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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Fair Play vs. Bribery: Does Sport Have an Advantage? A Slovak Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Purpose:** Sport is an industry traditionally associated with principles of fair play, integrity, and ethical behavior. However, it has not been immune to dishonest behavior such as bribery. These issues undermine trust in sports organizations and highlight the need for effective governance mechanisms such as anti-bribery management systems. Despite the ethical foundations of sport, little is known about how these values translate into attitudes toward bribery, particularly among young athletes. The aim of this study is to examine whether the fair play mentality represents an advantage in implementing anti-bribery measures in sports organizations, based on the perceptions of young athletes.

**Methods:** The research employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire distributed electronically to students of secondary sports schools in Slovakia. A total of 214 respondents participated. The questionnaire covered thematic areas including awareness of bribery, attitudes toward unethical behavior, and knowledge of anti-bribery measures. Six hypotheses were developed through the research framework and verified using descriptive statistics and inferential methods.

**Results:** The findings indicate that young athletes demonstrate a relatively high awareness of bribery, with most perceiving it as a serious societal and sports-related issue. A significant positive correlation was identified between knowledge of bribery and its perceived seriousness. Education in ethics and fair play significantly increased the willingness to report corrupt behavior. Significant differences were identified between athletes in individual and team sports. Awareness of anti-bribery measures was positively associated with more favorable evaluations of sports organizations, although the relationship was weak and context-dependent. The majority of young athletes expressed the need to strengthen anti-bribery efforts in sport. Additionally, personal experience with dishonest behavior significantly increased the perceived seriousness of bribery.

**Conclusion:** The findings of this study confirmed that while the fair play mentality contributes to ethical sensitivity among young athletes, it is not sufficient on its own to effectively prevent bribery. Systematic education, increased transparency, and stronger implementation of anti-bribery measures are necessary to enhance integrity in sports organizations. The findings highlight the importance of combining value-based approaches with formal governance tools to address bribery risks in sport.

### KEYWORDS

Risk Management, Anti-Bribery Management, Sport Organizations, Young Athletes, Bribery Awareness, Integrity, Fair Play

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sport has traditionally always been perceived as an environment based on the principles of honesty, equality, and respect. The concept of integrity and fair play in sport is not a novel approach and encompasses the basics of what is understood today as ethics in sport. It is possible to perceive behavior in sport comprehensively based on a broader social norm that goes beyond the boundaries of sports competitions.

Integrity in sport has long been associated with the principles of fair play and a normative ideal emphasizing the ideals of honesty, respect, and compliance with the rules. The origins of formal regulation and, at the same time, informal cultural expectations are the basis for the functioning of this industry and are considered generally binding. In contrast, cases of violations of such ethics in sport are often very

well-known and public. The global sports sector is not immune to scandals arising from cases of corruption, bribery, and unethical governance of sports organizations. Such cases are perceived in sport in an exceptionally negative way, precisely because of the setting of the perception of ethics in this environment (Kruesmann, 2018). Other stakeholders, such as potential members, the public, competitors, or governing bodies, therefore react very negatively to any dishonest behavior that is perceived as a violation of the basic principles on which these organizations operate. These warning signs also serve to point out the need for improved approaches to governance in the national and international environment (Philippou, 2019). The question also arises as to the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for compliance with the principles of ethics and basic rules in sports organizations.

Despite the ethical setting of all stakeholders in sport, this sport sector

has not escaped several challenges related to bribery and unethical decision-making in recent decades. These phenomena have undermined public trust and threaten the integrity of sports organizations. In response to these challenges and the increased risk of dishonest behavior, sports organizations are taking measures. One option is to implement an anti-corruption management system. Such a system, based on the international standard ISO 37001, provides organizations with tools to implement effective preventive and control mechanisms to comply with ethical standards. The implementation of such systems in various types of organizations has been extensively studied (Ragazou et al., 2022; Sarhan & Gerged, 2023; Veselovska, 2025), thanks to which the benefits are clearly determined. However, the current literature is absent from the perspective of sports organizations and their members on the implementation of anti-bribery measures and their effectiveness. There is also no examination of young athletes' opinions on this issue.

The attitude of young athletes, especially students of secondary sports schools, who are in the phase of forming their value orientations and moral attitudes, deserves special attention. It is the sports environment that plays a significant socializing role in this process, since through the training process, competition, and interaction with coaches or teammates, young athletes adopt the principles of fair play, respect for the rules, and rejection of unethical behavior. Nevertheless, it cannot be automatically assumed that these values are unconditionally transferred to their attitude towards bribery. The influence of the social environment, pressure to perform, desire for success, or patterns of behavior in professional sports can lead to the relativization of ethical principles. Exploring how young athletes perceive corrupt practices and to what extent they are able to identify and reject them is therefore crucial for understanding the potential of sport as a tool for preventing bribery. Findings in this area may also point to the need for more systematic ethics education that would complement the naturally internalized values of fair play with specific competencies in the areas of integrity and responsible decision-making (Kihl, 2022; Philippou & Hines, 2021).

The aim of this research is to examine whether the fair play mentality represents an advantage when implementing an anti-bribery management system in sports organizations based on the opinions and experiences of young athletes. It also seeks to identify whether this cultural predisposition is sufficient to effectively suppress corrupt practices, or whether it is rather an idealized concept that, in practice, encounters systemic shortcomings and economic pressures.

