

Article

How to Develop Moral Skills in Sport by Using the Corruption Heritage?

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Abstract: This paper examines how the corruption heritage of South-Eastern European sport can be used as content for educational strategies designed to improve the ethics and integrity in today's sport. Hidden or dark history is useful when considering an education for a sustainable development approach to improving athletes' moral skills. In education, examining mistakes can be a useful tool for preventing their recurrence as they provide examples for study and content for evidence-based learning. At the same time, it is a useful process, aiming to develop critical thinking and the decision-making skills in the area of sports. This paper provides examples on how narratives can be used in the field of sport moral education and what patterns reflecting the lack of integrity in sport can be identified. Because it has perpetuated and altered the image and principles of sports competition, diminishing trust in sport sustainability, it is important to identify how this effect can be approached from the perspective of the education for sustainable development (ESD), as applied to the area of sports. However, it is essential that sports integrity be valued by society and that all sports actors (athletes, coaches, officials) promote ethics and fair play.

Keywords: sports ethics; integrity; education; sustainable development; corruption heritage

1. Introduction

Sport has been among the most popular human activities since ancient times. It involves hard work, engagement, loyalty, respect for others, fair competition, friendship, and communication and is based on human and social values, ethics, and integrity, which establish it as a valued human moral practice [1]. All these traits have turned sport into a universal and global phenomenon that, at the elite level, attracts considerable support from industry. Sport thus becomes an important activity associated with both financial investments and the risks of violating integrity [2]. There are three important dimensions of sport that explain its expansion: the societal role, the economic dimension, and the organisational framework. These are all subject to laws and regulations, including those related to sensitive areas such as corruption. A researcher [3] wonders whether sport is sustainable, given that it faces numerous integrity issues.

In these conditions, the moral education of athletes and sports participants is a constant concern of international and national organisations, which point out the escalation in undesirable phenomena: corruption, doping, match-fixing, money laundering, illegal betting, harassment, etc. Based on the recognize–resist–report triad, moral education aims at forming skills through which athletes can identify violations of ethics and integrity in sport, avoid getting involved in these kinds of practices, and inform the responsible authorities about such phenomena. Anticipating a temptation is an essential aspect in this process of reporting and taking ethical action [4]. Therefore, specialists are concerned with identifying the most effective educational strategies that can contribute to the moral education of athletes by forming skills that reinforce their ethical behaviours. The concept of moral or ethical behaviour describes a type of conduct consistent with moral standards and values, which occurs intentionally and consciously and involves ethical obligations. Its opposite is immoral behaviour, which refers to non-compliance with ethical standards.

We believe that the above-mentioned triad, which is a key moral attitude in sport, can be approached from the perspective of education for sustainable development (ESD), which includes a wide range of strategies able to tackle different current issues in education [5]. The purpose of the present paper is to investigate the association between corruption-related experiences and moral judgement through the lens of ESD.

1.1. Education for Sustainable Development and Possible Strategies to Be Used in Sports Moral Education

The education for sustainable development has been widely analysed in the scientific literature in recent years due to its contribution to the general aim of education to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills [5–7]. Since 1992, UNESCO has claimed that “education systems must respond to this pressing need by defining relevant learning objectives and learning contents, introducing pedagogies that empower learners, and urging their institutions to include sustainability principles in their management structures” [8]. With regard to this assumption, several authors present the key competences that represent the finalities of ESD, namely systems thinking competency, anticipatory competence, normative competency, strategic competency, collaboration competency, self-awareness competency, and integrated problem-solving competency [8].

UNESCO mentions the importance of physical activity for the health of children and young people [9], and several specialists in the field have highlighted the importance of developing new research directions for the relationships that can be established between ESD and sport [10,11].

The general purposes of ESD are, among others, social justice, ethics, well-being, and future thinking [12], each of them also integrating the notion of morality. The connection between moral education and ESD is represented by the fact that both give people the opportunity to acquire moral values, competencies, and skills that allow them to make positive changes, not only at a personal level but also in the groups and communities to which they belong. So, a relationship can be identified between ESD and moral education, in general, and through sport in particular.

The contribution of sport to the moral education of children and youth is revealed by several studies that have highlighted the influence of physical exercise on moral and social development [13,14]. The ultimate goal of moral education is to develop the ability to reflect on events/irregularities in sport and become aware of their seriousness as a component of systems thinking competency. Therefore, sport can contribute to ESD by providing an analytical context, based on which people also have the opportunity to form their personal opinions about the shady sides of sports [15].

Several educational approaches are promoted for the moral education of athletes. On the one hand is the positive approach, in which the coach presents rules and regulations and provides examples through stories and comments. This strategy is reinforced by the fact that the moral education system used in sport is based on sanctions, which are applied according to the contents of sports regulations. Theoretical information has the role of

helping athletes to be aware of the irregularities that occur in sport and consciously act against such actions or towards reporting them to the responsible authorities. Therefore, the problem is to raise awareness of the situational factors that influence the moral judgements and behaviours of individuals and, on the other hand, to develop the ability to make moral decisions as a part of the normative competency of ESD by increasing the focus on the reasons why athletes/sports officials act in one way or another [16].

