

Study regarding the Ethics of the Managers from the Municipal Sports Clubs in Romania

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Abstract: *In this paper we conducted a survey to identify the ethics of the managers of sports clubs in Romania. Managers of sports clubs are those who are called upon to ensure the climate conducive to sports performance, in terms of ethics. The objective of the study was to assess the ethical levels of the managers from Romania. The study aims to analyze some ethical issues, such as: violence in sports, discrimination, use of prohibited substances and methods for increasing performance, results rigging, financial engineering, environmental degradation, exploitation of young people and encouraging victory at all cost. The work methodology involved a questionnaire-based study among six managers from three municipal clubs in Romania. The results show that ethical managers in Romania are high, respecting the ethics of both sports and management.*

Keywords: *managerial ethics, sport clubs management, managerial behavior*

JEL: *M12; M14.*

Introduction

Ethics is the code of moral principles and values that govern the behavior of a person or group, referring to what is right or wrong. Human action may fall within one of the three areas that differ in the amount of explicit control existing at that level: the law, the ethics and the free choice of each individual. The control exercised is great in the field of law and it drops very much when talking of the individuals' freedom to make decisions regarding their own person. Between the two poles there is ethics, which, although not legally regulated, has standards of behavior based on moral values and principles guiding the behavior of individuals and organizations. Since ethical standards are not codified, problems frequently arise about what is right.

The importance of ethics, both at the conceptual and applicative level, for sports organizations and for participants in sports activities, lies in the favourable consequences occurring in the long term, as a result of the adoption of behaviours, attitudes and decisions encompassing moral principles. One of the most important roles in developing and maintaining an ethical climate within the sport organization is the sports manager. Its decisions have an impact not only on the employees and the affiliated athletes, but also on the community and the way it perceives the

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organization in terms of respecting the ethical values and standards. In this context we have to mention that the emotions of the decision-maker have a strong impact in the configuration of the decision-making process. These can affect the optimal decision-making by distracting attention or by distorting the perception over the options (Barbu and Meghișan, 2011).

The Manager may represent a pattern of behavior and attitude to its employees, having the ability to create or to influence the organizational culture of the administered institution. It would be ethical for the managers to ensure the transparency of the decision-making process, so that the decisions are embraced by all employees (Androniceanu, 2011, pp. 33-34).

The manager must ensure and maintain the reputation and image of the sport organization. Clubs having performances based on work become strong brands. The branding of a sports club aims to provide an identity to that club, which on a long term basis can lead to an increase in the fans base and revenues from merchandising activities. The branding of a sports club aims to form a positive and real image (Popescu, 2011, p. 145).

1. Purpose of the research

The present research has as main purpose *the assessment of the ethical level of management in the municipal sports clubs in Romania*. The essential aspects that allow to evidence the managers' morality refer to the way in which they interact with the employees, to their behavior and their decisions when they are in front of an ethical dilemma.

The study aims to analyze some ethical issues, such as: violence in sports, discrimination, use of prohibited substances and methods for increasing performance, results rigging, financial engineering, environmental degradation, exploitation of young people and encouraging victory at all cost.

The research not only has the ascertaining purpose of assessing the ethical environment within sports clubs, but also the purpose of *proposing measures for solving ethical dilemmas (using standard ethical theories) and strengthening the ethos within the organization*.

2. Research hypotheses

In the scientific approach based on the study of numerous works in the national and international literature on ethical issues and, in particular, ethics in sport, but also taking into account the law case in the field of sports management, we formulated the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Informing the athletes about doping and its potential risks, as well as the lack of pressures on the athletes contributes to the lack of use of banned substances to enhance performance.

Hypothesis 2: Athletes from the club make strenuous and overworked workouts, which affects their family life, school performance and health.

Hypothesis 3: The share of women in the sports clubs is over 20%, as a result of measures adopted by the manager for attracting them.

Hypothesis 4: The financial interests are more important than athletes or an ethical management, moral choices leading to loss of revenues collected.