The research contributes to the current discussion on the integrity of sports by linking theoretical foundations of ethics, organizational management, and the fight against bribery with practical implications for sports institutions. By exploring this issue on a sample of young Slovak sport athletes, this research presents a unique insight into what the future of this industry will look like since it will be shaped by these young people. There is no such research currently providing this information through a similar scope. At the same time, it reflects the need for a comprehensive approach that combines the value setting of individuals with formal tools of management and control.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bribery has been present in human societies since their creation. Even though it is just one of the dishonest behavior types, it remains a prevailing negative phenomenon that impacts organizations and individuals by distorting the application of laws and ethical principles. No industry or economy is immune to bribery exposure. Therefore, several tools have been developed to mitigate bribery impacts. The anti-bribery management system was developed for this purpose and to focus on prevention. As the current research shows, it has brought many benefits for organizations that implement it, but it has not been without its challenges (Mean & Gehring, 2018; Sarhan & Gerged, 2023; Veselovska, 2025). The implementation of an anti-bribery management system in an organization needs to be done carefully and sensitively to the needs of all stakeholders. Only then would it have the desired effects.

Different industries have vastly different experiences with the

implementation of anti-bribery tools (Gordon & Miyake, 2001; Malega & Majerník, 2024; Makhdalena et al., 2021). Therefore, these researchers theorized what foundation is most beneficial for successful anti-bribery management system implementation. Philippou (2019) provided evidence on the connection between ethical governance and the effectiveness of anti-bribery measures. This theory by Philippou (2019) proved the link between understanding ethics and implementing tools targeting dishonest behavior prevention. Furthermore, theories of ethical perception suggested that personal experience plays a key role in shaping moral judgments. Individuals who have encountered dishonesty may develop lower tolerance for unethical practices and become more critical of behaviors that undermine fairness and transparency.

The sports industry has been among the most scrutinized sectors in terms of bribery exposure. However, this does not necessarily mean that sports organizations are more vulnerable to anti-social behavior. Philippou and Hines (2021), and Kihl (2022) theorized that if any case of dishonest behavior appears, sport sector stakeholders are simply more sensitive to its negative impacts than stakeholders of other sectors of the economy would be. The logic behind this is precisely related to the mindsets of these stakeholders. The core principle of sport is fair play. Thus, anyone involved with sport, either as an athlete or spectator, would be naturally attuned to any disruptions of fairness.

Sport is one of the most important social phenomena of our time. It affects millions of people around the world and affects various areas of life—from health and physical fitness to culture, economy and interpersonal relationships. Despite the fact that sport is often perceived mainly as a competition and a struggle for victory, its real meaning goes beyond the results themselves. Sport has a huge potential to shape a person's character, develop their moral values, and teach them respect, discipline, and responsibility (Yu & Jeong, 2025). That is why it is necessary to pay increased attention to the ethical awareness of athletes, the principle of fair play, and the systematic education of young people in this area. The ethical awareness of athletes represents the ability of an individual to be aware of the moral aspects of their actions in a sports environment. It is not only about knowledge of the rules, but especially about the inner conviction to act correctly even in situations where control from referees or authorities is not present. It includes values such as honesty, fairness, respect for one's opponent, respect for the rules, responsibility for one's own behavior, and the ability to accept the outcome of the competition with humility. An athlete with high ethical awareness is aware that his actions have a wider impact—he represents not only himself, but also his team, club, country, and often a certain role model for younger athletes.

According to Budevici-puiu and Budevici-puiu (2022), one of the most important principles of sports ethics is fair play. Its meaning is much deeper. Fair play does not only mean following the rules, but also actively promoting honesty and respect in every situation. In essence, it is the ability to behave fairly even when dishonest behavior could bring an advantage. Typical manifestations of fair play are, for example, admitting one's own offense, helping an injured opponent, respecting the referee's decision, or rejecting dishonest practices such as doping or manipulation of results.

However, in modern sport, the principle of fair play faces many challenges. The professionalization of sport, commercialization, media pressure, and fan expectations create an environment in which victory is often superior to moral values. Athletes are under constant pressure to achieve the best possible results, which can lead to the disregard of ethical principles. In extreme cases, phenomena such as doping, corruption, simulated fouls, aggressive behavior, or match manipulation appear. Such behavior not only damages the athletes themselves but also the credibility of sport as a whole. An important factor that influences the ethical behavior of athletes is the environment in which they operate (Hie et al., 2023). Coaches, parents, teammates, and sports organizations play a key role in shaping the values of young athletes. If the emphasis is placed exclusively on performance and results, regardless of the way in which they are achieved, this can lead to a distortion of moral perception. On the contrary, an environment that promotes honesty, respect, and cooperation creates the prerequisites for the development of a healthy ethical awareness (Kruesmann, 2018).

That is why systematic education of young athletes in the field of ethics and fair play is essential. This process should be long-term, comprehensive, and start at an early age. The family plays a fundamental role, where children acquire their first moral values. Subsequently, schools and sports clubs should develop these values. Education for fair play should be a natural part of the training process, not just an additional activity.

