



An Investigation of Affecting Factors on the Behavior of Selected Fans of Major Soccer League

(Case Study: The Cultural-Sport Clubs of Persepolis and Tractorsazi)

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the behavior of the selected fans of the Major League Soccer. The present is practical, descriptive-correlative, and survey in terms objective, strategy, and procedure of implementation respectively, hence conducted as a field study. The research population studied consists of the soccer fans of the teams of Persepolis of Tehran and Tractorsazi of Tabriz who were watching the matches respectively in the Stadium of Azadi in Tehran and the stadium of Yadegar Imam in Tabriz. Based on Morgan's Table, the sample consisted of 361 people of the fans of Persepolis and 353 of the fans of Tractorsazi selected randomly from four groundstands of the stadium. The data collection tools included the researcher-made questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire; the average reliability obtained was 0.72. Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, frequency) were used to describe the data and correlation coefficient was used to analyze the data. Of the most important results of the research one can mention the relationship between the behaviors of the fans of teams and age, mass media and press, the wins and losses of the favorite team, and the sensitivity of the match.

Keywords: fans, soccer, anomalous behavior..

INTRODUCTION

A lot of time and energy of every society is devoted to sports and activities related to it. It has an important place in the culture of communities. Sports matches may place the

athletes and spectators in situations that lead to violation of rules and norms and the division of labor is simply abused resulting in violent and aggressive confrontations.

The most obvious example of violence between fans of different sports is a phenomenon known as "vandalism" that is relatively common in an organized form in the countries that have made considerable progress in sports, particularly in Europe. Social science researchers and theorists suggest reasons and different interpretations about the vandalist behavior and violence of spectators of matches, ranging from major social transformations to micro factors. With the gradual development of the culture of fans and spectatorship in sports, its aggression issues have attracted researchers in recent years (Rahmati, 2001). According to Baron (1994), aggression is an act that includes both the physical and psychological damage; it has deliberate aspects; it is not coincidental; it is limited to humans; and in the damage done, human is involved not things. Berquitz (1986) also defined aggression as intentional harm to others, adding that this harm may be psychological or physical. Violence is usually distinct from aggressive behaviors due to the intensity of damage. It is an act deliberately done by a person in an effort to physical harm others. The aggressive and destructive behavior of some soccer fans and their participation in mass celebrations inside or outside the stadium, after defeat or victory of their favorite teams, indicate that probably in our country the conditions needed for natural release of emotions of the youth have not been prepared (Safabakhsh, 2003). In Iran soccer, as a modern phenomenon, has started its work officially in less than 50 years, but it has won a special place in filling people's leisure time over this short period of time and has been able to

gradually become the number one sport of the country in terms of audience engagement among the teens and the youth, and in general, among different sections of society so much so that watching it is of great appeal and importance among various groups of the community. But, the advent of soccer as a cultural commodity in Iran has always been faced with problems which prepared the grounds for formation and occurrence of dysfunctions. In short, soccer in Iran has moved toward professionalization meaning that balls, clothes, shoes, playground, the play, paying huge contracts to the coaches and players have all become almost professional, but the behavior of the spectators and fans in the stadiums has not undergone any serious and significant change. It seems that the word "cultural" of the Cultural Sport Clubs only plays the role of a beautiful though fragile showcase (Rahmati, 2002). Many ways of releasing the excitement and anxiety are blocked and stadiums have become suitable for discharge of youthful emotions and the soccer spectators with aggressive tendencies, the favorite Club of failure make the most of the opportunity and show aggressive behaviors, destructing and damaging the property, stadium utilities and public buses when their favorite teams is defeated and at the time victory mass together in the streets and public places to dance, stomp and joy together showing their inner emotions. Regarding the etiology and study of the causes and factors contributing to formation of behavioral abnormalities and celebrations of the fans in street rallies, it is worth mentioning that many of the needs of the younger generation have not received

positive responses in our society and therefore they let out their anger resulted from the failure of access to educational opportunities, marriage, family formation towards others and the outer environment, showing behavioral anomalies, aggression and destructive behaviors at the gym or outside it (Rahmati, 2003). On the other hand, the activists of soccer, whether those gathering in the stadium or those coming to the streets among the masses are deprived of the ability to think and chance of being led, so the social norms governing behavior lose their authority and emotional reactions and preemptory behavior quickly spread to other and are imitated without thinking and thought. Soccer spectators, without having a chance to ponder their decisions, show aggressive and destructive behaviors in an uncontrolled way and as such the culture of vandalism gradually takes shape (Rahmati, 2003).

