

Article

What Is the Role of Religious Commitment between an Extrovert Personality and Moral Disengagement through Prosocial/Antisocial Behaviours and Moral Identity? An Investigation on Student-Athletes

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Abstract: Moral disengagement in sports refers to the psychological process through which individuals distance themselves from the ethical implications of their actions within the sporting context. This study aims to examine the role of religious commitment between personality traits and moral disengagement and investigate the role of prosocial and antisocial behaviours and moral identity. Student-athletes were recruited from individual and team sports, including football, basketball, handball, volleyball, wrestling, combat sports, swimming, track and field, cycling, badminton, and futsal. We hypothesised that extrovert personality traits directly predict moral identity, religious commitment, and prosocial/antisocial behaviours. Extraversion predicted moral disengagement with the mediation roles of internalisation, symbolisation, religious commitment, and pro- and antisocial behaviours. Our findings provide insights into the complex relationships between personality traits, internalisation, symbolisation, religious commitment, social behaviours, and their impact on moral disengagement. They highlight the importance of considering internalisation, symbolisation, and religious commitment mediating roles in understanding the relationships between extraversion, social behaviours, and moral disengagement. Understanding the complex relationship among these factors can inform the development of tailored interventions that address individual athletes' needs and characteristics. Our study contributes to the growing body of literature on the psychological underpinnings of ethical behaviour in sports. By elucidating the roles of extraversion, moral identity, religious commitment, and social behaviours in moral disengagement, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing ethical decision-making and behaviour in student-athletes.

Keywords: student-athletes; religious commitment; moral behaviours



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1. Introduction

Recently, there has been increasing interest in understanding the diverse impacts of sports on individuals, particularly regarding physical health, social interactions, and psychological well-being. Researchers have delved into the multifaceted influence of sports on human development, including aspects such as moral values and personality traits. Notable studies have examined the determinants and patterns of sports participation across different age groups, highlighting the challenges and benefits of engaging in sports activities (Jenkin et al. 2017, 2018). There are many dynamics in the sports context that influence athletes' behaviours such as moral reasoning, moral decisions, and ethical considerations.

The integration of sports policy in promoting health and the health-promoting aspects of youth sports clubs have been highlighted, underscoring the broader implications of sports participation on public health and well-being (Mukaruzima and Jose 2019; Geidne et al. 2013). The role of moral identity in bridging the gap between moral judgement and action has also captured scholarly attention. Various studies have emphasised the importance of understanding moral motivation and commitment (Hardy and Gustova 2011; Hardy and Gustova 2005a).

Psychosocial experiences of youth in different sports activities have been scrutinised, revealing variations in factors such as physical maturation, injury risk, and expertise development across various sports activities (Evans et al. 2016; Howie et al. 2020). The intricate relationship between religiosity, prosocial behaviours, and the mediating role of moral identity has been explored, providing insights into the complex interplay between religious commitment, moral values, and ethical decision-making (Hardy and Gustova 2005b; Hardy et al. 2012).

Furthermore, the impact of physical education and physical skills development on individuals' physical and mental health has been a focal point, emphasising the need for comprehensive approaches to promoting well-being through sports and physical activities (Wang et al. 2023; Whatman 2020). The role of sports in promoting active ageing and its potential impact on physical and psychosocial well-being has been highlighted, stressing the necessity for well-designed experiments to provide causal evidence on the mental health benefits of sports (Sancassiani et al. 2018; Howie et al. 2020).

Research has also delved into the role of sports coaches in designing and delivering community sports interventions to increase physical activity and improve health, underscoring the importance of knowledge exchange activities between the community sport and public health sectors (Mansfield et al. 2018).

Extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between personality and moral disengagement in sports, revealing the intricate interplay between individual dispositions and ethical decision-making in athletic contexts. Studies have explored the influence of general personality traits, such as the Dark Triad, on moral disengagement and unethical behaviour, uncovering significant associations between personality characteristics and moral disengagement in consumer attitudes (Egan et al. 2015). Moreover, the predictive power of moral identity in doping likelihood through moral disengagement and anticipated guilt has been investigated, emphasising the role of moral identity in shaping moral disengagement tendencies among athletes (Kavussanu and Christopher 2017).

