

IDENTIFICATION AND CODIFYING ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR SPORTS REPORTERS ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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ABSTRACT

Sports media are an important part of sports community that has recently become an interesting topic for research. The purpose of the present study was to develop a code of ethics for sports reporters of Iran. The population of this descriptive survey consisted of all sports reporters of Tehran (N = 220). Using simple random sampling, 176 reporters were selected as the sample. Data were collected using a questionnaire developed by the researcher. Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the items and components, and confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine whether the items and components are consistent with the concept of ethical code. One-sample t-test, Friedman test, dependent samples t-test, ANOVA, and MANOVA were used for data analysis. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the hypothetical and observed means of code of ethics ($t = 12.30$; $p \leq 0.01$). However, there was no significant difference between the hypothetical and observed means of the components of the code of ethics. There was also no significant difference between the rankings of different ethical components. There was no significant relationship between age and code of ethics. Also the results of independent samples t-test showed that there were no significant differences in the concept of code of ethics by academic degree, major, and occupation. Finally, the results of ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences in components of code of ethics with respect to gender, education, academic major, and occupation. Implications are provided for managers. Developing a code such as honesty and responsibility ethics for sports reporters can serve as a useful guide for the sports media and can facilitate the process of sport development. It is recommended for officials to hold ethics courses for sports reporters and journalists to inform them about the role of truthful, responsible, and impartial reporting in the development of sports and prosperity of the media.

Keywords: *Code of Ethics, Sports Reporters, Iran*

INTRODUCTION

Sport and its different dimensions have received much attention over the last few decades. Media are now an indispensable part of sport, and there has been a dramatic increase in reports, research, audiences, and contents (Salimi *et al.*, 2011). Media have become so important that today's sport, especially at the professional level, cannot survive without them (Ghasemi, 2007).

Rapid technological advances have challenged ethical foundations of societies. It is becoming increasingly difficult for laws and ethics to keep pace with technology (Hassnavey, 2003). On the other hand, technology and science has also been used to prevent the degradation of social values and ethics (Kashef and Sheidayi, 2012).

Oates and Pauly (2007) argued that sport should be used not as a means to manipulate ethics, but to promote sublime ethical and moral values. DeSensi and Rosenberg (2003) describe sport management ethics as an applied area of moral philosophy, where ethical theories and principles are applied to understand, examine, and resolve particular moral dilemmas in sport management.

Media ethics are modes of behavior to which all branches of the media should attempt to adhere. The media can control the fate of nations and important people in the society. Along with this power the media has ethical duties and responsibilities to fulfill. Common topics covered in media ethics and related to journalists are the issues of news manipulation, truth, and privacy (Motamednejad, 2007).

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A code of ethics for the media comprises a set of statements of values and ethical principles about using power responsibly and presenting meaningful news that is accurate and separated from opinion (Noor-Allah, 2013).

Unethical acts of the media often involve presenting inaccurate or even false information. However, sports media ethics is more complex due to greater number of audiences, higher volume of working capital, and other characteristics unique to sports settings.

Taking side with one team or player, provoking club managers, coaches, and players against each other, intermediation with the purpose of large financial gains are a few unethical behaviors by sports media that mar the image of both sports and media.

Promotion of ethical behaviors in sports media is a critical measure for Iran's sport community, and sports reporters and journalists play a key role in this matter.

Researchers also are essential to this process. There have been various studies in Iran on development of code of ethics for sports practitioners. Poursoltani (2011) carried out a research on developing a code of ethics for physical education faculty members.

This code consisted of 6 components: teamwork, integrity, responsibility, professional behavior, commitment, and financial accountability.

They showed that all the items were significantly correlated with these factors and all the factors were positively associated with the concept of sports ethics.

Noor-Allah (2013) developed a code of ethics for Iranian paragliders with 6 components: education, facilities and equipment, physical and mental state, flight rules, meteorological factors, and environmental factors. Similarly, Bozorgzad (2014) developed a code of ethics for badminton players of Iran's national team.

Their code consisted of the following components: rule of law, respect, doping, courage, fear, realism, honesty, fairness, equality, responsibility, compassion, integrity, privacy and human dignity, honor, virtue, patience, impartiality, contentment, nationalism, and group interests and solidarity.

Given the critical role of sports media and reporters of Iran in the development of sports in the country and the importance of professional ethics in this process, the purpose of the present research is to develop a code of ethics for sports reporters.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population of this descriptive survey consisted of all the sports reporters actively covering sports events in Tehran (N = 220).

Based on Morgan's table, 176 reporters were selected as the sample using simple random sampling.