Functionalists argue that people cannot act rationally in collective behaviors because they do not know the reason for their fear and anxiety and their behavior is not targeting the source of the problem. Collective behavior is non-traditional behavior, in the sense that such behavior is not clearly defined and is not located in the context of cultural norms; because cultural definitions and social norms largely define and decide upon social behaviors; however, in collective behavior, such as hysteria, mass or mass panic and etc. cultural considerations are very little and the likelihood of abnormality is high (Goudarzi, 2011).

Hemmatinejad et al, (2000) in a research titled the study of the factors of aggression in sports fields from the perspective of athletes, spectators and physical education experts, showed that the following factors, in order of preference, have direct impact on reducing aggression in athletes and spectators: referee, losses and defeat in match, behavior of athletes of other team, competition sensitivity, exciting and stimulating match, learning aggression, athletes' and spectators' aggression, the team being host, crowd of spectators, low fitness level, low age, failure in life, rank of team in the standings and skill level, and the presence of media. Jahanfar (2002), in a research titled violence in soccer can be prevented, showed that this is because of the thrill of soccer that the younger generations who are more passionate and excited are attracted to it and the fact that it is the only sport and entertainment affordable for students and non-employed youth. Yet, the excitement in the young is not necessarily the reason of their violence. Anbari (2002) showed that by increasing the age of the respondents, their violence is reduced. Thus, the increase in audience education resulted in lower levels of aggression and there was a significant correlation between the favorite team and their aggressiveness. Rahmati (2003), in a research titled the study of the aspects of violence in soccer showed that there was a positive correlation between history of strife and conflict, tension and frustration in educational activities, smoking, history of stress in family, having friends and peers with a criminal past and collective heading to the gym and committing aggression and sports violence.

Kajbaf et al (2003) consider the team's losses and adventurousness as the causes of aggression among spectators. Safabakhsh (2003) showed that failure and frustration, perceived abuses, sports magazines and the gossiping of magazines were the causes of aggression and violence in spectators. Vaez Mousavi et al (2004), in a research titled frequency of aggressive behavior in situations of win, lose or draw (in Olympiad mass sports of students at high school level) revealed that both boys and girls showed more purposeful aggression when winning or losing than when drawing. Shah Mansoori et al (2006) as well studied management variables and concluded that the most important factor in creating crisis was mismanagement (software). Then, software and soul ware (sports facilities and social-psychosocial factors) are jointly in the second priority and the third priority is media. Noor Alivand (2007) introduced thrill-seeking audiences, peers and provocative sports press as the most important factor affecting aggressive behavior of spectators. Sheikh et al. (2008) in a research titled investigating the causes of riots of soccer spectators after big derbies showed that limitations in entertainment and health utilities, restrictions on travel services and the limitations established by the police and officials of the stadium, and etc. increased their motivation to show aggression. Paknejad et al (2010), in a research titled the aggressive behaviors of soccer spectators and its social and psychological causes, showed that by increasing the study of sports media the incidence of aggressive behavior also increased. Also, by improving the

management of the stadium and providing better facilities in the stadium the aggressive behavior is reduced. And also with the negative behavior of the referee and negative behavior of the coach, the aggressive behavior is increased. Ramezani Nejad et al (2012) in a research titled factor analysis of the variables of the incidence of aggression in the audience from the perspective of soccer referees of Iran, showed that the behavior of team members, the management of time and place, referee, behavior of the coach and referee, and social sensitivity, and the history of competition have direct correlation with aggressive behavior. Tanenbaum and Singer (1997), in a research on aggression and violence in sports, concluded that media productions, media hype, inappropriate behavior of players and coaches of sports teams and violent reactions of police were the main causes of anomalous behavior of spectators of sports matches. Julian Roberts and Cynthia Benjamin (2000) showed that the two factors of team's loss and social classes in North America and the factors of media in Europe played a major role in the spectators' violence. In addition, the main sources of aggression are mainly the destructors. Nestor Korakys (2004), in a research titled violence in soccer is not just an English problem, studied the related violence in stadiums of Athens. Korakys believes the negative attitude toward the rival fans, errors of referee, stimulating attitude of the police towards the audiences, stimulating sports journalists and earning reputation are the most important factors influencing the violence and aggression of sports fans. Koakly and Donnelly (2006) have identified