After analyzing the results collected from the managers of municipal sports clubs in Romania, through the application of a questionnaire, the hypotheses of this research will be validated or invalidated, configuring a picture of the ethical climate within the organization and its way of management.

3. Research objectives

In order to achieve the purpose of the research, we fixed the following objectives of the research, concerning the studied theme on the ethical level of managers of sports clubs in our country:

- assessment of the impact of the managers, through taken decisions and actions, on the ethical climate and, consequently, on the behavior of athletes.
- identification of measures adopted by managers of sports clubs to incorporate ethical values within them.
- setting the main ethical dilemmas specific to sports clubs management subject to this preliminary study.

Reaching the research objectives is dependent on the statistical information of the questionnaire drawn and distributed to municipal sports clubs in Craiova, Pitesti and Drobeta Turnu Severin.

4. Research Methods and Techniques

The research method used for assessing the ethics of sports management is the *opinion survey*, which uses the *questionnaire* as main instrument. This is a *preliminary quantitative study*, which provides a pre-test of the questionnaire by collecting responses from a limited number of municipal sports clubs managers.

The *opinion survey* is considered one of the most important methods of quantitative research, which is based on the use of the questionnaire to test on a sample representative for what is the subject of the study.

The *questionnaire* was sent in electronic form to managers of the MSC of Craiova, Pitești and Drobeta-Turnu Severin, being filled-in by six people in leading positions. The questionnaire is well structured, including several types of questions (open, closed, Likert's scale, etc.) which address the main ethical issues.

All these methods have led to attaining the objectives and targets set, correlated with *the study of literature in the field of sports ethics*, which ensured a good scientific justification of the research results. The documentation enabled to

know the ethical issues that managers of sports structures are facing in their activity, so that these issues could be clearly highlighted in the questionnaire that formed the basis of this research.

The research was conducted between *25 February 2012 - 25 March 2012*, on a small sample of six people - manager and head of department, and it is a preliminary stage of a larger study extended to the municipal sports clubs in the country. The questionnaire was sent electronically, and so was the collection of data from the sample managers.

5. Interpretation of data

The process of analysis and interpretation of data collected from the managers of the three sports clubs is difficult, given some reluctance to provide information about ethical issues they faced in their activity.

6. Policies and procedures for implementing ethics in sports clubs

Through the research conducted, we sought to determine the level of political and procedural implementation of ethics management instruments (ethics codes, ethics committees, procedures, training, etc.). Figure 1 shows that clubs that have a code of ethics in their institution are predominant, although we see that this is not enough, it must also be communicated, respectively well implemented and monitored.

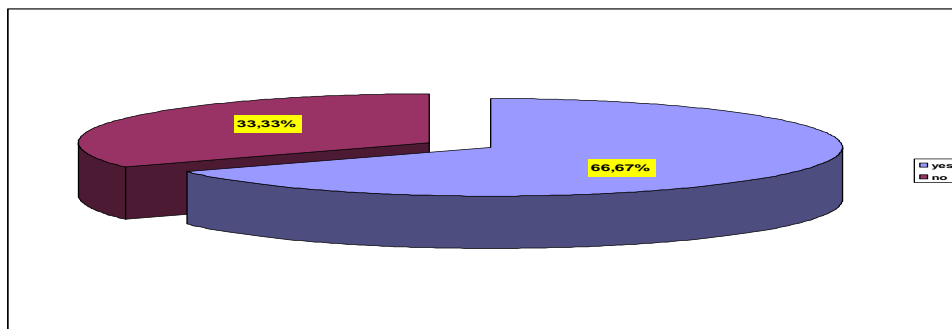


Figure 1. The existence of the code of ethics in municipal sports clubs

On assessing the necessity of its existence, all managers (even those of clubs that do not have a code of ethics) understand its role for the club they lead and coordinate. Among the methods used to communicate the code of ethics and other ethical issues, regular meetings have been nominated by 100% of managers (Figure 2), on the opposite being the ethical trainings that were not mentioned by any of the managers in the sample group.

