

Conceptualizing ethics positions of health and fitness managers; an empirical investigation in Greece Conceptualizar las posiciones éticas de los directivos de salud y fitness; una investigación empírica en Grecia

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Abstract. This research aim was to examine the ethical viewpoints of health and fitness managers in Greece. To achieve this, an adapted version of the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) (Forsyth, 1980) was employed. Additionally, the study sought to determine whether managers of these fitness centers leaned more towards idealism or relativism in their ethical perspectives. A group of 249 health and fitness managers participated in this study and completed Forsyth's original EPQ questionnaire included a total of 20 variables, with 10 assessing Idealism, and 10 evaluating Relativism. The EPQ was translated into Greek and adapted to suit the specific context of the Greek health and fitness industry, following multiple pilot studies. Both confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses were conducted, resulting in a 12-item questionnaire with two distinct factors. The modified EPQ demonstrated strong internal consistency and showed convergent validity with related constructs. Furthermore, the categorization of normative procedures into types suggested that health and fitness managers in Greece held varying ethical positions. Some leaned towards a more absolute ethical approach, while others took into account situational factors in their ethical considerations. Investigating the ethical perspectives of health and fitness managers can provide valuable insights for developing ethical codes of conduct and tailored educational initiatives within this sector.

Key Words: business ethics, health & fitness, managers, Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ)

Resumen. El propósito de este estudio fue investigar las posturas éticas de los directores centros fitness en Grecia mediante el uso de una versión adaptada del Cuestionario de Posición Ética (EPQ) (Forsyth, 1980). Asimismo, se buscaba determinar si los directores de centros de fitness mostraban una mayor inclinación hacia el idealismo o el relativismo. Para llevar a cabo este estudio, se recopiló información de una muestra compuesta por 249 directores de centros fitness procedentes, quienes completaron la versión modificada del EPQ. El cuestionario original constaba de 20 preguntas, de las cuales 10 evaluaban el idealismo y 10 evaluaban el relativismo. El EPQ se tradujo al griego y se adaptó para ajustarse al contexto de la industria de fitness en Grecia, después de realizar varios estudios piloto. Se llevaron a cabo análisis factoriales confirmatorios y exploratorios, lo que resultó en un modelo de 12 cuestión y dos factores. El EPQ modificado demostró tener una buena consistencia interna y validez convergente con constructos relacionados. Además, la categorización de los procedimientos normativos en tipos sugiere que los directores centros fitness en Grecia tienen diferentes posturas éticas, con algunos favoreciendo un enfoque más absoluto de la ética, mientras que otros consideran factores situacionales. Examinar las posturas éticas de los directores de centros fitness puede proporcionar información valiosa para la creación de códigos éticos de conducta y la implementación de iniciativas educativas adaptadas a este sector.

Palabras clave: ética de negocios, centro fitness, gerentes, Cuestionario de Posición Ética (EPQ)

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Introduction

Business ethics is the scientific field that explores every aspect of business activity from an ethical point of view (Velasquez, 2002). More specifically, ethical standards in a business context are often defined as honesty in communication, fairness, special care, fair competition, organizational responsibility, corporate social responsibility, and respect for the law (Bird & Waters, 1987; Hatcher, 2004; Pater & Van Gils, 2003). Ethical research requires identifying issues, proposing approaches aimed at best practices, and establishing ethically optimized public policy options (Freiesleben & Pohl, 2004). Following the above, ethical values allow any organization to set normative standards, e.g., for employees (Chen, Sawyers & Williams, 1997; Wines & Hamilton, 2009) or customers (Norman, 2011). The personal beliefs of managers are considered key factors, which form the axis of ethics of any organization (Schein, 1985; Kaptein, 2019). Singhapakdi (1999) emphasized that the institutionalization of strong moral values, arising from an individual moral ideology (Craft, 2013; Trevino, 1986), can enhance positive attitudes and behaviors within the organization. In the domain of participatory sports, such as fitness center memberships, where one of the primary

drivers of organizational success is customer retention, it becomes evident that the manager's personal beliefs and, consequently, their business philosophy play a central and decisive role (García-Fernández, Gálvez-Ruiz, Vélez-Colon, Ortega-Gutiérrez & Fernández-Gavira, 2018; Sanabria Navarro, Silveira Pérez, Guillén Pereira, & Rosero Duque, 2020; Tsitskari & Batrakoulis, 2022b; and others).

