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The hostility syndrome as a profile differentiating football spectators

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Abstract

Background: Football matches may be entertaining, or may become events erupting with violence and releasing aggression. Unfortunately, incidents of hooligans' disorderly conduct during matches and outside the stadium are more and more frequently considered to be prevailing and unavoidable elements in football games. **Material/Methods:** The study comprised a total of 60 football hooligans and 60 ordinary football fans, in which the hostility syndrome was assessed by means of the Scale of Interpersonal Stances (SIS). **Results:** The results of the survey regarding the style of social functioning in the groups of respondents showed a significant difference ($p = 0.004$) between them. The analysis of the hostility syndrome scores on the SIS (Tab. 2) revealed considerable divergences, and the 0.16 value of the rps index (football supporter vs. football hooligan) indicated low similarity of the created profiles. **Conclusions:** The hostility syndrome index was different in the group of ordinary supporters from that in football hooligans. High values of its components in the group of hooligans implied that their hostility was higher than normal, which could suggest their greater susceptibility to militant and antisocial stance than in the controls. The rebellious and suspicious style in social contacts was high and considerably higher in football hooligans than in ordinary supporters, which proved their long-lasting trend towards triggering off defensive and untrustworthy attitude to other people. Football hooligans possessed a high level of suspicion, significantly higher than in ordinary supporters, which resulted in their dominant antagonist and destructive stance towards others. During a match, the football hooligan preferred aggressive and sadistic, and cooperative and narcissistic styles in interpersonal relations, and manifested them with outbursts of extreme violence as well as with dramatically high superiority and exaggerated independence, as opposed to ordinary supporters who exhibited extremely low aggression and their superiority and independence did not differ from the norm.

Keywords

football hooligans, sadism, hostility, aggression

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Authors' Contribution:

- A Study Design
- B Data Collection
- C Statistical Analysis
- D Data Interpretation
- E Manuscript Preparation
- F Literature Search
- G Funds Collection

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The study comprised a total of 60 football hooligans and 60 ordinary football fans, in which the hostility syndrome was assessed by means of the Scale of Interpersonal Stances (SIS).

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Conclusions

The hostility syndrome index was different in the group of ordinary supporters from that in football hooligans. High values of its components in the group of hooligans implied that their hostility was higher than normal, which could suggest their greater susceptibility to militant and antisocial stance than in the controls. The rebellious and suspicious style in social contacts was high and considerably higher in football hooligans than in ordinary supporters, which proved their long-lasting trend towards triggering off defensive and untrustworthy attitude to other people. Football hooligans possessed a high level of suspicion, significantly higher than in ordinary supporters, which resulted in their dominant antagonist and destructive stance towards others. During a match, the football hooligan preferred aggressive and sadistic, and cooperative and narcissistic styles in interpersonal relations, and manifested them with outbursts of extreme violence as well as with dramatically high superiority and exaggerated independence, as opposed to ordinary supporters who exhibited extremely low aggression and their superiority and independence did not differ from the norm.

Key words

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INTRODUCTION

Lorenz [1] tried to explain the reasons for socially unacceptable behaviour. He claimed that in a restricted area people and animals functioned in a similar way, and also in situations when the so-called leadership instincts prevailed. The anonymity of individuals in given subcultures was deepened by masking (wearing similar clothes, hiding faces behind scarves or under hoods), which created favourable conditions for antagonist and destructive behaviours [2, p. 602]. Other studies on the subject-matter revealed that socially destructive behaviours depended also on gender – men, more often than women, preferred to use force when solving difficult challenges and violated law and order [3, p. 54]. The studies on neurasthenia, depression and hysteria revealed that each individual possessed a characteristic way of social functioning depending on their group affiliation. Various stance manifestations balanced between submission and dominance, and hostility and friendliness towards the social exposure participants [4, 5, 6]. Nowadays, more and more frequently we encounter people who surprise us with their attitudes and behaviours. One of the reasons for such a stance may lie in globalisation and greater availability of social goods, which some time ago were not accessible on such a large scale. Therefore, their value has depreciated, and they have become products for which the demand has decreased. Things which were earlier sought after and provided their owners with satisfaction and pride nowadays have become neutral stimuli [7]. Perhaps that is why a search for new impetus and sensations has become a modern source of stimulation, and anti-social attitude, including hostility, may turn desirable for various social groups [8].

