



Article

The Influence of Religiosity on Moral Judgment in Sport

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Abstract: The creation of a much clearer view on religiosity-morality relations was the basic goal of the present study. Another goal was to examine the impact of factors (gender, type of sports) that possibly effect the formation of moral content judgment and parts of religiosity within a sport environment. The participants were 258 athletes of the Christian Orthodox faith (180 males and 78 females). All participants were involved in the fourteen sports. They filled out the Moral Content Judgment in Sport Questionnaire (MCJSQ), the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ), and the Religious Schema Scale (RSS). Results showed an effect of gender and type of sports on moral judgment and religiosity, respectively. Results also revealed the predicting ability of religiosity on moral judgment with religious schemas presenting more intense participation than that of religious faith.

Keywords: moral judgment; religious faith; religious schema; sport

1. Introduction

Religiosity and morality are two constructs that hold a crucial role in the formation of people's behavior. Implicit priming of religious and secular moral concepts has been observed to increase pro-social sharing [1] and intentions to perform pro-social behaviors [2].

A growing body of research recognizes the influences of religion and religious faith on human behavior and psychological functioning; for reviews see [3]. Heidt [4] suggested that "religion is a powerful influence on human behavior. The precepts and teaching of the world's many religious traditions greatly influencing how people act toward others" ([4], p. viii). Chen and Liu [5] claim that "religiosity is considered to be the most important and stable social force in shaping an individual's life" ([5], p. 313), while Teymoori, Heydari, and Nasiri [6] reported that "religion is a social institution that dramatically influences individuals' behaviors and daily actions as well as their social and political orientation" ([6], p. 93).

Personal religiosity is considered as a social force that has an important effect on moral development and interactions, the relationship between the two [5,7] has not been thoroughly researched in sport settings. Due to the fact that a literature review provides little in the way of conclusive empirical results [7], the present study will make an effort to investigate the influence of personal religiosity on the formation of moral judgment regarding sport activities.

1.1. Theoretical Background

1.1.1. Moral Judgment

The moral judgment of decision makers is an issue of great concern for them. The way someone makes a decision is an indication of prediction of the behavior he/she will follow. According

to Lawrence Kohlberg's [8] cognitive developmental theory, moral judgment may be defined as judgments, judgments of value, social judgments, and judgments that oblige the individual to take action.

The assessment of moral judgment according to the theories of moral development was focused on the moral content and moral structure of judgments [9]. The term "moral content" refers primarily to internalized behavioral instructions regarding right and wrong, or, as we shall call them, "moral norms" ([9], p. 211). Turiel [10] claimed that moral norms are constructed by the child at an early age, based on intrinsic aspects of the behaviors involved, relating to human well-being and fairness, while the term "moral structure" is related to the stage of moral judgment, as described by Kohlberg. The structure of each stage exhibits cohesion and internal organization, supporting a general orientation. This assists both the ultimate apprehension of a situation and the making of a rational decision.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that knowing the moral content of judgments helps to explain choices in moral dilemmas that cannot be fully explained by their structure. For example, within moral reasoning (moral structure), there is the ability for systematic thinking to solve a moral problem based on the principles of justice. There are tough environments, such as the one surrounding sports, where the notion of justice is characterized by a difference in relation to the wider social environment. This is the reason Shields and Bredemeier [11] suggested that it is necessary to examine the reasons that motivate individuals to select certain principles or values, based on which they will make a decision, and to therefore present the corresponding behavior. Moral values, as well as attitudes and views, are elements that reveal the moral content of the moral judgment of an individual [12].

Recently Proios [13] developed the Moral Content Judgment in Sport Questionnaire (MCJSQ) for the study of moral judgment in sport settings. He considered elements of one of the three criteria (issues, norms, and elements) used for the assessment of moral content in the context of standardized scoring issues [14]. Elements inform us about the deeper reasons or motives for the specific choice in decision-making [9]. The MCJSQ assesses the components of elements of normative order, fairness, egoistic utilitarianism/consequences, social utilitarianism/consequences, and harmony-serving consequences (for more details see [13]).

Nevertheless, during recent years, it has been supported that moral functioning is a complex issue [15]. Haidt and Graham [16], within the framework of *Moral Foundations Theory* (MFT), supported that moral functioning is an issue of moral "foundations" or "intuitions", where social intuitions are central and occur rapidly and without awareness of their source, conveying a sense of rightness or wrongness without the assistance of reasons or reasoning. It was also supported that religiosity is a basic moral foundation including issues relating to purity and sanctity (concerns about physical and spiritual contagion including virtues of chastity, wholesomeness, and control of desires [16,17]).