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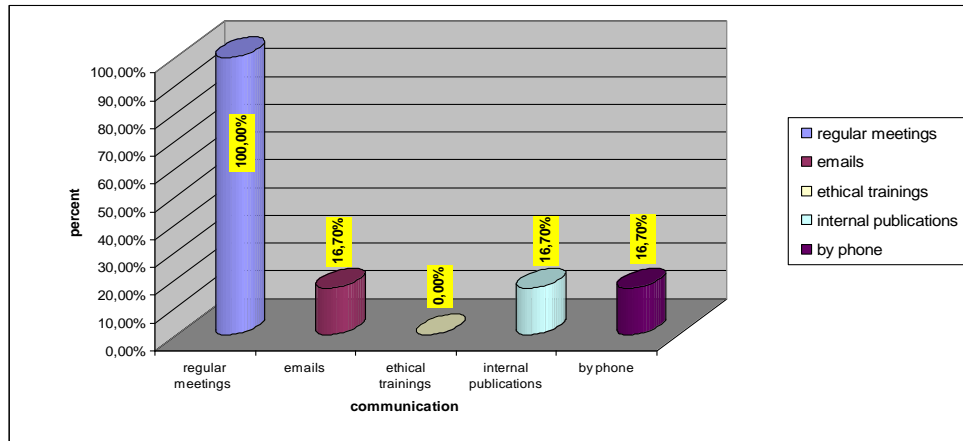


Figure 2. Forms of communication of the code of ethics by sports managers

The frequency with which managers address ethical issues is illustrated in Figure 3, and it shows that 83.33% of them frequently communicate with the staff, while only 16.67% stating that they do so infrequently.

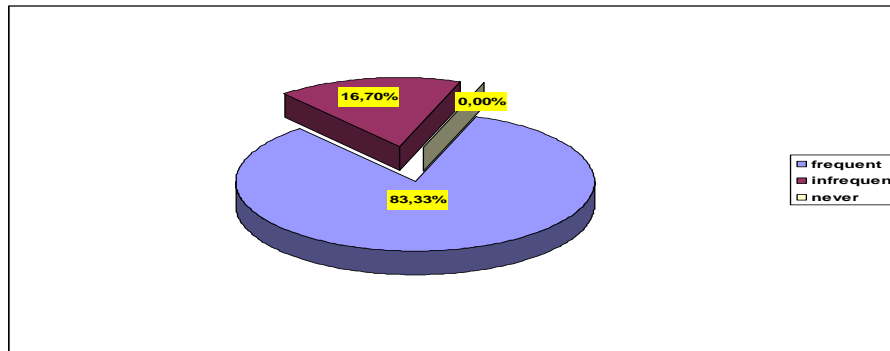


Figure 3. Frequency of addressing ethical issues

As can be seen in Figure 2, the managers do not use ethical training in communicating ethical problems with the employees, in order to increase the level of ethos within the organization. This fact is 100% consistent with the response given by managers in connection with the use of external trainers on sports ethics issues.

On the existence of an Ethics Commission, the percentages are the same as in the case of the existence of a code of ethics (Figure 4). The overlap of the two gaps within the same sports club (MSC Craiova) denotes a higher probability of occurrence of some ethical dilemmas among staff and affiliated athletes.

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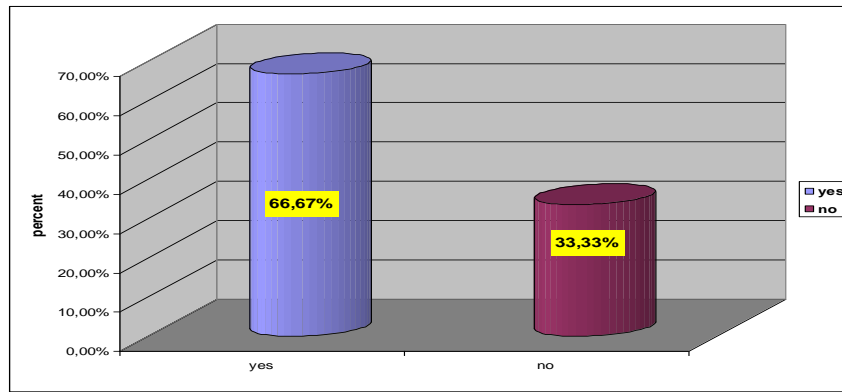


