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**VIOLENCE IN DERBIES FROM A FAN'S PERSPECTIVE
(A CASE OF THE 76TH TEHRAN DERBY)**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to identify the factors affecting violence in Iranian football spectators and provide strategies to prevent, monitor, and control it. The population consisted of all the spectators that attended the 76th Tehran Derby between Esteghlal F.C. and Persepolis F.C in Azadi Stadium. Using Cochran's sample size formula, 400 spectators were selected as the sample. Data were collected using a standard questionnaire and were analyzed using contingency tables, chi-squared test, and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The results showed that violence was negatively associated with age, education, and socioeconomic status, and positively associated with environmental factors. Marital status and job had no significant effect on aggression. Improving environmental factors such as ticket sales, transportation, facilities, referees' judgment, and the performance of players, coaches, and the police can have a significant effect on violence in spectators.

Keywords: Violence, Spectators, Football

INTRODUCTION

Sport has become a central aspect of modern societies. This increasingly expanding industry covers millions of people, from athletes, coaches, referees, and club managers to photographers, journalists, and people involved with other forms of media. Sport is also an important issue for policy makers, businesses, and researchers.

Violence in sports is a major concern that often manifests itself in exciting team sports such as football (Mohseni, 2004). Since the late 1960s researchers in the field of social science have been interested in violent behavior in football fans. Violence is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community" (Kung *et al.*, 2002). The violence of soccer fans is not a new phenomenon and can largely be solved through legitimate repression (Breschi, 2007). Violence in sports can be examined at three different levels: (1) violence by fans against each other or public property, (2) violence by fans against players, and (3) violence by players in the field. The first level, however, has been the focus of previous studies due to its wider scope and consequences (Sultan *et al.*, 2010).

Sultan *et al.*, (2012) examined the factors in football fan violence and found that the environmental factors, referees' judgment, live broadcast, player and coach behavior, and fan expectations were significant predictors of fan violence, but match time had no significant effect on fan violence. Courakis (1998) argued that football violence is not just a British problem. He identified several causes for fan violence, including negative attitude toward fans, the opponent, referee mistakes, stimulation by the police and journalists, and reputation.

Spaaij (2006) identified six key aspects of football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon: excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal; the construction of hard masculine identity; territorial identifications; individual and collective management of reputation; solidarity and belonging; and sovereignty and autonomy.

Grange and Kerr (2010) examined physical aggression in Australian football. They found numerous descriptions of aggression that could be categorized as examples of play, power, and anger aggression, but only found two examples of thrill aggression. They also showed that there are differences in the

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perception and experience of participants between sanctioned (play) and unsanctioned (power, anger, and thrill) aggression, including acts of intimidation and retaliation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research was a descriptive survey that examined the factors that lead to fan violence. The population consisted of all the spectators that attended the 76th Tehran Derby between Esteghlal F.C. and Persepolis F.C. in Azadi Stadium. Cochran’s formula was used to determine sample size from an estimated 100000 spectators. 400 spectators were selected as the sample. Data were collected using the questionnaire of Mohammad *et al.*, (2007), and were analyzed using contingency tables, chi-squared test, and Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient. All the statistical operations were done in SPSS 21 at the 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The demographic data of the sample were as follows: 80.3% were single and 19.7% were married; the majority (60.8%) were 18-25 years old and the minority were older than 65 (0.6%); the majority had high school diploma (37.8%) and the minority had master’s degree or PhD (6.1%); 30% were freelancers and 0.6% were retired; 43.9% were very low-income and 7.9% were middle-income. Moreover, 38.3% selected sport publications as the most effective media.

The data in Table 1 shows that about 68% of the respondents do not engage in any violent behavior. The least frequent acts of violence in spectators were fighting with the police (90%), using explosives (85%), destroying public property (83%), destroying stadium facilities (81%), throwing objects (80%), fighting with other fans (80%), and abusiveness (52%). Moreover, the most frequent reaction is chanting for one’s favorite team and against the opponent which was at high (25%) and very high levels (28%).