Several pieces of evidence can be found on how education should take several forms (Robertson & Constandt, 2021; Harvey & McNamee, 2018). In addition to theoretical familiarization with rules and ethical principles, practical learning through real situations is also important. Discussions about ethical dilemmas, model situations, and analysis of specific cases from sports practice or involving young athletes in decision-making can significantly contribute to the development of their moral thinking. Equally important is the appreciation of fair behavior, not only of winners, but also of those who behaved honestly.

The managerial perspective is specific to the sport industry as a whole. The role of the coach as a role model is also of great importance. A coach should not only be an expert in sports training, but also an educator. His behavior, communication, and the values he presents have a fundamental influence on young athletes. If a coach tolerates unfair practices or breaks the rules himself, he sends a negative signal. On the contrary, a coach who emphasizes the importance of fair play and leads by example can significantly influence the formation of the character of his players. In addition to the individual approach from the coach, support from sports organizations and institutions is also important. Various campaigns, projects, and awards focused on fair play can help spread these values among the general public. The introduction of ethical codes, regular training, and consistent sanctioning of unethical behavior are other steps that can contribute to improving the situation. Last but not least, the media also play an important role. The way they present sporting events affects the public's perception. If attention is focused only on winners and records, regardless of the way they were achieved, this can lead to a distorted image of sport. On the contrary, emphasizing examples of fair play and ethical behavior can motivate young athletes to follow these values. Therefore, it can be said that the ethical awareness of athletes and the principle of fair play are the basic pillars of healthy and valuable sport. Without them, sport would lose its educational significance and would become just a mechanical competition for the result. Educating young athletes in these values is therefore essential and should be a priority for all those involved in their

development. Only in this way can we ensure that sport remains not only a means to achieve performance but also a path to shaping better people and a fairer society (Ragazou et al., 2022; Souvenir et al., 2023).

What is currently missing in the pool of knowledge is the information that directly links the principles of fair play and anti-bribery sentiments. This research study aims to contribute to providing evidence on how young athletes perceive the impacts of bribery and the effectiveness of tools designed to combat its occurrence. Young athletes are especially significant research subjects due to their contributions to the sports industry, to shaping the mindsets of other stakeholders, and to shaping the future of the sports industry.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research is to analyze the level of awareness of bribery in sports among students of secondary sports schools and to assess their perception of the implementation of anti-bribery tools in sports organizations. The research is designed as a quantitative survey based on a questionnaire.

A structured questionnaire created by the project team for this purpose was used to collect data. The survey was part of a deeper investigation of the possibilities and barriers to the implementation of anti-bribery management systems in organizations in the Slovak Republic. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire was anonymous, and its completion was voluntary. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific work. Respondents were informed about the anonymity and voluntary nature of their participation in the research. The data obtained were processed exclusively for research purposes, and no identifying data were collected.

The questionnaire contained 20 questions divided into five thematic areas: basic demographic data, awareness of bribery in sports, experiences and attitudes of respondents, knowledge of anti-bribery measures, and proposed solutions. The questionnaire used closed questions (choice of options), semi-closed questions, and Likert scale questions.

The research group consists of students of secondary sports schools. The selection of respondents was carried out through a random selection.