Figure 4. The existence of Ethics Commission within the sport club

Of the managers who claimed that within their club there is an Ethics Commission, 100% claimed that someone other than the lawyer, the human resource manager or an internal auditor is part of this structure. Asked to specify who this person is, the head of sport branch was mentioned at the MSC Pitesti, and at the MSC Drobeta Turnu Severin, the ethics responsible within the Commission is the cashier, an extremely serious problem. The manager mentioned that this person was also given human resources duties, as a consequence of the lack of staff and funds.

7. Ethical issues and dilemmas in the management of sports clubs

The option of descriptive statistics provided the following distribution of managers' opinions about the ethical issues analyzed (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of sports ethos

Ethical issues	Minimum value	Maximum value	Average	Standard deviation
Rigging results	1	2	1.17	0.408
Employment without skills	1	4	1.50	1.225
Cronyism in hiring	1	4	1.50	1.225
Harassment between employees	1	4	1.83	1.169
Harassment in the employee-manager relationship	1	5	2.67	1.862
Discrimination against people with HIV	1	3	1.33	0.816
Discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment	1	2	1.17	0.408
Poor qualification of employees as a result of reducing costs	1	4	1.67	1.211

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Ethical issues	Minimum value	Maximum value	Average	Standard deviation
Athletes or their fans affect the environment	1	1	1	0
Ethical choices lead to falling revenues	1	2	1.17	0.408
Cronyism is a thorny problem to human resources management	1	3	1.33	0.816

We notice that the lowest recorded score is 1, corresponding to a unanimous total disagreement. The managers consider that the athletes or their fans, through their activities, do not affect the environment. Closely related to this aspect, 66.67% of the managers (Figure 5) responded that the employees voluntarily involve in various social projects (in case of floods or even in the snow removal in February 2012).

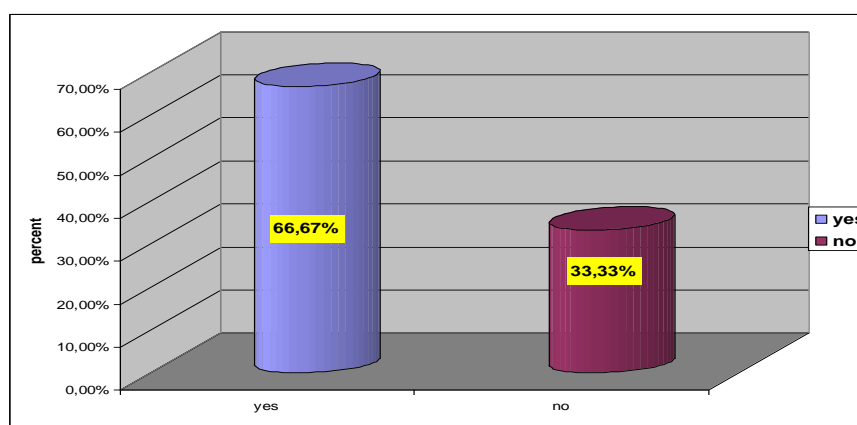


Figure 5. The voluntary involvement of employees of the sports club in social projects

The average of 1.17 and the standard deviation of 0.408 at three of the potential ethical issues illustrates a greater similarity of the responses given by managers, a fact also shown by the low amplitude (the difference between the maximum and the minimum values being 1). The low score reflects a total disagreement regarding the *tricking of results* in the clubs run by them, *discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment or that ethical choices lead to decreased revenues*. Either in terms of *persons with HIV* the managers do not consider that there is an issue of *discrimination*, the general attitude being one of disagreement with the allegation of discrimination (an average of 1.33).

The answers are subjective, of course, in the theory of ethics being presented the idea that individuals report themselves differently, in terms of morale, to the reality they face. On the other hand, there are non-ethical aspects,

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which are illegal, and it's hard to assume that those will be officially recognized by the managers or employees.