Studies have shown that theoretical moral education is not sufficient [17] and that emphasis should be placed on the transfer of knowledge into practice. Consequently, the target area of educational factors in sport should be building the moral skills of athletes, namely their ability to apply theoretical concepts in both training and competition, as the content of critical thinking competency. These conclusions are also supported by several trainers [18] who promote the idea that the autonomous achievement of moral education through discovery allows individuals to learn based on the consequences they will experience because of their actions. This social learning mechanism [19] is very useful for explaining and understanding the opportunity to use negative models in the moral education of athletes. Such an approach to sport is acceptable only if there is awareness of the consequences (including the legal ones) of illegal behaviours (a part of self-awareness competency). Through mediated learning and based on the consequences that a specific behaviour has on the person who enacts it [19], negative models in the field of sport can be highlighted as resources for the formation of moral skills. The concept of moral skills encompasses competencies such as self-control, duty, right and wrong, knowledge of self and others, reliability, discipline, integrity, responsibility, and more. These are fundamental values that strengthen a person's behaviour, protecting them from harmful actions and helping them to develop from an ethical point of view. In fact, moral development is the result of internalising the modelled and reinforced behaviours of significant people in the athlete's life (coaches and parents, in general, and valuable athletes, owners, agents, officials, politicians, and referees as special actors in the sport context); it is the expression of collaboration competency in the ESD approach.

On the other hand, the ethics literature describes several failures of the positive approach in achieving moral education, specifically education relying on moral development theories (virtue ethics, Kantian ethics, and utilitarian ethics). These findings have led to a state in which a negative approach to moral education, based on the theories promoted by Locke, Smith, and Rousseau, can be much more effective [18]. The conclusions of these authors are the foundations of our analysis of how the moral education of athletes can be achieved by providing examples of violations of ethics and integrity in various sports.

Starting from the idea that stories can model integrity, as well as teach one how to think through a dilemma [16] (as content for integrated problem-solving competency), the narrative-based moral education of athletes is an important practice that provides life models consistent with human values, such as honesty, integrity, loyalty, and friendship. The storytelling approach to education offers a non-directive but inspirational framework for life experiences with a strong emotional impact. On the other hand, it ensures the transition from moral intuition to critical thinking, facilitating decision making based on the anticipated consequences of certain behaviours.

An important step in identifying the means to be used in moral education is the choice of story. It should have moral significance with an impact on the individual that produces changes in their behaviour. In recent years, negative heritage, be it material or immaterial, has been used not only to know the historical past but also to build social and civic skills [20], which gives the opportunity to particularise this idea and observe to what extent the negative heritage of sport can be a tool for moral education. This paper offers a model for the systematisation of the information that can make up the content of moral education, providing several arguments that support this status.

1.2. Corruption Heritage in Sport

In any society, corruption is a challenge. To understand corruption, it is important to understand the concept and to look at its history. Corruption is a concept that involves an improper, immoral action, the effect of which is often to corrupt a person's ethical character. Corruption is deeply rooted in history. In the case of Eastern European countries, the term "corruption heritage" is well known. Corruption heritage can also be identified as a part of an intangible cultural heritage through its process, abilities, and knowledge, as well as a tangible cultural heritage through its financial consequences and the other material damages involved. The wide adoption of this expression suggests that these countries believe that a culture of corruption exists [21–23].

Sport is a mirror of society, and the problems of society are also reflected in sport. In 2002, Andvig investigated the prevalence of corruption in former communist countries, and his analysis suggests that economic and political corruption parallel the corruption in sport [24]. He makes a substantial contribution to the exploration of corruption concluding that corruption is a result of rapid institutional changes.

Andvig's analyses are useful in explaining corruption heritage and its evolution through time in South-Eastern European sport. Corruption heritage is a social reality in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania and is connected to cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is based on the principle of constant re-creation [25], and this element can also be identified in corruption heritage. As Herzfeld (2014) stated, "heritage and corruption represent two closely interrelated dimensions", and it would be a mistake to ignore them in European sport [26].

The abovementioned studies raise several problems related to corruption in South-Eastern Europe, but there is no consistent approach to the legacy that this phenomenon has left across this geographical space, especially in the field of sport. Such a tumultuous past generates debates among those who have lived or watched the course of sport in South-Eastern Europe and who ask themselves whether it should be used as an example in the moral education of future generations of athletes. However, as has been demonstrated for match-fixing, the issue of education needs to be rethought, and one of the perspectives would be to consider the negative effects of the match-fixing phenomenon as a lesson in raising awareness and improving the situation [27].

1.3. Negative Heritage as a Resource for Moral Education

Negative heritage is a relatively old but underexplored concept, defined as "the haunting remainders of dark or problematic histories to which the public has emotional ties" [28]. To understand how negative heritage and hidden or "dark histories" [29] are useful in the preparation of an ESD approach to morality in sport, it is pedagogically useful to apply the concept of historical empathy, which is seen as a teaching method. It postulates that recreating or remembering a past event or episode can illustrate how knowledge was acquired from that event and even how the emotions that guided the actions of that event were transmitted [30]. Usually, historical empathy is understood as a tool for recollecting positive past events, but in our study, it has been adapted for examining negative examples because "making mistakes can be a positive way of learning if it can provide a safe environment for reflecting on mistakes and sharing learning with others" [31] (p. 191). The same author observes that our cultural norms cause us to make mistakes, but at the same time, we can learn from them [31]. Schön (1987) has proposed the concept of reflection-on-action, suggesting that looking back on and evaluating experiences could help individuals understand a situation and propose action [32]. However, negative heritage results from the actions of some people with questionable morality. Such negative examples generate reflection, given that discussing and exposing them are ways to meditate on what negative morality means and to avoid moral failure by becoming aware that "the negative action leads to some form of negative consequences" [33] (p. 70). Based on these theories, we propose using negative heritage for moral education.