Theoretical background

The Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ)

One of the greatest contributions to applied ethics research, has been made by Schlenker and Forsyth (1977) and Forsyth (1980). Schlenker and Forsyth (1977) at the beginning of their research on ethics, noted that variations and differences in moral judgment can be successfully described, after taking into account two factors: i) *relativism*, described as the extent of the rejection of universal moral norms and the refusal to invoke these moral norms when it is necessary to make moral judgments (Greene & Haidt, 2002) or answer critical moral questions, and ii) *idealism*, which is described as the moral attitude of a person to truly believe and invoke absolute moral principles and universal moral norms (Forsyth, 1980). In the context of studies of business ethics in general, and individual moral ideology in

particular, evaluation tools were structured in specific theoretical normative frameworks, defining philosophical concepts as components of variables (e.g., *Idealism*, as a philosophical current, is at the same time a factor that explains specific variables) (Randal & Gibson, 1990). Specifically, for the study of the ethical ideology of managers, a tool that has been widely used is the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) of Forsyth (1980), which contains two scales of 10 variables each, which measure idealism and relativism respectively. This two-factor structure has been judged reliable in different cultural groups and in different business sectors (finance, sales, telecommunications, etc.) while it was broadly used in the study of the service sector (indicatively: Davis, Andersen & Curtis, 2001; Forsyth, O'Boyle & McDaniel, 2008; Musbah, Cowton & Tyfa, 2016; Caswell & Gould, 2008; Sharkey, 2020; MacNab et al., 2011; Vitell, Rallapalli & Singhapakdi, 1993). Several observations from previous research using the EPQ concluded that it satisfactorily explains individual issues (Giammarco, 2016; 1998; Bass et al., 1999) while the structure of the two resulting EPQ factors appears to be stable and reliable (Beebe & Guynes, 2006; Bhattacharya, Chen & Liu 2009; Giammarco, 2016; Bhattacharya, Neelam & Murthy 2018).

Nevertheless, some researchers, in order to assess cross-cultural moral stances, noted that cross cultural variation can result in a more than two-factor construct. Davis, and his colleagues (2001), identified a third factor “veracity”, which was also discussed by Levine, Park & McCornack (2009). Similarly, MacNab and his cooperates (2011), revealed a four-factor construct and suggested more complex ethical dimensions.

In addition, researchers, discovered after conducting the EPQ that certain items had a weak correlation with the rest and as a result, those items were eliminated in order to attain an acceptable level of internal reliability. Cui et al., (2005), for example, revised and modified the structure of the EPQ in order to test measurement equivalence in five countries, concluding that only 12 of the original 20 EPQ items were able to be used in most of them. Furthermore, Johari, Zuraidah and Ismail (2012), found that out only 13 of the original 20 EPQ items are extracted and best suited to measure the ethical orientation of participants. Other researchers also proposed the deletion of items in order to achieve acceptable construct validity (Chonko, Wotruba & Loe, 2002; Eastman, Eastman & Tolson, 2001). After considering the modifications suggested by previous researchers, O'Boyle and Forsyth (2021) conducted three studies to shorten the length of the original EPQ significantly, introducing the EPQ-5, which has not yet been tested in different populations and services.

Although widely used in the services' sector, the EPQ does not seem to have been tested in the field of sports and specifically in the field of exercise and fitness. Employing tools for assessing individual ideology can assist in gaining a deeper insight into organizational decision-makers (fitness managers in our case), thereby providing guidance that can

benefit the organization, or even the sector and its customers. The application of these tools should undergo testing in various population groups and cultural contexts, as well as across different industries, as is the case in our scenario.