Additionally, the development and validation of the Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale have offered insights into the association between sports moral disengagement and behaviours such as rule-breaking and unsportsmanlike conduct, highlighting the relevance of personality traits in ethical decision-making within sports settings (Boardley and Kavussanu 2007). Furthermore, the influence of moral disengagement on antisocial sports behaviour has been examined, underscoring the mediating role of moral disengagement in the relationship between motivational climate and moral behaviour in youth sports (Stanger et al. 2018). The mediating and moderating effects of moral disengagement on rule-respecting behaviours and social trust have been explored, elucidating the complex interplay between personality traits, moral disengagement, and enacted behaviours (Alessandri et al. 2020).

In addition, the link between dark personality traits, anger, and moral disengagement in cyber aggression perpetration has been investigated, providing insights into the role of moral disengagement as a mediator of relationships between personality traits and aggressive behaviours in online environments (Nocera et al. 2022). Furthermore, the influence of moral disengagement on bullying and cyberbullying has been examined, emphasising the interaction of moral disengagement with psychopathic traits in predicting bullying behaviours among adolescents (Orue and Calvete 2016). Furthermore, the influence of religiosity on moral disengagement in the perpetration of incivility and academic dishonesty has been examined, providing insights into the potential impact of religious beliefs on

moral disengagement tendencies and unethical behaviours (Sunawan et al. 2023; Firdaus and Solicha 2018).

The relationship between religiosity and moral disengagement has been a subject of interest in various contexts, shedding light on the complex interplay between religious beliefs and ethical decision-making. Studies have explored the role of religiosity in amplifying the importance of moral disengagement for self-justifying prejudice and negative attitudes, highlighting the intricate relationship between religious values and moral disengagement tendencies (D'Urso et al. 2023). Additionally, the influence of religiosity on moral disengagement in the context of doping likelihood has been investigated, emphasising the mediating role of moral disengagement in the relationship between religiosity and unethical decision-making in sports settings (Kavussanu and Christopher 2017). Moreover, the relationship between athletes' values and moral disengagement in sports has been explored, revealing differences across gender, level, and years of involvement, underscoring the relevance of religiosity in shaping moral disengagement tendencies among athletes (Šukys and Aušra 2018). The relationship between prosocial and antisocial behaviours in sports has been extensively investigated, shedding light on the multifaceted influences and outcomes of athletes' conduct within athletic contexts. Studies have explored the role of coaching style, motivational climate, and moral disengagement in shaping prosocial and antisocial behaviours among athletes, emphasising the complex interplay between environmental factors and ethical decision-making in sports settings (Hodge and Chris 2011; Hodge and Gucciardi 2015). Additionally, the relationship between the moral climate in sports and the moral behaviour of young athletes has been examined, highlighting the potential impact of situational factors on prosocial and antisocial conduct in sports activities (Spruit et al. 2018).

Furthermore, the consequences of prosocial and antisocial behaviours for recipients have been investigated, providing insights into the outcomes and implications of athletes' conduct on individuals within their social environment (Al-Yaaribi et al. 2016). The mediating role of mental toughness on the relationship between self-efficacy and prosocial/antisocial behaviour in elite youth sports has been explored, underscoring the potential psychological mechanisms underlying athletes' behavioural tendencies (Ramolale et al. 2021). Moreover, the relationship between prosocial and antisocial behaviours and personality traits in team athletes has been examined, revealing associations between individual dispositions and behavioural tendencies within sports contexts (Çutuk et al. 2021).