At the same time, considering that negative heritage can create bridges between the past, present, and future, it can be accepted as an element of the identity of a community. In this way, by recognising it, negative heritage can become subject to debate and can be an object of study for pedagogical purposes oriented towards moral education. Through the examples provided, negative heritage can generate knowledge and enable critical thinking in one who addresses the cases proposed for analysis. In this regard, the history of sport proves to be a field rich in case studies that have already entered the collective memory of a community and can offer topics of debate regarding how well they define a particular group, be it a professional, regional, ethnic, or national community.

1.4. Paper Aim

The paper proposes an ESD approach because it illustrates the way in which specific competencies targeted by ESD can be built through the interaction of people with facts and actions involving negative experiences that can be subject to their moral judgement. This paper provides evidence on the usefulness of learning through mistakes as an educational strategy for the prevention of unethical behaviours.

More specifically, the current research aims to answer the questions: How can the negative heritage of sport be used in athletes' moral education? How can negative examples from the area of sport be positively used from the ESD perspective?

The logic of this type of research is to offer a starting point for similar studies about the relationship of ESD and sport, given that education and socio-cultural heritage provide a wide range of approaches with applicability to the field of sport.

The novelty of the paper is represented by the fact that it is the first to integrate the ESD approach with the negative heritage of sport by explaining its usefulness in the teaching of moral skills. Although the negative heritage has been explored over time as an educational resource [34] which can also be given positive roles [35], so far, no study has been conducted to identify its role and content in sport. The negative heritage of sport does not have the dark dimension of other human events [36], but corruption heritage in sport can have some similar effects in educational terms because it can generate emotions and reflection and can educate in the context of the popularity of sport.

2. Materials and Methods

The study is based on a quantitative and qualitative approach using the documentation method and reflection. To identify corruption cases that can be categorized as parts of negative heritage, the study triangulated data obtained from the sports press and reports on corruption in sport.

To identify the contents of moral education, four countries were selected, namely Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania, where cases of negative heritage in sport were identified. The choice of these countries was determined by the fact that, in South-Eastern European countries, ethics, honesty, and fair play are constantly in danger, and the expression "inherited corruption" is still used today, often in reference to the frequent violations of ethics and integrity in sport [34,35,37–39] They are part of the so-called corruption heritage that, in these countries, has gone through various eras and influences contemporary sport. The importance of the paper is also given by the fact that it analyses examples from several South-Eastern European countries, creating premises for the generalization and exploitation of the results in various socio-educational contexts.

The selection of countries was made on the basis of two criteria. The first was the score of the countries in the hierarchy of the Corruption Perception Index—Transparency International; the selected ones were below the European average. The second criterion was to include countries that did not ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions by 1 June 2020; the four countries mentioned above also met this criterion. The selected countries have similar profiles in terms of integrity problems in sport, although not all of them have undergone the same historical evolution.

This selection ensures cultural diversity, also incorporating into the discussion societies with real ethical problems.

The sources are varied, but they focus on articles published on the main sports websites, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, *ProSport* (Romania), *7DNI Sport*, *Sportal* (Bulgaria), *Livesport*, *Metrosport* (Greece), *Super Sport*, *Panorama Sport* (Albania), the general daily *Adevărul*, *Mediafax* (Romania), *Novinite* (Bulgaria), *Gazeta Shqiptare*, *Koha Jonë* (Albania), and *Eleftherotypia* (Greece). This was intended to ensure a wide range of sources. The selection criterion for the publications was the level of audience identified through the media audience sites in each country, but also those with a large representation of readers, with an audience of all ages from various social backgrounds, and with mixed political orientations.

In addition to searches on the servers of the abovementioned publications, the study searched the terms corruption, sport, football, and irregularities, as well as combinations of these terms. Football was chosen because it is a branch of sport that mobilises many financial resources, generating a political and economic interest that exceeds the interest in any other branch of sport.

The terms were translated into the languages of the four countries and searched for in the aforesaid publications. In this way, the cases with the strongest media coverage were filtered and quantified not only through the number of results provided by the website search engine but also by the comments generated by the abovementioned articles. The identified articles on sports topics were filtered through content analysis, the purpose of which was to observe the frequency of certain keywords (corruption, integrity, morality, and ethics) or characters (owners, managers, officials, and athletes).

The inclusion criteria for the cases considered as part of the negative heritage were reference to the case in two publications; description of the case in three different articles; and the frequency with which certain events reappeared at different time intervals as topics in the above publications. This last criterion was met when either the author of the new article mentioned an old case or those who commented on the article made reference to past cases. This meant that a specific situation was already part of the negative heritage. Although the comments on the articles were not actually included in the analysis, their number and content were considered important for including or excluding a case from the final analysis.

The data collection was complemented by qualitative analysis, which facilitated the deepening of the topic and clarified the selected cases by placing them in a specific category. The qualitative method is based on using a deductive approach to identify various themes in the data, and for that, we used a thematic analysis in conjunction with a descriptive analysis because it was essential not only to identify patterns across the selected cases but also to observe how frequently a certain type of case occurred in the same country or in multiple countries. The qualitative approach was often micro-analytic and contributed to interpreting and understanding everyday situations [40]; it also contributed to improving the information about the negative legacy because it appealed to the authors' observational ability. This facilitated the exploration of the topic and the deepening of certain case studies. The main utility of the qualitative research here is that it helped to examine how people might interpret events in sports history and how they might transform a negative episode into a useful moral resource.

This methodological approach helps in understanding what patterns can be identified in unethical behaviours in sport and how they can be used as educational content in moral education through the lens of ESD. For this, in order to identify patterns, we employed a thematic analysis. The collected materials were structured into topics identified by several features of negative heritage. The materials provided a starting point for inductive thinking, beginning with particular examples and working towards general solutions. Observation and interpretation are the most important instruments for analysing corruption heritage and transforming it into a positive tool for understanding the phenomenon and improving moral education strategies.