According to Haidt and Bjorklund [18], "Moral judgment is a product of quick and automatic intuitions that then give rise to slow, conscious moral reasoning" ([18], p. 181). Narvaez [15] reports that intuitive decision may or may not be followed by reasoning, while Baril and Wright [19] supported that "the general picture is that Haidt and Graham's moral foundations overlap with the neo-Kohlbergian stages of moral development across very different cognitive load situations" ([19], p. 472).

1.1.2. Religiosity

Religiosity is a construct for which a wide range of definitions has been created, though without these being operationally clear [20]. The Fetzer Institute [21] and Hackney and Sanders [22] claim that religiosity is a term difficult to define. For Koenig, McCullough, and Larson [23], religion is defined substantively and functionally as:

"...an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols that serve (a) to facilitate individuals' closeness to the sacred or transcendent other (i.e., God, higher power, ultimate truth) and (b) to bring about an understanding of an individual's relationship and responsibility to others living together in community" ([23], p. 18).

Wilkes, Burnett, and Howell [24] supported that religion, religiousness, and religiosity are used interchangeably within some studies, and, considering the fact that there is no concession for the use of these constructs, they suggested the development of these constructs should be done in a different way. Considering the above-mentioned claims, the present study uses the construct of religiosity to better understand the convictions and the way the participants think.

Plante and Boccaccini [25,26] considered that religiosity is a matter of strength of the religious faith. For this reason, they developed the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ). The SCSRFQ is a brief 10 items of self-report measurement that assesses the strength of religious faith and engagement and is suitable for use by multiple religious traditions, denominations, and perspectives [27].

Fowler [28] suggested that religious spiritual growth is a continuous procedure that includes a number of stages (six-stage model). Nevertheless, Fowler's view that faith development can be considered as a "hard stage" model has been heavily criticized (see, e.g., [29–31]). Considering the aforementioned criticism of the hard stage theory, Streib [30] moved to revise Fowler's faith development theory. He suggested religious schemata, which are the distinguishing marks for religious styles. Religious styles resemble and relate to lifestyles and habits [31]. For the measuring of religious schemas, Streib, Hood, and Klein [32] developed the Religious Schema Scale (RSS), which "...has a clear focus on a specific dimension of religious styles: on the spectrum between a more fundamentalist orientation on the one hand and tolerance, fairness, and openness for dialog on the other—which is most pertinent in the face of interreligious relations in our globalized world." ([32], p. 155). The RSS includes three schemata, which are not independent structural units but part of a dynamic field with multiple interactions. More specifically: the *truth of text and teachings (ttt)* that corresponds to, and is supposed to be indicative of, the mythic-literal faith of Fowler's stage two and the instrumental-reciprocal religious style; the *fairness* that relates to the individuate-reflective faith of Fowler's stage four and to the religious style named individuate-systemic' and the *tolerance, rational choice (ftr), xenosophia and inter-religious dialog (xenos)*, aiming at the conjunctive faith in Fowler's model or the so-called dialogical religious style [31].

Religion is a construct that should be studied as a complex system, which includes many social functions [33]. This is the reason why the present study chose to examine religiosity through two different approaches; religious faith and religious cognitive schemas. Especially the approach of religiosity was done through the religious schemas, since these are the ones that carry the most interest by revealing the cognitive interpretation pattern a person seeks and prefers in order to deal with everyday issues. Following that, we expect, through the knowledge of religious schemas, to acquire advanced knowledge of human behavior. McIntosh [34] claimed that a schema is a cognitive structure or mental representation containing organized prior knowledge about a particular domain.

1.1.3. Religiosity and Moral Judgment

The relationship between religiosity and morality has been a subject of special interest for many researchers throughout the years. Findings have not yet led to a clear view on this relationship [35,36]. Rossano [37] believed that religion entails moral values and standards and that adherence to them is considered "deliberate moral practice". Many studies have revealed that there is a significant relationship between religiosity and mature moral reasoning (e.g., [37–39]). Nevertheless, the claim of a relationship between religiosity and morality was heavily doubted by the findings of social and behavioral studies that dealt with religious beliefs and moral behavior. Kohlberg [8] has argued that religiosity and moral reasoning are inherently unrelated because morality and religion represent two distinct areas of human concern.

