



Consequences of prosocial and antisocial behavior for the recipient



Ali Al-Yaaribi*, Maria Kavussanu, Christopher Ring

University of Birmingham, UK

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ABSTRACT

Statement of problem: Although studies have examined antecedents of prosocial and antisocial behaviors in sport, little is known about the potential consequences of these behaviors for the recipient. In this research, we examined: (a) whether teammate prosocial and antisocial behaviors are related to athletes' effort, performance, enjoyment and anger during a match and the mediating role of enjoyment and anger (Studies 1 and 2); and (b) whether prosocial and antisocial behaviors are related to commitment to play for one's team and whether enjoyment and performance mediate these relationships (Study 2).

Method: Right after a game, football/soccer ($N = 203$; Study 1) and basketball ($N = 281$; Study 2) players completed a multi-section questionnaire measuring the aforementioned variables.

Results: Prosocial teammate behavior was positively related to effort, performance, and enjoyment, and enjoyment mediated the relationship between prosocial teammate behavior and effort and performance; prosocial teammate behavior was also positively related to commitment directly and indirectly through enjoyment and performance. Antisocial teammate behavior was positively related to anger and negatively related to effort and performance. Anger and performance mediated the effects of antisocial teammate behavior on effort and commitment, respectively.

Conclusions: Our findings demonstrate the importance of acting prosocially and not acting antisocially toward one's teammates and have implications for enjoyment, effort, performance, and commitment in sport.

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1. Introduction

Moral behavior in sport has attracted considerable research attention in recent years (see Kavussanu, 2012). While playing sport, athletes engage in a variety of prosocial behaviors, such as helping other players off the floor, helping injured players, and supporting or encouraging their teammates (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009); they also engage in antisocial acts, such as trying to injure their opponents and verbally abusing their teammates (e.g., Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu, Seal, & Phillips, 2006). Although much research has investigated antecedents of prosocial and antisocial behaviors (e.g., Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Kavussanu, Ring, & Kavanagh, 2015; Kavussanu, Stanger, & Ring, 2015), we know little about the consequences of these behaviors for the recipient. The present research was designed to address this issue.

A theoretical framework that is pertinent to this research is the social cognitive theory of moral thought and action (Bandura, 1991). According to Bandura (1991), individuals develop moral rules or standards from a variety of sources such as modeling, direct tuition, and others' evaluative social reactions. In addition, the social environment influences the individual's behavior, but the individual can also affect the environment. Importantly, Bandura (1991) has called for a focus on moral behavior highlighting the consequences of one's actions for the recipient. In contrast to structural developmental theorists, who focus on moral cognition (e.g., Kohlberg, 1984), Bandura (1991) emphasized that behavior – regardless of one's thoughts or motives – has consequences for others. For example, verbally abusing or hitting another person should result in some psychological suffering for the recipient regardless of the reasons that led to the behavior.

Bandura (1999) has also distinguished between proactive morality, which is the power to behave humanely, and inhibitive morality, which is the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely. These two dimensions of morality have been investigated in sport research as prosocial and (lack of) antisocial behavior,

* Corresponding author. School of Sport, Exercise & Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK. Tel.: +44 (0)121 414 4112; fax: +44 (0)121 414 4121.

E-mail address: aliyarubi@gmail.com (A. Al-Yaaribi).

respectively. Prosocial behavior is voluntary behavior intended to help or benefit another individual (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998), while antisocial behavior has been defined as behavior intended to harm or disadvantage another individual (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Sage, Kavussanu, & Duda, 2006). Prosocial and antisocial behaviors can have positive and negative consequences, respectively, for the recipient. It has been argued that considering both dimensions of morality is important for a more complete understanding of the moral conduct that takes place in sport (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu, 2012).

Investigating prosocial and antisocial behaviors using both observational (e.g., Kavussanu et al., 2006, Kavussanu, Stamp, Slade, & Ring, 2009) and self-report (e.g., Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009) methods, researchers have found that a number of such acts occur in sport and they are directed toward both opponents and teammates. For example, team sport athletes have reported – or have been observed – to congratulate their teammates for good play, give positive feedback and encourage their teammates after a mistake, thus engaging in prosocial behavior; but also to verbally abuse, swear, argue, criticize, and express frustration at a teammate's poor play, thus displaying antisocial behavior (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu et al., 2009, 2006). The aim of the present research was to investigate potential consequences of prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors for the recipient. We focused only on potential consequences of *teammate* behavior because one's teammates are stable and could have more lasting consequences for the recipient; in addition, their behavior could be influenced by the coach, thus, one can more readily intervene in relation to teammate behavior. Finally, because teammate behaviors are different from opponent behaviors (see Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009), they could also have distinct consequences for the recipient.

