

# ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL CODES IN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS: FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.

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Numerous scandals and abuses have raised the question for more ethical behavior in sport organizations worldwide. A frequently used instrument to tackle unethical behavior in the sports world is a code of ethics. Until now, no empirical research has been done on what constitutes these ethical codes in sports organizations and which underlying moral theories they apply. However, the content of ethical codes may have a great impact on their effectiveness (Singh, 2011; Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008) and the great differences in content of codes may contribute to the mixed results of studies on code effectiveness (Erwin, 2011).

One of the reasons that could clarify the absence of content analysis of ethical codes in sports organizations, could be the lack of coherent framework to analyze the documents. Therefore, we present a framework that can be used for analysis of ethical codes, as regards both content and form. This framework is constructed on the foundation of existing literature and refined with inductive findings from our own research. The result is a method to measure the quality of contents of codes of ethics.

After the construction of the framework, a large number of ethical codes from Flemish clubs of different sports (badminton, football, martial arts, equestrian sport and gymnastics) were analyzed regarding their form and content. Huge differences in ethical code content and form between and within sports were found, despite the fact that all these documents were identically labeled 'ethical code' by the sports organizations. In our research, we discuss the parallels and differences in ethical codes of sport organizations, and the possible impact on these differences on code effectiveness. Moreover, the study of the applied moral theories in ethical codes can shed a light on how the sports world themselves define ethical behavior, and the findings can highlight ethical issues that are of unique importance for a particular sport.

This study provides a much needed framework for analysis of ethical codes, as well as empirical findings on this analysis in sports organizations. It can also contribute to the establishment of guidelines to design ethical codes and lay bare essential elements of these codes. These realizations are essential to sport management, as ethical codes emerge worldwide as an instrument for the promotion of ethical behavior in sport.

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