Parboteeah, Hoegl, and Cullen [40] supported that mixed results are mostly due to conceptual and methodological issues such as the consideration of religion as a one-dimensional conceptualization or as multiple dimensions without the relevant conceptual support for the choice of their dimensions; many of the ethical measurements have been attitudinal and may thus suffer from social desirability

biases. Many studies have emphasized narrow, and for this subject matter, peculiar samples of undergraduate and MBA students. The importance of the present study is found in the avoidance of issues such as the above, in order to offer a much clearer picture on the relationship between religiosity and morality. Initially, the present study examines the construct of religiosity in both of its forms (one-dimensional and multi-dimensional). In both cases there is the relevant conceptual support. It also offers further knowledge on the way people possibly act through the explanation of religious cognitive schemas. The measurement of morality should avoid social desirability biases, while the sample should cover a wide range in order to address issues such as age, form, and type of sports. Finally, the study of the relationship between religiosity and morality within a social environment such as sports further enhances the importance of the present study.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between moral content judgment and constructs of religiosity. In addition, this study will investigate the impact of gender, form, and type of sport in shaping moral content judgment and constructs religiosity. The main hypothesis in the present study is the existence of a relationship between elements of moral judgment and constructs of religiosity, as well as the differences in the content of moral judgment and constructs of religiosity in relation to gender and type of sport. In relation to gender, it has been supported that there is a difference in moral reasoning (care oriented, justice oriented) [41] and that care and justice imply different ways of judgment, the motives of which have different consequences [42,43]. Regarding type of sport, differences may be appearing in scores of dependent variables. This may be caused by the fact that team sports are considered to carry attenuation of feelings of individual responsibility for the needs and aims of the team as a whole [44].

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants were 258 amateur athletes of the Christian Orthodox faith (males, $n = 180$ and females, $n = 78$). Their age ranged from 18 to 27 years ($M = 19.72$, $SD = 1.73$). All participants were undergraduate sport-science students at a Greek university and were involved in the following sports: football ($n = 86$), basketball ($n = 48$), track and field ($n = 35$), martial arts ($n = 16$), swimming ($n = 22$), volleyball ($n = 18$), gymnastics ($n = 7$), handball ($n = 9$), tennis ($n = 5$), skiing ($n = 3$), cycling ($n = 4$), rowing ($n = 2$), sailing, and weightlifting ($n = 1$).

2.2. Procedure

Prior to the beginning of the research, ethical approval and relevant permissions were asked from the participants. For individuals that participated in competitive sport activities in public sports organizations, special requests for permission for their participation were made to the relevant authorities. Following this, the researchers informed the participants of the content of the questions featured in the questionnaire, as well as of the purpose of the present study.

2.3. Measurements

Moral judgment: The Moral Content Judgment in Sport Questionnaire (MCJSQ; [10]) was used to assess the moral content judgment of participants. The questionnaire was used in its Greek version. The instrument started with the statement, "Do I believe that my actions in sport are characterized by...". This statement was followed by 25 items related to the five constructs of the moral content elements of the normative order (e.g., "...interest in the opponents when the latter are in danger"), egoistic utilitarianism/consequences (e.g., "...a wish for reward"), social utilitarianism/consequences (e.g., "...an interest in the positive consequences for my team"), harmony-serving consequences (e.g., "...courage and nerve"), and fairness (e.g., "...respect for the opponent"). Participants were asked to answer on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). The MCJSQ has shown evidence of content and construct validity and is considered appropriate

for use with adolescent athletes [10]. In this study, reliability coefficients for the five subscales were 0.71 (normative order), 0.76 (fairness), 0.70 (egoistic utilitarianism), 0.68 (social utilitarianism), and 0.72 (harmony-serving consequences). The above-mentioned value (0.68) can be considered satisfactory, since this factor is comprised of less than ten items (namely, five items) [45,46].

Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire: A validated Greek version [47] of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ; [25]) was used in order to assess religiosity. SCSRFQ is a 10-item self-report measure. The SCSRFQ uses a 4-point Likert response format, ranging from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (4) *Strongly agree*. The SCSRFQ was found to have high internal reliability with Cronbach's alphas, ranging between 0.94 and 0.97, and split-half reliability correlations between 0.90 and 0.96. In the present study, the alpha coefficient was ($\alpha = 0.95$).

Religious Schema Scale: A validated Greek version [48] of the *Religious Schema Scale* (RSS; [32]), consisting of three subscales of 5 items each, was used. The RSS uses a 5-point Likert-type format from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Reliabilities of the three subscales in the current sample are: $\alpha = 0.84$ for subscale truth of texts & teachings (ttt), $\alpha = 0.58$ for fairness, tolerance, and rational choice (ftr), and $\alpha = 0.67$ for xenosophia and inter-religious dialog (xenos). The alpha value for attraction ($\alpha = 0.67$ and 0.58) appeared low but is considered as relatively acceptable [49].