Data were collected using a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Face and content validity of the instrument was confirmed by 15 experts, and construct validity was examined using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Also a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 was obtained for the instrument, indicating its high reliability.

Descriptive statistics, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality, one-sample t-test, Friedman test, independent samples t-test, ANOVA, and MANOVA were used for data analysis.

All the statistical operations were done in SPSS and LISREL at the 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

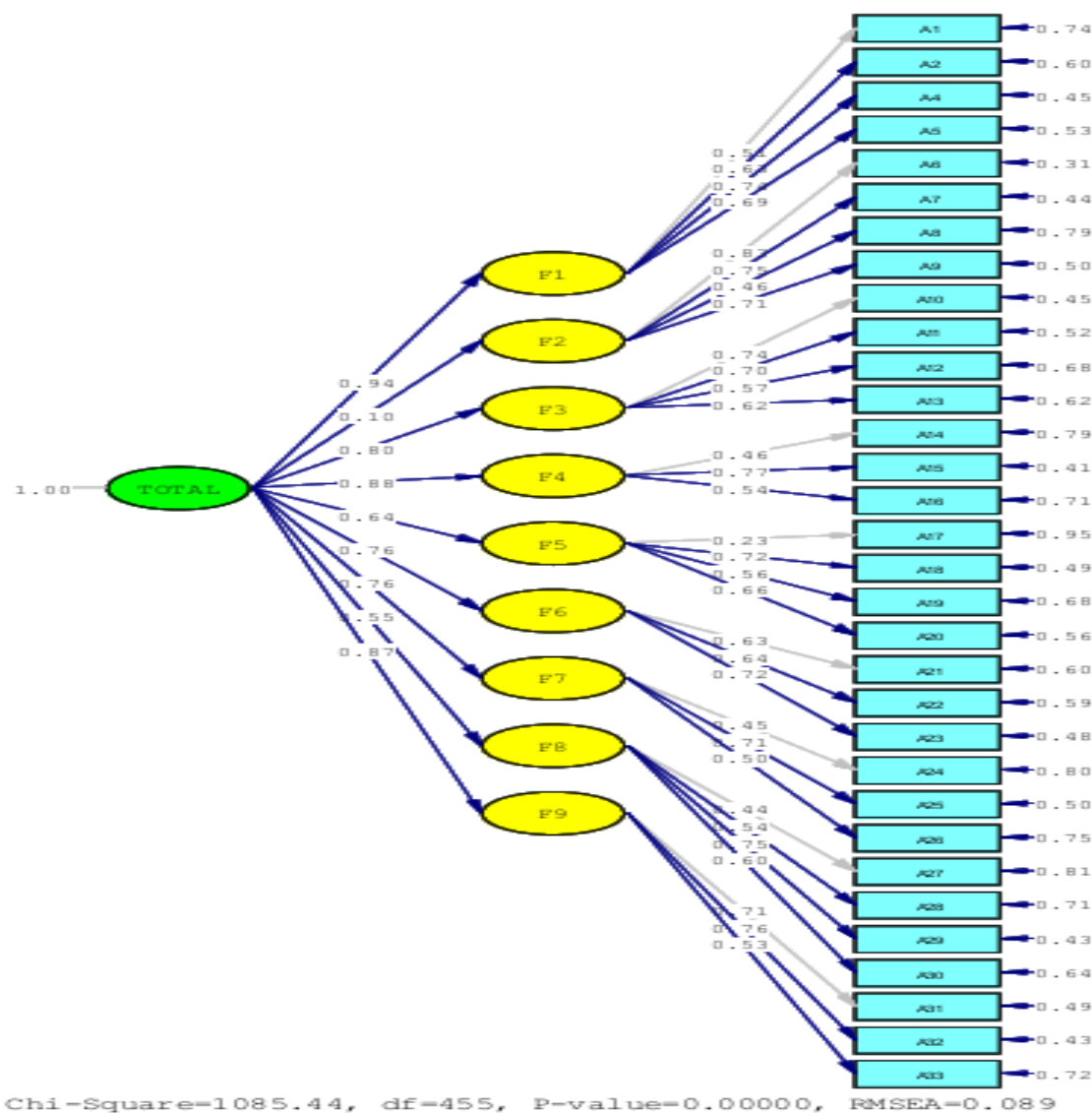


Figure 1: Confirmatory Factor analysis graph of ethical code

Confirmatory factor analysis results are listed in figure 1. All indicators related to the concept of ethical code and T and factors loading which are acceptable are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Assessment of model fit

| Concept modle | Indicators |
|---|------------|
| Chi-Square | 1085.44 |
| Degrees of Freedom (df) | 455 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.089 |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | 0.9 |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.91 |