In the thematic analysis, we used a six-step framework [41]. The first step was to identify various cases of corruption in sport by reading the selected articles. The selection was made from online articles issued in the aforementioned publications until 1 June 2020.

The second step was to organise the data based on the established codes for each fragment of the article considered to be relevant for the facts described. The data were processed using Microsoft Excel and coded using five different sheets—one for each country and another sheet with all the data together. This allowed the authors to not only analyse each country separately but also to have a comparative perspective of the cases in the four countries. The information processing was based on a protocol where the following aspects were used as benchmarks to validate the introduction of the cases in the analysis: reliability (cases referring to concrete situations that left no doubt about their veracity); relevance (national cases that had notoriety at least in the country); and applicability today (cases applicable today and also allowing comparisons with situations possible to encounter in current sport). Therefore, the filtering was double: in a first phase, the cases that could be considered to belong to the negative heritage were selected, and then, the cases considered by the authors to be relevant nowadays for educational purposes were retained.

More than 40 cases were identified that related to negative heritage in the history of Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek, and Albanian sport. As a general observation regarding the frequency with which these cases appear in the aforesaid publications and implicitly in the discussions of the general public, it should be noted that every time a new case is mentioned, the article in question usually refers not only to the most recent similar case but also to the best-known similar case, even if this one happened 20 or 30 years ago. The frequency with which the cases are mentioned again is between one and two years, depending on each country and case.

In the third phase of the thematic analysis, after examining over 40 examples included in the negative heritage of sport in the aforementioned countries, we identified certain patterns that could be found in other states with a similar evolution from a socio-political point of view. Each example considered has at least a national dimension in terms of notoriety, and several articles about it have been published on the mentioned platforms. For each identified case, the actors involved were examined, as was the degree of immorality associated with them and the processes that generated the violation of ethics.

The actors and their actions offer us examples that can be used as case studies. For this reason, in the fourth phase, we found it more useful from an educational point of view to divide the examples into situations or contexts that display similar patterns. On the other hand, the examples were systematised from the perspective of their inclusion in several risk factors models for various illegal behaviours in sport [42–44]. Within all these models, one can identify a series of common causes relating to the athlete, the coach, and the athlete's entourage.

In the fifth phase, we highlighted why each case study was useful for ESD. The systematised presentation of these situations, designed as narrative means, was complemented by the explanation on how some of the ESD competencies can be approached through moral education in sport. In this way, we can emphasize the status of negative heritage as valuable content for an educational process. The sixth step consisted in writing the article itself.

This research and its results should be understood within the limits of the interpretation methods used, which means that the proposed analysis was built on a deductive process and several observations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Athletes and Moral Weakness

The athlete, as the main actor in the sporting event, is caught between the ethical code of sport and the numerous temptations to break the rules. In such situations, a characteristic called moral weakness is developed, which refers to the moment when a person behaves in a way that they know or believe they should not. In other words, a person shows moral

weakness when, even though they know that they should or should not act in a certain way, they do not comply with this principle that they accept in theory and violate it in practice. The athlete's moral weaknesses derive from different contexts and can contribute to feeding negative heritage.

For the development of the athlete's normative competency, the cases of involvement in illegal actions by athletes from different categories can be brought into discussion. These narratives highlight the need for athletes to know and act based on the provisions of the contracts they sign, and when they find that these provisions have been violated, they must be aware of their rights and get actively involved in negotiating the appropriate settlement of a potential conflict.

As an example, one of the problems faced by athletes in South-Eastern Europe is the late payment of salaries. Football clubs took advantage of the deficiencies and shortcomings in the federations' regulations. Except for the most important players on a team, many players frequently encountered problems with receiving their salaries or bonuses. Their financial rights became a source of dispute between the athletes' legal representatives and the members of the federations. Over time, the clubs developed a "habit" of late payments to their players. The rule became "three months of allowed delay", which did not improve the players' situation. For example, in March 2021, 120 cases of non-payment in Romanian football were recorded [45].

During the time when the salaries of the athletes were lower than they are today, many athletes, in order to increase their income, chose to involve themselves in match-fixing. In addition, influential sports clubs, such as Steaua Bucharest and Dinamo Bucharest in Romania and Partizani Tirana and Dinamo Tirana in Albania, acknowledged these arrangements. The athletes also benefited from the arranged results. For example, the former captain of the Dinamo Bucharest team, Cornel Dinu, admitted that his team had fixed many matches; the competitive system revolved around Dinamo and Steaua, which shared "spheres of influence" [46] and perpetuated a corrupt system.

In Greece, footballers have repeatedly admitted that they were approached to arrange matches. In 2014, in a survey by the global representative for professional footballers (FIFPro), 13.7% of the 211 Greek footballers who answered the questionnaire said they had played in arranged matches. Moreover, the majority of footballers in Greece (64%) thought that several matches in their championship had been arranged in the previous season. The same survey was performed in Romania, with those answering yes reaching 13.6% [47].

To analyse these situations, athletes will be encouraged to identify the reasons why such statistics have been produced and how the presented cases can be prevented and resolved.

Another perspective of approaching ESD competencies in relation to the athletes' weakness consists in addressing the issue generated by the sports betting activity.

The athletes' morality became much more vulnerable when sports betting was legalised in the countries of South-Eastern Europe. Betting houses have multiplied at a rapid pace, and competitions are now listed in bookmakers' offers, with increased interest from betting players. Many athletes and coaches thus saw the opportunity of getting rich fast by betting on their matches.