2.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were obtained and preliminary data analyses were conducted to estimate the responses of athletes on psychological constructs in sport settings. Simple correlations were calculated to test the relationships between variables. Inferential statistics (multivariate analysis of variance [MANOVA]) was used to analyze the extent to which the perception of the athlete's moral judgment and religiosity varied in relation to gender and type of sport. The n^2 values were used to control for the level of effect of gender. Finally, a series of hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted in order to investigate the influence of religious variables (predictors) in a sequential way, within a criterion (moral content judgment elements) [50,51]. All analyses were completed using SPSS for windows version 15.0.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 provides means and standard deviations for all the investigated variables. Regarding moral content judgment, on average, participants exhibited higher scores in the element of fairness and lower in egoistic consequences. In regard to elements of religiosity, participants presented moderate scores in strength of religious faith, while in religious schemas they exhibited high scores in the ftr, and low in the ttt schema.

Correlations amongst measures are shown in Table 2. Results indicated that the elements of moral content judgment were not correlated to the total of variables of religiosity. More specifically, strength of religious faith was positively correlated only to the egoistic consequences element. Regarding religious schemas, ftr and xenos had a positive correlation with elements while the ttt schema did not correlate with any of the elements of moral content judgment (see Table 2).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach α for all variables.

Variables	Males (<i>n</i> = 213)	Females (<i>n</i> = 45)	Total (<i>n</i> = 258)	Cronbach α
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	
<i>Moral judgment</i>				
Normative order	7.48 (0.90)	7.38 (0.94)	7.49 (0.88)	0.71
Fairness	7.58 (0.81)	7.82 (0.74)	7.62 (0.82)	0.76
Egoistic	7.23 (0.91)	7.12 (0.95)	7.22 (0.90)	0.70
Social	7.40 (0.89)	7.74 (0.77)	7.51 (0.88)	0.68
Harmony	7.52 (0.92)	7.59 (0.68)	7.53 (0.85)	0.72
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Religious Faith	2.31 (0.71)	2.16 (0.70)	2.28 (0.71)	0.94
Ttt	2.66 (0.84)	2.42 (0.79)	2.62 (0.84)	0.84
Ftr	3.95 (0.53)	4.00 (0.52)	3.95 (0.55)	0.58
Xenos	3.15 (0.61)	3.10 (0.55)	3.13 (0.59)	0.67

Table 2. Correlations for all variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Normative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Fairness	0.56 **	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Egoistic	0.64 **	0.51 **	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Social	0.58 **	0.70 **	0.49 **	-	-	-	-	-
5. Harmony	0.68 **	0.64 **	0.64 **	0.72 **	-	-	-	-
6. Religious Faith	0.10	0.02	0.14 *	0.01	0.04	-	-	-
7. ttt	0.09	0.03	0.11	0.03	0.04	0.77 **	-	-
8. ftr	0.26 **	0.26 **	0.24 **	0.31 **	0.32 **	0.23 **	0.21 **	-
9. xenos	0.23 **	0.23 **	0.26 **	0.25 **	0.23 **	0.28 **	0.39 **	0.51 **

Note: Statistical significant * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

3.2. Differences between Gender, Type of Sports, and Subscales of Moral Judgment and Religiosity

Separate analyses of variance were conducted to identify any gender or type of sports differences on the psychological variables, moral judgment and religiosity. Initially, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance was performed with the use of five MCJSQ scales (normative order, fairness, egoistic utilitarianism, social utilitarianism, and harmony-serving) as the dependent variables and gender as the independent variable. The multivariate test revealed a significant main effect for gender, Wilks' lambda = 0.942, $F(5, 252) = 3.09$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.058$. According to Cohen [52], guidelines for interpreting an eta square value (η^2) is that 0.01 indicates a small effect, 0.09 indicates a moderate effect, and 0.25 indicates a large effect. Therefore, our finding $\eta^2 = 0.058$ indicates that 5.8% of the total variance in variables of moral judgment is accounted for by gender differences, and, as such, it can be classified as a small effect. Subsequent univariate analysis showed that gender diversified moral judgment only on the scale of social utilitarianism, $F(1, 257) = 4.46$, $p < 0.05$. During the check of differences between moral judgment and type of sport, a second multivariate analysis did not show a main effect for type of sport, Wilks' lambda = 0.744, $F(5, 239) = 0.31$, $p = 0.98$.

A third multivariate analysis, with the use of three religious schemas (ttt, ftr, and xenos) as dependent variables and gender as independent variable did not indicate significant multivariate effects concerning the gender, Wilks' lambda = 0.985, $F(3, 254) = 1.30$, $p = 0.27$. The use of another multivariate analysis revealed the effect of type of sports on religious schemas, Wilks' lambda = 0.831, $F(3, 241) = 0.95$, $p = 0.57$.

Finally, separate one-way ANOVAs were performed with strength of religious faith as the dependent variable and gender and type of Sport as the independent variables. The analysis did not reveal significant effects for gender, $F(1, 257) = 1.69$, $p = 0.19$. On the contrary, the analysis revealed a

significant effect for type of sport, $F(1, 257) = 1.87, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.111$. The finding $\eta^2 = 0.111$ indicates that 11.1% of the total variance in variables of strength of religious faith is accounted for by type of sports differences, and, as such, it can be classified as a moderate effect.

