effort and commitment via anger and performance, respectively. The second study (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2017) showed that perceptions of prosocial teammate behavior during matches of a competitive season were positively related to task cohesion and negatively related to burnout both directly and indirectly via positive affect. The reverse pattern of relationships was observed between antisocial teammate behavior and task cohesion and burnout, with negative affect mediating these relationships.

To date, no study has investigated consequences of teammate prosocial and antisocial behaviors in adolescents. The presence of such behaviors in adolescents has been reported in previous research. For example, Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi, and Power (2005) assessed athletes' perceptions of sport-related poor (similar to antisocial) and good (similar to prosocial) behaviors. Results showed that athletes reported high frequency of poor sport behavior and 13% of them admitted having made fun of a less-skilled teammate. In contrast, approximately 89–96% of athletes acknowledged that their teammates engaged in prosocial behavior as reflected by two items 'on our team we try our best to be good sports' and 'on our team we encourage each other to be good sports'. Also, Shields, LaVoi, Bredemeier, and Power (2007) found a high rate of poor sport behaviors (e.g., "say things to hurt, anger, or upset an opponent", "make fun of a less skilled teammate") with males scoring higher than females in such behaviors.

In a study of adolescent soccer players, Omli and LaVoi (2009) found that players reported moderate frequency of antisocial behavior (e.g., yelling at teammates) with peak incidents of such behavior around the age of 16. In addition, Kavussanu, Seal, and Phillips (2006) observed prosocial and antisocial behaviors in videotaped soccer games of male players (aged 12–17). It is essential to examine adolescent athletes' moral behavior as at this stage of life various aspects of social and moral behaviors are adopted (Bredemeier, 1985; Conroy, Silva, Newcomer, Walker, & Johnson, 2001; Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996). These behaviors could potentially influence adolescent relationships in sport, which are important for athletes' psychological development (see Smith, 2007).

In line with Al-Yaaribi et al.'s (2016) findings, we examined whether teammate behaviors were related to enjoyment, anger, effort, performance, and commitment. The recipients of prosocial teammate behavior may perceive trust in their athletic abilities and be motivated to perform with maximum effort during matches. Such behavior may also lead the recipients to have an enjoyable experience and perceive positive social relationships with teammates, which are key predictors of commitment (e.g., Scanlan, Carpenter, Simons, & Schmidt, 1993). In

contrast, antisocial teammate behavior may demotivate the recipients from trying hard, as they may interpret such behavior as disapproval of their abilities. The recipient may also experience anger as they may feel offended or disrespected by their teammates' antisocial behavior. Indeed, increased provocation was linked to increased anger in past research (Stanger, Kavussanu, McIntyre, & Ring, 2016).

1.1. The role of motivational climate

A social-environmental variable which has been linked to moral behavior in sport is motivational climate. This construct, which is drawn from achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1989), refers to the situational goal structure created by significant others such as coaches (Ames, 1992), and is typically assessed via athletes' perceptions (e.g., van de Pol, Kavussanu, & Ring, 2012). Two distinct types of motivational climate have been examined in sport: mastery and performance (Ames, 1992). In a mastery climate the focus of the coach is on skill development, effort, and individual improvement, whereas in a performance climate the emphasis is on interpersonal comparison, normative feedback, and public evaluation. In sport, mastery and performance motivational climates have generally been associated with adaptive and maladaptive outcomes, respectively. For example, perceptions of a coach-created mastery climate have been linked with prosocial behavior toward teammates, enjoyment, effort, perceived competence, and commitment (e.g., Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Ntoumanis, Taylor, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2012; Reinboth & Duda, 2004; van de Pol et al., 2012), whereas perceptions of a coach-created performance climate have been associated with antisocial behavior toward teammates, tension, anxiety, low effort, and intention to drop out (e.g., Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Ntoumanis et al., 2012; van de Pol et al., 2012). It is possible that the relationship between teammate behaviors and outcomes may vary depending on players' perceptions of motivational climate in their team.

1.2. The present study

In sum, most previous research has focused on antecedents of prosocial and antisocial behaviors, particularly those directed toward opponents (see Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017). Although the potential consequences of these behaviors for the recipient have been investigated in adult athletes (e.g., Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2017; Al-Yaaribi et al., 2016), we do not know whether previous findings would be replicated in a younger sample of athletes. In this study, we extended previous work to adolescent male soccer players. We studied this population due to previous research showing high frequency of both prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors in these athletes compared to basketball and hockey players, and higher in males than females (Al-Yaaribi et al., 2016; Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu, Stamp, Slade, & Ring, 2009). In addition, soccer is a very popular sport, so findings are expected to have implications for many athletes.

The first purpose of this study was to examine whether the findings of Al-Yaaribi et al. (2016) in adult athletes would be replicated in adolescent soccer players. Specifically, we investigated whether perceived prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors (hereafter referred to as prosocial and antisocial behaviors) were related to enjoyment, anger, effort, perceived performance (hereafter referred to as performance), and commitment, both directly and indirectly via enjoyment, anger, and performance. We hypothesized that prosocial behavior would be positively related to effort, performance, and commitment directly and indirectly via enjoyment. We also expected that prosocial behavior would be indirectly related to commitment via performance. In contrast, we hypothesized that antisocial behavior would be: (a) positively related to anger and negatively related to effort and performance; (b) indirectly related to effort via anger; and (c) indirectly related to commitment via performance. The second purpose of this study was to examine whether mastery and performance climate,

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