In terms of favoritism at hiring, we have included in the questionnaire three similar questions (trick questions), spread in the structure of the questionnaire, in order to check the Manager's vigilance, his sincerity and consistency in responses and opinions. Thus, hiring based on criteria other than competence, cronyism in hiring and cronyism - a thorny issue of human resource management in sport clubs - are the ethical issues that received a score of 1.50, 1.50 and, respectively, 1.33, values corresponding to total disagreement.

However, the standard deviation is quite high (1.225) for the first two of the above mentioned issues and 0.816 for the last one. This shows that some managers, though few (as they could not influence the overall perception of the problem), agreed (the maximum value is 4) that these problems exist within the club.

A similar situation in terms of high amplitude and standard deviation greater than 1 (1.211) is found also for the assertion that *the employees' qualification is poorer for reasons of cost reduction*. The average of 1.67 signifies partial disagreement of the managers, although some managers have stated that they agree with the existence of this problem, yet too few to affect the final result.

A similar discrepancy between the managers' answers can also be found to the question concerning the *verbal or physical harassment between employees or in the manager-employees relationship*. Table 5.2 shows that the standard deviation for this question is 1.169 and respectively 1.862, and the average is 1.83 and 2.67. These differences mean different opinions divided among managers, some of them noticing this problem, while others didn't confront it into their work.

At the question relating to the detection of doping cases in athletes of the clubs they manage, 100% of the managers stated that they are in total disagreement with the existence of such problems. This reality is encouraging, proving a high level of ethics among employees, fairness, honesty, fair play, respect, in other words, giving evidence of sportsmanship.

Descriptive statistics provide a more accurate picture of the phenomenon of doping, correlated with the information of the athletes and the absence or presence of pressures on them to perform (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on doping issues

Assertions	Average	Standard deviation
Information on doping is carried out annually	3.83	1.835
Junior athletes and their families are informed of the potential risks	4.67	0.516
Number of athletes who use banned substances increased	1.17	0.408
There is pressure on athletes to perform	1.50	0.837

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This table shows that the athletes and their families are informed both about doping and the potential risks, and that the averages of 3.83 and 4.67 reflect the agreement and, respectively, the total agreement on these issues. The score of 1.50 (disagreement) obtained for the last assertion reveals a climate within which managers do not exercise pressure on the athletes to perform and to increase revenues of the club. This contributes to the drawing of the moral profile of managers, and also to understanding the fact that doping among athletes has not increased, the clubs having not recorded such cases.

Hypothesis 1: *Informing the athletes about doping and its potential risks, as well as the lack of pressures on the athletes contributes to the lack of use of banned substances to enhance performance – is thus validated.*

To validate the hypothesis, the Pearson coefficient has been calculated, which reflects the existing correlation between the two variables, as well as the direction of this correlation (Table 3).

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficient

Variables	Information on doping	Information on risks	Exerting pressure to perform and to increase revenues
<i>Number of athletes who use banned substances increased</i>	-0.489	-0.632	0.878

The correlation between the lack of pressure exercised by the manager and the number of athletes using banned substances is significant and oriented in the same direction. In other words, both information on doping and the risks inherent in sports activities are important for lowering doping, but the correlation is slightly lower (-0.489 and -0.632) and reverse.

The lack of doping cases in the sample sport clubs can also be related to the number of doping tests conducted. Thus, in all three clubs, tests took place in 2011, averaging about four tests. However, the smallest number of tests was conducted at MSC Drobeta Turnu Severin (one) and the highest in MSC Craiova (8). The extent to which it was the manager's initiative to take the doping test is shown in Figure 6.