3.3. Moral Content Judgment and Religiosity

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses (Table 3) were performed to test the ability of religiosity to forecast the formation of moral content judgment in sport. First hierarchical multiple regression; in the first step one predictor was entered, strength of religious faith. This model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 256) = 2.48, p = 0.11$, and explained 1% of variance in the normative order element. After the entry of religious schemas (ttt, ftr, and xenos) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 8%, $F(3, 253) = 6.56, p < 0.001$. The introduction of religious schemas explained an additional 7% variance in normative order element, after controlling for ttt, ftr, and xenos ($R^2\text{Change} = 0.07$). In the final model, one out of the four predictor variables was statistically significant, with *ftr* showing a Beta value ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$).

Second hierarchical multiple regression; in the first step one predictor was entered, strength of religious faith. This model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 256) = 0.11, p = 0.73$, and explained 0% of variance in fairness element. After the entry of religious schemas (ttt, ftr, and xenos) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 10%, $F(3, 253) = 9.44, p < 0.001$. The introduction of religious schemas explained an additional 10% variance in the normative order element, after controlling for ttt, ftr, and xenos ($R^2\text{Change} = 0.10$). In the final model, three out of four predictor variables were statistically significant, with *ttt* presenting a higher Beta value ($\beta = -0.20, p < 0.05$) than *ftr* ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$) and *xenos* ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$).

Third hierarchical multiple regression; in the first step one predictor was entered, strength of religious faith. This model was statistically significant, $F(1, 256) = 5.32, p < 0.05$, and explained 2% of the variance in the egoistic consequences element. After the entering of religious schemas (ttt, ftr, and xenos) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 9%, $F(3, 253) = 6.51, p < 0.001$. The introduction of religious schemas explained an additional 7% variance in the egoistic consequences element, after controlling for ttt, ftr, and xenos ($R^2\text{Change} = 0.07$). In the final model, one out of four predictor variables was statistically significant, with *xenos* showing a Beta value ($\beta = 0.20, p < 0.01$).

Fourth hierarchical multiple regression; in the first step one predictor was entered, strength of religious faith. This model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 256) = 0.01, p = 0.91$, and explained 1% of variance in the social consequences element. After the entry of religious schemas (ttt, ftr, and xenos) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 12%, $F(3, 253) = 11.26, p < 0.001$. The introduction of religious schemas explained an additional 12% variance in the social consequences element, after controlling for ttt, ftr, and xenos ($R^2\text{Change} = 0.12$). In the final model, two out of four predictor variables were statistically significant, with *ftr* presenting a higher Beta value ($\beta = 0.26, p < 0.001$) than *xenos* ($\beta = 0.15, p < 0.05$).

Fifth hierarchical multiple regression; in the first step one predictor was entered, strength of religious faith. This model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 256) = 0.52, p = 0.47$, and explained 1% of variance in the harmony-serving consequences element. After the entry of religious schemas (ttt, ftr, and xenos) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 11%, $F(3, 253) = 10.12, p < 0.001$. The introduction of religious schemas explained an additional 11% variance in the harmony-serving consequences element, after controlling for ttt, ftr, and xenos ($R^2\text{Change} = 0.11$). In the final model, one out of four predictor variables was statistically significant, with *ftr* showing a Beta value ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression.

Variable	R	R ²	R ² Change	B	SE	β	t
<i>Normative order</i>							
Step 1	0.09	0.01	0.01				
Religious Faith				0.12	0.08	0.10	1.57
Step 2	0.28	0.08 ***	0.07 ***				
Religious Faith				−0.05	0.12	0.04	0.45
ttt				−0.04	0.19	−0.03	−0.33
ftr				0.32	0.12	0.19 **	2.69
xenos				0.20	0.14	0.13	1.78
<i>Fairness</i>							
Step 1	0.02	0.00	0.00				
Religious Faith				0.02	0.07	0.02	0.73
Step 2	0.32	0.10 ***	0.10 ***				
Religious Faith				0.09	0.11	0.08	0.80
ttt				−0.19	0.09	−0.20 *	−2.01
ftr				0.28	0.11	0.19	2.68
xenos				0.26	0.10	0.19 **	2.63
<i>Egoistic utilitarianism</i>							
Step 1	0.14	0.02 **	0.02 **				
Religious Faith				0.18	0.08	0.14 *	2.31
Step 2	0.30	0.09 ***	0.07 ***				
Religious Faith				0.16	0.12	0.13	1.32
ttt				−0.10	0.19	−0.09	−0.88
ftr				0.22	0.12	0.13	1.79
xenos				0.30	0.11	0.20 **	2.69
<i>Social utilitarianism</i>							
Step 1	0.01	0.01	0.01				
Religious Faith				0.01	0.08	0.01	0.10
Step 2	0.34	0.12 ***	0.12 ***				
Religious Faith				−0.09	0.11	−0.07	0.77
ttt				−0.03	0.10	−0.03	−0.30
ftr				0.43	0.11	0.26 ***	3.76
xenos				0.22	0.11	0.15 *	2.05
<i>Harmony-serving</i>							
Step 1	0.04	0.01	0.01				
Religious Faith				0.06	0.08	0.05	0.72
Step 2	0.33	0.11 ***	0.11 ***				
Religious Faith				−0.02	0.12	−0.02	−0.16
ttt				−0.05	0.10	−0.05	−0.45
ftr				0.45	0.12	0.27 ***	3.88
xenos				0.17	0.11	0.11	0.12

