



EXAMINATION OF MORALITY AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF SPORTS MEDIA IN TURKEY

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Abstract:

Aiming to unearth the Turkish Sports Media's understanding of morals and ethics, this study was developed by way of compilation. It aims to explain such relevant topics as morals, ethics, relation between morals and ethics, relation between ethics and philosophy, sports ethics, ethics of the sports media, and to infer a conclusion from those explanations. Sports ethics refer to manners, actions and behaviors performed by sportspeople or people involved in sports and accepted in general by the stakeholders. Sports media provides the public with news about sports through the Press and other communication means, and should aim to popularize the sports, ensure more people to be interested in sports, and promote the sports to the masses. In doing this, it is expected to respect both the sports ethics and Media ethics. However, it is observed that the facts that communication technologies spread fast, access to news and information get easier, the Media grows and expands, and new Media means are introduced cause the sports media to develop a number of unethical notions. It was concluded that the root reason of this tendency is the Media's aim to be more influential for the public and to access more people by means of various communication means in order to increase its income. In the light of these findings, this study emphasizes that it is important for the sports media to adopt and respect the applicable ethical principles and to act in accordance with them.

Keywords: ethics, sports, media

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1. Introduction

Communication and other technologies advancing fast affect every aspect of life. People use the mass media outlets to interpret and construe the problems they face in daily life and the social events that happen. The mass media outlets manipulate the Turkish sports audience for their own interests and cash in on such manipulation. Thus, they shape the agenda around their interest and set the sports agenda of this country.

2. The notion of ethics, its relation with morals and philosophy

The word *ethics* dates back to *ethos* in ancient Greek, which dates back in turn to *ethika*. The word *ethika* refers to of or concerning *ethe*, plural of *ethos*. In its oldest sense, *ethe* means a place regularly visited and used as shelter by a living thing (Tepe, 1999).

Ethics is defined as a branch of philosophy studying the attributes and basics of good or bad, right or wrong moral values of people (Girgin, 2001).

The notion of ethics is also defined as a discipline to study morals, moral philosophy or human actions as a special field of problem in order to study the properties of said field and the properties of the principles governing said field (Arslan, 2001).

Ethics indicates and requires not a particular action or behavior, but morality in terms of freedom peculiar only to humans. In addition, it describes how people should select the actions acceptable in moral terms (Pieper, 1999).

Most of the definitions of the notion of ethics agree on the following common points: ethics as a branch of philosophy, distinguishes between good and bad actions, and is based on certain values and standards. In short, ethics refers to the act of distinguishing human actions between good and bad with reference to certain standards (Dolaşır 2006).

It is observed that the notion of ethics is used in daily life as a synonym for morals or moral. Even some scientific articles use the word ethics as a synonym for mores. These terms refer to different meanings, but their common ground is they cover the rules for individuals' behaviors to each other and the behavioral principles governing individuals' relations with each other (Akarsu, 1997).

The means of control for moral standards is one's conscience. Conscience refers to considering certain moral standards to be genuine, right and obligatory and having a sense of responsibility if any of those standards is violated. Therefore, the moral principles cannot be enforced by an institution; they can only be performed under the control of people's conscience. The controller of the moral principles adopted by an individual is that individual himself/herself (Meb, 2008).

As a main branch of philosophy, ethics studies what is good in behavioral terms and what things are good, aiming to formularize Man's ideal behaviors. In social life, ethics correspond to a group of rules, entitled morals, instructing people what to do and what to refrain from in their relations with each other. Professional ethics, which set the rules to be obeyed by a group of people working at a certain business field and which describes the behaviors expected in applications peculiar to that business field, are relatively younger than the first two notions and is a synthesis of them in a way (Yıldırım, 2007).

3. Sports media's awareness of ethics and ethical problems

Awareness of ethics should be developed by and between all the actors of the organizational structure of sports. However, sports fans' urge for winning exerts pressure on both the management executives of sports clubs and the Media who does its best to sell its publications to and to receive ratings from the mass of sports fans (Uzun, 2004).

In general, the term sports ethics refers to parties involved in sports, who play important roles in the progress thereof, performing their duties and responsibilities in accordance with such universal values as integrity, justice, openness, impartiality and respect, working in accordance with certain principles. The basic purpose of sports ethics is to ensure individuals to be aware of the universal ethics accepted in the world of sports, and to ensure those principles to be fulfilled at the behavioral level in sports activities (Bucher, 1999).

The very first sports article appeared in the Turkish Press was written on fencing by Ali Ferruh Bey from Paris and published in the periodical *Servet-i Fünun* (Atabeyođlu, 1991).