Ethics position theory & moral types

Ethics position theory posits that moral decision-making is influenced by two critical factors: i) the degree of harm or benefit produced by an action, and ii) the consistency of the action with commonly accepted moral standards. According to this theory, individuals possess varying levels of idealism and relativism that determine their moral philosophies. Theory identifies four distinct moral philosophies or ethical positions: i) *Absolutists* (high idealism/low relativism), who endorse both moral standards and harm minimization; ii) *Exceptionists* (low idealism/low relativism), who are conventional in their moral orientation and recognize that moral principles do not always minimize harm; iii) *Situationists* (high idealism/high relativism), who prioritize minimizing harm over relying on moral standards; and iv) *Subjectivists* (low idealism/high relativism), who are skeptical about the validity of trans-situational and trans-personal moral rules and do not strongly endorse the “do no harm” mandate (Forsyth, 1980; 1992).

Overall, scholars have investigated the two dimensions of ethics on a global scale and have reported that the degrees of idealism and relativism, along with their relationship to ethical behaviors, differ significantly across cultures (Forsyth et al., 2008). Other researchers, also confirmed the existence of various levels of moral philosophies, noting that each dimension can be dichotomized into “high” and “low” and result in the above mentioned four classifications based on an individual's preferred ethical ideology (Angelidis & Ibrahim, 2011; Hastings & Finegan, 2011).

Ensuring customer retention remains a pivotal priority within the fitness industry, as customers play a central role in driving global participation in physical fitness and sports (Alguacil Jiménez, García-Fernández, Calabuig, & Valcarce-Torrente 2023; Tsitskari & Batrakoulis, 2022a, b; and others). Within this context, equipping fitness centers managers with the training to adapt their management styles based on their unique ideologies, with the goal of enhancing employee and trainee satisfaction, can offer a distinct competitive advantage upon an organization when compared to its peers (Chen, 2022; Ibaibarriaga Tose, & Tejero-González, 2020; Zakus, Cruise Malloy & Edwards, 2008).

Fitness Centers' Management

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2018) has emphasized the importance of physical activity in improving global health rates. Fitness centers are one of the most popular option for exercise (e.g., Addolorato, Garcia-Fernandez, Gallardo & Garcia-Unanue, 2020; Gómez Chávez, López-Haro, Pelayo-Zavalza, & Aguirre-Rodríguez, 2023; Tsitskari, Tzetzis & Batrakoulis, 2021, Tsitskari & Ba

trakoulis, 2022a, b; Veiga, Romero-Caballero, Valcarce-Torrente, Kercher, & Thompson, 2022), and fitness professionals are crucial in ensuring member satisfaction and retention (Glaveli, Papadimitriou, Karagiorgos & Alexandris, 2023; Tsitskari, Fragkou, Alexandris & Matsouka, 2023), as well as achieving desired levels of physical activity and business profitability (Bodai et al., 2018; Murphy & Bauman, 2007).

Addolorato, García-Unanue, Gallardo, & García-Fernández, (2022) suggest that the concept of fitness should not solely revolve around its commercial aspects, but rather be seen as a cultural field influenced by both commercialization and consumer behavior. In today's context, this communal process gives rise to a diverse range of practices that highlight characteristics like customer engagement, perceived value, members' satisfaction, and future purchase intentions. These aspects subsequently shape the development and implementation of business models, driven by global communities. In Greece, the evolution of business models in the fitness industry has been influenced not only by ongoing challenges and trends in the European region, as highlighted by Batrakoulis (2019), but also by the owners' efforts to adapt to a changing environment amidst the long-lasting socio-economic crisis (Stylianidis & Souliotis, 2019).

As per Tsitskari, et al. (2021), the Greek fitness market encompasses a variety of model businesses, including commercial clubs, personal training facilities and boutique gyms, and licensed CrossFit® affiliate boxes. These establishments offer a wide array of physical exercise services catering to the general population and recreational athletes.

Both internal and external stakeholders have a significant impact on the effectiveness and functionality of these fitness businesses (Parent & Deephouse, 2007; Choo & Bae, 2016; Schein, 2004). However, research suggests that customer management of members relations in fitness businesses is often inadequate (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2007; Tsitskari et al., 2021; Tsitskari, Quick & Tsakiraki, 2014), leading to low membership retention rates (Avourdiadou & Theodorakis, 2014; Buckworth & Dishman, 2002).

