

# Erosions Of Normative Self-Commitment — Analysis Of Conditions Weakening The Integrity Of Sport

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## Aim of the research

Sporting achievements that arouse the interest of sport consumers consist of the performance and the belief in the integrity of competition (e.g, Büchel, Emrich & Pohlkamp, 2016; Emrich & Pitsch, 2011). In addition to doping a large number of other forms of manipulation exist and these are perceived by the spectators as a threat of Olympic games (Emrich & Pierdzioch, 2015, Tab. 2). If integrity is weakened, the interest in consuming sport should decrease (see the Olympic Games, the FIFA scandal, etc.). The aim of the study is to investigate determinants that threaten the integrity of sport included corruption from the point of view of athletes. Therefore the normative self-commitment of athletes as well as of socio-economic parameters are used as explanatory variables.

## Theoretical background

The olympic values make the Olympic Games an event which has a higher importance for athletes and spectators than for example a world championship (e.g, Emrich, Pierdzioch & Pitsch, 2014; Emrich & Pitsch, 2011). It is precisely these Olympic values and the Olympic idea, created by Coubertin, to which the athletes confess with the solemn oath at the beginning of the Olympic Games. This oath produces the faith in the honesty of the performance for consumers, who can not watch the honesty directly but only trust in the integrity of competition (Büchel, Emrich & Prohlkamp, 2016). To guarantee for example fair play, tolerance, doping and tamper-free sport, a normative self-commitment by the athletes is necessary but not sufficient. Therefore accompanying sanctions are required to stabilise this self-commitment and the faith of consumers in the integrity of competition.

Following the "homo sociologicus", the athletes have the rules to watch the values internalised by socialisation, following the "homo oeconomicus", these values must not be internalised by each individual but stabilised by a sanction system.

A sanction system can not completely substitute the self commitment of athletes. Therefore the perspective of the athletes has to be taken up and their normative self-commitment to be analysed (see for a efficient mixture of self commitment and sanction system Homann, 2002).

## Methodology, research design, and data analysis

By means of an online survey 5,548 German squad athletes listed in 2005 have been asked for their perceived susceptibility to fraud in 2013 (N = 373 answered). The athletes' perception of the fraudulent behaviour in sport in general, but also with regard to the sport they are practicing, was asked on a 5-level scale. In addition, there were asked questions about personal attitudes towards fairness and corruption of the squad athletes. Using regression analyses the extent to which the internalised normative self-commitment among squad athletes has an influence on the perceived corruption risk of sport in general and athletes in different sports was analysed.

## Results, discussion, and implications

The regression analyses show different results between one's own sport and sport in general. The vulnerability of one's own sport is not significantly affected by normative self-commitment. However, the item concerning the possibility to cheat by betting affects the perceived corruption significantly ( $p < 10\%$ ). Some items influence the perceived corruption of the athletes in general. There is a

- negative impact if exciting competitions for spectators by equivalent opponents and fair athletes are measured high ( $p = 0,04$ ) and a
- positive impact if the importance of media attention for tamper-free sports is given ( $p = 0,005$ ).

In relation to sports in general, we can show a

- negative influence of an item concerning the importance of respect before the opponent ( $p = 0,065$ ) and the importance that viewers in general want clean sports ( $p = 0,053$ ), and a
- positive influence of an item concerning the importance that an athlete recognises when others compete better ( $p = 0,000$ ).

The results show that a high degree of normative self-commitment has little effect on the perception of one's sport and its players. Sport in general, however, is influenced by the importance of sporting values such as fairness and the pursuit of tamper-free sports. This means that the attitudes influence the judgment on sport in general, but the narrower one looks at the athletes' own sports activity, the more ineffective the whole is in its inhibiting effect on corruption. Here, a kind of dissonance theory can be shown, since in sport many things are very bad, in athlete's own sport it is quite in order.

## References

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