Ethics in the World of Sports
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Abstract

Background: Sports all over the globe has been given the status of positivity, fair play and respect but due to the increasing competition amongst the athletes, the pride of sports is at stake. The research paper “Ethics in the World of Sports” helps us understand that it is not always about winning, it is about the ethics that are involved in the sports that makes an athlete great and not just wins.

Methods: A study was conducted in which a total of 54 participants were taken who were sports professionals and the sports management students. A questionnaire was sent to them in which various questions related to ethics and athletes were asked and the responses that were received through them supported the study.

Conclusion: This research paper will help us to understand the role ethics play in an athlete’s career. It explains how deeply it impacts the whole ecosystem of the sports industry which includes fans, coaches, sponsors, parents and all the individuals directly or indirectly related to the athlete.

Keywords: Coaches, Ethics, Grassroot, Role Model, Sports Ethics

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1.Introduction:

The morals and principles that governs a particular athlete in the world of sports are known as ethics. Ethics are the hard roads that take an athlete towards the well-deserved victory. Nowadays athletes have become so much competitive that they forget that people who are there behind them to support them do not just see a champion who always wins on the ground but also a person who carry himself with pride, determination and hard work.

Ethics defines an athlete, they make an athlete great and when not followed they can take him down into the darkness from which it gets really difficult to find any light. Athletes now a day’s use performance enhancing drugs, become way too much violent, cheat, and does many more things that are not ethical in nature and becomes a path of self-destruction for the athletes.

Successful athletes become a role model for the coming generation and any negative influence on them can destroy them on the ground and also in their personal lives. A person tries to copy the life style of the athlete who he considers his role model and for that an athlete needs to be ethical to be able to stand on the podium of deserving to be someone’s ideal.

One wrong decision of an athlete to win a game can make his life upside down if caught. Now the question is it only if he gets caught? What if he does not and continue to be the greatest in the eyes of his loyal fans, then comes the question of his inner voices, will they let him live in peace when he retires?

The research is purely based on how ethics play a vital role in the development of the athlete and what kind of impact does it have on the upcoming generations. It is not just the athlete, his hard work and his support staff in making the athlete great. There are several other factors that makes an athlete and it includes the fan base, the sponsors, people who trust the athlete and many more. A company who sponsors a particular athlete have a trust on him because in return of what has been invested, the athlete gives him customers who comes to him because of the loyalty and love they have for the athlete. If an athlete becomes unethical, then there is not just the athlete who suffers but also the brands, people, fans who suffers because the whole cycle is connected to one another.

An athlete can be made ethical by following different ways and can be infused in the athletes by the coaches, family and people around them.
Ethics are practices and the way of life which helps the athlete to stay positive and stay motivated without diverting them from the path of success and hard work. Patience is the main ingredient of being ethical not only on the ground but also in the real life, whenever a person becomes impatient that’s when he gets on the path of self-destruction and decides to get unethical. Gender discrimination is also a kind of unethical practice being done all over the globe, men are given more preference then women in the era where women are equally strong and talented.

Unethical practice is not just restricted to athlete but it takes into account the fans as well, hooliganism is one such example where fans becomes way too much violent and crosses their lines. Sports teaches us to be disciplined, patient, leader and also accountable for what we do. The core of ethics is also formed with these elements and if a sports person is able to adapt these, there is no one stopping him to become great. The importance of ethics should be taught to the athletes right from the beginning and should also be a part of their regular routine. Coaches and parents should take the charge of the athlete from the very beginning and make him realize that winning is not the ultimate goal but to maintain the decorum of the game is much more important. Ethics should form a major part of training program for an athlete from the very beginning and coaches as well as parents can play a vital role in this process by training the athletes in such a way that they know the difference between good and bad. Athletes should be taught the importance of ethics right from the Grassroots level. Every individual talks about how athletes can be made better in terms of their performance, adaptability, right coaching but no one talks about him being ethical in his approach, which is lacking in sports right now and this is what restricts an athlete’s growth.