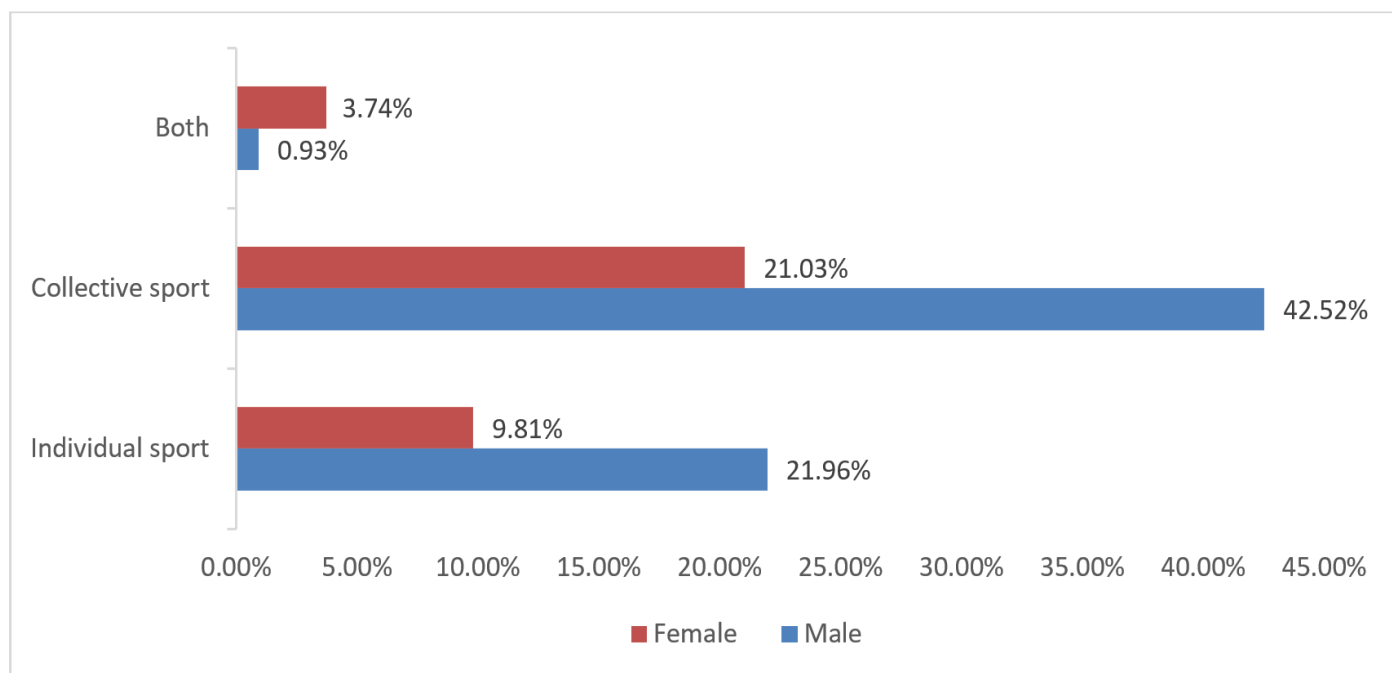


Figure 1 Sample File Structure

Respondents of different grades and specializations (individual and team sports) were included in the research, which ensured the heterogeneity of the sample. Up to 214 students were involved in the research. The structure of the research sample is shown in Figure 1. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents were male athletes. The distribution by grade was relatively even. The majority of respondents are engaged in team sports (63.55%). A smaller proportion were students engaged in individual sports (31.78%), while the rest were athletes combining both types.

Based on the research objective, hypotheses were established to guide the research. The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the level of knowledge about bribery and the perception of its seriousness.

H2: There is a difference in awareness of bribery between young athletes in individual and team sports.

H3: Young athletes who have been educated about fair play show a higher willingness to report bribery.

H4: Higher awareness of anti-bribery measures is associated with a more positive assessment of the functioning of a sports organization.

H5: The majority of young athletes believe that the fight against bribery in sports needs to be improved.

H6: Young athletes who have encountered dishonest behavior in sports perceive bribery as a more serious problem.

The logical framework of the interconnectiveness of key concepts and hypotheses is presented in Figure 2. The two main elements are bribery and young athletes. There are several derived elements that are related to either one of the main elements or both of them. The environment is provided by sport organizations that provide the system where the elements can be connected and interact.

The obtained data were processed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive analysis used basic statistical characteristics such as absolute and relative frequencies, mean, and median. The statistical significance level was set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The following statistical methods will be used to test the hypotheses:

- Spearman's correlation coefficient to assess the relationship between ordinal variables;
- Mann-Whitney U test to compare differences between two independent groups;

• Kruskal-Wallis test in case of multiple group comparisons;

• Chi-square test of independence to analyze relationships between categorical variables;

• One-sample chi-square test to verify the distribution of responses.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research focused on assessing the level of awareness of bribery in sports among students of secondary sports schools and assessing their perception of the implementation of anti-bribery tools in sports organizations. The subjects of the research were students of secondary sports schools, who represent a unique group of young students who are also active athletes. Their awareness of bribery was primarily examined. In terms of awareness of bribery, the majority of respondents stated that they understood the concept of bribery (75.36% of answers "rather yes" and "completely yes"). However, the respondents assessed their own level of knowledge as average, which indicates a certain discrepancy between the subjective understanding of the concept and deeper knowledge of the issue. Bribery was perceived by most respondents as a serious problem in society (96.74% of answers "rather serious" and "very serious"). As many as 71.25% of young athletes consider bribery in sports to be a serious problem. This result indicates a relatively high level of sensitivity of young athletes to ethical issues in the sports environment. An interesting finding is that only a part of the respondents (12.56%) reported personal experience with dishonest behavior in sports, which may indicate either a lower incidence of such behavior at their level or its low identifiability. The research also included hypotheses formulated to examine the connections in more depth and identify dependencies between variables. The main hypothesis H1 focused on examining the potential relationship between the level of knowledge about bribery and the perception of its seriousness by young athletes. Analysis using Spearman's correlation coefficient showed a moderate positive correlation between the level of knowledge about bribery and the perception of its seriousness ( $r_s = 0.694$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This result confirms the assumption that more informed athletes tend to perceive bribery as a more serious problem. Hypothesis H1 was thus confirmed. From a practical point of view, this points to the importance of education in the field of ethics and integrity in sport.