While there has been some research on ethical issues faced by sport managers and fitness professionals (Hums, Barr, & Gullion, 1999; Manley, O'Brien, & Samuels, 2008), there are currently no studies that investigate the measurement and utilization of ethical positions or moral decisions in sports and fitness management. The literature that does exist on the topic, tends to focus on ethical issues facing sport participants rather than managers (McDaniel, Kinney & Chalip, 2001; Sherry, Shilbury & Wood, 2007), as well as on issues around ethical codes in sports organizations (Constandt, De Waegeneer, & Willem, 2019; Manley, et al., 2008) or Social Responsibility and ethics (Walker, Hills & Heere, 2017). Moreover, the ethical decision-making models used in some of these studies tend to be more general business-oriented rather than sport-oriented, and none of them are specifically designed for ethical decision-making within the sport context. Given the complexity of the sport industry and the unique ethical issues faced by sport

managers in different segments, it is difficult to propose a single best model for making sound ethical decisions in this context.

Taking the above into account, it is interesting to explore the Greek health & fitness (H&F) industry, in the context of business ethics, as an object of ethical and legal analysis, seeking to formulate practices and actions aimed at providing services that will minimize the withdrawal of members from fitness services, while enhancing their retention and attracting new consumers (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015).

More specifically, the research hypotheses of the study were formulated as following:

H1: Forsyth's Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) is a valid and reliable measure for assessing H&F managers' ethics position in the Greek context.

H2: Health and fitness managers in Greece can be segmented in all EPQ moral types.

Methods

Sample & Data collection

The sample of the survey consisted of 249 fitness centers' managers (fitness studios, CrossFit® clubs, multipurpose gyms) from all over Greece, mainly men (63.5%), aged 31-39 years (36.1%), with less than 10 years of experience in the management of the gym (59%). The researchers used a convenience sampling technique to identify potential participants, reaching out to gym owners and managers through various channels, such as email or social media.

Measures

Forsyth's EPQ initial questionnaire (1980) was used to assess the individual ethics of H&F managers, consisting of a total of twenty (20) variables of which ten (10) evaluate Idealism (e.g., *Putting someone at risk is an intolerable act, no matter how small the risk is*) and ten (10) evaluate Relativism (e.g., *What is moral varies by circumstance and from one society to another*).

The questionnaire was back to back translated into Greek (Banville, Desroriers & Genet-Volet, 2000). The translated questionnaire was discussed with four sports marketing scientists and one lawyer on issues of content and understanding of variables. This discussion resulted in some minor corrections of the translated variables with the aim of their meaningful understanding by the participants in the survey. Finally, in order to check the validity of its content, a pilot survey of 10 fitness centers managers was carried out, who were not included in the final sample of the survey. None of the respondents reported difficulty in understanding or answering any of the variables of the two questionnaires.

Data analysis

Amos and SPSS (version 21.0) were used for statistical data processing, in line with previous research (Forsyth et

al., 2008) and more specifically: Descriptive analyses, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Byrne, 2010), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Hair et al., 2006), Cronbach's reliability analysis and K-means Cluster.

Results

Scale validation

In order to assess the psychometric properties of the EPQ scale, exploratory analysis and internal consistency tests were subjected to explore the proposed two-factor scale. First, item-to-total correlation value was estimated for each trait. Items with a corrected item-to-total correlation less than .30 should be discarded (Hair et al., 2006). The results revealed that one item (item 6) had less than the cut off criterion. Then, principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed (Jackson, 2005). A two-factor pattern emerged after removing items that did not have substantial loadings on the extracted factors. The EFA revealed that five items (items 1-5) exhibited significant loadings for the construct of "Idealism," while seven items (items 12-18) showed significant loadings for the construct of "Relativism". These findings suggest that the resulting factorial patterns align with the original EPQ framework. However, some original items were eliminated because they poorly measured the two constructs, due to cross-loadings, indicating that the items may be poorly written or the a priori factor structure could be flawed (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

Table 1.
Factor Correlations for Exploratory Factor Analysis of EPQ

	Factor	
	1	2
idealism_1		,714
idealism_2		,803
idealism_3		,608
idealism_4		,833
idealism_5		,813
relativism_12	,682	
relativism_13	,801	
relativism_14	,677	
relativism_15	,808	
relativism_16	,688	
relativism_17	,710	
relativism_18	,711	
Eigenvalues	3,837	2,789