These studies contribute to understanding the intricate relationship between prosocial and antisocial behaviours in sports, highlighting the multifaceted influences on ethical decision-making and conduct within athletic environments. The associations between personality traits and religiosity and their predictive potential in shaping prosocial and antisocial behaviours have yet to be extensively investigated within the sports context. However, existing research provides valuable insights into the potential interplay between these factors. For instance, studies have examined the relationship between values, achievement orientations, and moral attitudes in youth sports, shedding light on the value-expressive function of attitudes and their role in predicting moral attitudes (Lee et al. 2008). Additionally, research has explored the relationship between the moral climate of sports and the moral behaviours of young athletes, highlighting the potential impact of situational factors on prosocial and antisocial conduct in sports activities (Spruit et al. 2018). Furthermore, the development and validation of the Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale have provided insights into the association between moral disengagement and the intention to use doping products, emphasising the relevance of moral disengagement in ethical decision-making within sports settings (Boardley and Kavussanu 2007). This study aims to investigate the effect of religious commitment on moral disengagement in student-athletes; identify the roles of personality traits, pro/antisocial behaviours, and moral identity in this relationship; and thereby better understand athletes' moral decision-making processes and ethical behaviours.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

We recruited student-athletes from diverse sports, including football, basketball, handball, volleyball, wrestling, combat sports, swimming, track and field, cycling, badminton, and futsal. The participants had an average age of 21.41 years (SD = 3.13) and 6.79 years (SD = 3.67) of experience in their respective sports, indicating a broad range of expertise and skill levels. The study group comprised 293 female athletes (40.6%) and 429 male athletes (59.4%), reflecting a balanced gender representation in the sample. Notably, 16% of the participants reported that they were currently competing for the Turkish national team in their sports, highlighting the high level of athletic achievement within the sample. This diverse and accomplished group of student-athletes provided a rich dataset for examining the impact of religious commitment on moral disengagement and the roles of personality, prosocial/antisocial behaviours, and moral identity in this context.

2.2. Prosocial and Antisocial Behaviours

Prosocial and antisocial behaviours exhibited towards teammates and opponents were assessed using the Prosocial and Antisocial Behaviour in Sports Scale (PABSS), a 20-item questionnaire (29, 45). Participants rated the frequency of engaging in various behaviours on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). [Sezen-Balçıkanlı \(2013\)](#) established the construct validity and internal consistency of the scale, reporting coefficients of 0.72 for prosocial behaviours towards opponents, 0.70 for prosocial behaviours towards teammates, 0.75 for antisocial behaviours towards opponents, and 0.72 for antisocial behaviours towards teammates. [Table 1](#) summarises the scale's alpha values and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results. Higher scores in prosocial behaviours towards teammates and opponents indicate a greater propensity for such behaviours. In comparison, higher scores in antisocial behaviours towards teammates and opponents suggest a greater likelihood of exhibiting antisocial behaviours.

Table 1. Summary of bivariate correlations, means, standard deviations, reliability, skewness, and kurtosis scores.

	X ± sd	Skewness	Kurtosis	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Extraversion	0.66 ± 0.29	−0.59	−0.61	0.69	-					
2. Internalisation	5.80 ± 1.12	−0.89	0.13	0.71	0.264 **	-				
3. Symbolisation	4.61 ± 1.25	−0.26	−0.05	0.79	0.179 **	0.200 **	-			
4. Religious Commitment	2.77 ± 1.03	0.11	−0.77	0.93	−0.063	−0.018	0.255 **	-		
5. Antisocial Behaviours	2.49 ± 0.84	0.48	−0.15	0.86	−0.126	−0.392 **	0.005	0.166 **	-	
6. Prosocial Behaviours	4.04 ± 0.82	0.31	10.40	0.70	0.203 **	0.398 **	0.230 **	0.047	−0.080 *	-
7. Moral Disengagement	2.47 ± 0.86	0.76	1.83	0.75	−0.180 **	−0.356 **	−0.011	0.193 **	0.627	−0.147

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

2.3. Moral Identity

The two dimensions of moral identity, Internalization and Symbolization, were evaluated using a 10-item Turkish version of the Moral Identity Scale (MIS) (57). [Aquino and Reed \(2002\)](#) developed the scale and provided evidence of its construct validity. Participants rated each item on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale assesses individuals' internalisation and symbolisation of moral identity. [Yılmaz and Yılmaz \(2015\)](#) reported internal consistency coefficients of 0.76 for internalisation and 0.77 for symbolisation. [Table 2](#) presents the alpha values and fit indices of the scale.

Table 2. The standardised and standardised direct effects of the study variables.