Sports is not just limited to male and female athletes but it is also related to the people directly or indirectly related or engaged in sports. Sports has an impact on the language, culture and also the thought process of an individual. Many students who have interest in ethical issues raised by sports join the philosophical courses because of their knowledge of sports. The question raised in the given literature was should sports be accorded the importance our society has given to them. Ethics played a vital role in this study, unethical practices on the ground have changed the game altogether. The author has mentioned all the hazing practices, suffering of the animals in the name of sports, athletes charged for domestic violence and also depression in his study. The study represents a long standing fascination with the varied manifestations of violence in the sporting cultures of the world. Violence in and off the field has resulted into social problems as sports is not just about the athletes who are part of the sport but it consists of the whole ecosystem around the sport.

The study talks about the Spirit of the game and when we talk about the spirit of the game Doping comes into picture. Athletes often end up taking substances which improve their performance and help them to over perform rest of the opponents. Such performance enhancement substances are termed as unethical as it over rules the spirit of the game which also talks about fair play. To make things clear and implement the spirit of the sports WADA works on the following values: Health, teamwork, respect for rules and regulations, ethics, fair play and honesty. In this study the author emphasis on the importance of developing an understanding of ethics. This research talks about how ethical and social understanding and implication play a vital role in the sports environment. The core of sports is fair play thus ethics has to be the first step for any athlete and forms a crucial part of sports all over the globe. The study talks about how an athlete is looked upon as a role model, competes in a fair manner, keeps their personal lives upon and so on. Ethics, sportsperson ship, integrity and wellbeing are interrelated topics in sports. An athlete should feel comfortable and positive while doing what they do on ground and also off ground. Due to immense pressure and eyeballs the athlete becomes uncomfortable and gets into unethical practices to prove a point.

Cut throat competition amongst athletes have developed a mindset within the athletes that winning is the only way to prove themselves and for that they are ready to do anything which brings victory or brings them closer to victory. The focus should be on creating an athlete who is hardworking, patient, positive and also a role model for a number of people who watches them. Emphasis should be given on the overall development of an athlete and induction of ethical values in the athlete right from the beginning. To know more about the role of ethics deep emphasis has been given on the fans, sponsors, drug abuse, gender discrimination.
The objective of this study was to analyze the impact of an ethical athlete on fans, how they can influence their fans. Impact of unethical practices on sponsors has also been taken into account, the trust that companies show in an individual to represent their brands and strengthen it. The shelf life of an individual also somehow depends on the ethical practices because if an individual is not involved in an wrong doings then they tend to have a long career.

2. Material & methods:

Selection of the subjects:
Participants from the age group 15-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, were chosen for conducting the study and they all were athletes who have played at District, National and International levels. People who play for recreational purpose were also included in the study to get more clear idea of what they think about ethics in sports and how it influence them. To get professional help, Sports Managers were also included to get the in depth knowledge. Majority of the participants were from the age group 21-25, 37% female and 63% male were part of the study. Responses were received on the Likert scale on which 0 denoted strongly disagree/ least important and 5 denoted strongly agree/ most important. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the participants.

Selection of the variables:
The variables used in the study were ethical values, career stability, financial stability, performance, fan base, sponsorships, and grassroots development.

Data Collection:
A total of 13 questions were asked through the questionnaire which mainly revolved around the ethics and all the attributes of ethics. The questions were asked from general to specific. To get more specific about a particular sport, the participants were also asked what is the game that they play. The following issues related to ethics were mentioned in the questionnaire, the participants were asked the impact of ethics on the shelf life of an athlete, the impact of ethics on the sponsorships an athlete gets during the course of his career, the impact of an ethical athlete on the juniors who consider them as their role models. Critical issue such as Country’s image was also considered while preparing the questionnaire and a question was asked whether the participants think that a Country’s image is affected if one of the citizen of the Country does an unethical act in front of the world. Issues like drug abuse, gender inequality and racism was also included in the questionnaire. A very basic as well as an overall perspective was covered through these questions and thus the results and a clear understanding was received.