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As seen in the table, the values of all the indicators show conceptual and appropriate model (GFI > 0.9, AGFI > 0.9) and the proper fit of the conceptual model be approved with the conceptual model of the data Figure 4.1 Structural model and confirmatory factor loadings associated with

Descriptive Statistics

The demographics of the participants were as follows: 70.5 percent male and 29.5 percent female,

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the participants

| Variable | Percentage |
|-----------|---------------------|
| Gender | Male |
| | 70.5 |
| | Female |
| | 29.5 |
| Education | High school diploma |
| | 8 |
| | Advanced diploma |
| | 27.8 |
| | Bachelor's degree |
| Major | 47.7 |
| | Master's degree |
| | 16.5 |
| | Physical Education |
| Media | 9.7 |
| | Journalism |
| | 29 |
| | Others |
| | 61.4 |
| | News Agency |
| | 19.9 |
| | Television |
| | 27.3 |
| | Radio |
| | 6.3 |
| | Newspaper |
| | 39.2 |
| | Weekly and Monthly |
| | 7.4 |

Inferential Statistics

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the data were normally distributed ($z = 0.92$; $P = 0.36$). Further, the results of one-sample t-test showed that there is a significant relationship between the hypothetical and observed means of the concept of code of ethics ($t = 12.30$; $P \leq 0.01$) as well as the components of the code (except for the Counsel component) (Table 2).

Table 3: The results of one-sample t-test for the concept of code of ethics

| Concept | Hypothetical Mean | Mean \pm SD | t-Statistic | df | Sig. |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----|-------|
| Code of Ethics | 3 | 3.70 \pm 0.44 | 12.30 | 175 | 0.001 |

Table 4: The results of one-sample t-test for the components of the code of ethics

| Components | Hypothetical Mean | Mean \pm SD | t-Statistic | df | Sig. |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----|-------|
| Honesty | 3 | 4.03 \pm 0.64 | 21.57 | 175 | 0.001 |
| Counsel | 3 | 2.89 \pm 0.88 | 1.65 | 175 | 0.10 |
| Rule of Law | 3 | 4.05 \pm 0.56 | 24.76 | 175 | 0.001 |
| Compliance | 3 | 3.65 \pm 0.69 | 12.93 | 175 | 0.001 |
| Trustworthiness | 3 | 3.93 \pm 0.59 | 22.14 | 175 | 0.001 |
| Fairness | 3 | 3.14 \pm 0.57 | 26.52 | 175 | 0.001 |
| Patience | 3 | 3.26 \pm 0.80 | 4.41 | 175 | 0.001 |
| Respect | - | 3.19 \pm 0.78 | 3.25 | 175 | 0.001 |
| Hope | 3 | 4.16 \pm 0.63 | 24.24 | 175 | 0.001 |

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The results of Friedman test showed that there was a significant difference between the mean ranks of the components of the ethical code. Hope had the highest mean and counsel had the lowest mean (Table 5).

Table 5: The results of Friedman test for ranking the components of the code of ethics

| Rank | Component | Mean Rank | N | χ^2 | df | Sig. |
|------|-----------------|-----------|-----|----------|----|-------|
| 1 | Honesty | 6.25 | 176 | 561.35 | 8 | 0.001 |
| 2 | Counsel | 2.52 | | | | |
| 3 | Rule of Law | 6.38 | | | | |
| 4 | Compliance | 4.42 | | | | |
| 5 | Trustworthiness | 5.63 | | | | |
| 6 | Fairness | 6.67 | | | | |
| 7 | Patience | 3.20 | | | | |
| 8 | Respect | 3.15 | | | | |
| 9 | Hope | 6.79 | | | | |

The results also showed that the code of ethics is not significantly associated with age ($r = 0.04$; $P \geq 0.05$) and gender ($t = 1.96$; $P \geq 0.05$). The results of Levene's test indicated the homogeneity of variances in the concept of the ethical code based on academic degree, education, and occupation (Table 5).