Independent	Dependent	Unstandardised Estimates	Standardised Estimates	<i>p</i>
Extraversion	Internalisation	1.010	0.264	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Extraversion	Symbolisation	0.765	0.179	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Extraversion	Religious Commitment	−0.312	−0.089	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Internalisation	Religious Commitment	−0.146	−0.158	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Symbolisation	Religious Commitment	0.251	0.304	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Internalisation	Antisocial Behaviours	−0.286	−0.380	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Symbolisation	Prosocial Behaviours	0.100	0.151	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Religious Commitment	Antisocial Behaviours	0.134	0.164	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Religious Commitment	Prosocial Behaviours	0.013	0.016	<i>p</i> > 0.05
Internalisation	Prosocial Behaviours	0.271	0.370	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Symbolisation	Antisocial Behaviours	0.026	0.039	<i>p</i> > 0.001 **
Religious Commitment	Moral Disengagement	0.102	0.121	<i>p</i> < 0.05
Antisocial Behaviours	Moral Disengagement	0.607	0.592	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **
Prosocial Behaviours	Moral Disengagement	−0.106	−0.101	<i>p</i> < 0.001 **

** *p* < 0.01.

2.4. Personality Traits

Three personality dimensions were measured using the Turkish version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised/Abbreviated Form (EPQR-A) (Francis et al. 1992). Participants indicated their agreement with each of the 20 items using “yes” or “no” responses. Karanci et al. (2007) established the construct validity and reported Kuder–Richardson alpha coefficients of 0.78 for extraversion, 0.65 for neuroticism, and 0.42 for psychoticism. Table 3 displays the alpha values and fit indices of the questionnaire.

Table 3. Indirect effects of predictors on outcome variables (user-defined estimands).

Predictor(s)	Mediator(s)	Dependent	Estimate (95% C.I.)	<i>p</i>
Extraversion	Internalisation and Religious Commitment	Moral Disengagement	−0.015 (−0.029–−0.006)	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Extraversion	Symbolisation, Religious Commitment, and Antisocial Behaviours	Moral Disengagement	0.016 (0.007–0.029)	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Extraversion	Symbolisation and Religious Commitment	Moral Disengagement	0.020 (0.009–0.036)	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Extraversion	Religious Commitment and Antisocial Behaviours	Moral Disengagement	−0.025 (−0.055–−0.005)	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Extraversion	Religious Commitment	Moral Disengagement	−0.032 (−0.072–−0.007)	<i>p</i> < 0.001

2.5. Religious Commitment:

Religious commitment was assessed using a scale developed by Worthington et al. (2003), consisting of 10 items that measure intrapersonal and interpersonal religious commitment. Akin et al. (2015) translated and validated the scale for use with Turkish participants. Responses were given on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5. Akin et al. (2015) reported an internal consistency coefficient of 0.85 for the scale.

2.6. Moral Disengagement in Sport

The tendency towards moral disengagement was evaluated using the Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale developed by Boardley and Kavussanu (2007) and translated and validated for the Turkish context by Gürpınar (2015). This scale consists of 8 items rated from 1 to 5. Gürpınar (2015) reported an internal consistency coefficient of 0.78, with fit indexes from structural equation modelling indicating good model fit.

2.7. Procedure

The present study investigated the effect of religious commitment on the moral disengagement of student-athletes, considering the role of personality, prosocial/antisocial behaviours, and moral identity. This research received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board of [University/Institution], ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Participants were recruited from various educational institutions, including state and private universities, with the assistance of coaches and academic advisors. Initial communication explaining the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of responses, and the voluntary nature of participation was sent to potential participants and their coaches or advisors. Upon receiving consent, participants were given a link to an online survey or scheduled for face-to-face data collection based on their preference. The online survey was hosted on a secure platform, Google Forms, and participants could complete it at their convenience. The face-to-face data collection was conducted in quiet and private settings, such as empty classrooms or offices, to ensure participants' comfort and confidentiality. The survey included measures of religious commitment, moral disengagement, personality traits, prosocial/antisocial behaviours, and moral identity. Demographic information, including age, gender, sports participation, and level of competition, was also collected. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study without any consequences.