3. Results and Discussion:

After receiving the responses, it became evident that yes ethics have a certain kind of impact not only on the athletes but also on the fans. Ethics is a small word but it does play a vital role in making an athlete successfull and also helps fans to pick the right inspiration for themselves. If an athlete is ethical, they would definitely inspire the people who admire them and also an ethical athlete has a higher chance of becoming someone’s idol. Performance, hardwork, achievements and ethics are the four most important pillars for an athlete and if even one of them becomes weak, it can impact an athletes overall career. A deep understanding can be developed by the following variables that were considered while researching about ethics and the following results were generated:

Ethical Values: Ethical Values were the key component of the study so a question related to ethical values was asked from the athletes and a question in the context of money was asked from the athletes because money do influence the decision of the athletes and to this more than 30% of the participants strongly disagreed to the fact that they will prioritized money over their ethics, and also 7% of the participants gave priority to money, this also proves the fact that ethical values are more important than money.

Career Stability: Career stability means how stable an athlete will be throughout his career and how long can they survive in the field. A question related to shelf life was asked in this context which stated that do ethics play a vital role in increasing the shelf life of an athlete, to this more
than 55% of the participants strongly agreed that yes shelf life is impacted from the ethical and unethical acts, while 0% participants strongly disagreed. This proves the fact that in order to have a long career and have a career stability an athlete has to be ethical with his actions inside and outside the field.

**Financial stability:** Financial stability is an important factor in an athlete’s life and a lack of finance can pull back a talented athlete from doing what he does the best. When finances gets in the way of an athlete’s career, they often get scared and are ready to do anything to get themselves into a safer zone but this eventually leads them to do something unethical and thus can destroy their career completely.

**Performance:** When an athlete is ethical, he is much more positive in his approach because he is calm from inside but when there is an element of unethical acts involved then an athlete looses his calm, which affects the performance. A question was asked in this context which stated that do you think ethics adds value to your performance, to this 50% of the participants strongly agreed that ethical practices adds value to their performance and 1% participants strongly disagreed to this fact. This makes it all evident that the athletes have noticed a positive change when they are ethical in their approach.

**Fan Base:** Fan base is something that is not created in a day, it requires an athlete to stay up to the expectations and deliver results whenever required. A single negative act and an athlete looses it all, with this context the participants were asked two questions which stated two different question, one was related to the inspiration that youth gets and also whether people will still consider a particular athlete as there idol even after he does something unethical. More than 60% of the participants strongly agreed to the point that youth do get inspired by ethical athletes and make them as their role models and more than 30% of the participants strongly disagree and said that they won’t consider an athlete as their idol after knowing that they are unethical in their approach. Only 1% of the participants did not support these facts and this made it all clear that people/fans won’t support unethical athletes.

**Sponsorships:** Sponsorships is a trust that companies/organisations show in an athlete and invest in an athlete. Companies nowadays looks for a long term growth and not just the short term growth. In this context a question was asked from the athletes that do you think that companies will trust an athlete and invest in him even after knowing that he is unethical, to this a majority of the athletes said that they don’t think that a company will invest in such athletes again and they will loose trust in him. When a company is associated with an athlete, so even a single act done by the athlete will impact the company directly or indirectly. An athlete has to be very careful before thinking of doing unethical acts because this could have a negative impact on his whole career.

**Grassroots development:** Ethical issues are something which has to be considered right from the grassroots because that is the stage when an athlete learns a lot and tries to implement all the things that he learns. Parents and coaches can play a vital role in this particular aspect and an athlete can be made responsible and careful with his acts.

4. **Conclusion:**

    It can be concluded that ethics play a vital role in the overall career of an athlete and they decide whether an athlete can survive and become an inspiration for all the people watching him or not. The responses that we received while performing the research clearly shows that people and fans will only support the athletes who are ethical and can become a role model for them. It can also be concluded that investors and sponsors believe in the players who are ethical and will surely invest in him to make sure that funds never become a problem for an athlete to perform. Winning can only be fruitful if the efforts made to win are ethical and fans admire the players who are ethical in their approach.

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