

**THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CONTEXT, SPORT
INVOLVEMENT, SOCIAL COGNITION AND MORAL
REASONING OF ATHLETS AND NON-ATHLETS
ADOLESCENCE**

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Abstract

The aims of this study were to examine the relationship in sports among context and sport involvement on psycho-social fields- level of social cognition and moral reasoning of teenagers. In addition, examine the model of the system of connections between measures of the level of social cognition in everyday life and in sports, with the hypothetical levels of moral reasoning and in sports.

The study compared two approaches of the developmental-structural theory, one in its accepted context and the other, in context to dilemmas in sports.

1. The development of the social cognition theory was examined also in a unique and specific context that has never been examined before- the field of sports.
2. In contrast, the moral development theory, examined before in the field of sports but not yet in Israel, therefore, the connection between the theories were examined in general and in specific context to sports amongst teenagers in Israel.

Survey of the literature in the field of moral reasoning shows, athletes present a lower level of moral reasoning than non-athletes. That and more, when athlete participants are presented with daily life dilemmas rather than dilemmas from the field of sports, they reason at a lower moral level in sports dilemmas as compared to moral dilemmas of everyday life.

This study examined the level of moral reasoning and social cognition of teenagers from different age groups in subjects related to sports and to everyday life, furthermore, the study examined the reliance of moral reasoning and social cognition on variables such as: gender, type of class, level of class, type of sports and the involvement of the teenagers in the sports. In addition, the research examined the question of a difference in the levels of social cognition and moral reasoning in subjects associated with sports with regards to levels of social cognition and moral reasoning in subjects associated with everyday life issues.

The research sample consisted of 503 students of the 7th to 12th grade from five different schools from the center of the country. The students were divided into two groups according to their affinity to sports activities outside the school's framework: a) athletes; b) students that do not engage in sports activities outside the school's framework.

The research method consisted of handing out closed-questioned anonymous questionnaires examining the levels of social cognition in everyday life (Rel-Q) Relationship Questionnaire translated for the needs of this research study and the levels of social cognition in sports (a questionnaire composed by the writer of this paper for the specific use of this research study), questionnaires examining the levels of moral reasoning in everyday life (D.I.T) Defining Issues Test and in sports (HBVCI) Hahm-Beller Values Choice Inventory, translated for this research study and the justification of the performance of fouls questionnaire according to the functional approach and following the work of Wolf (also composed by the writer of this paper for the specific use of this research study) handed out to a small number of exceptional athletes. Wolf's perception assumes, that a person judges events according to his/her involvement in them and according to his/her social role in context to the matter discussed, his/her judgment changes according to the alignment of roles of the one implementing the judgment. According to Wolf, moral judgment is a cognitive judgmental schema expressing the functional psychological connection between guilt and consequence.

An examination of the relationship between the level of moral reasoning and social cognition of teenagers from different age groups in subjects connected to sports and to everyday life was conducted by Smallest Space Analysis (SSA). This is an analysis of reciprocal relationships between variables represented by points in space and the space proximity between the points represents the intensity of the relationships between the variables and themselves.

Furthermore, this study examined the theoretical model that describes the pattern of structural relationships between the background variables of the participants (gender, age group, type of class and type of sports), and the level of social cognition and moral reasoning in everyday life and in sports. A graphic description of the theoretical

model outlining the pattern of structural relationships between the background variables of the participants was displayed by means of the Amos computer program.

The findings of this research study suggest that: 1) A connection exists between the level of social cognition and the level of moral reasoning. Negative connection was found between the level of social cognition (in everyday life and in sports) and between the level of moral reasoning in sports, and positive connection was found between the level of social cognition (in everyday life and in sports) and between the hypothetical level of reasoning. Furthermore, it was found that the intensity of the connections differed between athletes and non-athletes. Among non-athletes, no significant coordinator was found between the level of social cognition in everyday life and the hypothetical level of moral reasoning.

2) Differences were found between the levels of social cognition and moral reasoning according to the participants' level of class. It was found that the levels of social cognition and moral reasoning develop with age.

3) Significant differences were found according to gender. It was found that the level of cognition and reasoning of females is higher than those of the males, with the exception of moral reasoning in sports, where the males had a significant advantage.

4) It was found that only a small sector of the measures related to social cognition in everyday life and social cognition in sports were affected by the fact that the participants involved in sports take part in competitions (professional athletes) as opposed to amateur participants who do not take part in competitions, nevertheless, the level of social cognition in everyday life in two measures: *perspective and realistic negotiation* were found to be higher amongst participants who do not take part in competitions as opposed to participants who do take part in competitions.

5) It was found that students of regular classes presented higher levels of social cognition than students of sports-orientated classes in terms of the measure of striking athletes whereas in terms of non-striking athletes, students of sports-orientated classes presented higher levels of social cognition than students of regular classes. In terms of moral reasoning it was found that students of sports-orientated classes presented higher levels of moral reasoning than students of regular classes.

6) No connection was found between the type of sports (group versus private) and social cognition and moral reasoning.

7) A connection between competitions and the level of social cognition was found to exist. Participants involved in non-competitive sports presented higher levels of social cognition as opposed to participants involved in competitive sports. Nonetheless, opposite results were found with regards to the level of moral reasoning in sports. That is, participants involved in competitive sports presented higher levels of moral reasoning than those not involved in competitive sports. No differences were found with regards to hypothetical moral reasoning between participants involved in competitive sports as opposed to those involved in non-competitive sports.

8) A single finding arose from examining the judgmental modularity dealing with the prediction of violent behavior by means of the functional framework and it was that the positions of the basketball players were more negative than those of the swimmers or the dancers. The basketball players tended to be more supportive of (or to be more precise, to object less to) the performance of fouls.

The present study constitutes a contribution and an innovation to both the research and the educational fields, where a connection was found to exist between the level of social cognition in everyday life and in sports and between the level of moral reasoning in sports (negative connection) and the hypothetical (positive connection).

A methodological contribution to this study would be the composing of new questionnaires dealing with the subjects of social cognition in sports and foul performance in sports. More so, the translation and suiting of existing questionnaires dealing with the subjects of social cognition and moral reasoning in sports into the Hebrew language.

The educational contribution refers to the educational consequences derived from the study's findings that show the need for the directed construction of moral and social values for students of sports-orientated classes and frameworks.