2.8. Data Analysis

The data underwent a comprehensive screening process encompassing identifying and treating outliers and assessing normality in SPSS 25. The subsequent analytical procedures contained a series of techniques, including descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and bivariate correlations, all executed to elucidate the interrelationships between the variables at hand in SPSS (Denis 2018; Khatun 2021; Kwak and Jong 2017). To facilitate these analyses, composite mean scores were computed to represent the personality traits, religious commitment, moral disengagement, prosocial/antisocial behaviours, and moral identity. These scores served as pivotal reference points for conducting subsequent statistical evaluations. The Pearson correlation coefficient, employed within the SPSS 25 software, was deployed to quantitatively scrutinise the magnitude and direction of associations between the distinct variables, thereby shedding light on the intricate relationships encapsulated within the dataset.

We used AMOS 24 to test our hypothesised model (see Figure 1). We used the maximum likelihood estimator and examined χ^2/df (chi-square and degrees-of-freedom ratio), TLI (Tucker–Lewis Index), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), RMSEA (Root-Mean-Squared Error of Approximation), SRMR (Standardised Root Mean Residuals). As Mardia's coefficient was 27.304 with a critical ratio of 32.680, the data depart from multivariate normality. Therefore, we utilised the bootstrapping method procedure with 5000 bootstrap replication samples to calculate more accurate parameter estimates (Byrne 2016).

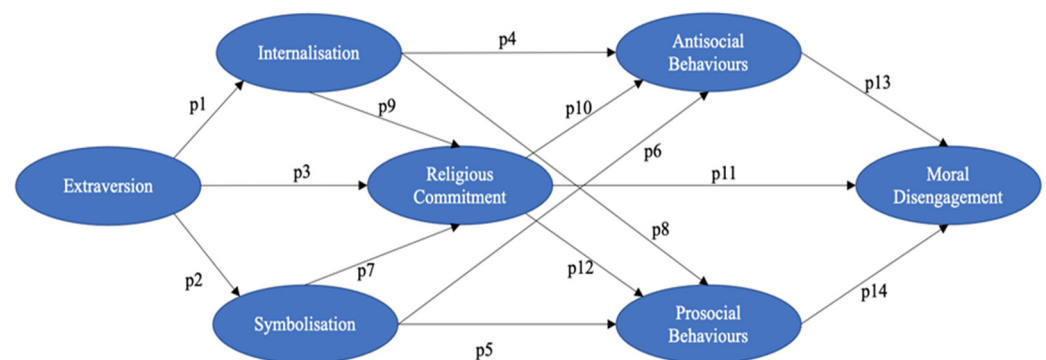


Figure 1. Hypothesised path analysis of the prediction of moral disengagement by extraversion through moral identity, religious commitment, and prosocial and antisocial behaviours.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the research variables' mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, skewness, Cronbach's alpha, and correlation coefficients. The mean score for extraversion is 0.66. Internalisation has a mean score of 5.80, suggesting a high level of internalisation within the 1 to 7 range. Symbolisation has a mean score of 4.61, indicating a moderate to high level of symbolic moral identity expression within the 1 to 7 range. Religious commitment has a mean score of 2.77, suggesting a moderate level of commitment within the 1 to 5 range. The mean score for antisocial behaviours is 2.49, indicating a low to moderate level of such behaviours within the 1 to 5 range. Prosocial behaviours have a mean score of 4.04, suggesting a moderate to high level of prosocial behaviour within the 1 to 5 range. Lastly, moral disengagement has a mean score of 2.47, indicating a low to moderate level of moral disengagement within the 1 to 5 range.