The research also formulated a hypothesis aimed at examining the differences in awareness of bribery between young athletes in individual and team sports (hypothesis H2). The Mann-Whitney U test was used to

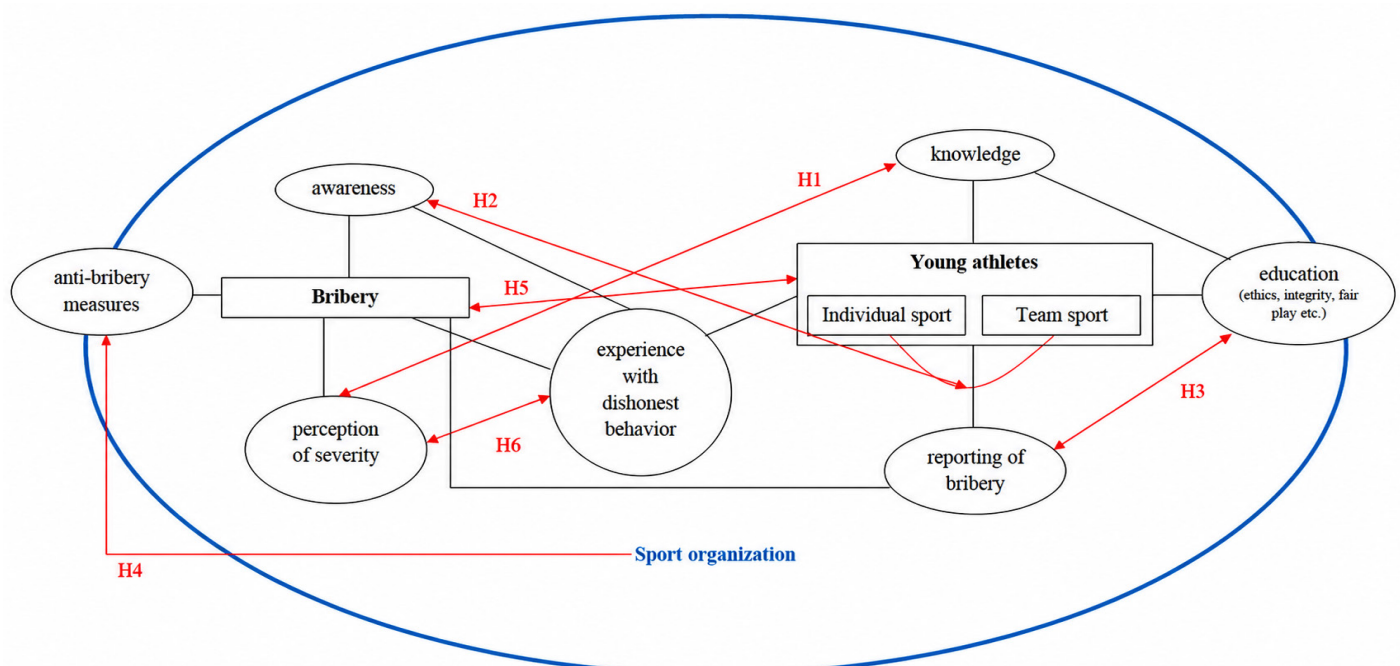
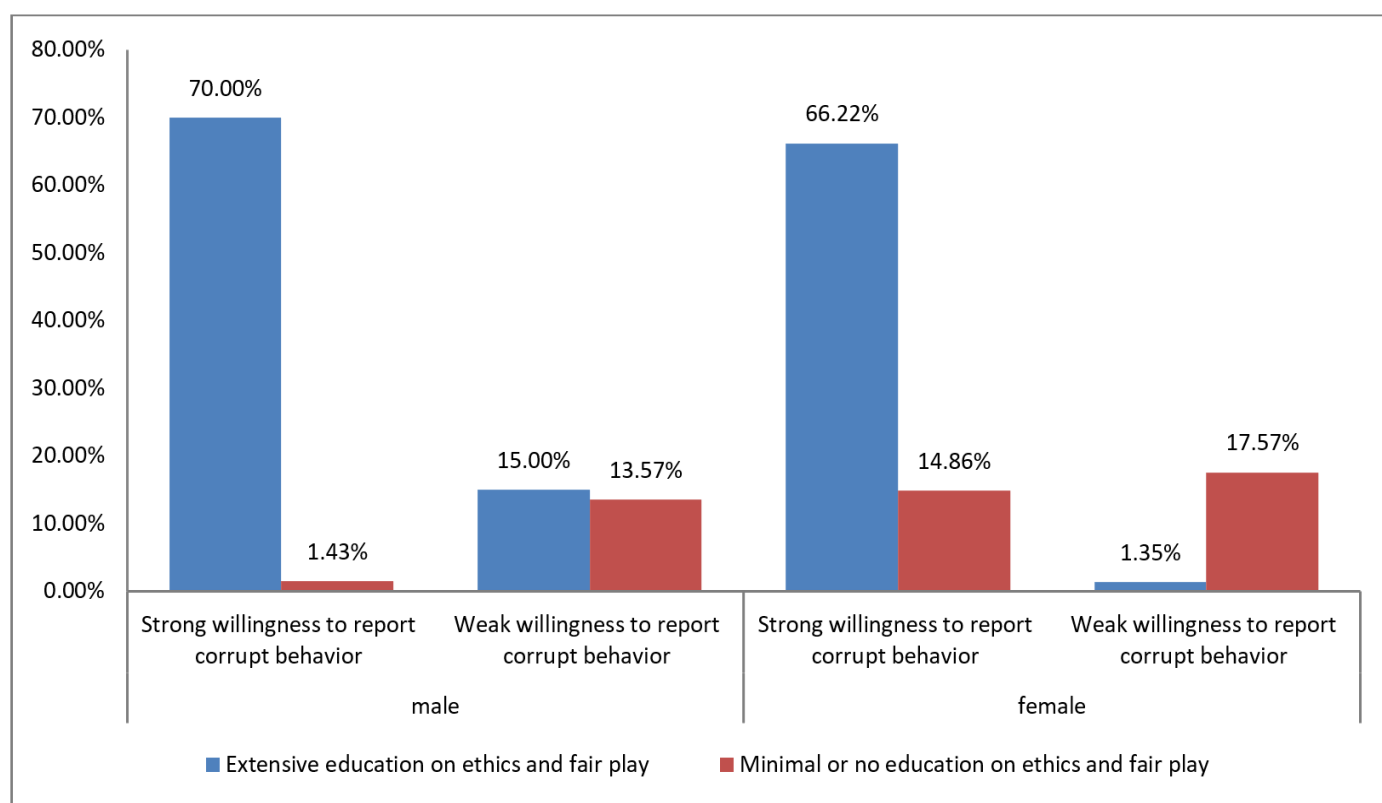


