

Aggression And Violence In Sports, Its Effects On Sports Performance

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Abstract

Aggression and violence have been the part of human psychology and its essence has been woven in the very nature of the social animal. Sports sociologists have always been showing their concern about the ill effects of the phenomenon of aggression and violence as it has been entirely against the soft spirit of sports and recreation. This research study is undertaken to evaluate the existing literature, examining the possible causes of the prevalence of the violent behavior and to suggest practical preventive measures for controlling and curbing this menace. Aggression and violence in sports are the two different forms of hostile behavior and they both are associated with the personal vested interest of the person by inflicting harm to the opponent. Main focus of the study was to evaluate the effect of violence upon sports participation. So far, it has taken toll in terms of lives, injuries and damage to the property at large scale. Research has confirmed a number of measures which may prove productive in controlling aggression as well as violence in sports. These measure include effective role of media in discouraging violent behavior among the fans, strict compliance of rules and regulations of the game, affective surveillance system and stopping the suspects from entering the gathering. In addition to that, timely, unbiased and fair decision of the referee, level playing field for both sides and prompt supervision of the proceedings of the game are a few steps that may eradicate the menace of aggression and violence in the field of sports.

Keywords: Aggression, Violence, Behavior, Sports, Player, Competition, Tolerance.

Introduction

Aggression and violence have been the part of human psychology and its essence has been woven in the very nature of the social animal. This phenomenon is often reflected in the shape of individual difference during our mutual interaction in everyday life. On one hand, there is polite, submissive, caring, tolerant and accommodative behaviour and simultaneously on the other there is violent and aggressive behaviour which can equally be observed in the re-action of the competitors, spectators, administrators, fans and supporters to a certain stimulus. This stimulus have a number of reasons and it may be either the decision of a referee, dominating performance of the rivals, any action or gesture of the opposing ones, frustrating performance of the own side and so on. Sports sociologists have always been showing their concern about the ill effects of the phenomenon of aggression and violence as it has been entirely against the soft spirit of sports and recreation. Sáenz et al. (2015) have concluded that aggression and violence have deteriorating social effect in everyday life. Aggression and violence may be termed as the unusual and unprovoked action of a person or group directed towards imposing one's own improvised state of happenings by unlawful means. Fortier, Parent, & Lessard, (2020) have found that aggression is the physical action aimed to disrupt the normal proceedings of the activity by hurting, injuring or influencing the rival. Aggression and violence are the ultimate result of the faulty and illegal psychological state with the intension to divert the situation in one's favour. Its occurrence in sports may certainly have negative consequences and it may endanger the safety of the competitors as well as spectators. Literally, the word aggression reflects behavioural aspect of feelings whereas violence is somewhat linked with the unprovoked physical action. The term aggression stems back from the Latin word "Aggressionem" meaning assault or attack and it was initially used in 1912 for describing opposing or hostile behaviour by a person or

group (<https://www.vocabulary.com> › dictionary › aggression). So for as the term violence is concerned, it too is intentional harmful violent physical action of the stakeholder for attaining their vested interest and desired objectives (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_in_sports). Violence in sports refers to the harmful, illegal and dangerous physical course of action in respect of all the stakeholders including players, spectators, fans and other concerned ones resulting in physical hurt and injury (<https://studycorgi.com/the-issue-of-violence-in-sports>). However, there exists disagreement among the sports sociologists and sports psychologists upon the universally acceptable definition of the term aggression (Dias, Corte-Real, Cruz, and Fonseca, 2013). Consequently there seems to be scarcity of literature focusing the aggression as pivot for the research studies. Kimble, Russo, Bergman, and Galindo (2010) have affirmed that the issue of aggression and its associated issues have partially been ignored in systematic studies. Working on the same lines, Parent et al. (2019) argue to examine the issue of aggression while taking into account the phenomenon of anger which works as the precursor for aggressive behaviour. A number of causative factors like dominating performance of the rival, any decision of the referee, behaviour of the opposing fans etc. may trigger the state of anger on which alternately reflect in shape of aggression and violence (Maxwell, Visek, and Moores, 2009). In simple words, aggression and violence may be either verbal, physical or instrumental, and in either case, it may inflict mental, psychological or physical hurt or injury or may prove fatal and take toll of the life. In general perspectives the story of aggression and violence revolves around the feelings of anger, frustration, fear, pain, agony of defeat, revenge, personal likings and honour of role models. In addition to the above, there are a number of environmental factors like having weapon, alcoholism, use of drugs, harsh temperature, improper arrangements, noise and biased

decision of the official may lead to trigger the feelings of aggression.