In the relevant literature one may find disparate reasons for hostility in football hooligans. The two most common ones include factors connected with a specific course of a given sporting event and determinants of rivalry between aggressive football firms [9, 10]. Other causes of hostility revealed in fights outside the stadium also comprised destructive ways of coping with alienation [11, p. 633] and anonymity by young spectators, heightened in those subcultures by wearing similar clothes or by characteristic hiding their faces behind scarves or under hoods [2, p. 602].

The purpose of the study was to describe growing hostility in football spectators depending on their group affiliation. It tried to find answers to the following questions: 1) Does the hostility syndrome differentiate football spectators? 2) Do groups of ordinary supporters and football hooligans present different levels of mistrust and suspicion towards other people? 3) What is the level of aggression in football spectators?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study comprised a total of 120 football fans, aged 19-28 years, i.e.: the experimental group (FH – football hooligans) – which consisted of 60 supporters of football clubs from the city of Rzeszów, Poland, and the control group (OS – ordinary supporters) – represented by 60 students from the University of Rzeszów.

The Interpersonal Theory of Personality (ITP) constituted the theoretical basis for the accepted research method. Based on the above, it was possible to assume that the antagonist and destructive stance would be more typical of football hooligans in their interpersonal relations rather than of ordinary sup-

porters. Therefore, the Scale of Interpersonal Stances (SIS) was used to detect the so-called hostility syndrome. It was especially helpful in diagnosing the style of interpersonal approach and social functioning and in differentiating personality disorders. All styles of functioning were created in the spheres of domination-submission and love-hostility.

The survey consisted of 70 questions, and answers to them developed the following 12 participant profiles: 1) managerial and authoritarian, 2) supporting and over-protective, 3) collaborating and friendly, 4) submissive and dependent, 5) refraining and masochistic, 6) rebellious and suspicious, 7) aggressive and sadistic, 8) competitive and narcissistic, 9) self-accepting, 10) deceiving, 11) resourceful, realistic and relatively autonomous, and 12) pessimistic, hopeless and calling for help. The hostility syndrome index was made out of scales 5, 6, 7 and 8. The 8-grade¹ octile conversion table for the measurement of attitudes was used to find inter-polar location for representatives of individual groups in order to analyse individual profiles on the SIS. Each of the 8 octiles was ascribed one level of the variable: extremely low (1st-2nd octile), low (3rd octile), below average (4th octile), normal (5th octile), above average (6th octile), high (7th octile) and extremely high (8th octile) [4, 5, 6].

Each group was analysed taking into account individual profiles by means of the mean and standard deviations. The 8-point conversion table for each SIS distribution was harnessed to specify differences between the groups of respondents (see footnote 1). Profiles for those groups were made by means of the mediana (see Table 2) and the conversion table (see footnote 1), and the Dumas method [12, p. 24-45] was implemented to interpret the results (see footnote 1). It enabled calculating the similarity index of the obtained profiles.

RESULTS

The style of social functioning was analysed in the experimental group (football hooligans) and the controls (ordinary supporters). The analysis of the results focused on finding out a possible dependency between the two antagonistic groups and the 12 criteria describing the SIS. Further on, having found potential differences, a detailed comparative analysis followed, which concerned the hostility syndrome expressed by the following criteria: refraining and masochistic (profile 5), rebellious and suspicious (profile 6), aggressive and sadistic (profile 7), and competitive and narcissistic (profile 8).

Table 1. Comparison of arithmetic means of the style of social functioning on separate SIS between the research groups

Research groups	Style of social functioning - SIS											
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
Ordinary supporters (OS)	5.3	6.5	6.8	8.3	3.2	1.2	2.1	4.2	4.2	3.0	6.8	1.8
Football hooligans (FH)	7.8	4.3	5.5	6.8	4.4	5.7	9.3	9	3.8	2.4	5.0	5.1
Level of significance	p = 0.004											

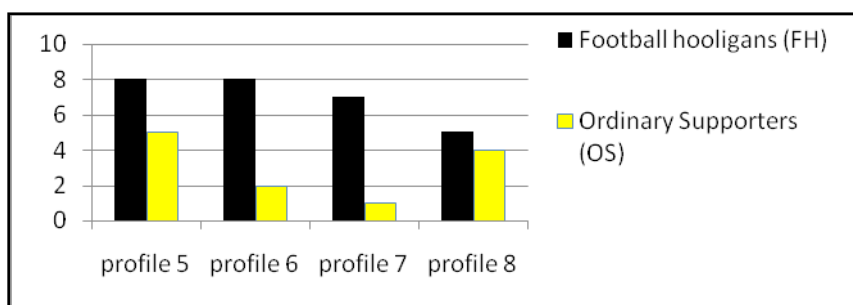
The scores showed a significant differentiation (p = 0.004) between the groups of respondents and their style of social functioning.