Extraversion exhibits a positive correlation with internalisation ($r = 0.264, p < 0.01$) and prosocial behaviours ($r = 0.203, p < 0.01$), suggesting that extraversion is associated with higher levels of internalisation of moral identity and prosocial behaviours. Internalisation is positively correlated with symbolisation ($r = 0.200, p < 0.01$) and prosocial behaviours ($r = 0.398, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of internalisation are associated with higher levels of symbolisation and prosocial behaviours. Symbolisation is positively correlated with religious commitment ($r = 0.255, p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher levels of symbolisation are associated with higher levels of religious commitment. Antisocial behaviours are negatively correlated with internalisation ($r = -0.392, p < 0.01$) and positively correlated with religious commitment ($r = 0.166, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of internalisation are associated with lower levels of antisocial behaviours. In comparison, higher levels of religious commitment are associated with higher levels of antisocial behaviours. Prosocial behaviours are negatively correlated with antisocial behaviours ($r = -0.080, p < 0.05$), suggesting that higher prosocial behaviours are associated with lower antisocial behaviours. Moral disengagement is negatively correlated with internalisation ($r = -0.356, p < 0.01$) and positively correlated with religious commitment ($r = 0.193, p < 0.01$) and antisocial behaviours ($r = 0.627, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of internalisation are associated with lower levels of moral disengagement. In comparison, higher levels of religious commitment and antisocial behaviours are associated with higher levels of moral disengagement. The parameter estimates of the hypothesised model have been displayed in Figure 2.

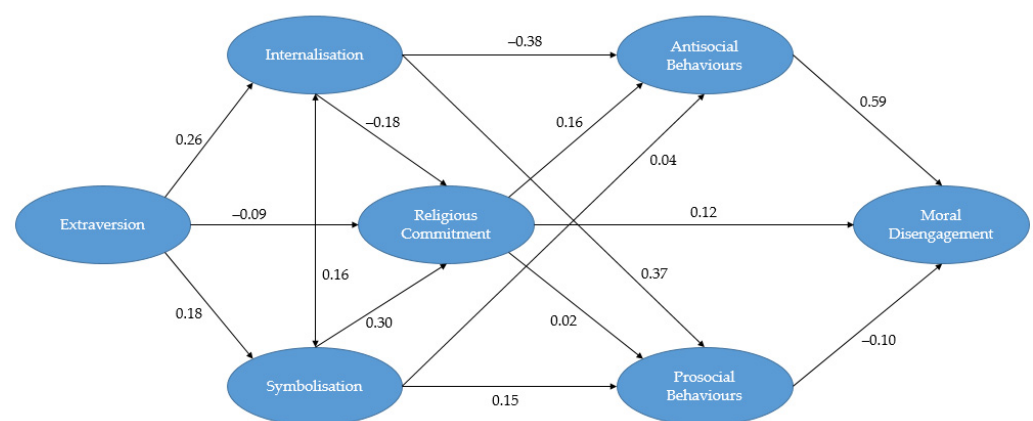


Figure 2. Standardised estimates for the hypothesised path of the prediction of moral disengagement by extraversion through moral identity, religious commitment, and prosocial and antisocial behaviours.

The results are summarised in Table 2, displaying the study variables' standardised and unstandardised direct effects. Extraversion, characterised by sociability, assertiveness, and a tendency to seek stimulation, was found to have significant positive associations

with the internalisation of moral identity ($\beta = 1.010, p < 0.001$) and symbolisation of moral identity ($\beta = 0.765, p < 0.001$). This suggests that extroverted individuals are more inclined to internalise and symbolise their moral identity. However, extraversion was associated with a decrease in religious commitment ($\beta = -0.312, p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals with higher extraversion may exhibit lower levels of religious commitment. Regarding the internalisation of moral identity, it was observed to be associated with a decrease in religious commitment ($\beta = -0.146, p < 0.001$) and antisocial behaviours ($\beta = -0.286, p < 0.001$), but an increase in prosocial behaviours ($\beta = 0.271, p < 0.001$). This suggests that individuals who internalise their moral identity are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours and less likely to engage in antisocial behaviours or exhibit high levels of religious commitment. Symbolisation of moral identity was associated with an increase in religious commitment ($\beta = 0.251, p < 0.001$) and prosocial behaviours ($\beta = 0.100, p < 0.001$), while its association with antisocial behaviours was negligible ($\beta = 0.026, p > 0.001$). This indicates that individuals who symbolise their moral identity are more likely to exhibit higher levels of religious commitment and engage in prosocial behaviours.