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Another round of EFA was performed in the remaining 12 items and a clear two-factor structure was emerged. The new factor structure with the retain traits explained 55,1% of the total variance. All the items had strong loadings, and exceeded the 0.70 threshold (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). The Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 3752,76$, $df = 136$) was significant ($p < .001$) and KMO measure was .785. Thus, the data satisfied the criteria for further analysis and indicated non-zero correlations (Hair et al., 2006). The eigenvalue for Relativism ($e = 3,8$) dimension was higher than the eigenvalue for Idealism ($e = 2,7$) facet. The component correlation matrix ranged between .608 and

.833 and it was consisted with the accepted thresholds of .200 to .900 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). Moreover, the mean scores were high (see in Table 2). Table 1 shows the new purified scale with the two dimensions and twelve items. The EFA resulted in five items for "Idealism" and seven items for "Relativism" that had significant loadings across the Greek sample of fitness centers managers.

The validation of the scale involved confirmatory analysis using the maximum-likelihood function. Two latent factors were assessed using various indicators and goodness-of-fit indices (Shi, Lee & Maydeu-Olivares, 2019). The overall model fit assessment indicated satisfactory fit indices: $\chi^2(98,3)/df(51) = 1.9$, $p < .001$, CFI = 1.0, TLI = .9, RMSEA = 1.0, and Standardized RMR = ,049 (refer to Table 3). To evaluate reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) methods were employed. Cronbach's alpha demonstrated adequate scores (.77 to .85), and the composite reliability index ranged from .79 to .87, which were considered acceptable (Fornell & Lacker, 1981) (refer to Table 4). Then, a validation process was conducted to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the scale. Convergent validity was evaluated using two tests: a) *t-values*, which ranged from 15.5 to 45.1 and met the appropriate threshold ($\geq \pm 1.96$) (Byrne, 2013), and b) Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which exceeded the .50 cut-off criterion (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004) for Relativism (.51) and the CR also demonstrated adequate score (.87), falling into the acceptable threshold of $> .70$ (Awang et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017), while in the meantime for Idealism, AVE value was .45, which is below the appropriate threshold, but with a CR value (.79) greater than .70. To further assess the discriminant validity of the proposed model, the method outlined by Kline (2015) was employed. The examination of the correlation matrix among the two constructs, which demonstrated that the correlation between Idealism and Relativism factor ($-.130$) was below the 0.85 threshold. Therefore, the validation of the scale was established.

Clustering analysis & Classification into moral types

Two steps were undertaken in relation to cluster analysis. Firstly, a two-step cluster analysis was conducted to determine the appropriate number of clusters for further examination. According to Field (2013), this analysis automatically suggests a tentative number of clusters based on the data. The findings indicated that the Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation ($e=0.7$) achieved a "Good" rating, suggesting the presence of 2 clusters (Field, 2013). Subsequently, a K-means analysis was performed, which is a commonly used method among social researchers. Initially, the number of clusters was set at 2, as revealed by the initial analysis. The primary aim of this analysis is to minimize variability within segments while maximizing variability between segments. The final cluster centers identified two groups: the first group consisted of individuals with

high Idealism and low Relativism (M=4.94, M=2.45, respectively, n=121), while the second group included individuals with a high Idealism and high Relativism (M=4.88, M=4.05, respectively, n=133). In order to characterize each group of individuals according to the four ethics positions, we classified individuals as either high idealists or relativists, if their idealism and relativism scores were above the sample median (3.6 and 3.1, respectively), while those with scores below the median were classified as low idealists or relativists (O’Boyle & Forsyth, 2021). Following the respective literature and previous research, we concluded that the two groups that emerged from the clustering analysis were: *Absolutists* and *Situationists*.

Discussion

The present study examined the psychometric characteristics of Forsyth's Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) (1980) in capturing fitness centers’ managers’ ethics positions in Greece. We used EFA and CFA to evaluate the fit of the original two-dimensional scale, which measures "Idealism" and "Relativism" in ethical decision making and we assessed the fit of the model using several indices. Our results showed that the original EPQ scale fit well in the Greek context, only after the deletion of some of the original items.