Note: Statistical significant * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4. Discussion

The main goal of the present study was to examine the relationship between two constructs (religiosity and morality) that hold an important role in the formation of human behavior. In addition, the present study investigated the impact of gender and type of sport on the shaping of moral content judgment and religiosity.

The present study reveals a number of interesting findings that have to do with (a) the way reasons/motives relate to moral judgment in sport; (b) the strength of religious faith; (c) the religious styles of athletes; (d) the way moral judgment and religiosity of athletes is formed in relation to

gender and type of sport; and (e) the relationship between moral content judgment and perspectives of religiosity. We structure our discussion below around these five issues.

4.1. Moral Judgment

In general, the athletes involved in this study presented better scores on the fairness element of moral judgment (deontological moral orientations) than all other elements of moral judgment. This shows that athletes are interested in justice (e.g., support and promotion of fair play), mutual respect (treating others in the same way we would like to be treated), and equality (procedural fairness). This specific finding is enhanced by the results of the study that showed that the value of honesty is most often reported by Christian athletes [53]. Athletes also scored higher on the harmony-serving consequences element (perfectionist moral orientations), revealing that, within the frame of moral judgments, athletes take under consideration self-respect, human dignity, service of harmony, etc. Scores on other elements of moral content judgment were also high. High scores on all five moral content judgment elements is enhanced by a recent study [54], even though in that specific study scores on the harmony-serving consequences element were higher than on the fairness element.

4.2. Strength of Religious Faith

The findings of this study revealed that the strength of religious faith of athletes was on a medium level. Other findings present the strength of religious faith of athletes to be from low to a medium level (e.g., [55,56]). Further discussion of these findings is rather difficult to do, due to the current absence of empirical evidence of religious development at all. The developmental characteristic of religiosity is not an issue of special interest in the field of developmental science [38].

4.3. Religious Schemas

In the present study, the religiosity of athletes was additionally assessed through religious schemas. Findings revealed that religious faith or development of athletes is mostly expressed through fairness, tolerance, rational choice, and xenosophia-religious dialog and less through truth of texts and teachings. In other words, athletes prefer to deal with everyday issues in such a way so that openness to fairness and tolerance stand in the foreground. The finding that revealed a medium level of truth of texts and teachings enhances the previous finding for the existence of a medium level of strength of religious faith in athletes, showing, at the same time, a limited existence of religious fundamentalism. The absence of other empirical proof does not allow further discussion on this finding.

4.4. Gender, Type of Sport and Moral Judgment, Religiosity

The findings of the present study, from the investigation of factors such as gender and type of sport that affect moral judgment, revealed that only gender plays an important role in the formation of moral content judgment. This finding is assured by the finding of another recent study [54]. The present finding supports the results of Gilligan [41], who stated that there is a difference in moral reasoning (care oriented, justice oriented) in relation to gender and that care and justice imply different ways of judgment, the motives of which have different consequences [42,43]. Research findings revealed differences related to gender on prescriptive judgments (e.g., [57,58]), moral maturity (e.g., [59]), and moral functioning (e.g., [60,61]). Nevertheless, gender in the present study was found to affect just the social utilitarianism element of moral content judgment. This means that there are differences between the viewpoints of males and females on issues concerning consequences related to the team (e.g., positive consequences for the team, satisfaction of team's wishes, negative consequences for the team) [13].

The finding that moral content judgment does not differentiate between athletes in different sports did not confirm the assumption that each sport has its own unique character and set of values [62]. This is enhanced by the results of a previous study that investigated the existence of differences in moral development among athletes of football, handball, and basketball [63]. Nevertheless, differences

were found only in studies that investigated the moral reasoning of athletes in team and individual sports [44,64].