As a matter of fact, sports sociologists have concluded that there are three different dimensions having linkage with the onset of the feelings of aggression and violence in one way or the other; these are:

- (a) Nature and popularity of the activity
- (b) Management for the conduct of the activity
- (c) Behaviour and lifestyle of the fans and stakeholders

One thing is decided that, despite foolproof arrangements, complete control over the occurrence of the incidents or any untoward happening can never be fully guaranteed. However, to prevent and minimize the chances of occurrence of mishaps and violent activity inside and outside the field of playing, the role of the aforementioned three factors has always been decisive.

Effect of Aggression and Violence on Performance

Literature has confirmed that inclination of the player towards aggression has negative correlation with the sports performance; the more pro-aggression is the behaviour of the player the poorer will be their performance (Olhert, Rau, & Allroggen, 2019). In case of team event, aggressive behaviour of one team-mate may deteriorate performance of the complete squad. Fear of defeat and poor performance threatens the

personal prestige of the self-conscious players which alternately instigate the players to use the weapon of violence and aggression (Mountjoy, 2019). As a matter of common observation, when the game is closing towards its end, behaviour of the players of the weaker side showing poor performance turn more violent and aggressive and hostile. Kerr, Willson & Stirling (2019) has concluded that during the closing hours of the game, players of the week side presume the normal action of the rivals as to cause harm or hurt to them therefore they begin to respond with aggressive and intense behaviour causing injury to them. Literature has confirmed that in the event of closer is the level of performance, there will be lesser chances of aggression and vice versa Jeckell, Copenhaver, & Diamond (2018). With the passage of time, the level of reputation, popularity and playing status of the player goes higher and higher. In many cases, on account of personal ego, a player does not accept the fair and legal win of the opponent and tries to avert the situation otherwise by any means. It results in disregard for the established rules regulation and tradition of the game as personal ego is preferred over the spirit of the game (Hamby et al. 2017). The history of sports has a number of fatal incidents of aggression and violence in the field of sports which have taken toll in shape of many human lives and leaving behind hundreds of injured. Let us have a look at the figures in the following two tables which reflect the true horrible story of the situation:

Table 1: Incidents resulting in Human Casualties during 1960-2000

Year	Competition	Sport	Venue	Death/ Injured
1964	Tokyo Olympic final qualifying match	Soccer	Lima, Peru	Deaths 318 Injures 500
1967	Keyserispor & Sivasspor	Soccer	Keyseri, Turkey	Deaths 44 Injures 600
1971	Rangers Games	Soccer	Glasgow, Scotland	Deaths 66 Injures 140
1971	Unspecified	Soccer	Salvador, Brazil	Deaths 04 Injures 1500

1972	Summer Olympics	Olympics	Munich, West Germany	Deaths 12 Injures 00
1974	Zalamek SC & Dukla Prague	Soccer	Cairo, Egypt	Deaths 50 Injures 50
1975	Canadian & USSR Youth Team Games	Soccer	Moscow, USSR	Deaths 20 Injures 00
1981	AEK Athens Match	Soccer	Piraeus Greece	Deaths 24 Injures 54
1982	UEFA Cup	Soccer	Russia	Deaths 66 Injures 340
1985	European Cup Final	Soccer	Brussels, Belgium	Deaths 39 Injures 400
1987	Unspecified	Soccer	Tripoli, Libya	Deaths 02 Injures 16
1988	Nepak vs Bangladesh Match	Soccer	Katmandu, Nepal	Deaths 93 Injures 100
1989	Liverpool vs Notingham Forest Match	Soccer	England	Deaths 96 Injures 766
1991	Kaizer Chiefs vs Orlando Pirates Match	Soccer	South Africa	Deaths 42 Injures 50
1996	Guatemala vs Costa Rico Match	Soccer	Guatemala City, Guatemala	Deaths 83 Injures 140

Summary: Total 4959 deaths and 4656 injured in 15 recorded incidents during 1960-2000

