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Sportsmanship rating scale in tennis competition with young players

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Abstract

This study presents the psychometric properties of a rating scale of sportsmanship in tennis competitions with young players. A total of 446 players used this scale to assess the games they played during a season (n=223). Analyses confirmed the discriminative capacity both sportsmanship (12) and unsportsmanlike (17) items, and high internal consistency of the overall scale (Cronbach's Alpha = 0,702). Moreover, the analysis made to assess the quality of sportsmanship in several tennis championships, shows the scores associated with sportsmanship and unsportsmanlike behavior and identify the players with the highest scores and lowest in sportiness, allowing the implementation of preventive actions.

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1. Introduction

The psychometric properties of a rating scale of sportsmanship in tennis competitions with young players were studied on this study. This survey has its main focus on the acknowledge of the real incidence that a kind of unsportsmanlike behavior could have in a competitive tennis player as well as the need to ensure some effective actions to prevent the former mentioned unsporting behavior. According to Turnbull (2002), the actions implemented should be evaluated to enhance knowledge for possible and realistic preventive intervention. There are various programs (Gimeno, Sáenz & Gutiérrez, 2010; Checchini et al., 2003; Bach, 2002) which are intended, from prevention and intervention activities to reduce anti-social behavior by encouraging prosocial behaviors.

Competitive tennis with young players is associated with the presence of a specific and equally broad cast of sporting and unsportsmanlike behaviors. With the title of "specific" we refer own tennis behaviors that are considered unsportsmanlike and does not occur in other sports such as, "say deliberately call it out the balls" or "throwing the racket consciously". These hypothesis explains these behaviors as they are developed from different theoretical frameworks, as Frustration-Aggression Theory (Berkowitz, 1989) when considering the unsportsmanlike behavior as a way to deal with a mistake or a partial result badly during the match, or Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1984) to argue the influence of sports models in the acquisition of unsportsmanlike behavior.

In line with the arguments above, a preliminary study was conducted in order to identify sports and unsportsmanlike behavior characteristics of competitive tennis (Colás, Gimeno & Lacambra, 2011). The methodology used was qualitative, using focus groups with players, coaches, referees and parents of the players themselves.

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Later, in a quantitative study has been developed the *Escala de Evaluación de los Partidos de Tenis* (EEPT). By EEPT is intended to have a tool that allows specific assessment of sportsmanship in competitive tennis, both from the perspective of the player, individually, as the set of matches of a tennis tournament.

2. Method

The participants were 446 players, of which 61% (n=274) were male and 39% (n=172) were female. Different categories of players that were evaluated were: 10&U, 12&U, 14&U, 16&U and 18&U. So 21% of the players evaluated correspond to the category 10&U (n=94), 28% 12&U (n=126), 26% 14&U (n=116), 5% 16&U (n=22) and 20% 18&U (n=88).

2.1. Instrument

The instrument used to measure the phenomena of sportsmanship and unsporting in tennis competitions with young players was the “Escala de Evaluación de los Partidos de Tenis” (EEPT). This instrument was developed specifically for this study. Its structure is as follow:

Part 1. The scale has a number of variables sporty nature and identity of the players, and a valuation of the player himself about his match as to the final outcome.

Part 2. Three items for valuation of sportsmanship in connection with the match as a whole and the performance of both players (own performance and that of the other player).

Part 3. A subscale of 12 items concerning attitudes and behaviors associated with to fair or sporty play.

Part 4. A subscale of 17 items concerning attitudes and behaviors associated with to unfair or non-sporty play.

Part 5. The identification of other attitudes and behaviors that were not included in the 3rd and 4th parts.

Part 6. Player’s identification.

For the preparation of the 3rd and 4th parts of the scale have to be defined concretely and specifically the sporting and unsporting behavior variables that are involved in tennis (Colás, Gimeno & Lacambra, 2011).

Escala de Evaluación de los Partidos de Tenis (EEPT).

Championship:							Place:	
Category:	Pre-Preview	Preview	Final			Date:		
Player name:								
Round:	1/64	1/32	1/16	1/8	1/4	1/2	Final	Score:
The score obtained comparing with the expected has been:	BETTER			AVERAGE			WORSE	
	O			O			O	

	Very sporty										Very conflictive											
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
I would classify this match as:																						
I would classify the acting that I had at the match as:																						
I would classify the opponent player’s acting as:																						

More specifically, I could observe (select with a circle the correct number):