1.1. Consequences of teammate behaviors

In his social cognitive theory of moral thought and action, Bandura (1991) outlined the morally relevant consequences of behavior (e.g., the suffering experienced by the victim of aggressive behavior). However, besides these apparent consequences, the teammate behaviors identified in sport morality research could also have achievement-related consequences. For example, players who are the recipients of antisocial conduct from their teammates may be de-motivated to try hard during a match. These behaviors could be interpreted as lack of trust among one's teammates in the player's athletic ability and could demoralize the recipient. In contrast, receiving positive or constructive feedback from a teammate or being congratulated by a teammate for good play may increase the recipient's confidence in their ability to perform, which in turn should enhance their motivation and performance. Indeed, positive feedback about performance on a shuttle run led to higher perceived competence, which was associated with greater intentions to perform similar activities in the future (Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Sideridis, 2008). Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) underlines the important role that the social environment plays in influencing the individual's behavior; one's teammates are part of this environment.

The present study is grounded on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) as well as achievement goal theory (Ames, 1992) and related research. More specifically, a construct derived from achievement goal theory that shares some similarities with prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors is peer motivational climate (Vazou, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2006). Peer climate refers to the emphasis placed by one's teammates on self-referenced (i.e., task involving) versus other-referenced (i.e., ego involving) criteria

for success (e.g., Ntoumanis & Vazou, 2005; Vazou et al., 2006). One dimension of the task-involving peer climate – improvement – pertains to teammates providing feedback and encouragement to improve. The teammate behaviors encompassed in this dimension (e.g., help and encourage each other to improve), in addition to focusing on self-referenced achievement, can be classified as prosocial, because they are voluntary behaviors with potentially positive consequences for the recipient (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Kavussanu, 2012). Similarly, the intra-team conflict dimension of ego-involving peer climate pertains to negative behaviors toward teammates (e.g., criticizing and laughing at teammates when they make mistakes, making negative comments that put teammates down) that could be classified as antisocial behaviors because they can have negative consequences for the recipient (see Kavussanu, 2012).

Due to the similarities between prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors and some dimensions of the peer motivational climate, findings of peer climate studies can be used as additional support for our research hypotheses regarding the consequences of teammate prosocial and antisocial behaviors. In previous research, Vazou et al. (2006) reported a positive – albeit weak – relationship between task-involving peer climate and coach and physical education teacher-rated effort, when confronted with difficult tasks; the reverse relationship was revealed between effort and ego-involving climate. These findings were replicated in a second study, which examined coach-rated effort over the previous three months (Ntoumanis, Taylor, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2012). Based on these findings, it is reasonable to expect that prosocial and antisocial teammate behaviors would be differentially associated with effort during a match. In turn, effort could lead to better performance, thus teammate behavior could also influence the recipients' performance indirectly via effort. Research has established links between effort and performance in sport (Cooke, Kavussanu, McIntyre, Boardley, & Ring, 2011; Cooke, Kavussanu, McIntyre, & Ring, 2013).

The recipients of prosocial teammate behavior could also experience different emotions. Prosocial teammate behavior could lead athletes to feel more socially connected with their teammates and due to this social bond they may experience enjoyment, which is a positive emotional response to sport and includes feelings such as fun, pleasure, and liking (Scanlan, Russell, Beals, & Scanlan, 2003). Previous research in young athletes has shown that a task-involving peer climate was a strong positive predictor of enjoyment (Vazou et al., 2006) as well as vitality (Ntoumanis et al., 2012), which is a positive emotional experience and an index of well being. Thus, prosocial teammate behavior may lead to enjoyment, and this in turn could influence the recipients' effort and performance. Research has established links between enjoyment, effort, and performance (Cooke et al., 2013). When individuals enjoy performing a particular task, they tend to spend more time on it and perform better (Puca & Schmalt, 1999). Consequently, the positive effects of prosocial teammate behavior on the recipients' effort and performance during a match could occur via enjoyment. This is in line with Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, where affective states are highlighted as one of the psychological mechanisms through which the environment influences the individual's behavior.

Finally, antisocial teammate behavior could lead to anger, which is an emotion that involves high arousal and results from an event perceived to be a “demeaning offence against me and mine” (Lazarus, 2000, p. 234 cited in Jones, Lane, Bray, Uphill, & Catlin, 2005, p. 410). Being the recipient of verbal abuse and criticism from one's teammates could elicit anger as the recipients might feel that they are offended or treated disrespectfully by their teammates. Anger was the predominant negative

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