Figure 2 Logical Framework Diagram



**Figure 3** Willingness to Report Bribery Based on Gender and Education in Ethics

verify the assumption. However, the test results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between young athletes in individual and team sports. The hypothesis cannot be confirmed in this research sample of young athletes. The result thus points to the finding that the type of sport does not have a significant impact on the level of awareness of bribery.

Hypothesis H3 aimed to examine the impact of education about fair play and ethics in sport on the willingness to report corrupt behavior that a young athlete would potentially witness. The chi-square test showed a statistically significant relationship between receiving education about fair play and willingness to report bribery ( $\chi^2 = 0.782$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Students who were educated about ethics in sport were more likely to declare their willingness to actively respond to corrupt behavior. This result emphasizes the importance of preventive and educational programs. Figure 3 shows the differences between individual segments of athletes

The next part of the research assessed the perception of anti-bribery measures by young athletes. The research included examining the assumption that the level of awareness of anti-bribery measures has an impact on the evaluation of the functioning of a sports organization (hypothesis H4). Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to verify the hypothesis. The results indicated the existence of a statistically significant relationship between knowledge of anti-bribery measures and the evaluation of a sports organization. This result confirms the hypothesis H4. However, this is a weak dependence ( $p = 0.266$ ). The above result can be understood as a finding that more informed athletes tended to evaluate organizations more positively, which may be related to higher transparency. However, minor differences were observed in coefficients calculated for different segments of athletes based on both gender and type of sport performed. Male athletes exhibited a slightly higher rate of dependency ( $p = 0.381$ ) than female athletes ( $p = 0.249$ ). Both values fall within the weak to moderate range, meaning awareness plays a role, but it is not a dominant factor in shaping perceptions. The higher coefficient among men may suggest that male athletes are either more sensitive to governance and integrity mechanisms or more likely to link formal rules (like anti-bribery policies) with organizational

effectiveness. For female athletes, the weaker relationship could imply that other factors such as communication quality, inclusion, or support structures may weigh more heavily in their evaluation of organizational functioning. Even more significant differences were observed when segmented athletes based on the type of sport, as divided in the questionnaire into team and individual sports. Athletes participating in team sports exhibited moderate direct dependency between these variables ( $p = 0.502$ ). On the other hand, the segment of individual sport athletes reached only a weak dependency ( $p = 0.207$ ). This distinction is particularly insightful. In team environments, organizational structures, rules, and governance mechanisms are more visible and directly experienced, for example, through shared training systems, coaching hierarchies, and group decision-making. As a result, awareness of anti-bribery measures may serve as a clearer signal of fairness, transparency, and professionalism, which directly influences athletes' perceptions. In contrast, athletes in individual sports often operate more autonomously, with less daily interaction with organizational systems. Their evaluation of the organization may therefore depend less on formal integrity measures and more on personal support, access to resources, or individual performance pathways. This could explain why increased awareness of anti-bribery efforts does not translate as strongly into improved organizational assessments in this group. Overall, the findings partially support the hypothesis: greater awareness of anti-bribery measures is associated with more positive evaluations, but the effect is context-dependent. The stronger correlations in team sports and among male athletes suggest that organizational visibility and social context amplify the importance of governance mechanisms.