In Romania, there have been several famous cases of athletes arranging matches for their own benefit. Footballers at the second-tier club Gloria Buzau also found that they were not getting paid as the club had financial problems. The players thus used this as an argument to fix matches, and the coach and players started to place bets on their own games. The Romanian Football Federation ruled on this case of match-fixing in 2014, and the coach, his two assistants, and 14 players were excluded from sports and fined for corruption. The club collapsed and ceased to function [48].

Many other cases have been identified by Romanian publications, and corruption has taken on a new dimension via the involvement of the betting mafia. Emilian Hulubei, President of the Romanian Association of Amateur and Non-amateur Footballers, has stated that a few football players in Romania report being approached or threatened by the betting mafia [49].

Match-fixing seems to be the biggest problem with integrity in Albanian football. The most notorious case is that of Skanderbeu Korce, a club that was banned from European competitions for 10 years in 2018 and fined EUR 1 million. This decision generated a mass protest in Albania. Thousands of Korce's inhabitants gathered to demand a lighter punishment for their clubs with the message, "Do not kill our dream." UEFA identified 53 matches that had been fixed by Skanderbeu since 2010. These included national, European, and friendly matches, and UEFA described the practice as "persistent and recurrent".

In the 2013–2014 season in Bulgaria, Krassimir Mechev and Anatoli Tonov were the head coach and assistant coach at FC Lyubimets, which had debuted in the professional league for the first time in the previous season and in the same season were relegated to the lower league. In 2014, an investigation was launched into the two coaches by the specialised prosecutor's office in connection with cases of match-fixing during their stay at FC Lyubimets. During the investigation, special intelligence tools were used, and the homes of the two were searched. In 2016, the case was filed with the Specialized Criminal Court under Article 321, paragraph 6 of the Criminal Code, which refers to participation in an organised criminal group. As a result of the case filed in the spring of 2016, the Disciplinary Commission of the Bulgarian Football Union suspended both coaches' rights. At the end of 2017, they were acquitted, and the Commission restored their coaching rights. Both are currently practicing coaches.

A match between two Greek football clubs in 2015, resulting in a 2-1 victory for the host team, was fixed. The coach of the losing club revealed that he was under pressure not to use some players in the starting line-up. This case was discovered by the National Intelligence Service, who recorded telephone conversations among football officials. The police authorities opened an investigation, and the actors involved were subjected to severe sanctions. Specifically, the owners of the two clubs, the coach, and twelve other officials were accused of "fixing the result of a match for betting purposes". Although Article 27 of the Code of Conduct of the Hellenic Football Federation points to penalties for match manipulation, no final verdict has been reached.

Such cases have exceeded national barriers and come to exemplify a lack of morality at the highest level. Match-fixing by athletes is a significant offence in sports competition because it eliminates the main element of the sporting spectacle—the unpredictable. Through such immoral practices, sport loses its essence and purpose. The analysis of such cases by athletes contributes to the development of their ability to recognise and understand the relationships that are established in sports activity between the provisions of the regulations and the consequences of violating the norms included in those regulations.

3.2. Immoral Interference of Politicians in Sport as a Source of Decision and Power

One of the most common occurrences in negative heritage is when figures with national notoriety become involved in sport and undertake immoral actions. Such people usually hold high positions in the state apparatus and resort to abuses of power to influence decisions in the sports arena. The researchers explain political involvement in sport and how politicians use sport to the benefit of their own interests, regardless of political ideology [50,51]. Such cases can be identified in all of the selected SEE countries.

Their use in moral education, from the perspective of negative heritage, contributes to the formation of the athletes' ability to apply the precautionary principle, assess the consequences of their own and others' actions, and reflect on social roles within a community.

For example, in Romanian football, central figures such as Valentin Ceaușescu (son of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu), Valentin Bărbulescu (brother-in-law of the country's leader), or Tudor Postelnicu (Minister of Internal Affairs) became involved in the administration of sport clubs. Football was the most popular sport, and here, corruption was rife. Occasionally, the Romanian Football Federation punished a club or some officials, but never those higher up in the major clubs. Similar cases can be found in Albanian football. For example, the dictator Enver Hoxha was represented in the Albanian first league by the Luftëtari football team.

In October 2019, a day after the national team lost to England (0–6), in a match that was interrupted due to racist suspicions, Boiko Borissov, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, stopped funding the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) and publicly demanded the resignation of the president of the BFU. On the same day, the president of the Bulgarian Football Union, Borislav Mihailov, resigned, and the biggest corruption scandal in the history of Bulgarian football emerged. The General Directorate for Combating Organised Crime searched the offices of the BFU in connection with an investigation by the Specialized Prosecutor's Office on suspicion of crimes against sports, specifically corruption. As a result of the searches, numerous documents were seized, and the chairman of the referee commission, the manager of the referees, a BFU employee, and two referees were detained. One month later, on 26 November, repeated searches were performed in the buildings and offices of the BFU. In December, searches were performed throughout the infrastructure of the BFU all over the country.