Contrary to moral judgment, in the present study religiosity was found to be affected only by the type of sport. This, though, was exercised only on the element of strength of religious faith and not on religious styles. This finding enhances the view that the strength of religious faith may differ as a function of the type of sport [56]. Considering the fact that there is a significantly short age of literature assessing religiosity in athletes, especially in different sports, this does not allow for further discussion. Nevertheless, the differentiation of the strength of religious faith between the types of sports could be attributed to the environment of each sport that cultivates a different climate. For example, team sports may lead to the reduction of the emotion of individual responsibility [65]. This seems to be related to the findings of empirical studies that link religion and social responsibility behavior (e.g., [66,67]).

Even though religious faith seems to present higher scores in women regarding intrinsic religiosity [68,69], this was not confirmed by the findings of the present study. This result was enhanced by the findings of another study that revealed the main effect of gender on three dimensions of religiosity (organizational, non-organizational, and intrinsic) [70]. In addition, no significant effect of gender on religious schemas has been supported [32].

4.5. Moral Judgment and Religiosity

The findings of this study supported, in part, the ability of religiosity to predict motives or reasons that lead to moral judgment. More specifically, the participation of the element of strength of religious faith in the models investigated in the present study was quite important only on the model where the ability of religiosity to predict the egoistic consequences element of moral judgment was examined. The present finding is enhanced by findings of other studies that revealed that little evidence exists on the link between post-conventional reasoning and religiosity variables [71], that scriptural literalism does not present a significant predictor of post-conventional moral reasoning [72], and that there is a negative association between religiosity and procedural justice, i.e. higher religiosity is associated with lower perceptions of procedural justice [73].

Contrary to the strength of religious faith, the findings of the present study showed that religious schemas had a higher ability to predict elements of moral content judgment. More specifically, religious schemas were found to be related to both groups of elements that express different moral orientations. The deontological moral orientation includes the elements of normative order and fairness, where morality consists of moral obligations and duties and is linked to obedience and to moral rules [13], as well as to the teleological moral orientation that includes the elements of egoistic, social utilitarianism, and harmony-serving [13].

From religious schemas, the one found to have a higher predictive ability on the elements of moral content judgment was the ftr schema (fairness, tolerance, and rational choice), which was found to be positively related to the element of deontological ethics, normative order, and fairness, as well as to the elements of teleological ethics, social utilitarianism, and harmony-serving. The relation of ftr schema, normative order, and fairness reveals that individuals who perceive religious faith exclusively as openness to fairness and tolerance appear to make moral judgments motivated by reasons relating to obedience to the system and rules, duty (e.g., loyalty to superiors), and the equal distribution of opportunities for distinction (distributive justice). The findings of another study showed that religious people prefer order [74], leading us to think of the ftr schema as a religious dimension, possibly showing a relation to the preservation of order. Obedience to rules and loyalty to superiors are issues that express the element of normative order and state the presence of conformity on a social operation system. Conformity has been found to be strongly related to religiosity [75].

Contrary to the above-mentioned relation, the ftr schema as a religious style, in which openness to fairness and tolerance stands in the foreground, was found to also be positively related to elements that justice uses as a criterion for utilitarian consequences on a group of people, that is, the prosperity of a group of individuals (social utilitarianism), the acquisition of some ideal, and the achievement

of harmony and perfection for both the individual and the group (harmony-serving consequences) (perfectionism ethics). In perfectionism, good is determined independently from right and right is what maximizes good [76].

Researchers' reports confirm the existence of a relationship between religiosity and moral judgment elements that characterize a teleological moral orientation. Specifically, Clark and Dawson [7] reported that religious individuals may have stronger utilitarian norms than the non-religious ones and may judge actions from less egoistic perspectives. This claim is reassured by the findings of another study, in which the relationship between issues of social justice and aspects of religion is supported [77]. Beit-Hallahmi [78] claimed that religiosity affects happiness and quality of life. Bergan and McConatha's [79], in their study with adolescents, young adults, and adults in later life, demonstrated a low positive relation between religiosity and happiness across all three age groups. Clary and Snyder [80] suggested that religiosity is linked to the welfare of others and to volunteerism.

The findings of the present study for the xenos schema present similar behavior to that of the ftr schema. More specifically, xenosophia as a religious style is characterized by the appreciation of the alien and, thus, by interreligious dialog, was found to be related to moral judgments, which, as a criterion for justice, holds moral principles (fairness element, deontological moral orientation), as well as the consequences of actions for the individual or a group (egoistic and social utilitarianism consequences elements, teleological moral orientation). The relationship between the xenos schema and the fairness element strengthens the claim that xenos is actually the end of religious development [32].