¹ Conversion table - the author of the scale [5], while calculating variability by means of octiles (1/2 of quartile), elaborated the eight-grade conversion table for each dispersion on the Scale of Interpersonal Stances (SIS), and accepted that the distance between octiles covered 12.5% of the population. Each octile was ascribed a descriptive grade: octiles 1 and 2 - extremely low, octile 3 - low, octile 4 - below average, octile 5 - average, octile 6 - above average, octile 7 - high, octile 8 - extremely high. During the research on two sexually diversified groups, 100-person each, the above-mentioned obtained material which, in the case of each octile, allowed him to create numerical brackets for raw results in separate SIS profiles.

Table 2. Comparison of medianas of the style of social functioning on separate SIS between the two research groups

Research groups	Style of social functioning – SIS											
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	9	10	11	12
Ordinary supporters (OS)	6	6.5	6	8	3	0	1.5	4	2.2	2.5	7	2
Football hooligans (FH)	8	4	5.5	6	4	6	10	9	4	2	4.5	4

The comparison of the hostility syndrome scores on the SIS revealed considerable result diversification, and the 0.16 value of the rps index (OS vs. FH) implied low similarity of the created profiles² (Tab. 2).



LEGEND: Hostility syndrome components: refraining and masochistic [profile 5], rebellious and suspicious [profile 6], aggressive and sadistic [profile 7], competitive and narcissistic [profile 8]

Fig. 1. Comparison of the hostility syndrome components determined on the basis of the conversion table between the group of football hooligans and ordinary supporters

The scores of both groups of respondents in separate social functioning profiles on the SIS were obtained by means of the conversion table [5, p. 27] (Fig. 1). While comparing football supporters with football hooligans, one might notice significant differentiation of the data ascribed to the hostility syndrome (see profiles: 5, 6, 7 and 8), and the below-mentioned analysis of the interpersonal stance profiles, conducted separately for each of them, provided a number of interesting observations.

Profile 5. The OS group showed a moderate stance towards the outside world, and this style of social contacts was below the norm, as opposed to the FH group, in which the social contacts index was normal (5th octile). The style of social functioning revealed a moderate (socially optimal) similarity of stances in the groups under research, which did not prefer refraining and masochistic attitudes in social contacts.

Profile 6. A high level of rebellion and suspicion in the FH group (7th octile) was a manifestation of hostile and anti-social attitude. Some of its participants were undoubtedly emotionally cool and suspicious individuals, who ostentatiously rejected external law and order, and boasted a negative style in interpersonal functioning. Participants in the OS group appeared on the other end of the scale (1st octile – extremely low score). The rebellious and suspicious style in social functioning enabled revealing totally different attitudes in hooligans and ordinary supporters.

² The Dumas test enabled calculating the rate of similarities of the obtained profiles [12].

Profile 7. Extremely high aggression and sadism towards others were typical of the FH group (8th octile), while the opposite end of the scale was restricted to the OS group, which scored extremely low (2nd octile). It was, no doubt, indicative of preferring stances devoid of irrational aggression or sadism. The aggressive and sadistic style in interpersonal relations showed extremely different stances in the FH and OS groups.

Profile 8. Social contacts of the OS group were normal (5th octile), but unfortunately the same could not be said about the group of football hooligans (8th octile), who showed a tendency towards extremely high superiority and exaggerated manifestation of their independence.

DISCUSSION

Sporting events taking place in the stadium may provide satisfying emotional, aesthetic and social experiences and should be perceived positively both by players and spectators [13, p. 130]. Unfortunately, football hooliganism has become overwhelming and society has started to perceive it as a prevailing and unavoidable part of football matches [14, p. 135]. Football spectators can be divided into those who are excited by the match, identify themselves with its values and do not cause any trouble, and those – the so-called football hooligans – who identify themselves with their football club, celebrate its victory pointedly, are mainly interested in the win of their team but not always in the game, and compensate the possible defeat of their club by aggression in or outside the stadium [13].