Table 2: Incidents resulting in Human Casualties during 2000-2020

Year	Competition	Sport	Venue	Death/ Injured
2000	Unspecified	Soccer	Morovia, Liberia	Deaths 03 Injures 08
2000	World Cup Qualifying Match	Soccer	Harare, Zimbabwe	Deaths 12 Injures 08
2000	Soccer Championship Match	Soccer	Brazil	Deaths 00 Injures 200
2001	Kaizer Chiefs vs Orlando Pirates Match	Soccer	Johannesburg, South Africa	Deaths 43 Injures 80
2001	Accra Hearts vs Asante Kotoko	Baseball	Ghana, Africa	Deaths 127 Injures 00
2004	Boston Red Sox Game	Baseball	USA	Deaths 02 Injures 00
2009	Angel's Game Opening Day	Baseball	USA	Deaths 00 Injures 01
2009	Philadelphia Phillies vs Cardinal Game	Baseball	USA	Deaths 01 Injures 00
2010	BlackburnRovers Match	Soccer	England	Deaths 01 Injures 00
2010	AFC Leap vs Gor Mahia	Soccer	Kenya	Deaths 07 Injures 50

2011	South Asian Games Final	Soccer	Indonesia	Deaths 02 Injures 00
2012	Al-Masry and Al-Ahly Match	Soccer	Egypt	Deaths 70 Injures 1000
2014	Santa Cruz vs Parana Match	Soccer	Brazil	Deaths 01 Injures 00
2014	ASV Club vs Tout Puis. Maze.	Soccer	Kinshasa, Congo	Deaths 15 Injures 20
2015	Zamalek and ENPPI Match	Soccer	Cyro, Egypt	Deaths 28 Injures 25
2017	Sanat Rita Cassia FC vs Rec. do L.	Soccer	Angola, South Africa	Deaths 17 Injures 59
2017	Orlando Pirates & Kaizer Chiefs Match	Soccer	Johannesburg, South Africa	Deaths 02 Injures 17
2017	Unspecified	Soccer	Dakar	Deaths 08 Injures 60
2017	Unspecified	Soccer	Uige, Angola	Deaths 17 Injures 24
2017	Juventus vs Real Madrid Match	Soccer	Turin, Italy	Deaths 02 Injures 1600
2018	African Championship League	Soccer	Luanda, Angola	Deaths 05 Injures 00
2019	Unspecified	Soccer	Madagascar, Africa	Deaths 16 Injures 101
2019	Motagua vs Olympia	Soccer	Honduras	Deaths 04 Injures 10

Summary: Total 391 deaths and 3263 injured in 23 recorded incidents during 2000-2020

Objectives of the Study

1. Initial objective of the study was to examine the available literature and to evaluate the possible reasons of violent behavior among the players.
2. Second objective was to suggest practical measures to eradicate the menace of aggression and violence in sports.

Literature Review

Aggressive and violent behaviour of a person is more or less linked with the psychological affiliation of that person showing aggression and violence. A research study conducted in Iran having population of the Football players has confirmed that aggressive behaviour

amongst the spectators, fans as well as other stakeholders is directly connected with the intensity of the spirit of their association and closeness with the players they like (Jadambaa et al., 2019). Literature has confirmed that there exists lack of proximity between the approach of male and female towards the concept of aggression and violence. A similar study examined the perception of 462 Czech fans representing both genders towards violence and aggression, has concluded that findings reveal that perception and behavior differ on the bases of gender and there the study reflected no association between the male and female Football fans Fortier, Parent, & Lessard, (2020). Since there are a number of causative factor responsible for onset of aggressive and violent behavior, each one needs to be

addressed separately to properly curb the menace of violence. Kerr & Stirling (2019) conducted a study to evaluate the relationship between the use of alcohol and violent behavior among the spectators, the study concluded that violent behavior was a complex phenomenon, caused by multiple factors and alone use of alcohol did not trigger it independently. As a matter of fact, there are manifold reasons behind aggressive and violent behavior and its reasons vary from case to case. In a study Mountjoy (2019) found a number of motivators triggering violent behavior among fans like alcoholism, affiliation and loyalty with the team and fear of defeat.