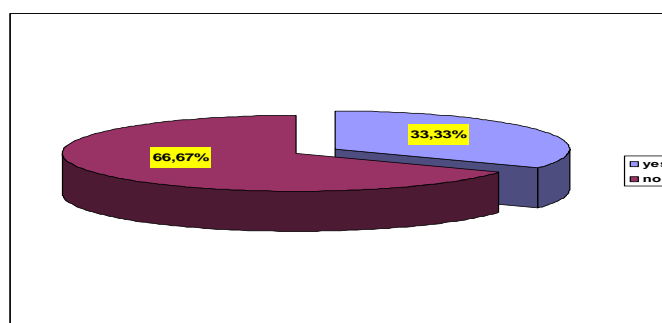


Figure 6. Manager's initiative in anti-doping testing in the last two years

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We may notice that the majority of managers (66.67%) have not taken such initiatives at the level of their club, which can constitute a deficiency in ethics management. Also, the number of initiatives taken by the other managers is not very high, this measure being taken only twice in the last two years.

Another ethical issue is that of strenuous and oversteering sports training, that endanger social life, family life, and sometimes even the health of the athletes. Correlating the responses of managers on this issue with the data in Table 5.3 (concerning the information on the risks inherent in intense and performance sports activities, and also the lack of pressure exerted by the manager), it can be said that athletes are not overworked, the training not affecting their lives.

Hypothesis 2 - Athletes from the club made strenuous and oversteering workouts, which affect their family life, school performance and health - is *invalidated*, as demonstrated using descriptive statistics (Tables 4 and 5) and the Pearson coefficient (Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the variables relating to the training of athletes and the factors of influence

Assertions	Average	Standard deviation
Workouts are oversteering	1.50	1.225
Trainings affect the lives and the health of athletes	1.17	0.408
Junior athletes and their families are informed of the potential risks	4.67	0.516
There is pressure on athletes to perform	1.50	0.837
There is a schedule of workouts for each age group	5.00	0.00

Managers are, in a proportion of over 80%, in total disagreement with the assertions according to which workouts are oversteering, or that the workouts affect family life, school performance or health of the athletes.

Table 5. The Pearson correlation coefficient between strenuous workouts and pressures exerted on athletes

Pearson coefficient	<i>Exerting pressure to perform</i>	<i>Junior athletes and their families are informed of the potential risks</i>
<i>Strenuous workouts affect family life, school performance or health</i>	0.878	-0.632

The Pearson coefficient of 0.878 in Table 5 shows a significant direct correlation between the lack of pressure on athletes and the perception of the quality of trainings that pose no threatening to athletes' life. The relationship between the two variables can be regarded as a causality relationship, while the

opposite situation can also become possible (increased pressures can lead to strenuous workouts, in order to get better performance and higher revenues).

Another important issue for sports activity is the *careful monitoring of the health of athletes*, so that their lives or psychological condition should not be affected. When asked about the occurrence of sudden deaths in athletes from the club, the managers responded unanimously that no such cases have been reported. The managers in the sample group are in total disagreement (100%) with the assertion that medical supervision of athletes is poor and it may endanger the athletes' lives.

The frequency of periodic medical examinations (Figure 7 shows that 66.67% of managers provide these checks quarterly and 33.33% of them half yearly. We consider that these tests must be made at least on a quarterly basis, as the sports case abounds in examples of young athletes who died suddenly due to some health problems undiscovered in due time.

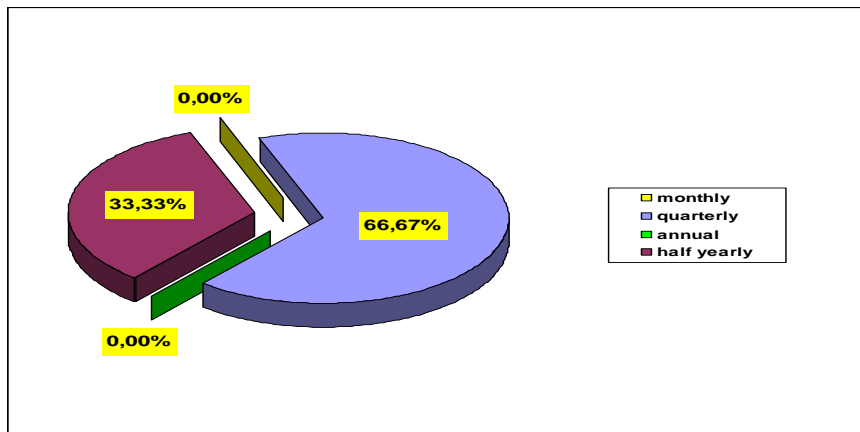


Figure 7. Frequency of periodic medical checks in sports clubs

Psychological counseling is also important, especially in the case of underage athletes. These athletes, as well as their families, must receive psychological support within the sports club, in order to better understand how the athletic activity influences them.