10 factors including: overcrowding of population, heterogeneous mixing of the audience (such as social class and race), the degree of importance of the match for fans, history of previous matches between the two teams or their spectators, violent and aggressive control of the population, place of match (neutral ground versus one of the teams being host), way of attending the match, (private car or public transport), incidence of violent play on the part of players, poor referee, and strength and innocence (among the weak people, violence may be the only way of expressing their needs) as causing aggression in the audience. In the same way that people directly interact with the community in which they live, the audience is directly interacting with the people such as coaches and players whose values, beliefs and behaviors are related to their attitudes, decisions and actions. They are in common in defining specific situation and the consequent behaviors and actually provide a general background for the ethical practices of the team. On the other hand, the researcher assumes that there is a relationship between the fans of teams and age, mass media and press, the wins and losses of the favorite team, and the sensitivity of the match and anomalous behavior. As such, this research aims to investigate the factors influencing these behaviors and their relationships among the fans of the teams of Persepolis of Tehran and Tractorsazi of Tabriz, hence providing a strategy to reduce these behaviors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is practical, descriptive-correlative, and survey in terms of objective, strategy, and procedure of implementation respectively, hence conducted as a field study. The research population studied consists of the soccer fans of the teams of Persepolis of Tehran and Tractorsazi of Tabriz who were watching the matches respectively in the Stadium of Azadi in Tehran and the stadium of Yadegar Imam in Tabriz. Based on Morgan's Table, the sample consisted of 361 people of the fans of Persepolis and 353 of the fans of Tractorsazi selected randomly from four groundstands of the stadium. The descriptive statistics (mean, percentages, frequency) was used to organize and describe the raw scores; all research hypotheses were studied at the significance level of ($P \leq 0.05$) for data analysis. The correlation coefficient test was used for testing the hypotheses. The data collection tools, given its nature, included the researcher-made questionnaire. The questionnaire is described with a brief introduction about the purpose of the questionnaire, asking for honest cooperation, and explaining how to answer questions. It is also composed of two parts of personal information and the main questions. The main questions are intended to assess the impact of age and committing anomalous behaviors with 2 items, the impact of mass media and press and committing anomalous behaviors with 5 items, the impact of wins and losses of favorite team and committing anomalous behaviors with 9 items, impact of fees and ticket status and committing anomalous behaviors with 6 items. The

answers are on Likert's 5-option scale (very important, important, somewhat important, not important, not important at all) to which the scores (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) were assigned respectively. To assess the validity of the questionnaire the opinions of experts in sports management and university professors were used. After receiving their

comments and making the necessary changes in the questionnaire, the content validity was confirmed. To assess the reliability of the questioner, a primary study was done and the questioner was implemented for 50 people among the fans, hence using Cronbach's alpha.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the descriptive analysis about the age of the fans of both teams showed that the average age of fans of Tractorsazi of Tabriz was 24.97 and that of Persepolis of Tehran, 23.84. The residency status of fans showed that nearly 80% of the fans of Tractorsazi and over 88% of fans of Persepolis lived in city. The educational status of both teams revealed that most of the fans of Tractorsazi had Diploma, Associate and Bachelor degrees which comparatively had higher education level than those of Persepolis. The job status of the fans of both teams indicated that most of the fans of Tractorsazi were either students or self-employed which was true about the fans of Persepolis too. The marital status of both teams showed that most fans of both teams were single; over 64 % of the fans of Tractorsazi and over 69 % of the fans of Persepolis.

Table (1) reliability coefficient of questionnaire of Persepolis fans based on each section using the Kolmogorov –Smirnov test

Questions	Number of Items	coefficient α
impact of age and committing anomalous behaviors	2	72.
impact of mass media and press and committing anomalous behaviors	5	78.
impact of wins and losses of favorite team and committing anomalous behaviors	4	70.
impact of sensitivity of match and committing anomalous behaviors	6	73.
Mean		.73

Source: authors, 2013.