Other researchers also proposed the deletion of EPQ’s original items in order to achieve acceptable construct validity (Cui et al., 2005; Johari, et al., 2012; and others). This was not surprising, given that measurement scales developed in one cultural or sector context may not be applicable in another without modifications, especially in leisure research (Dimanche, Havitz & Howard, 1991; Vlachopoulos, Ntoumanis & Smith, 2010, and others).

The two-factor pattern obtained was consistent with the original EPQ framework, with five items for "Idealism" and seven items for "Relativism" that had significant loadings and achieved adequate fit with the Greek sample of fitness center managers. Some of the deleted items were characterized by wordiness and high cognitive demand, as exemplified by the statement "Deciding whether or not to perform an act by balancing the positive consequences of the act against the negative consequences of the act is immoral". We speculate that these item characteristics were the primary reasons behind their poor factor loadings and correlated residuals, which ultimately contributed to the moderate overall fit of the model. Moreover, our findings revealed that certain EPQ items were inadequate measures for capturing the construct of interest within the Greek context. The dropped Idealism items all revolved around the concept of causing harm or risk to others, which may not be a prominent feature of ethical values in the Greek cultural context

Table 2. Descriptives

Construct	Item	Loading	SMC	t-value	α	CR	AVE	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
IDEALISM	People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree.	.714	.476	7.59 ***	.774	.796	.458	3.17	0.87	-0.50	-0.11
	Risks to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risks might be	.803	.561	8.94 ***				2.84	1.09	0.07	-1.03
	The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained	.608	.421	7.59 ***				2.65	1.12	0.43	-0.61
	One should never psychologically or physically harm another person.	.833	.644	9.78 ***				3.15	0.91	-0.35	-0.30
	One should not perform an action which might in any way threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual.	.813	.649	9.59 ***				3.02	1.01	-0.02	-0.91
RELATIVISM	What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another.	.682	.652	2.89 ***	.852	.879	.512	3.13	0.93	-0.38	-0.33
	Moral standards should be seen as being individualistic; what one person considers to be moral may be judged to be immoral by another person.	.801	.640	2.83 ***				2.51	1.14	0.88	0.22
	Different types of morality cannot be compared as to "rightness."	.677	.582	2.89 ***				2.63	1.17	0.70	-0.06
	Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual.	.808	.659	2.84 ***				2.58	1.16	0.76	0.10
	Moral standards are simply personal rules that indicate how a person should behave and are not be applied in making judgments of others.	.688	.507	2.89 ***				2.82	1.07	0.18	-0.76
	Ethical considerations in interpersonal relations are so complex that individuals should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes.	.710	.621	2.83 ***				2.67	1.13	0.50	-0.42
	Rigidly codifying an ethical position that prevents certain types of actions could stand in the way of better human relations and adjustment.	.711	.612	2.82***				2.60	1.14	0.67	-0.11

Note: SMC: square multiple correlation; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted; ***p < .001.

The implementation and modifications made in the original EPQ model comes in line with previous research that highlight the importance of cross-cultural measurement evaluations (Bhattacharya, Chen & Liu 2009; Beebe &

Guynes, 2006; Bhattacharya, Neelam & Murthy 2018). Leveraging a tool designed to assess the ethical inclinations of fitness center managers can significantly contribute to enhancing service quality and, in turn, member retention.

Managers are responsible for crucial decisions pertaining to fitness centers' operations, including setting objectives, staff management policies, and membership attraction and engagement, oriented to the organizations' sustainability (Tsitskari & Batrakoulis, 2022). By understanding their unique ethical traits, we can formulate recommendations aimed at encouraging them to cultivate or adjust specific qualities that may prove more effective in connecting with and comprehending the needs of members. This data can also be valuable to Educational Institutions, allowing them to tailor their educational approaches to individual ethical perspectives or provide practical examples and applications for aligning individual ethics with the requirements of the fitness sector.