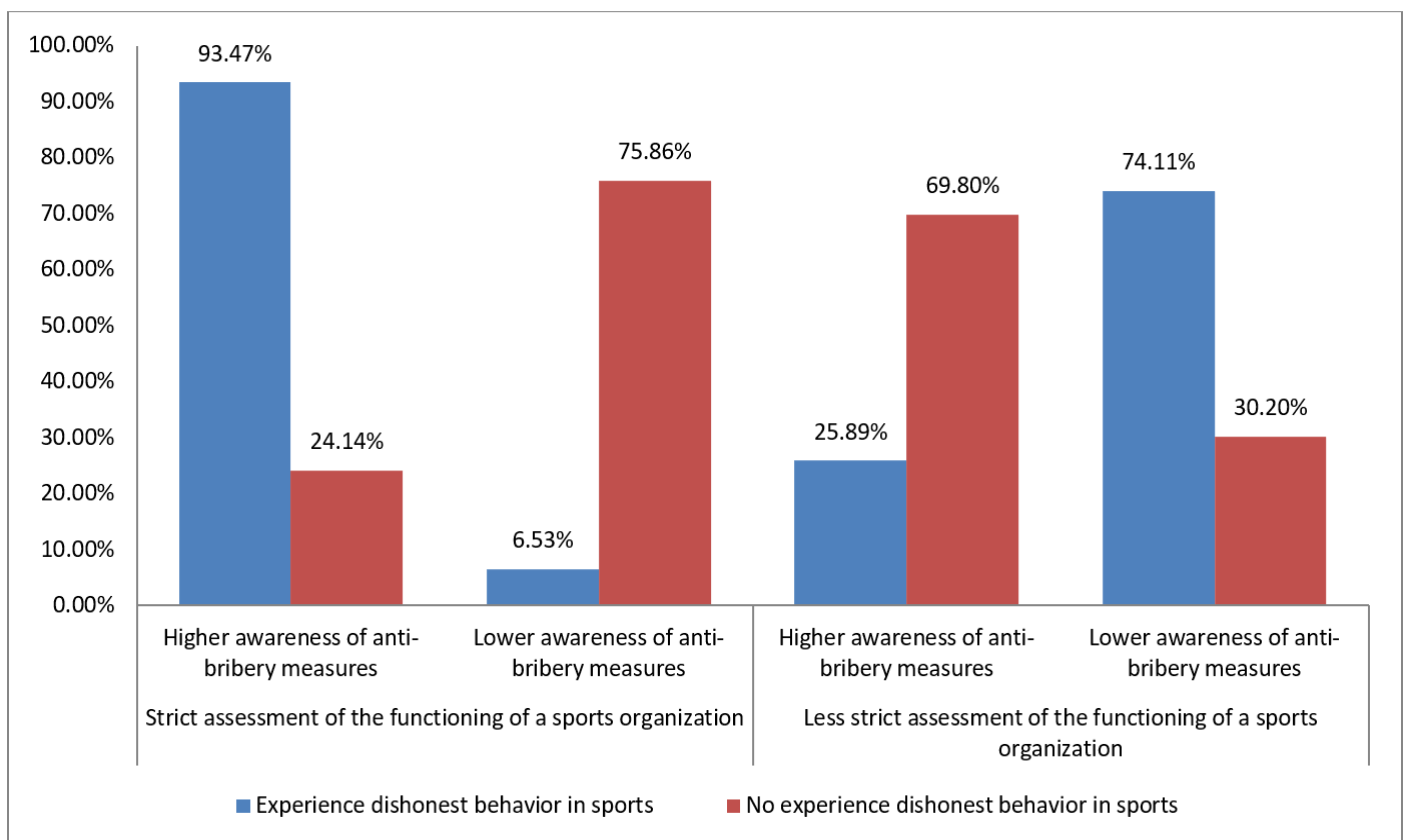
Furthermore, this research explored the perception of the need to increase the fight against bribery in sport. This issue was explored through the lens of young athletes in the context of their socioeconomic characteristics. It was discovered that the majority of young athletes believe that the need for mitigating bribery is significant, even in the sports sector (78.54%). However, this share is even higher when considering only those athletes who encountered dishonest behavior in sports (93.47%, Figure 4). There were no significant differences observed when this issue was segmented by gender. However, minor

differences were recorded by dividing athletes by type of sport. The share was higher for those athletes who perform team sports (83.21%) than for individual sport athletes (74.33%). A one-sample chi-square test confirmed the hypothesis H5 that focused on the assumption that the majority of young athletes agree that the fight against bribery needs to be improved ( $p < 0.05$ ). This result points to a critical perception of the current state and the need for systemic changes in the sports environment. This finding does more than simply confirm hypothesis H5, which reveals an important attitudinal pattern among young athletes that carries broader implications for the integrity of the sports environment. First, the statistically significant result ( $p < 0.05$ ) from the one-sample chi-square test indicates that the observed distribution of responses differs meaningfully from what would be expected under a neutral or evenly distributed opinion. In practical terms, this means that agreement with the statement about improving the fight against bribery is not random or marginal. It is the dominant viewpoint within the sample.

Substantively, this points to a critical stance among young athletes toward existing anti-bribery measures. Rather than expressing confidence in current systems, respondents signal dissatisfaction, suggesting that they perceive gaps in transparency, enforcement, or fairness. This perception may stem from direct experiences, indirect exposure (e.g., media coverage or peer discussions), or a broader awareness of governance issues in sport. Importantly, the fact that this view is held by young athletes is particularly noteworthy. As emerging participants in the sports system, their perceptions can shape future norms and expectations. A shared belief that bribery is insufficiently addressed may lead to decreased trust in sports institutions, skepticism toward competition outcomes, or, conversely, increased demand for accountability and reform. From a policy and governance perspective, this finding underscores the need for systemic changes rather than isolated interventions. It suggests that current anti-bribery frameworks may lack visibility, credibility, or effectiveness in the eyes of athletes. However, this result can also be interpreted as a constructive signal. While it reflects criticism, it simultaneously indicates awareness and sensitivity to ethical issues among young athletes. Such awareness is

a necessary precondition for cultural change, meaning that targeted reforms and engagement strategies could leverage this critical perspective to foster a more integrity-driven sports environment.

