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## **GAMESMANSHIP AND CHEATING BEHAVIOURS AMONG ATHLETES IN TUNKU MAHKOTA ISMAIL SPORT SCHOOL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gamesmanship is built on the principle that winning is everything. School athletes are encouraged to bend the rules wherever possible to gain a competitive advantage over their opponents. Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify the main moral decision-making in sports on behaviours among school athletes. Meanwhile, for the second and third objective of this study was to determine the differences of moral decision-making in sports on behaviours among school athletes between genders and sports. The study involved 220 school athletes who completed the Attitudes to Moral Derived Decision Making in Youth Questionnaire (AMDYSQ), which contains 24 items measuring athletes' moral decision-making in sports. Descriptive analysis was used to identify the main moral decision-making in sports on behaviors among school athletes. For inferential analysis, Independent T-Test was used to test the differences in moral decision-making on behaviors among school athletes between genders. Meanwhile, One-Way ANOVA was used to identify the differences in moral decision-making on behaviors among school athletes between major sports. The result found that the main domain of moral decision-making among Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School (SSTMI) athletes is keeping winning in proportion. Next, the findings indicated that there was a significant difference between genders in terms of acceptance of cheating and keeping winning in proportion, while there was no significant difference in acceptance of gamesmanship. For third objective, the results showed that there was no significant differences in acceptance of cheating and gamesmanship. However, there was significant differences in keeping winning in proportion between types of sports. Overall, this study provides insights into the moral decision-making of SSTMI school athletes and highlights the importance of considering gender and major sports when examining these behaviors. Further research in this area could help to develop interventions to promote positive moral decision-making among young athletes.

**Keywords:** Gamesmanship, Cheating, Gender, Discipline, Sport school athletes

### **INTRODUCTION**

The development of sports schools in Malaysia has grown actively since then until now and has been one of the most important topics currently in the sports industry. Sports, physical contests pursued for the goals and challenges they entail. Sports are part of every culture past and present, but each culture has its own definition of sports. The most useful definitions are those that clarify the relationship of sports to play, games, and contests. Sport unites people from all walks of life behind a common goal. It creates opportunities for individual growth, improves physical, mental and emotional health, as well as developing confidence and a sense of empowerment. The moral decision making among athletes in sports has been an important- banded topic in the sports world today, as concerns about good, bad,

right and wrong things feel like a common scenario.

There are several acceptances in moral decision-making that exist. According to Deborah Teasley (2022), a moral decision is a choice made based on a person's ethics, manners, character and what they believe is proper behavior. These decisions tend to not only affect your well-being, but also the well-being of others. The concept of morality can be influenced by cultural beliefs. According to Vitor de Assis, González-Víllora, Clemente, Cardoso & Teoldo (2020) decision-making in sports plays an important role in individual performance. This is because some athletes are described as being able to read the game to the opponent better to show superior game intelligence and appear as if the athlete has the experience to perform an action.

According to Stranger, Jennings & McKenna (2018), these behaviours apart from those attributed with the use of physical violence, are also encouraged by the teammates and coaches who choose to have "smart" athletes on their team. Gamesmanship is the art or practice of winning a game by clever methods which are not against the rules but are very close to cheating (Collins Cobuild, 2022). This practice definitely stems from a lack of emphasis on gamesmanship and an overemphasis on a win- at- all- costs mentality that drives school athletes to engage in unethical behavior. These problems also occur due to a lack of emphasis on sportsmanship and pressure by extrinsic factors that motivates them to commit unethical conduct (Champion, Karcher & Ruddell, 2019). Athletes put much effort into making their team successful and earn extrinsic reward and popularity. Researchers have recently found that gamesmanship behaviours are accepted by 58.7% of athletes, while fewer than 32.1% of athletes consider cheating during games (Ponseti et al., 2016). According to Mulcahy (2017), sport participation has declined due to a few factors including lack of fair play, focus on winning or competition and violence.

Due to the social nature of sports, and thus the socialization among team members, coaches and parents, both prosocial and antisocial behaviours among players are likely to arise. It is often considered to be a positive predictor of moral indifference and a negative predictor of prosocial behaviour towards peers' anti-social behaviour (Lucidi, Zelli, Arnaldo, Luca, Giampaolo, Lambros & Martin, 2017). Avocat-Lepicier (2022) had define cheating behaviors as a false statement of fact such as being injured by acting on the basis of a false fact. School athletes with a high ego orientation are more likely to participate in unethical behaviors that help them achieve a prime chance to win, such as cheating (Ring & Kavussanu, 2018). This practice definitely stems from a lack of emphasis on sportsmanship and an overemphasis on a win- at- all- costs mentality that drives school athletes to engage in unethical behavior. Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify the main moral decision-making in sports on behaviours among school athletes. Meanwhile, for the second and third objective of this study was to determine the differences of moral decision-making in sports on behaviours among school athletes between genders and sports.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The population of Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School athletes is the focus of this scientific query. Simple random sampling was used in this study as it allowed exploration and investigation of the difference in moral decision-making among SSTMI school athletes, in which a self-administered questionnaire is used. The sample size of this research is 220 respondents. Out of the 220 respondents, based on sex, 53.2% (N=117) are males and 46.8% (N=103) are females. The items used in the instrument of questionnaire were adopted from previous research done by Lee, Whitehead, & Ntoumanis, (2007) and were applied to investigate the main moral decision-making among SSTMI school athletes and to analyse the difference in moral decision-making of SSTMI school athletes based on the gender and sports. The questionnaire consists of two sections; section A presents the respondent's demographic background and section B includes the domains that make up moral decision-making as represented in the 24 items. All the items in section B use a 5-point-Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