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED TO FAIR OR SPORTY PLAY

1	I think that “call it in” or “call it out” the balls was correctly.
2	The opponent player thinks that “call it in” or “call it out” the balls was correctly.
3	I clapped hands to the opponent player’s points.
4	The opponent player clapped hands to the good points.
5	I admitted “call it in” a ball that I saw doubtful.
6	The opponent player admitted “call it in” balls that saw doubtful.
7	Before a questionable ball we decided to repeat the point.
8	I apologized on having been lucky in a ball.
9	The opponent player apologized on having been lucky in a ball.
10	We shook hands after the match.
11	My parents and other guests congratulated to the opponent player once the match was finished.
12	Opponent player’s parents and guests congratulated me once the match was finished.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED TO UNFAIR OR NON-SPORTY PLAY

13	I intentionally admitted the wrong balls.
14	The opponent player admitted the wrong balls.
15	I threw the racket to the tennis court during the match.
16	The opponent player threw the racket to the tennis court during the match.
17	I used abusive language during the match.
18	The opponent player used abusive language during the match.
19	I argued with the opponent player during the match.
20	I argued with the opponent player after the match.
21	The opponent player argued with my parents and guests during or after the match.
22	It was an argument between player's parents and guests during and after the match.
23	I argued with my parents and guests during and after the match.
24	I used techniques not allowed to make the opponent player loose the match.
25	The opponent player used techniques not allowed to make me loose the match.
26	My parents and guests encouraged me to complain about the opponent player game.
27	The opponent player's parents and guests encouraged him to complain about my game.
28	My parents and guests gave me advices during the match.
29	The opponent player's parents and guests gave him advices during the match.

ANOTHER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS NOT MENTIONED ABOVE

Another parent's behaviors or conducts?
Another coach's behaviors or conducts?
Another referee's behaviors or conducts?
NAME AND SURNAME

2.2. Procedure

The scale was completed after the match. Previously, before the start of the same, the Tournament Director reported to both the players and their parents of the existence of this scale, in order to seek the consent of both fill it once to finish the match to play. During the administration of it, a member of the research team explained how the two players had to fill it by solving the possible questions that may arise during the process, stressing the confidentiality of the same and tried to answer with utmost sincerity possible. The time required to complete the scale was about fifteen minutes, this duration varied slightly according to the age of the players.

3. Results

A converging set of analyses was conducted to evaluate the item adequacy and reliability of the three items of the second section belonging to the rating scale of sportsmanship in tennis competitions with young “Escala de Evaluación de los Partidos de Tenis” (EEPT). The overall Cronbach’s alpha was an acceptable .70 with a range interitem correlation of .50 to .56. Based on the criterion of .30 as an acceptable corrected item–total correlation (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), the three items were identified as unacceptable.

Group discrimination analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which each EEPT item discriminated between high- and low-sportsmanship perception of participants who completed the EEPT. Participants were placed in the high sportsmanship perception group if they scored in the top quartile and were placed in the low-sportsmanship perception group if they scored in the bottom quartile (see table 1).

Table 1. High and low sportsmanship perception group discrimination analyses

	tennis match		opposing player's
	valid	own assessment	assessment
N	440	440	440
	lost	6	6
Mean	8,73	8,17	8,65
Median	9	9	9

deviation		1,55	1,95	1,65
Minimum		0	0	0
Maximum		10	10	10
Percentiles	25	8	7	8
	50	9	9	9
	75	10	10	10

4. Discussion

We believe that this study has a great interest in both sports and social relevance of their subject, and its descriptive and can be applied. Thus, the results provide evidence of the psychometric properties (internal consistency, construct validity and discriminating power) of the scale items measuring the perception of sportsmanship in tennis matches. This scale is a specific contribution in the context of tennis for the evaluation of sportsmanship in sports competitions, providing: (1) the overall assessment of a tennis tournament, not only by sporting character variables (e.g., results, rankings, ...) but also considering "process" variables that have a conductual natural behavior, (2) identifying attitudes and behaviors that are most relevant contribution sportsmanship, either match independently of all matches as a tournament, (3) the identification of valued players with lower level of sportsmanship and implementation of preventive actions consequently.

It would therefore be desirable from this scale could study a number of basic variables, such as: (1) analyze whether sports, unsportsmanlike behavior in tennis competition with young players is significantly different to that of other sports, (2) verify that the unsportsmanlike behavior are characterized by physical aggression absent or, on the opposite side, the latter prevail, (3) ensure if a low frequency of unsportsmanlike behavior is associated with a high number of matches (e.g. during the development of a competition) and if they in turn can be considered globally as "sporty", (4) check whether the perception of non-sportsmanship in a match of tennis is associated with repetitive unsportsmanlike behavior by any player, their parents, or both (e.g. in the development of a competition or in monitoring several of them for a while), (5) testing that primary prevention actions used to can be associated with a greater number of sporting behavior in competitions that also can be evaluated.

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