According to the information in table (1) the average reliability of total items of the questionnaire of Persepolis fans equals 0.73.

Table (2) reliability coefficient of questionnaire of Tractorsazi fans based on each section using the Kolmogorov –Smirnov test

Questions	Number of Items	coefficient α
impact of age and committing anomalous behaviors	2	70.
impact of mass media and press and committing anomalous behaviors	5	72.
impact of wins and losses of favorite team and committing anomalous behaviors	4	73.
impact of sensitivity of match and committing anomalous behaviors	6	70.
Mean		71.

Source: authors, 2013.

According to the information in table (2) the average reliability of total items of the questionnaire of Tractorsazi fans equals 0.71.

Table (3) investigation of the relationship between age and fans' committing anomalous behaviors using Cramer's correlation coefficient

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	208.	.001
Cramer's coefficient	208.	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013.

The information presented in Table 3 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.208 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance and indicates that there is a correlation between the fans of both teams; and since the correlation coefficient is positive, they have direct correlation. But, since it is relatively low, it is not acceptable and this correlation is insignificant.

Table (4) investigation of the relationship between mass media and press and fans' committing anomalous behaviors using Cramer's correlation coefficient

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	396.	.001
Cramer's coefficient	396.	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013.

The information presented in Table 4 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.396 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance and indicates that there is a correlation between the fans of both teams; and since the correlation coefficient is positive, they have direct correlation. But, since it is relatively low, it is not acceptable and this correlation is insignificant.

Table (5) investigation of the relationship between wins and losses of favorite teams and fans' committing anomalous behaviors using Cramer's correlation coefficient

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	308.	.001
Cramer's coefficient	308.	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013.

The information presented in Table 5 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.308 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance and indicates that there is a correlation between the fans of both teams; and since the correlation coefficient is positive, they have direct correlation. But, since it is relatively low, it is not acceptable and this correlation is insignificant.

Table (6) investigation of the relationship between sensitivity of match and fans' committing anomalous behaviors using Cramer's correlation coefficient

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	304.	.001
Cramer's coefficient	304.	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013.

The information presented in Table 6 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.304 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance and indicates that there is a correlation between the fans of both teams; and since the correlation coefficient is positive, they have direct correlation. But, since it is relatively low, it is not acceptable and this correlation is insignificant.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Violence in soccer, be it on the part of spectators or players and coaches, is a kind of social damage to the sports community. Social values such as various religious and traditional forms and collective conscience can greatly limit anomalies, vandalism and violence of social harms. It is said that if violence in soccer prevents this harmless fun, it will be deemed anti-value. Our sports fields with virtually no recreational functions lose their identity and only the skeleton of it remains. For example, in Iran, an opposition occurs between fans of two teams and sometimes the scope of this opposition gets so vast that affects the intimate relationships of family members, colleagues and peers and the consequent bad words and insulting after it seriously threatens the life of people (Ramezani Nejad, 2012). The results of the research showed that there was a correlation between the Fans' opinion on the subscale of age and committing anomalous behaviors. In the research done by Kazemi et al (2007) it was observed that there was a reverse significant correlation between age and committing anomalous behaviors. Because, researchers believe that most children express their resentment and anger because of their certain age, regardless of other dominant conditions in their life, and that most of the spectators of soccer in our country are the adolescents and the youth, the reverse and logical correlation can represent one of the

major factors in anomalous behavior in our country's stadiums. Thus, the results of this research are consistent with those of Kazemi et al (2007). Also Shabani Bahar et al (2006), in their study, stated that one of the reasons of aggression is unstable character. Since the majority of our soccer fans in stadiums are the youth and young adults and that in such ages the personality is not stable, age could be one reason for the anomalous behavior. Thus, the results of this research are consistent with those of Shabani Bahar. Also Hemmati Nejad et al (2000), in their study, titled the study of aggression in the sports fields from the perspective of athletes, spectators and physical education experts concluded that the age of spectators could reduce the aggression which is consistent with the results of this research. The results of the research are consistent with those of Noor Alivand et al (2007), Anbari (2002), and Korakys (2004). The results of the research indicated that there was a correlation between the fans' opinion on the subscale of mass media and press and the anomalous behavior. Iran media plays a decisive role in the selection of coaches and tensions of matches using their headlines and the press is not monitored at all. Press and media can also provoke the audience by their controversial headlines and the fans with no control over their emotions, start committing anomalous behaviors. Magnification, gossip and provocation of