Additionally, this study found that religious commitment was associated with an increase in antisocial behaviours ($\beta = 0.134, p < 0.001$) but had a non-significant association with prosocial behaviours ($\beta = 0.013, p > 0.05$). Religious commitment was also associated with an increase in moral disengagement ($\beta = 0.102, p < 0.05$), suggesting that higher levels of religious commitment may be related to increased levels of moral disengagement. Antisocial behaviours were strongly associated with increased moral disengagement ($\beta = 0.607, p < 0.001$). In contrast, prosocial behaviours were associated with a decrease in moral disengagement ($\beta = -0.106, p < 0.001$), indicating that antisocial behaviours are related to elevated levels of moral disengagement. In contrast, prosocial behaviours are related to reduced levels of moral disengagement. The model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 4.08$, TLI = 0.92, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.03) suggest a good fit between the hypothesised model and the observed data.

This study investigated the indirect effects of various predictors on outcome variables through multiple mediators using structural equation modelling (SEM). The results are summarised in Table 3, which displays the user-defined estimands, including the estimates and 95% confidence intervals (C.I.) for the indirect effects.

A significant negative indirect effect of extraversion through internalisation and religious commitment on moral disengagement (-0.015) indicates that higher levels of extraversion, through increased internalisation and decreased religious commitment, are associated with lower levels of moral disengagement. A significant positive indirect effect of extraversion through symbolisation, religious commitment, and antisocial behaviours on moral disengagement (0.016) suggests that higher levels of extraversion, through increased symbolisation, increased religious commitment, and increased antisocial behaviours, are associated with increased moral disengagement. A significant positive indirect effect of extraversion through symbolisation and religious commitment on moral disengagement (0.020) indicates that higher levels of extraversion, through increased symbolisation and religious commitment, are associated with increased moral disengagement. A significant negative indirect effect of extraversion through religious commitment and antisocial behaviours on moral disengagement (-0.025) suggests that higher levels of extraversion, through decreased religious commitment and decreased antisocial behaviours, are associated with lower levels of moral disengagement. A significant negative indirect effect of extraversion through religious commitment on moral disengagement (-0.032) indicates that as extraversion increases, religious commitment decreases, associated with a decrease in moral disengagement. These findings provide insights into the complex relationships between personality traits, internalisation, symbolisation, religious commitment, social behaviours, and their impact on moral disengagement. They highlight the importance of considering internalisation, symbolisation, and religious commitment mediating roles in understanding the relationships between extraversion, social behaviours, and moral disengagement.

4. Discussion

The present study provides valuable insights into the interplay between extraversion, moral identity, religious commitment, prosocial and antisocial behaviours, and moral disengagement in student-athletes. Our findings highlight the significant role of personality traits and moral identity in shaping ethical behaviour and decision-making in sports contexts. One of the notable observations from our study is the positive association between extraversion and the internalisation and symbolisation of moral identity. This suggests that extroverted individuals are more likely to embrace and express their moral values, aligning with previous research that links extraversion to higher levels of moral reasoning and ethical behaviour (Bedi et al. 2015; Yildiz et al. 2018). Studies have shown that extraversion is associated with ethical and transformational leadership outcomes, indicating a positive relationship between extraversion and ethical behaviours (Bedi et al. 2015; Kalshoven et al. 2010).

Furthermore, extraversion influences power, achievement values, and individualised moral foundations, suggesting a connection between extraversion and ethical values (Athota et al. 2019).

However, it is essential to note that extraversion, when combined with specific traits like high assertiveness and low emotionality, can lead to negative consequences in organisations (Vries 2018). While extroverts may exhibit ethical behaviours, it is crucial to consider the potential impact of extraversion on leadership styles, such as the likelihood of abusive supervisory behaviours among leaders with high extroversion (Skandrani et al. 2021; Xu et al. 2010). However, the negative association between extroversion and religious commitment raises intriguing questions about the relationship between personality traits and religious involvement. It is possible that extroverted individuals may seek social interactions and stimulation outside religious contexts, or they may perceive religious commitment as constraining their social freedom (Saroglou 2010).