Managers responded at a rate of 50% that juniors and their families do not receive psychological support from the club (Figure 8). However, the descriptive statistics of responses to this question show an average of 2.83 (corresponding to an intermediate attitude) and a standard deviation of 2.041. This is due to differences of opinion on this issue, as can be seen in Figure 8.

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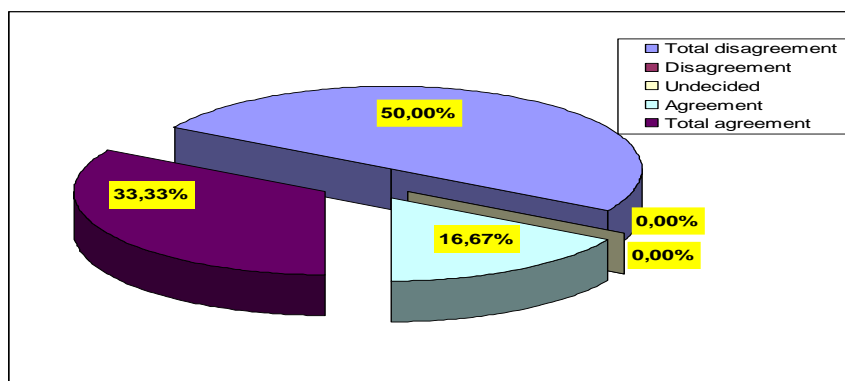


Figure 8. Psychological counseling of athletes

Descriptive statistics also provide a more accurate picture of the responses given by managers in relation to the two assertions (Table 6).

Table 6. Descriptive statistics on the share of women and the measures adopted by managers

Indicators	The share of women is less than 20%	The manager permanently takes measures to increase this share
Average	1.50	3.83
Standard deviation	1.225	0.753

An average of 1.50 for the first assertion indicates the managers' disagreement on the low share of women, which means that this ratio is higher than 20%. In the case of the second assertion, the average is of 3.83 (corresponding to agreement) and reflects the fact that managers permanently take measures to increase this share. A causal relationship thus appears between the two assertions, which can be measured by the Pearson correlation coefficient (Table 7).

Table 7. Pearson coefficient between the variables of the percentage of women and the actions of managers

Pearson coefficient	<i>The manager permanently takes measures to increase this share</i>
<i>The share of women is less than 20%</i>	-0.542

A Pearson coefficient of -0.542 reflects a causal relationship between the two variables, the negative sign indicating the direction of this correlation. Thus, the share of women is over 20%, as a result of the measures taken by the management of sports clubs. Therefore, *hypothesis 3 – The share of women in*

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sports clubs is over 20%, as a result of measures taken by the manager to attract them – **is validated**.

In terms of discrimination against women in employment in management positions and payment discrimination on grounds of sex, age or ethnicity, the answers of the managers are in majority proportions for total disagreement (Table 8).

Table 8. Descriptive statistics on discrimination

Variables	Average	Standard deviation
<i>Discrimination against women in employment in management positions</i>	1.17	0.408
<i>Payment discrimination</i>	1	0.0

We may notice that managers are in total disagreement with the existence of such forms of discrimination, a fact reinforced by the proportion of 50% of women managers in the sample group under study. The literature in the field also raises the question of ethical behavior also to fans who buy tickets or subscriptions to sports competitions. An undue increase of the price falls into a non-ethical attitude of the manager towards the fans of the club. To this question, the average response is 3 (intermediate position - indecision) and the standard deviation is 2, proof of the variability of responses (Table 9).