For example, training programs for aspiring fitness center managers that emphasize specific ethical principles, including modules on fair pricing strategies, transparent communication with members, and policies for handling customer feedback, can be designed and combined with leadership workshops which can provide them with practical tools and strategies for making ethical decisions in various situations. These workshops can focus on scenarios commonly encountered in the fitness industry, such as handling membership cancellations or addressing staff conflicts. In addition, case studies and role-playing exercises that reflect real-world ethical dilemmas faced by fitness center managers can be used in education. This hands-on approach helps individuals practice making ethical decisions in a controlled environment.

The present study additionally aimed to identify the existence of the ethics positions theory moral types. Findings reveal that among the population of Greek fitness center managers, only two distinct moral types, namely *absolutism* and *situationism*, are observed. The ethical position theory proposes that individuals' moral philosophies are shaped by their levels of idealism and relativism. Forsyth et al. (2008), as long as other researchers, also confirmed the existence of various levels of moral philosophies, leading to a classification (clustering) based on an individual's preferred ethical ideology (Angelidis & Ibrahim, 2011; Hastings & Finegan, 2011).

These results are in alignment with our study. It turns out that not only the culture of the region but possibly the culture of the industry (in our case the H&F industry) itself may significantly influence their separation into ethics positions' sub-groups. The separation of fitness centers managers into absolutists and situationists shows that there are different approaches regarding the ethical decision-making processes. These approaches are reflected when communicating ethical expectations and promoting ethical behavior within the organization. Absolutism refers to individuals who exhibit high levels of idealism and low levels of relativism, indicating a strong adherence to moral principles and a belief in universal moral standards. For instance, absolutist managers may benefit from highlighting universal moral principles and the significance of adhering to ethical standards, which, for example, in a pricing policy scenario would

involve establishing a clear and non-negotiable pricing structure based on ethical considerations with transparent and fair pricing for all clients, ensuring that everyone is charged the same rate for similar services and implementing strict policies to prevent any unethical practices, such as price gouging or hidden fees. On the other hand, situationism represents individuals with high levels of both idealism and relativism, emphasizing the importance of contextually appropriate moral evaluations and the attainment of desirable consequences. Situationist fitness managers may respond better to discussions that underscore the importance of considering the specific context and consequences of their actions. For example, when determining prices for services a situationist manager might consider factors such as the client's individual needs, goals, and financial circumstances and offer flexible pricing options or customized packages to ensure that clients receive the most appropriate and beneficial services for their specific situation. If a client experiences changes in their fitness journey or financial situation, the situationist manager may be willing to reevaluate the pricing structure to accommodate these changes.

Fitness centers, in order to address the variety of those ethical approaches and avoid future conflicts, can establish clear and comprehensive ethical guidelines and policies for their managers. These guidelines can cover areas like pricing transparency, conflict resolution procedures, and guidelines for fair treatment of staff and members, to name only a few. That way, moral evaluations from managers can be adjusted to the scope of the fitness center and may not be narrowed down. Setting such a scope into their businesses, fitness centers' owners who are often engaged also as managers can gain more perspective regarding ethics. By identifying managers with strong ethical inclinations towards member engagement and satisfaction, fitness centers can assign them roles that involve direct interaction with members, such as conducting surveys, organizing events, or providing personalized fitness advice. Also, performance evaluations for managers can incorporate ethical considerations as a key component. For example, managers could be assessed on their ability to uphold ethical standards in their interactions with both staff and members.

It is also proposed, following the above recommendations, that a system for collecting feedback from members about their experiences with fitness center managers can provide valuable insights into which ethical traits are most valued by the clientele. This information can be used to further refine training programs and performance evaluations. Encouraging managers to engage in ongoing professional development focused on ethics can help them stay updated with industry best practices and emerging ethical considerations. By implementing these practical strategies, educational institutions and fitness centers can foster a culture of ethical leadership, ultimately leading to improved service quality and member retention in the fitness industry.

Overall, our study underscores the importance of achieving construct equivalence and domain representativeness in cross-cultural research and provides support for the

use of the modified EPQ scale in the fitness centers' context, especially in Greece. Our modified EPQ scale provides a plausible instrument for assessing and monitoring the ethical orientations of fitness center managers in Greece and highlights the need for culture-specific modifications in measurement instruments.