How to Curb Aggression and Violence in sports

As discussed earlier, roots of the issue of aggressive and violent behavior are linked with the social setup and cultural norms of the society, nature and intensity of the fanaticism, respect for law, lifestyle and affiliation with the sports and so on. Consolidated and collaborated efforts in true sense are required to be followed among all stakeholders in terms of violence eradication policies, rules and regulations. Each section of the stakeholders either they are parents, fans, spectators, mediemen, administrators, coaches, personnels of the law enforcing agencies; has to play their role in curbing the menace of violence in sports. To control the nuisance, multidimensional efforts are required for proper coping this evil including introduction of modern technology and ensuring enforcement of the law and controlling use of alcoholism among fans (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019). There is scarcity of evidence to conclude that which one is the most dominant cause responsible for the spectators violence and it may be triggered by either factor. Olhert, Rau, & Allroggen (2019) conducted a study examining the reasons for violent behavior have confirmed that winning has been the triggering cause for hostile and violent behavior among rugby and football fans. Jacobs, Smits & Knoppers, (2016) has found that persistent and strict and compliance

of the eradication strategies prove to be very effective in countering fans' violence in European Union. Examining the available literature regarding the issue of aggression and violence in sports, a few practical suggestions are extracted to curb it and render the sports arena clear of this menace. These suggestions are:

1. To curb and control the violence, global efforts are required at all fronts including administrative, social, cultural, moral, judicial and managerial level.
2. All forms of media channels should be made responsible for their role in controlling violence in sports. They should be made accountable for their irresponsible media coverage in terms of glamorizing the acts or incidents of violence by the players, fans or other stakeholders.
3. Entry of the drunk fans or other stakeholders to the venue or taking alcohol to the arena of competition should be banned.
4. Taking any instrument to the venue with the intention of violence, should be stopped at the entrance.
5. Accommodative and tolerant behavior on part of the coach, Manager and captain can educate the players and fans to avoid violent behavior in sports.
6. Prior to taking part in the competition, a counselling session should be conducted to ensure positive sentiments among the players during the course of playing.
7. Players showing tolerant and resistant behavior during critical situation should be encouraged and honoured with substantial public recognition.
8. Strict compliance of the rules and ensuring stern penalties to the wrongdoers may improve the worsening situation.
9. Close observance of the spectators by the close-circuit cameras and other surveillance technologies will be

another positive step in controlling violence in sports.

10. Focus should be placed upon education of the young generation and mass awareness campaign, regarding the ill consequences of violent behavior in sports, be launched from local to national and international level.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to evaluate the available literature with reference to prevalence of aggression and violence among the players, fans, spectators and other stakeholders in sports. Past studies affirm that in the event of contact sports, male happen to have been more violent as compared to their female counterpart Smits, Jacobs, & Knoppers (2017). Female are less likely to involve in the physical aggression in team-sports as the male do Fortier, Parent, & Lessard, (2020). Similar findings are revealed in a study confirming increased aggressive behavior in in contact sports than the non-contact sports (Burton, Hafetz & Henninger, 2007). Another factor is the team sports, which also contribute to the prevalence of violence in team-sports. As a result of the mutual harmony and understanding among the team-mates, violence or foul-play against one member of the team may trigger the act of violence among other members of the team (Burns, 2010). A study was conducted to examine the behavior of the university players has concluded that positive inclination towards aggression in sports was reported among the participants (Parent et al., 2016). There exists notion that the sense and trend of violence is associated with the sports event or game and it vary from game to game. In this regard a study was conducted with the respondents from Football, Basketball, Judo, Volleyball and Badminton. The study confirmed that no significant difference was observed among the trend of the respondents from these games (Rezaa, 2012). So far as the question of violation of rules and regulations of the sport event is concerned, research has confirmed that male happen to have been more prone to rules-breaking than female players. However, a study

conducted by Jadambaa et al. (2019) revealed significant difference in the tendency of the players towards violent behavior in the contact and non-contact sports.

Conclusion

Literature has confirmed that the attraction of sports glamour, worldwide reputation, financial advantages, fans attachment and global recognition has increased the significance of the sporting events. Very sophisticated and modern methods of training and coaching are employed to outdo the rival in the field of action. In the process of outclassing the opponents, all out efforts are made to succeed, in case, legitimate efforts are inconclusive, otherwise means including violence is the main feature of the plan B. Mild aggression and violent behavior have become as part of the game in the present day sports particularly in the popular games where massive interest is shown by the fans. Need of the hour is to curb this ailment on war footing bases employing all public and private sources, introduction of anti-aggression policy focusing sports and highlighting role of the fair play through mass media.

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