The negative association between the internalisation of moral identity and antisocial behaviours supports the notion that a strong moral identity protects against unethical conduct (Aquino and Reed 2002). Moreover, the positive association between the internalisation of moral identity and prosocial behaviours underscores the importance of internalised moral values in promoting positive social interactions and altruistic behaviour. The relationship between internalised moral identity and unethical conduct has been supported by research indicating a negative association (Detert et al. 2008). Additionally, studies have shown a positive association between internalised moral identity and prosocial behaviours (Kromerova and Saulius 2018).

Interestingly, our findings reveal a complex relationship between religious commitment, moral disengagement, and social behaviours. While religious commitment was associated with increased antisocial behaviours and moral disengagement, the symbolisation of moral identity was associated with increased religious commitment and prosocial behaviours. This suggests that expressing moral identity through symbolisation may mitigate the adverse effects of religious commitment on moral disengagement and antisocial behaviours. Individuals who symbolise their moral identity may be more likely to integrate their religious beliefs with their moral values, leading to more ethical behaviour. Studies have shown that moral disengagement is not a fixed trait and can be influenced by external factors over time. This suggests that interventions and training programs could reduce moral disengagement tendencies (Moore et al. 2012).

Additionally, moral identity has been found to predict how individuals evaluate the behaviour of others, indicating its role in shaping moral judgments and behaviours (Aquino et al. 2011). Furthermore, the interaction between moral emotion and moral identity has been implicated in predicting moral conduct, highlighting the complex interplay between emotional and identity factors in ethical decision-making (Ding et al. 2018). Moreover, moral identity symbolisation has been associated with motivating prosocial behaviour through recognition and internalisation processes, suggesting that recognising and internalising moral identity can encourage individuals to engage in altruistic actions (Winterich

et al. 2013). On the other hand, moral disengagement has been linked to guilt following unethical behaviours, indicating a potential emotional toll on individuals who exhibit moral disengagement tendencies (Ogunfowora et al. 2022). In conclusion, the synthesis of these studies emphasises the importance of understanding the interplay between religious commitment, moral identity, moral disengagement, and social behaviours. It underscores the potential for interventions to mitigate moral disengagement, the predictive power of moral identity on behaviour, and the emotional consequences of moral disengagement. By recognising these dynamics, interventions and educational programs can be tailored to promote ethical behaviour and reduce moral disengagement tendencies.

The strong association between antisocial behaviours and moral disengagement highlights the role of moral disengagement as a psychological mechanism that facilitates unethical conduct by disengaging moral self-regulatory processes (Bandura 1999). Conversely, the negative association between prosocial behaviours and moral disengagement emphasises the protective role of prosocial behaviours in maintaining moral standards and preventing moral disengagement. Our study's findings have several implications for sports psychology and sports ethics. Interventions to enhance moral identity and reduce moral disengagement could effectively promote ethical behaviour among athletes. Coaches and sports organisations should consider incorporating moral education and character development programs into their training to foster a strong sense of moral identity and ethical conduct in athletes.

5. Conclusions

Understanding the complex relationship between personality traits, moral identity, religious commitment, and social behaviours can inform the development of tailored interventions that address individual athletes' specific needs and characteristics. For example, interventions targeting extroverted athletes might focus on enhancing the internalisation and symbolisation of moral identity to promote prosocial behaviours and reduce antisocial behaviours. Our study contributes to the growing body of literature on the psychological underpinnings of ethical behaviour in sports. By elucidating the roles of extraversion, moral identity, religious commitment, and social behaviours in moral disengagement, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing ethical decision-making and behaviour in student-athletes. Future research should continue to explore these relationships in diverse athletic populations and examine the effectiveness of interventions designed to enhance moral identity and reduce moral disengagement in promoting ethical behaviour in sports. The main limitation of our study was that we included athletes from individual and team sports. Individual and team sports contexts have unique psychological dynamics in nature, and these dynamics can affect perceptions in different ways. Future studies can include team and individual athletes separately. Moreover, our participants were not categorized as elite and nonelite athletes. This limitation can be considered when testing similar models.

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