The last assumption in this research was related to exploring the impact of having an experience with dishonest behavior in sports on the perception of bribery as a more serious problem (hypothesis H6). The Mann-Whitney U test showed that respondents with experience of dishonest behavior perceived bribery as a statistically significant more serious problem ( $p < 0.05$ ). This result suggests that personal experience increases sensitivity to ethical issues and can influence individuals' attitudes. This result can be interpreted through the lens of experiential learning and moral awareness. Direct exposure to unethical conduct such as cheating, match-fixing, or rule violations in sports may heighten an individual's sensitivity to integrity-related issues more broadly. Rather than viewing unethical behavior as abstract or distant, these individuals have witnessed its consequences firsthand, which can make similar forms of misconduct, like bribery, feel more tangible and concerning. Additionally, this finding aligns with theories of ethical perception explored in the literature review, suggesting that personal experience plays a key role in shaping moral judgments. Individuals who have encountered dishonesty may develop lower tolerance for unethical practices and become more critical of behaviors that undermine fairness and transparency. In contrast, those without such experiences might perceive bribery as less immediate or impactful, potentially due to a lack of direct emotional or cognitive engagement with similar issues. From a practical standpoint, the result highlights the importance of awareness and exposure in ethics-related education and prevention strategies. It suggests that initiatives aiming to reduce bribery could benefit from incorporating real-life case studies, testimonials, or simulations that help individuals better understand the implications of unethical behavior. By making these issues more relatable, it may be possible to foster stronger ethical attitudes even among those without direct personal experience. Overall, the confirmation of hypothesis H6 emphasizes the role of personal experience as a significant factor in shaping perceptions of bribery, reinforcing the broader conclusion that ethical awareness is not only a matter of knowledge but also of lived experience.



**Figure 4** The Relationship Between Awareness of Anti-Bribery Measures and Assessments of Sports Organization Functioning

## 5. CONCLUSION

The research results indicate a relatively good basic orientation of young athletes on the issue of bribery in sports, but at the same time, they reveal reserves in deeper understanding and systematic information. This discrepancy may be mainly due to the fact that information about bribery is often conveyed by the media, which focuses mainly on the most visible cases. However, it was discovered that athletes performing team sports usually have not only a better understanding of the negative impacts of bribery, but also express a more positive attitude towards anti-bribery measures. This finding indicates the importance of the peer aspect of the community in sport, where ideas and experiences are shared. No previous research has explored this issue. Therefore, these findings provide a new revelation and thus also a significant contribution to the current pool of knowledge and a foundation for further research.

Furthermore, the research results confirmed the importance of education in the field of integrity, fair play, and ethics, which has a positive impact on the willingness to respond to corrupt behavior. This aspect is especially crucial in the context of prevention, as young athletes represent future actors in the sports environment. The findings also indicate that there is room for improving the implementation of anti-bribery tools in sports organizations, as well as increasing their transparency. The perceived need to improve the fight against bribery points to a certain level of distrust of young athletes towards existing mechanisms, as was previously suggested by Harvey and McNamee (2018), even though their research did not target young athletes specifically.

The results of this research are consistent with the results of other research that emphasizes the importance of education, transparency, and control mechanisms as key tools in the fight against bribery, not only in sports. Dietl and Weingartner (2014) explained how corrupt practices in sport negatively affect the perception of governance in sport organizations. This research study revealed similar findings confirming that young athletes are especially sensitive to integrity breaches, including bribery. Various other research findings also confirm these implications (Hie et al., 2023; Robertson & Constandt, 2021). Furthermore, Philippou (2023) revealed the insufficient nature of anti-bribery tools in sport organizations. Young athletes are also aware of these shortcomings, as proved by this research study. As the findings suggest, the promotion of ethical behavior needs to be strengthened. This research confirmed the assumption that young athletes are sensitive to absorbing knowledge not only through media and peer pressure, but also through systematic education. Some further ideas can be found in research conducted by Volintiru et al. (2018), even though their recommendations are not tailored specifically for the needs of sport organizations.

This research provided significant contributions to the current pool of knowledge in the field of sport management and anti-bribery management systems. The main limitations of the research can be considered the priority use of random selection of respondents. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire survey at selected secondary schools with a sports focus. The research sample may therefore not clearly correspond to a representative sample of the basic set, which would be all young athletes in Slovakia. This factor may affect the degree of generalizability of the results, but at the same time, it represents an opportunity for further research. It would be interesting to expand the research to include other generations of athletes and thus create an intergenerational comparison of the perception of bribery and the possibilities of implementing anti-bribery measures in sports organizations.

Additionally, the broader economic aspects and governance were not considered. Since the focus of the research was from the perspective of young athletes, such additional factors were not considered. Therefore, this research can be expanded to include these perspectives and also consider the established global indices such as the UNDP Human Development Index and the UN E-Government Development Index. The assumption should be that nations with very high human development are expected to exhibit different governance structures and institutional capacities compared to those with low human development. Ignoring

such variation may lead to overgeneralized conclusions. The findings of this research study confirm the importance of continued exploration of anti-bribery practices and the development of tools that can mitigate related risks in sport organizations and set a foundation for further research into this topic. Therefore, the contributions of this research are not just for academia but also for managers of these organizations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. The data were not publicly available because of the privacy of the research participants.

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