## Statistical Analysis

For this study, the researchers used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 to analyse the data. The data from the pilot study were analysed for its reliability and validity values. The overall reliability for all domains showed a value above 0.60 value set by the researcher. Using Mohd Majid Konting (2005) reference that suggested that the measurement of reliability using Cronbach Alpha coefficient at level 0.6 and above is an Alpha value with high reliability. Thirty athletes from Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sport School were selected randomly for the pilot test. The Cronbach's alpha for the first survey showed that the *acceptance of cheating*  $\alpha=0.85$ , *acceptance of gamesmanship*  $\alpha=0.91$  and *keeping winning in proportion*  $\alpha=0.89$ , indicating that all of the items are valid and may be used in the study which is above the .60 value set by researchers.

After the pilot study was conducted, the research was conducted on the actual number of populations. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 220 SSTMI school athletes. It is collected immediately after respondents complete the questionnaire. Data was collected in the period from December 2022 to January 2023. The questionnaire was answered honestly by each respondent. The purpose of honesty is to obtain accurate and valid information after the data has been analysed.

A normality test is used to test the data and it is not normally distributed. Based on the result, the researcher chose to proceed in analysing the data using a non-parametric testing. In conducting the first objective of this study, table 1 present a descriptive statistical analysis that was used to identify the main moral decision-making among SSTMI school athletes while a Mann-Whitney test was used to answer the second research objective which was to identify the differences in moral decision-making among genders. Last but not least, One-Way ANOVA test was used to answer the third research objective which was to identify the differences in moral decision-making among SSTMI school athletes between sports. The significant level was set at  $p \leq .05$ .

**Table 1:** Specification of Measurement Scale and Data Analysis Procedure

Section	Detail of Measurement	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Statistic Procedure
A	Demographic Profile	1-4 (4 Items)			Descriptive
B	Moral Decision-Making Domains				
	- Acceptance of Cheating	1-9 (9 Items)	.85	9	Independent T-Test
	- Acceptance of Gamesmanship	10-19 (9 Items)	.91	9	One-Way ANOVA
	- Keeping Winning in Proportion	20-24 (6 Items)	.89	6	

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first research objective is to identify the moral decision-making in sports on behaviours among school athletes. Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics of moral decision-making among school athletes. It was found that the main domain of moral decision-making among Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School (SSTMI) athletes is *keeping winning in proportion* where the mean value is 4.03. This showed that the athletes of Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School (SSTMI) put winning at all costs as their precedence when participating in competitive sports since sports are too important symbolically in society to only concentrate on winning. This research also showed the smallest mean for the moral decision-making domain was acceptance of cheating with the mean 2.22. This result is in line with the

study done by Bermejo, Borrás, Haces-Soutullo, & Ponseti, (2018) showing that ‘acceptance of cheating and acceptance of gamesmanship’ do not gain a high average in making moral decisions among athletes.

**Table 2:** The main moral decision- making in sports on behaviours among school athletes

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
Acceptance of Cheating	220	2.22	.916
Acceptance of Gamesmanship	220	3.06	.807
Keeping Winning in Proportion	220	4.03	.786

Independent Sample t-Test being used to see whether there is difference perception between two groups. Based on table 3, the results showed that the mean ranking of male athletes is 2.3770 than female athletes which is 2.0431 in ‘acceptance of cheating’. Meanwhile, for the ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’, the mean score of male athletes is 3.0883 than female athlete which is 3.0442. Next to ‘keeping winning in proportion’ the mean ranking for male athletes is 3.8732 lower than that of female athletes is 4.2087. The findings of this study also show that there’s no significant difference in moral decision- making on behaviors among school athletes between genders for the domain ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’ with a significant value of .687 which is ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that male athletes are more likely to accept gamesmanship behavior in sports than female athletes.