Conclusions

The findings of the study revealed the presence of two distinct moral types among Greek fitness center managers: absolutism and situationism. Ethical training and development programs can be designed to accommodate the prevalent moral types among fitness center managers in Greece. Incorporating case studies, scenarios, and discussions that reflect real-life ethical dilemmas encountered in the fitness center industry can stimulate critical thinking and decision-making aligned with both absolutist and situationist perspectives. Such programs can facilitate the development of a more nuanced understanding of ethical decision making and enable managers to apply appropriate ethical frameworks in different situations.

Managers can also play a crucial role as ethical leaders and role models within the organization. Absolutist managers can demonstrate strong adherence to ethical principles and act as champions of moral standards. By consistently making decisions based on moral principles, even in the face of challenges or conflicts, they can inspire ethical behavior among employees. For example, when considering commitments to employees, such as fair compensation and a safe work environment, or promises made to members regarding quality of service and customer satisfaction, leaders who consistently prioritize these moral values foster a culture of integrity and trust within the organization. This, in turn, encourages employees to uphold similar ethical standards in their own actions and interactions.

Situationism managers, on the other hand, can emphasize the significance of considering the specific context and consequences of actions. They can demonstrate how to make morally sound decisions by weighing the potential outcomes and adapt their decision-making based on the unique circumstances they encounter. For instance, when faced with a difficult choice, such as allocating resources or resolving a conflict among team members, leaders can showcase the importance of considering the broader impact and the individual needs involved. This demonstration of decision-making can serve as a valuable model for employees, enabling them to navigate their own ethical dilemmas with integrity.

Creating an ethical climate and organizational culture that accommodates both absolutist and situationist perspectives is essential. Managers can foster an environment that promotes ethical decision making by encouraging open discussions about ethical dilemmas and providing channels for employees and members to seek guidance and support. In that way, they can enhance their existing ethical position

and further cultivate an ethical culture in their organizations. By acknowledging and valuing different ethical orientations, managers can respect individual differences in moral philosophies and promote ethical awareness, sensitivity, and responsible decision making. By creating opportunities for dialogue and encouraging diverse viewpoints, managers can foster a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to ethical decision making. Encouraging open conversations and appreciating diverse viewpoints, managers can foster a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to ethical decision-making. For example, in situations involving pricing policies, managers ought to actively solicit input from team members, considering different perspectives and potential consequences to establish an equitable and ethically sound strategy.

In conclusion, the modified EPQ scale developed in this study provides a suitable instrument for measuring ethical values among fitness center managers in Greece. However, in order to further advance the understanding of ethical orientations among fitness center managers, several avenues for future research can be explored.

The research conducted in Greece took place during the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EPQ instrument may be further re-evaluated to a similar population of fitness managers. It is worth noting that ethics evaluation scales have not been widely employed to assess sports professionals in general. Therefore, exploring the ethical status within the realm of professional sports could provide valuable insights and shed light on this important area.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies can be conducted to examine the predictive validity of the modified EPQ scale. By tracking ethical decision-making and behaviors over time, researchers can investigate the relationship between the ethical orientations measured by the scale and actual ethical actions or outcomes. This would provide valuable insights into the stability of ethical orientations and their impact on long-term ethical behavior. Also, comparative studies could be conducted to explore cross-cultural variations in ethical positions among fitness center managers. By comparing the moral philosophies prevalent in different societies, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of cultural influences on ethical decision-making and identify potential factors contributing to these variations. This comparative approach would contribute to a broader perspective on the role of culture in shaping ethical orientations. Exploring the role of cultural factors, such as national values and cultural dimensions, in shaping ethical positions would provide valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying cross-cultural variations specifically for H&F managers worldwide.

Further research could investigate the relationship between ethical orientations and organizational outcomes, such as employee job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Understanding how different ethical positions relate to organizational behaviors and outcomes can guide managers in developing strategies to foster a more ethical work

environment.

By addressing these research recommendations, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the ethical orientations of fitness center managers in different cultural contexts and facilitate the development of culturally sensitive ethical frameworks and interventions. This would help in promoting ethical decision-making and behavior among fitness center managers worldwide.

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