In Albania, political interference was doubled by economic pressure. Politicians involved in sport often used multiple levers to increase their power and influence. For example, the Skenderbeu Korçe club strengthened its position in sport via political relations. The club's management frequently appeared with the Minister of Finance, Ridvan Bode, to force sponsors to join the club. This habit started in 2008, and many investors in distinct fields who were interested in obtaining certain advantages from politicians knew that they had to sponsor the club in order to create a productive relationship with the Minister of Finance and his staff and obtain fiscal facilities, contracts, etc. [52]. At the same time, the politicians close to Skenderbeu destroyed the competition via fines applied to the other businessmen who financed the rival clubs. This was the case for Dinamo Tirana, whose president was once fined EUR 11 million for some irregularities in his casinos and then another EUR 2 million. To stop these abuses, the people close to Ridvan Bode suggested that the problems for Dinamo Tirana would end if the club worked in the favour of Skenderbeu—which is what happened. With this system of financial and political fines, Skenderbeu became the leader of Albania.

In Greece, no such example of the politicians' interventions has been revealed. There are suspicions of close relationships between the politicians and club owners, but the politicians have not clearly intervened in the sport context. However, there are cases of people associated with the clubs moving into politics with the support of the clubs.

A useful instrument for tackling this phenomenon of the intertwining of sports and politics, and the associated conflicts of interest, would be to construct a clearer demarcation between them. For this to happen, athletes need to understand and define the correct functioning of the two domains and ascertain how sports can be protected against political abuses. Such an analysis requires the mobilisation of abilities related to the recognition and understanding of the relationships between different aspects of social life and the connections that are established between them, as well as the limits that must be respected for their proper functioning. The free expression of one's point of view, supported by sound arguments, is also encouraged.

3.3. *Bad Governance in Sport*

The integrity of sport organisations has been an ongoing problem due to the “multi-dimensional nature of corruption” [53]. Integrity in the organisational environment has the role not only of maintaining and defending the status of the organisation but also of acting as a protector of the members of that organisation. In order to ensure this aspect, good governance is needed, namely a management system characterised by transparency, efficiency, and equity, in compliance with the laws and rules in force. Good sportsmanship has been virtually unknown, and any action aimed at tackling the risks of corruption have developed slowly over the last decade through improving governance and boosting transparency. International institutions such as FIFA, IOC, and INTERPOL have started to impose integrity politics, strengthening the core values of fair play, which has since become a central objective of education about integrity.

The immoral behaviour of officials, represented by presidents or general secretaries of specialised federations has been intertwined with political involvement. Negative heritage includes many notorious cases that have often crossed the borders of the country in question, precisely because of the positions held by those involved.

Knowledge of these cases helps athletes to acquire the ability to analyse how the violation of certain statutes and roles is seriously detrimental to the image and activity of sport organisations. Understanding how sports activity can interfere with other aspects of social life, athletes will more easily recognise certain illegalities and become aware of the consequences of engaging in such activities.

A large-scale case included in the negative heritage of sport and identified in the Romanian collective memory of the general public concerns “The Cooperativa” network. This was made up of officials from the second line of sport in communist Romania, who, after the fall of the totalitarian regime, took over the leadership of clubs and the football federation and controlled the football system until 2014 [37]. The most notorious individuals were Dumitru Dragomir, the ex-chief of Victoria Bucharest Club; Jean Padureanu, president of the Gloria Bistrita football team since 1966; Gheorghe Netoiu; Romica Pascu; Gheorghe Copos; and others from Romanian football. They were active during the communist period and became pivotal in Romanian football after 1989.

They took advantage of rapid institutional changes and seized power, taking advantage of this period of transition in their developing country. This contributed to an upsurge in football corruption in post-communist Romania. At the same time, the chaos generated by the change in political regime weakened the monitoring mechanisms and allowed for corrupt practices. It was a type of creative destruction, as the Schumpeter effect implies [54], and resulted in the decline of sporting society.

Money laundering during football transfers is an example of this decline, and a complex case was brought in 2014. The trial lasted six years, and ultimately, five people in the upper echelon of Romanian football were sentenced to prison on charges of tax evasion, money laundering, and deception. The former owner of FC Rapid Bucharest, George Copos, was sentenced to three years and eight months in jail. Cristi Borcea, former owner of Dinamo Bucharest, was sentenced to six years and four months. The general manager of Steaua Bucharest, Mihai Stoica, was sentenced to three and a half years in jail. Gheorghe Netoiu, former shareholder in FC National, Dinamo Bucharest, and Craiova, was sentenced to three years and four months in jail. Jean Padureanu, the former president of the club Gloria Bistrita, was sentenced to three years and four months in jail. They had laundered money by transferring players to foreign clubs, and the court found them guilty of fraud. In total, they had defrauded the Romanian state of around USD 1.5 million, and around USD 10 million was stolen from several football clubs. These convictions affected the public perception of the integrity of sport in Romania. Financial transparency has never been a priority for Romanian sport clubs, and even today, it is a neglected aspect of sports integrity. Moreover, in recent years, the betting industry has become a key partner of Romanian sports clubs and federations, and these partnerships are also seen as a threat to the integrity of sport.

A network similar to the “Cooperativa” in Romania was also identified in Greece. Important figures in Greek football had formed a mafia-type network that operated between 2008 and 2011 and committed many violations [55]. This generated the biggest corruption scandal in Greek football, the so-called “Koriopolis”. This scandal included 187 defendants, with indictments related to a “criminal organisation”, bribery, illegal gambling, fraud, extortion, and money laundering. The defendants were club owners, referees, coaches, and international and national football players. The persecutions were based on conversations recorded by the National Intelligence Service. The prosecutor proposed the acquittal of some of the defendants, resulting in just 13 convictions, most of which were for illegal gambling and money laundering. This case highlighted the numerous abuses committed by Greek football officials, as well as the fact that the issue of corruption had become systemic and was not punished by the sports institutions as many of those involved also held

positions of power in the federation. For example, Vangelis Marinakis was the president of the club Olympiakos, but was also the vice-president of the Hellenic Football Federation, an institution that exists to punish club irregularities.