Table 6: The results of Levene's test

| Variable | Test Statistic | df ₁ | df ₂ | P |
|--|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|
| The concept of the ethical code based on academic degree | 0.43 | 3 | 172 | 0.99 |
| The concept of the ethical code based on academic major | 1.64 | 3 | 173 | 0.20 |
| The concept of the ethical code based on academic degree | 0.65 | 4 | 171 | 0.63 |

Table 7: The results of ANOVA for differences in the concept of ethical code based on academic degree, major, and occupation

| Variable | Variance | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Squares | F | P |
|------------|---------------|----------------|-----|--------------|------|------|
| Degree | Between-Group | 0.25 | 3 | 0.08 | 0.43 | 0.73 |
| | Within-Group | 33.32 | 172 | 0.19 | | |
| | Total | 33.57 | 175 | - | | |
| Major | Between-Group | 0.2 | 2 | 0.01 | 0.6 | 0.94 |
| | Within-Group | 33.32 | 173 | 0.19 | | |
| | Total | 33.57 | 175 | - | | |
| Occupation | Between-Group | 0.34 | 4 | 0.09 | 0.44 | 0.78 |
| | Within-Group | 33.32 | 171 | 0.19 | | |
| | Total | 33.57 | 175 | - | | |

The results in table 7 showed that there are no significant differences in the concept of ethical code based on academic degree, major, and occupation.

The results of Wilk's lambda distribution test (Table 9) showed that there are no significant differences between the means of the components of ethical code with respect to gender and academic major. The value of η^2 for the variable of gender (0.08) indicated that gender can explain 8 percent of changes in the dependent variable. Also academic degree and major and occupation explained 5, 7, and 4 percent of changes in the dependent variable respectively (Table 9).

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Table 8: The results of Ljung–Box test

| | | | | | |
|------------|--------|------|-----|----------|-------|
| Values | 132.45 | 1.25 | 90 | 6669.59 | 0.054 |
| Gender | 42.30 | 0.87 | 45 | 34156.10 | 0.71 |
| Degree | 195.31 | 1.01 | 135 | 8283.16 | 0.51 |
| Major | 132.45 | 1.25 | 90 | 6669.59 | 0.054 |
| Occupation | 271.68 | 1.18 | 180 | 5790.33 | 0.06 |

Table 9: The results of Wilk's lambda distribution test

| Variable | Value | F | Hypothesis df | Error df | Sig. | η^2 |
|------------|-------|------|---------------|----------|------|----------|
| Gender | 0.92 | 1.69 | 9 | 166 | 0.10 | 0.08 |
| Degree | 0.85 | 0.10 | 27 | 479.61 | 0.47 | 0.05 |
| Major | 0.87 | 1.34 | 18 | 330 | 0.16 | 0.07 |
| Occupation | 0.84 | 0.80 | 36 | 612.57 | 0.80 | 0.04 |

The results of Wilk's lambda distribution test indicate the equality of means of the components of ethical code with respect to gender. That is, there was no significant difference between these means. As noted above, gender can explain 8 percent of the changes in the dependent variable. Moreover, the results of Levene's test indicated the homogeneity of the variances of ethical code components. The results of ANOVA after Bonferroni correction (new alpha of 0.025) showed that the components of the ethical code were not significantly different with respect to gender.

Discussion and Conclusion

Today, sport and its different aspects have gained much importance as an effective tool for creating a dynamic and happy society and solving social, cultural, economic, and political dilemmas. With the increasing popularity of sports, mass media have become more interested in sports and have affected sports in various ways. Ethical behavior of the media is an essential factor in the success of sports. Media can control the fate of nations and important people in the society. But along with this power the media has ethical duties and responsibilities to fulfill. Promotion of ethical principles in the community of sports reporters and journalists can play a significant role in the development of sport in the society. Sports reporters and journalists must use their power responsibly and present meaningful news that are accurate and separated from opinion. Developing a code of ethics for sports reporters can serve as a useful guide for the sports media and can facilitate the process of sport development. Ethical and moral principles are not a function of gender, education, or specialty. It is necessary to develop and effectively communicate a code of ethics to sports reporters. Such a code must underline the importance of truth, privacy, and impartiality. Fairness in reporting and observing the laws related to privacy are important characteristics of a successful sports reporter. Patience and respect are other characteristics that can create a climate of trust in the sports arena. The present findings are consistent with the results of Noor-Allah (2013) and Bozorgzad (2014), but the demographics findings are inconsistent with the results of Bozorgzad (2014). It is recommended for officials to hold ethics courses for sports reporters and journalists to inform them about the role of truthful, responsible, and impartial reporting in the development of sports and prosperity of the media.

The code developed in this research calls for reporters to:

- Be honest.
- Set counsel as one of their priorities and do not present news without it.
- Consult each other in preparing the news.
- Help their coworkers in decision-making.
- Always adhere to the rules of journalism.
- Present news in accordance with the law.
- Play an effective role in creating an environment of trust and empathy and prevent chaos.
- Prepare and present the news responsibly.

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- Be accountable for their actions.
- Observe the rights of other reporters and journalists.
- Be careful not to violate people's privacy.
- Be truthful in presenting the news.
- Be aware of the great responsibility they have to fulfill.

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