This result is aligned with the research done by Zorba (2018) when male athletes can contribute towards gamemanship behavior compared to female athletes. The introductory reason for this is that male athletes have an advanced sense of fairness than female athletes. According to Saulius Sukys (2013), in terms of gender, it should be noted that male athletes are more likely to cheat in sports. According to a former study by Karakullukçu (2020), it was found that male athletes had greater scores in ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’. This is because male athletes prioritize winning over good sportsmanship and the negative side of decision- making behaviour today is commonplace. The basic reason for this is that male athletes have a higher sense of fairness than female athletes.

Eventually, there is a significant difference in moral decision-making on behaviors among school athletes between genders for the domain ‘keeping winning in proportion’ with a significant value of .001 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The mean position of male athletes was lower than female athletes. These researches chancing aligned with the study by Bradford, Brotherson & Tracy (2018), female athletes were constantly more likely to fete the action more inferior than male athletes. It is argued those females’ athletes are less told by an egocentric perspective of competitive sports.

**Table 3:** Moral decision- making on behaviours among school athletes between genders

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
Acceptance of Cheating	Male	117	2.3770	1.02854	.09509
	Female	103	2.0431	.73460	.07238
Acceptance of Gamesmanship	Male	117	3.0883	.82228	.07602
	Female	103	3.0442	.79370	.07821
Keeping Winning in Propotion	Male	117	3.8732	.83007	.07674
	Female	103	4.2087	.69652	.06863

Based on table 4, there are no significance difference in ‘acceptance of cheating’ between types of sports as determined by one way ANOVA ( $F(7,212)=1.125, p=.349$ ). According to Cuadrado (2021), cheating has existed throughout history and across all walks of life. ‘Acceptance of cheating’ in the game of baseball is often decided by small margins that cannot be distinguished with the naked eye. Furthermore, there are no significance difference in ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’ between types of sports as determined by one way ANOVA,  $F(7,212) = 1.453, p = .186$ . According to the previous research by Karakullukçu (2020), the analysis results show that sporttypes variable does not have a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of athletes in ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’. The underlying reason is that athletes across types of sports demonstrate roughly similar levels of acceptability on the ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’ conduct. Strand et al., (2018) also found that there were no significant differences observed at ( $p > 0.05$ ) by ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’ based on sport types. Athletes maybe prone to believe that it is the referee's responsibility to enforce rules rather than their responsibility and thus consider lack of disclosure as acceptable. The researcher also stated that how athletes respond to the acceptability at particular scenarios was depending on the types of sports being played and the context of gamesmanship conduct (Strand et al., 2018).

There was significance difference in ‘keeping winning in proportion’ between types of sports as determined by one way ANOVA,  $F(7,212) = 2.405, p = 0.022$ . According to Yosi Yaffe(2021), participants with authoritative parents, compared to those with non-authoritative parents, are significantly less accepting of cheating in sports, while they also tend to ‘keeping winning in proportion’. School athletes with authoritative parents also hold much stronger moral values towards sports, but they do not differ from their opinion i.e., school athletes with non-authoritative parents in the ‘keeping winning in proportion’. Furthermore, the first research hypothesis argues that school athletes involved in sports categories individual sport or in team sport express a lower ‘acceptance of cheating’ and spirit of the game, a strong tendency to ‘keeping winning in proportion’, and stronger moral values in sports. The findings of the study show that there is indeed a significant difference between individual sport and team sport athletes. These findings are consistent with what found by Boardley, Grix & Harkin, (2015).

**Table 4:** Moral decision- making on behaviours among school athletes between sports

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Acceptance of Cheating	Between Groups	6.585	7	.941	1.125	.349
	Within Groups	177.279	212	.836		
	Total	183.864	219			
Acceptance of Gamesmanship	Between Groups	6.538	7	.934	1.453	.186
	Within Groups	136.257	212	.643		
	Total	142.795	219			
Keeping Winning	Between Groups	9.975	7	1.425	2.405	.022
	Within Groups	125.601	212	.592		
	Total	135.576	219			

## CONCLUSION

The focus of this study is on the differences of moral decision-making in sports on behaviors among school athletes between gender and major sports. The results of this study show that SSTMI school athletes emphasize efforts to maintain proportional victory. The findings of this study also show that there is a significant difference in ‘acceptance of cheating’ and ‘keeping winning in proportion’ among school athletes between genders. Meanwhile, for ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’ there is no significant difference in moral decision making on behavior among school athletes between genders. Furthermore, the finding showing there is no significant in ‘acceptance of cheating’ and ‘acceptance of gamesmanship’ among school athletes between types of sports. In term of ‘keeping winning in proportion’, there is significant different among school athletes between types of sports.

According to Richard Marra (2019), he states that "*it is precisely the attitude of holding back that prevents you from playing with every fiber of your heart and soul for the best results, you suppress your natural ability*". Indirectly, this statement clearly gives harmony in a sports competition at school. Hopefully the findings of this study can be beneficial to the parties related to this research for them to make improvements in themselves.

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