In Bulgaria, several referees revealed in 2008 that they were forced to referee in favour of certain clubs. Those pointed to as the sources of the pressure were Ivan Lekov, vice chairman of the State Agency for Sport and Youth and member of the Executive Commission of the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU), and Borislav Alexandrov, head of the Bulgarian Referees' Commission. The testimonies of the referees highlighted major issues of integrity and morality within the exact institution that should have ensured fairness in the sport and compliance with the rules.

The power and the influence that benefit individuals are fostered by this kind of relationship, and this generates corruption and problems of integrity [56]. By knowing and understanding these relationships, athletes will be able to evaluate the actions of different actors in the field of sport and anticipate the consequences of these actions.

3.4. The Intermediary—An External Element of Immorality

Sport has become increasingly specialised in the last century, such that, in addition to athletes, coaches, and managers, many other positions have emerged, contributing to the expansion of the phenomenon. Those who work in sports but are not directly involved in the events are called intermediaries, and these include the athletes' agents, persons responsible for marketing, and any other position that connects athletes, coaches, or managers and the outside world. A lack of morality can be identified in people who put their own interest above the sporting act.

In South-Eastern Europe, the footballers' agents are most often accused when morality is questioned. In Romania, Albania, and Greece, football agents have had a reputation as dishonest merchants. We have identified several cases that raise discussion and are part of the corruption heritage of sport.

In Romania, the brothers Ioan and Victor Becali controlled the football agent market in the 1990s, and their monopoly was associated with many abuses. The two were sent to prison in 2014 for irregularities in the transfer of athletes as the real fees were not declared. In addition, the policy of commissions implemented by the pair has often been debated, raising the question of whether it was moral for them to receive large sums of money to mediate such transfers.

A similar situation has been identified in Albanian football. In 2017, a TV show in Albania screened a recorded telephone conversation featuring an attempt to bribe an FK Partizani Tirana player. The "Fiks Fare" investigative programme on Top Channel TV broadcast a conversation between football agent Drini Çausi and the FK Partizani player Emiliano Vila ahead of a game against KS Kukesi. Çausi tried to convince Vila to help the opponents. The match ended 1–1. The Albanian football federation condemned the actions of the programme and said that it was unable to take measures because Drini Çausi was not a part of any club.

In Greece, there are testimonies of "agents coming into the dressing room and asking players to accept goals. Players are offered 20,000 euros before the game starts to score four or five goals" [57]. Agents take advantage of the fact that they are in the background and can influence key actors in tactical arrangements [23]. Such situations involving outsiders have multiplied in the context of the growing phenomenon of match arrangements.

Bulgaria has been subject to an even stronger influence from external sources. Not only the national but also the international press have written about numerous club owners in Bulgaria being killed by the Bulgarian mafia. Between 1995 and 2007, 15 club presidents in Bulgaria were assassinated. In an attempt to decipher the context of their killing, experts have defined a landscape in which corruption, political interests, and mafia groups intersect [58]. Such events instil fear, not only among club leaders, but also in footballers, coaches, and fans. In this way, the Bulgarian mafia has had a negative moral influence on the sport.

Furthermore, a lack of legal regulation has strengthened the corruption heritage and allowed the betting mafia to take advantage of the clubs' financial problems. From another perspective, the permissive attitudes of sports federations have allowed the clubs to accumulate debt, much of which the clubs have been unable to pay. The phenomenon was explored through the relationship between corruption and levels of investment. The explanation is that people seek immoral alternatives when there are low levels of investment in certain societal domains, particularly in sport [59].

Being informed about these attitudes and irregularities allows athletes to anticipate possible illegal relationships and activities and preserve their personal integrity.

4. Discussions

4.1. From a Culture of Corruption to a Culture of Morality

Experts have noted that, in recent years, education has become one of the three means of combating sports violations, along with sanctioning irregularities and monitoring irregular betting patterns [60]. Their belief is that, over time, the culture of corruption and corruption heritage could be replaced by a culture of integrity. To achieve this, education is necessary.

It is unrealistic to think that corruption can be completely eradicated, but society has the tools to lessen its effects and consequences. The negative heritage of sport that has accumulated over several decades is the result of complex interactions between managers, owners, players, and institutions. Tackling the problems inherent in this interaction and organising targeted actions could improve integrity. Education can also help in the process of disassembling negative heritage by using teaching materials, activities, and media campaigns. Media is an essential tool for moral education because it is very influential and has the power to shape values [61].

To ensure proper engagement and beneficial results through this approach, the narratives offered to the public must connect them to the stories and their socio-cultural and economic contexts. In this regard, sensitive histories, such as those presented, may induce strong moral responses based on cognitive and affective efforts. At the same time, neglecting people's emotional reactions may give rise to superficial learning and thus miss opportunities for helping them to resolve their internal relationships with histories that are relevant to society.

The cases and situations identified in this research were integrated into an ethics and integrity football course, offered by the project SEE-Countries for the Integrity of Football Clubs (Erasmus+ Sport project, agreement number 613592-EPP-1-2019-1-RO-SPO-SCP). The course was validated by 10 experts in sport integrity from 5 countries, following the steps suggested for the development of a curriculum [62], and the examples mentioned above, within the results, were considered relevant to be used for educational purposes. This course approached issues such as doping, match-fixing, and corruption and was addressed to athletes, coaches, and managers from Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania. Based on the observations made by the trainers who delivered this course to over 200 people, it has been concluded that highlighting the negative heritage through concrete examples is clearly beneficial in the process of educating about integrity because the message is concrete, and the public reacts better to examples from the cultural space to which they belong.