fans, players and technical staff especially before important and sensitive matches are of main causes of aggression in the spectators, so perhaps that is true that the newspapers use a language in soccer which is more warlike than sports like. Jahanfar (2002) in his article states that raising popular culture, especially in the media and press can prevent the occurrence of aggression and anomalous behavior. So, press and media with high quality of writing and no hype can contribute to this important matter. Thus, findings of this research are consistent with Jahanfar's research. Hemmati Nejad et al. (2000), in their research titled investigation of aggressive factors research in sports fields from the perspective of the athletes, spectators and the physical education experts, concluded that media and press could be effective in reducing the aggression, which is consistent with the results of this research. Also, the results of this research are consistent with those of Safabakhsh (2003), Shah Mansouri et al (2006) and Nour Alivand et al. The results of this research indicated that there was a correlation between the opinions of fans of both teams on the subscale of wins and losses of the favorite team and committing anomalous behavior. Hemmati Nejad et al. (2000), in their research titled investigation of aggressive factors research in sports fields from the perspective of the athletes, spectators and the physical education experts, concluded that wins and losses of the favorite team can be effective in reducing aggression among spectators, hence being consistent with the results of this research. Kajbaf et al (2003) consider the losses of team and adventurousness as

the factors of occurrence of aggression among the spectators, which is consistent with the results of this research. The results of this research indicated that there was a correlation between the opinions of fans of both teams on the subscale of sensitivity of match and committing anomalous behavior. Besides the two teams of the capital (Persepolis and Esteghlal), Tractorsazi also has many fans who supported the team in matches away from home and comprehend the importance of the sensitivity of match. And this factor could be one of the reasons of anomalous behavior. Hemmati Nejad et al. (2000), in their research titled investigation of aggressive factors research in sports fields from the perspective of the athletes, spectators and the physical education experts, concluded that sensitivity of match can be effective in reducing aggression among spectators, hence being consistent with the results of this research. Rahmati (2004), in his study, considers the importance and sensitivity of match one of the major factors among the spectators which are consistent with the results of this research. Given the effective role of media in making culture and its effective communication with the audience, it is recommended that sports publications pay attention to culture making of the audience in the stadiums and instead of provoking, spreading rumors, publishing interviews, and provocative imagery, start norm making for the spectators. Violence and aggression in Iran's soccer, unlike other European countries is not organized and happen just before, after and during the match. Based on a research published in the second quarterly of studies of social security, emotional

behavior, team orientation, community, hatred and age, had the greatest effect on violence of soccer fans. According to Ejbari's guidelines, systematic and non-discriminatory inspections, fines and penalties, preventing known troublemakers from entering stadiums, emphasis on sitting and preventing undo standing and ongoing monitoring of the population are effective in changing spectators' violent behavior; The strategy which is currently used by police, to some extent, but not effective enough in reducing violence after the matches. Perhaps this is why the researchers suggest preventive strategies; the strategy in which the proper provision of transportation facilities, fixing the best time for matches, optimal use of media, acceptance of host ethics, provision of the legal outlets for collective excitement in stadiums, encouragement, rewarding and culture making with an emphasis on social norms and values are proposed to police for greatly reducing the incidence of violence. Future research may also be risk factors for abnormal behaviors in crowd of players and coaches perspective, the impact of race, ethnicity and cultural factors on the incidence of family violence, spectators and players of abnormal behavior, abnormal behavior factors affecting the audience's perspective and educators to study. Also, for future research, the effective factors in incidence of anomalous behaviors among the spectators from the perspective of players and coaches, the impact of race, ethnicity and family's cultural factors on the incidence of anomalous behaviors and violence of the spectators and players, effective factors in incidence of anomalous

behavior among the spectators from the perspective of the players and coaches can be investigated.

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