Aggression of football fans was often explained by the influence of family environment [15]. It turned out that personality more prone to asocial, antisocial rather than pro-social attitudes more frequently developed in high-risk, broken, disintegrated or dysfunctional families [13]. Taking into account a great number of determinants which affect the personality of a football supporter, it is interesting to discover what their attitude towards the outside world is and what type of styles in social functioning they represent (friendly, hostile, leadership). Other surveys showed that there was a close connection between regular participation in sport and social involvement [16, 17]. It was also discovered that together with a greater engagement in sports activity, the probability of developing attitudes susceptible to disturbed interpersonal stances also increased [18]. At the same time, those individuals could be sensitive to incidents of breaking social norms by others [19].

The hostility syndrome described by profiles 5, 6, 7 and 8 showed that the value of the refraining and masochistic style (profile 5) was normal (5th octile) in both groups. Unfortunately, the 7th octile of the rebellious and suspicious style (profile 6) might show an extremely high susceptibility of the FH group to hostile and antisocial attitudes, as opposed to the OS group, in which the conversion value of the 1st octile was extremely low. The aggressive and sadistic style (profile 7) scored the 8th octile in the FH group, which related to extremely high criticism, reciprocal hostility, treating themselves as individuals better than others. The same score for the OS group was extremely low (2nd octile). The competitive and narcissistic style was the last index of the hostility syndrome (profile 8), it was extremely high (8th octile) in the FH group, and it

was in the norm in the OS group. A higher score of this profile in the FH group testified to a tendency towards superior and over-independent attitudes.

Stanik, an expert in interpersonal stances [4, 5, 6], claimed that each person possessed a specific way of social functioning depending on the group they belonged to. This survey focused on assessing differences in hostility styles, which were manifested by mistrust, suspicion and open and patent aggression in the groups of ordinary supporters and football hooligans. The analysis enabled determining correlations between the hostility syndrome and different group affiliation of the above-mentioned spectators. The use of the Dumas method proved different reactions of the above-mentioned groups in identical situations of social exposure, which was confirmed by the similarity of the created profiles ($rps = 0.16$). It is a well-known fact that football hooligans search for such situations and places which would allow them, at least to a smallest degree, to accomplish their thrill seeking [20, p. 96]. The analysis of separate segments of the scale confirmed assumptions that the ordinary football supporter differed from the football hooligan with a pro-social syndrome. The average score in profiles 2, 3 and 4 showed that those respondents would represent socially accepted attitudes based on fulfilling common environmental needs [21, p. 78].

The overall analysis of the hostility syndrome proved that football hooligans were a negative group of supporters. Mistrust, suspicion and aggression were typical of them – especially of the ones who scored higher in separate profiles. The level of significance calculated for the groups showed the incidence of vital differences in separate SIS profiles. The set of attitudes typical of the hostility syndrome was different, and depending on its intensity it emerged in both groups as specific stances. Some of their members could belong to groups which preferred to disturb personal spheres of other people, while others could represent the group which manifested victories or defeats of their teams according to the accepted norms.

Taking into account a high level of rebellion and suspicion in football hooligans, it should be mentioned that they were exceptionally aggressive and sadistic towards others. The survey revealed that those respondents were excessively critical and hostile towards one another, and most of all thought of themselves as of individuals more superior and better than others. Such an attitude allowed them to summon all their strength and conquer their weaknesses, fear or anxiety. Unfortunately, it seemed that in the case of football hooligans that energy was directed towards another man in order to humiliate, injure, eliminate and many a time kill them.

CONCLUSIONS

The hostility syndrome differed between the groups of ordinary supporters and football hooligans. Its high score in the group of hooligans showed that this syndrome was above normal in them, which might indicate a greater susceptibility to hostile and antisocial attitudes than in the controls (OS).

The rebellious and suspicious style in social contacts in football hooligans was high (7thoctile) and significantly higher than in ordinary supporters (1st

octile – extremely low score), which proved a long-lasting tendency towards triggering off defensive and mistrustful attitudes towards others.

The level of suspicion in football hooligans was high (7th octile) and significantly higher than in ordinary supporters (1st octile – extremely low score), which caused that the antagonistic and destructive style of stances towards other people (including other supporters) was the norm in them.

The football hooligan during football matches preferred aggressive and sadistic, and competitive and narcissistic style in interpersonal relations, which was manifested by high aggressiveness (7th octile) and extremely high superiority, and exaggerated independence (8th octile), as opposed to the ordinary supporter, who had an extremely low aggression index (2nd octile) and their superiority and independence were normal (5th octile).

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