One of Tangen's suggestions for making sport sustainable is to generate "self-reflection and communicative responses" [3] to the problems encountered, and this can be done by understanding the errors of the past, which is an essential step to improving moral skills.

4.2. Sanctioning the Immoral Act

The education of moral skills cannot be achieved without sanctioning the behaviour or conduct of negative heritage. Sanction, in a broad sense, must be impersonal and adhere to Eirick Prairat's "principle of objectification". This assumes that we do not sanction the lack of morality of a person, but rather the immoral act itself that was committed in a particular situation [63].

The aforementioned cases have crossed national borders, which makes them useful as content for moral education. In the context of enhancing moral skills, it can be argued that a lack of morality can have a domino effect, and the above examples reveal that a case of corruption can have multiple negative consequences for sport. Thus, promoting moral education from the ESD perspective aims to build some competencies able to turn athletes into active factors in the process of maintaining integrity in sport. This approach could lead to whistleblowing as a solution that would restore and nurture morality in sport. Such a case arose in 2013, when Sebe Fișcă, treasurer of the Romanian Skating Federation, revealed his superiors' corruption. This whistleblowing initiative revealed that the president of the federation spent significant discretionary funds on bribes to the Ministry of Sport and the Romanian Olympic Committee [64].

5. Conclusions

Our study exemplifies how a constructive model designed from an ESD perspective can be applied to the moral education of athletes based on the negative heritage. Simply ignoring the past is not a solution for solving the problems of sport, and for this reason, an integrated perspective is recommended. Knowing the past and the mistakes made and discussing them from the benefits of ESD learning objectives offers a chance for improving sports and keeping fans involved. Case studies such as those presented in this paper can help build real social engagement with the corruption heritage. As such, sport is a specific social activity that impacts moral education in a particular way by combining different methodological guidelines.

This study has explored the contexts, activities, and strategies that support the learning and adopting of good practices based on an awareness of negative heritage. Frequent reference to previous mistakes and corruption could have a restorative effect on integrity in South-Eastern European sport and involves three important thinking processes: affective, reflective, and cognitive. By understanding the mistakes made in the past, people come to a better understanding of their own role in sports and can build moral skills and influence the institutions in a positive manner.

The most important and necessary change is that athletes understand the relationship between the positions of power and influence and become able to identify the potential implications of misconduct. They should be aware of the dangers to themselves and their sports organisations and institutions. They should also be knowledgeable and competent in creating and/or adjusting their strategies and plans in such a way as to be able to safeguard the identity and brand of their organisation. A pre-condition to achieving this is to be aware of the positive and the negative heritage of the sport in which they work. Sports education should include analyses of the abovementioned cases because each case can be a useful tool for understanding how to strengthen principles of morality.

This paper outlines the many challenges that South-Eastern European sport has confronted over time, with the blame placed on inherited corruption. The narratives presented in this paper highlight that the causes are more complex, thus giving rise to a conundrum. For example, in Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania the influence of politics on sport is still observed, and this interference is closely related to another important aspect, bad governance. In these cases, it is quite clear that the issues that affect sport integrity diminish and even prevent sport from being a development tool for a sustainable society. Some specialists consider that education should be rethought in the case of match-fixing [27]; we can also consider that there are arguments to use anti-corruption education in the sport-politics relationship. For instance, after 1989, Romanian sports officials were unable to frame their organisations in the European and global contexts and reduce the gap between Romania and the more economically developed countries. In the 1980s, Romanian sporting performance was remarkable, but the lack of integrity was seen as something normal. Corruption continued to permeate sport because of a lack of transparency, financial problems, and the interference of politics. Many new challenges arose in the area of sports because of

the transition to democracy, which enhanced the corruption heritage of the communist era [37,54].

In South-Eastern European countries, sport is undergoing a transformation, but corruption is far from eradicated. Enacting reforms is a difficult process, but sports organisations need to bring people and institutions together to analyse this negative heritage and to devise best practices for the governance of sports through use of the state, businesses, and non-profit organisations. Athletes, fans, and sponsors all have an interest in cooperating in this process of education.

A solution could be the ESD model, as a generous pedagogical approach basically oriented to the athletes' and the professionals' qualities [8], which can contribute to the consolidation of the moral skills necessary to promote the values of sport.

It is important for athletes and all those involved in sport to be aware of and critically address the dangers that compromise ethical behaviours in sport. For example, the repeated mistakes of club presidents in Bulgaria [58], the involvement in match-fixing networks, such as in Romania and Greece [37,55], or the negative influence of sports agents, such as those mentioned above, all these are aspects that affect not only sport integrity but can also have an impact on the community and society and hinder their development. When the irregularities concerned were sanctioned legally or even only by public, symbolic blaming, they have become lessons that can be used towards a just society, with a higher level of integrity. Thus, using negative heritage for educational purposes can help create strong institutions and organisations. In an even broader sense, educating by using negative heritage can have a positive effect not only on the people involved in sport but also on those around them, just as an act of corruption or match-fixing will not destroy only the career or life of that person but will also have detrimental effects on those close to that person (colleagues, friends, and family), as described in the models of risk factors for sport integrity [42–44].

The learning strategy suggested in this paper encourages the exploitation of the “resources” created by corruption and its heritage. Although the examples discussed in this paper are specific to sport in the above-mentioned countries, they resonate with similar cases in other countries. Considering this, case studies such as those presented in this paper could be conducted in other domains too and thus contribute to construing a positive perspective on negative heritage and its dark stories.

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