The findings of the present study so far, on the relation between religiosity and the two moral orientations, may be justified by the fact that justice may be mentioned in both orientations [81]. For example, law and class support may be considered justice (normative order), and the maximization of the prosperity of a group may also be considered as justice (utilitarianism consequences). Taking under consideration the view of Piaget on justice, Kohlberg supported that justice is regulatory reasoning, the balance of social acts and relationships.

The present study also revealed that both the xenos schema and the ttt schema are related to the element of fairness. Nevertheless, this relation was found to be a negative one, supporting the views of researchers on the existence of differences between Christian and secular ethics, despite the fact that both forms of ethics are a set of moral principles/values directing the individual towards making the right choices. For example, it is maintained that Christian ethics is not a set of moral rules, but rather a proof of participation in the life of God [82]; the philosophical/worldly moral values are not based on the discovery of a transcendent deity, but they are rather the outcome of human experience [83]. Such maintenance is further supported by Cox [84]: "Secular man's values have been deconsecrated, shorn of any claim to ultimate or final significance...They are no longer the direct expression of the divine will. They have become what certain people at a particular time and place hold to be good. They have ceased to be values and have become valuations..." ([84], p. 27).

Another finding worth discussing is the intense predicting ability of the religious schemas to predict moral judgment. Streib et al. [32] stated that religious schemas are precise structural patterns of interpretation and praxis and claimed that religious styles resemble and relate to lifestyles and to habits. Similar to religious schemas seems to be the operation of moral judgment, in which a total of cognitive schemas reveals views, attitudes, and/or values for determining an act as right or proper [85]. It is obvious that both constructs (religious schema and moral judgment) reveal the way people live. Within the frame of this relation, we could consider that Christianity may be used as one complete moral (educational) system, as this is expressed through religious cognitive schemas [86]. This claim is enhanced by the expressed view that orthodox ethos, even though it is not offered as a secluded system of behavioral rules and subjective infliction [87], can give meaning to any aspect of personal and social life [88].

4.6. Limitations

The present study presented a series of limitations. One of them regards the sample: (a) lack of representativeness for Orthodox Christians; (b) the exclusive use of Orthodox Christians, meaning that results cannot be used for all religious faiths; (c) the sample size for some of the sports, as well as the absence of athletes from other sports and the use of only amateur athletes, do not allow the generalization of the present findings. Another limitation is the absence of other similar studies with which to compare results. Systematic future research is necessary to confirm the present findings.

5. Conclusions

The present study has highlighted the importance of the religiosity constructs as an influence on moral judgment. Religious faith is a part of religiosity, with a limited ability to predict moral content judgment in sport settings. This conclusion weakens the view supporting religion as a “foundation” of morality [16]. Haidt and colleagues settled on this view possibly because they studied religion only based on the element of “purity/sanctity” [16]. Nevertheless, religion is a multidimensional construct that has been variously defined. Religion involves the co-presence of beliefs, ritualized experiences, norms, and groups connected to what people perceive as a transcendent entity (e.g., [89,90]).

Contrary to religious faith, the findings of the present study reveal that religious schemas have an important impact on the formation of moral content judgment in sport settings. This finding enhances the view that religiosity and morality are not unrelated at all (e.g., [91,92]). The different impact of elements of religiosity on morality leads to the conclusion that the religiosity-morality relation can be explained by the way people approach religion and religious content [93]. The religiosity-morality relation can probably be explained by cognitive processes such as dogmatism (e.g., [94]), while if people process religious contents in a literal way, this seems to have a deleterious effect on their moral reasoning ability [95].

The relation of the element of fairness to the religious schemas that express religious faith in a different way, for example through the truths of religion, openness to fairness, or interreligious dialog, lead to the conclusion that concepts of justice (as expressed by Kohlberg’s element of fairness) are not the only, or the most important, moral criteria in sport settings. Richards [96] hypothesized that the conservative religious moral view is broader than the moral view proposed by Kohlberg and includes the following moral concepts or criteria: (a) what course of action is the most just and fair; (b) what course of action is the most loving and caring; (c) what course of action will allow those involved to fulfill or actualize their spiritual and intellectual potential; and (d) what course of action is in harmony with divine law. Regarding the above-mentioned relationship, it is important to mention the negative significant relationship between the religious schemas of truth of texts and teachings and the element of fairness, which may indicate that higher religiosity is associated with lower perceptions of procedural justice.

Finally, the findings of the present study lead us to conclude that moral judgment is a psychological notion that is formed differently in male and female athletes, while religiosity of athletes seem to be differentiated according to various types of sports. The use of two religious instruments on a sample of different culture and mother language, as well as the determination of a relation between them and similar concepts of the wider social area (through the MCJSQ), further enhances the validity and reliability of both the RSS and SCSRQ.

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