Table 1: Frequency of violent behavior in spectators

Violent Behavior	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Chants	72	18	40	10	76	19	100	25	112	28	400	100
Abusiveness	208	52	72	18	80	20	16	4	24	6	400	100
Destruction of Facilities	324	81	32	8	28	7	4	1	12	3	400	100
Throwing Objects	320	80	40	10	14	4	12	3	12	3	400	100
Using Explosives	340	85	28	7	12	3	8	2	12	3	400	100
Fighting with Other Fans	320	80	40	10	20	5	12	3	8	2	400	100
Destruction of Public Property	332	83	36	9	20	5	4	1	8	2	400	100
Fighting with the Police	360	90	24	6	8	2	4	1	4	1	400	100

The data in Table 2 show that about 36% of the respondents believed in the effect of environmental factors on violent behavior in football fans. The most important factors were biased referee judgment, lack of seats, provocation by players, lack of transportation, ticket sale issues, chaos and confusion in the stadium, and lack of appropriate facilities. Only about 8% of the respondents considered environmental factors as having little or very little importance. Environmental factors with the least effect on fan violence were police performance, delayed kick-off, and provocation by coaches and chant leaders.

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Table 2: Frequency of responses to the role of environmental factors in fan violence

Environmental Factors	Not Important		Slightly Important		Moderately Important		Important		Very Important		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Lack of Transportation	8	2	16	4	80	20	156	39	140	35	400	100
Ticket Sale Issues	12	3	20	5	76	19	156	39	136	34	400	100
Lack of Seats	12	3	12	3	48	12	184	46	144	36	400	100
Chaos and Confusion	8	2	28	7	72	18	180	45	112	28	400	100
Lack of Facilities	8	2	24	6	80	20	172	43	116	29	400	100
Delayed Kick-off	24	6	40	10	108	27	140	35	88	22	400	100
Biased Referee Judgment	8	2	12	3	40	10	140	35	200	50	400	100
Provocation by Players	8	2	16	4	48	12	152	38	176	44	400	100
Provocation by Coaches	16	4	36	8	76	19	148	37	120	30	400	100
Provocation by Chant Leaders	12	3	28	7	76	19	164	41	140	30	400	100
Police Performance	28	7	40	10	72	18	116	29	140	35	400	100

In addition, 62% of the respondents agreed on the effect of stadium climate on fan violence. Table 3 provides the results of hypothesis testing at the 0.05 significance level.

Table 3: Hypothesis testing

Variables	Propensity for Violence	Violent Behavior
Marital status	No significant relationship	Significant relationship (less violence in married individuals)
Job	No significant relationship	Significant relationship (less violence in employees and freelancers)
Age	Significant negative relationship	Significant negative relationship
Education	Significant negative relationship	Significant negative relationship
Poor Environmental factors	Significant positive relationship	Significant positive relationship
Bad stadium climate	Significant positive relationship	Significant positive relationship
Income	No significant relationship	No significant relationship

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the present research showed that propensity for violence was higher in individuals who were single, less than 25 years old, and less educated. They also had less income. Our findings suggested a significant relationship between marital status, job, and violent behavior. There was also a significant negative relationship between age, education, and propensity for violence. This is consistent with the results of Mohammad *et al.*, (2007), Anbari (2002), Lowles and Nicholls (2005), and Podnar (2007). According to the social learning theory, human beings are not inherently violent, but learned it through observation and experience. A great emphasis is placed on the role of mass media on violent and aggressive behavior. Research has shown that sport publications are specifically important as they may provide provocative materials that can potentially enrage fans (Ghasemi *et al.*, 2009; Mohammad *et al.*, 2007; Rahmati, 2002; Breschi, 2007). Our finding supports this notion.

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Frustration-aggression hypothesis says that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating, a person's efforts to attain a goal. Accordingly, lack of facilities, lack of transportation, and constraints enforced by the police and stadium officials may increase fan violence. According to this hypothesis, it is external constraints, not inner motivations, that provoke violence. Our findings suggest a significant relationship between environmental factors and fan violence. This is consistent with the results of Jahanfar (2002), Ghasemi (2009), and Mohammad (2007).

In line with collective behavior theory, the behavior of football fans follows a set of rules that emerge spontaneously, contradicts the existing social structure, and violates the norms. Collective behavior can encourage fans to engage in acts that they might consider unthinkable under typical social circumstances. This stems from the idea that the "crowd" in stadiums makes an unfamiliar environment where people do not know each other and their behavior is not controlled. The more an individual views the stadium as a crowd, the more likely they are to be affected by collective behavior. The present findings indicated a significant positive relationship between stadium climate and fan violence. Accordingly, the more fans view the stadium as an uncontrolled environment, the more likely they are to be affected by collective behavior and display acts of violence. This is consistent with the results of Mohammad *et al.*, (2007), Ghasemi *et al.*, (2009), and Vosoughi *et al.*, (2009).

Educating fans through mass media and improving environmental factors are effective strategies for reducing fan violence.

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