Table 9. Percentage distribution of the price increase for tickets and subscriptions

Ticket prices increased unjustifiably	Percentage
Total disagreement	33.3
Disagreement	33.3
Total agreement	33.3
Total	100

Although opinions are divided and even opposites, disagreeing managers prevail (either partially or totally) - 66.67%. This fact pictures an ethical behavior towards the fans of sports clubs as well as a chance to keep loyal fans.

Hypothesis 4 - *The financial interests are more important than athletes or management ethics, moral choices leading to loss of revenues collected - is **invalidated***, since managers responded unanimously that are in total disagreement (Table 10) to prioritizing financial interests in detrimental to the athletes' welfare or to choosing ethical decisions.

Also regarding the assertion that ethical choices lead to loss of revenues collected, managers expressed a total or partial disagreement in cumulative proportions of 100%, and not a single manager did not agree with this way of thinking and acting.

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Table 10. Percentage distribution of variables in Hypothesis 4

<i>Moral choices lead to loss of revenues collected</i>	
	Percentage
Total disagreement	83.3
Disagreement	16.7
Total	100
<i>Financial interests are more important than athletes or ethical management</i>	
	Percentage
Total disagreement	100

The data, which reinforce the invalidation of the hypothesis, are also illustrated by the average of the managers' responses to the following assertions (Table 11). The last three assertions are not explicitly expressed in hypothesis 4, but they reflect the same moral character of the manager. We may notice that the pressure to achieve targets and the financial rewards are not considered the main reasons for ethical violations (the average of 1.17 shows total disagreement) in activity clubs

Table 11. Descriptive statistics of variables in Hypothesis 4

Variables	Average	Standard deviation
<i>Moral choices lead to loss of revenues collected</i>	1.17	0.408
<i>Financial interests are more important than athletes or ethical management</i>	1	0.00
<i>Pressure to achieve the objectives and potential financial rewards are the main causes of ethical violations</i>	1.17	0.408
<i>Financial engineering are necessary for the survival of clubs</i>	2.83	2.041
<i>The main objective of the sports club manager is the performance at any cost</i>	2.33	1.751

An average of 2.83 for the assertion that financial engineering is required for the survival of the clubs expresses an intermediate situation caused by the heterogeneity of opinions on this issue (fact also reflected in the high standard deviation - 2.041). The percentage distribution of opinions is of 50% for total disagreement and of 50% for agreement (combined percentage of agreement and total agreement). This situation reflects a potential non-ethical phenomenon and at the limit of legality, used by managers to ensure the survival of the clubs.

Conclusions

There have been five research hypotheses, of which three mainly approached morality (the share of women among the personnel on the rise as a result of management measures; transparency and open management contributes to the creation of a solid and ethical climate and the information on doping and risks), and the other approached a potential immoral context (strenuous workouts that affect the lives of the athletes and the priority of financial interests to the interests of the athletes and ethics). The main tool used within this research was the questionnaire. It included various types of questions, covering most of the ethical issues that can arise in the manager's activity. There were also trick questions, which had aimed at verifying the managers' seriousness and vigilance, and the consistency of the responses they offered.

The results of the research have validated the hypotheses concerning the morality of managers and invalidated the others, thus drawing the image of managers with a high level of ethics. Thus, discrimination has not proved to represent a problem, the managers permanently taking steps to increase the ratio of women within the sports clubs.

Neither the workouts of the athletes are considered strenuous, such as to affect the health and the social life of the athletes. The phenomenon of doping is not a reality seen in the clubs in the sample, and to this fact a great contribution had the athletes being informed on the risks arisen from the use of banned substances for enhancing performance.

Transparency and openness of the style of management are prerequisites for creating a strong ethical climate among employees, the manager having a very important role in this regard. They do not give priority to financial interests in preference to the interests of the athletes of the club or to moral issues.

The results are optimistic and show a "nearly" ideal picture of morality within the sports clubs. This may be due to a large extent also to the managers' subjectivity, who must make an ethical self-portrait. Having in view these considerations, a further study has been imposed by extending the study sample and, respectively, by collecting the opinion of other participants in the sport, coming into contact with the managers of sports clubs or with ethical problems that could be managed by them.

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