In time, sports turned to a show and became a significant branch of the Media and the entertainment industry. According to data provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the total volume of the global sports industry was US \$ 133 billion in 2013 and this figure was higher than the gross national income of 129 countries.

Media emphasized the spectacle aspects of the sports to play a major role for turning the sports into entertainment for the masses, a consumer product, on the one hand, and built an infrastructure for the sports to market themselves on the other hand. Thus, tight economic ties were formed between the sports industry and the Media (Uzun, 2001).

The idea that the higher education level has a very positive impact can be said to have contributed to self-worth (Turkay & Gökyürek, 2015). The fact that the Press and

especially the visual Media are read and viewed by masses facilitates the Media to influence the masses and to manipulate them easily. Although an incorrect piece of news can be corrected later, it takes the legal system a long time to finish legal proceedings and to adjudge a verdict, so that damages suffered by the rights of individuals cannot be compensated enough, and *“mudslingers manage to soil one’s respectability in general”* (Kumyakan, 1998).

Turkish sports media is passing through an interesting stage where representatives of the Media are as much news materials as sports games, where unscrupulous remarks and insults dominate its agenda, where aggressiveness and sensational declarations are considered to be the best news material for reporters, where sports games are presented in a narrow frame between success and failure, between winning and losing, where a sportive success is praised to the skies only to criticize and depreciate severely the same team or sportsperson after it loses a game, without taking into consideration the toll such attitude might take on the sportsmen involved (Hiçyılmaz, 1985).

These violations of ethics rules are also connected with the commercialization of the Media. Commercialization of the Media imposes de facto restrictions on the freedom of opinion and expression in addition to the legal restrictions. As the Press turns into a commercial business and shows signs of monopolization, freedom of expression is limited by commercial interests (Uzun, 2001).

The harsh competition for ratings experienced in the Turkish sports media and some other interests cause the representatives of that media to present sports games in a different way designed to create a state of confusion, to create chaos for the overall sports agenda in this country and to dominate said agenda in order to outperform their competitors and to attract more and more viewers and readers.

Since soccer is a branch of sports favored and watched by masses in this country, it suffers most of the above mentioned presentations and scenes. A piece of news about the transfer of a soccer player, a soccer game or a scene made by the fans of a soccer team attracts more readers and viewers than news on other sports. Headlines of the sports press provoke the fans of teams before and after a game and invite them to make a scene. In fact, sensationalist headlines are composed in favor of the winning team after a game for commercial purposes only, and such headlines indeed increase the circulation of the relevant newspaper and contribute to fans’ identification with that team.

The role played by the Media to help the sports transform into a branch of the entertainment industry was to disseminate information about the sports to the masses fast and to increase the public’s interest in sports (Çeviker and Dolaşır Tuncel, 2014).

Turkish sports media also exploits the low education and economic levels, sentimentality, excitability, lack of choice and even nationalism of the individuals comprising most of the Turkish population, printing such sensational headlines as “*this goal was for the mothers of martyrs*”, “*this was a good lesson for that European team*”, etc. (Girgin, 2000).

News on sports branches other than soccer are announced in general after the pieces of news on a great success or a major scene are announced. Or non-sportive events about such other branches, for example the death of a sportsman, the fight that broke in a stadium, the use of doping by a sportsman, etc. are announced.

Uzun (2004) in his book *Ethics Mentality of Sport Press*, comments that management executives of the Media channels order pieces of news violating the integrity, justice and personal right principles to be published and aired for yielding to political pressure, lowering the manpower costs, doing favors for sports clubs, and dominating the sports agenda by way of sensationalism, and that the Media benefits from such news.

Günay (2007) underlines that in Europe reporters and journalists enjoy more freedom for their news items if they belong to the relevant labor unions and organizations, and that monopolization and management pressure is not as harsh there as it is here.

In a study, Tepe (1999) emphasizes that reporters and journalists should make a right choice when covering an event, report it accurately and not twist the facts thereof, and reminds that comments, judgments or praises made or attributed without knowing it will violate the ethics of the Media.

4. Conclusion

As communication technologies are improved and spread wider, the Media’s power to dictate the social agenda increases, and it is understood that the Media is more influent than the other stakeholders in terms of setting the social agenda or creating a social agenda. Sports media enjoys its power of having masses of readers and viewers and uses that power to set the agenda of the world of sports in order to manipulate the sports for its own interests, to influence individuals and institutions, to manipulate all stakeholders of the world of sports for its own interests and to gain financial benefit from these acts.

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