

VIOLENCE, MASS MEDIA AND SPORT: ETIOLOGY, CONNECTIONS AND PREVENTION

Maria LULESCU

Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of International Relations and Administration, "Nicolae Titulescu" University, e-mail: marialulescu@gmail.com

Abstract

The present paper explore the connections between violence manifestations in sport (various and mixed factors connected to violence patterns often generated by mass media), identifying actions which could support the prevention of this highly overspreading phenomenon in the society. No matter the country, no matter the individuals or the groups, violence appear to lead to escalating violence in schools, media, and even popular culture trends such as gaming or internet-based socializing. Media, both written and audio-visual, provides information with respect to different manifestations of this phenomenon.

This paper addresses various types of behavior and forms of violence, often associated with physical education and sport. Prevention is a key ingredient in order to counteract the invasive and durable influence of media regarding violence associated to sport. Coordinated efforts adopted by schools, sports clubs, as well as parents and local communities prove that violence can be reduced and the young generation can be educated in the spirit of tolerance and fair play, starting from recent legal steps observed in the Romanian national legislation.

Keywords: *violence, sport, media; education, prevention.*

1. Physical Education or Violence - Etiological Directions

The omnipresent, daily, conformist, repetitive and deviant human behavior, explained by motivational theories by biological model scientists, such as Konrard Lorenz (2005) or Freud (2010) the inborn traits and mechanisms lie at the basis of the activities of every individual. Freud believed that the information stored in our subconscious actually determines our behavior.

Researchers have concluded in the last couple of decades that violence is attributed to both internal/biological factors as well as external ones such as: education, culture and socially-related ones. The development of the needs/necessities pyramid is based on physiological/primary needs, safety needs, the need for a sense of belonging, for esteem and self-fulfillment, which are the motivation of human behavior. Abraham Maslow also introduced (2008) the self-transcendence stage which includes two categories of needs, self-achievement (intellectual-creative) and survival.

Maslow thought that the natural hierarchy of the needs of every stage is directed upwards, but the failure to satisfy a need placed on a higher level does not lower the individual to another

needs level. Once we satisfy a need/desire, we consider it worthless (or taken for granted). When individuals feel unhappy or even anxious, they tend to turn towards new, stimulating ideals. For example, a child who has a favorite football team generally thinks that he deserves to be present in the bleachers on the stadium at first, then he wants to become the member of a gallery, and later on the leader of that gallery. Each of these needs has been satisfied.

Conflict, competition and the needs' interdependence can motivate one's actions. Perception, thinking and memory are fundamental elements of individuals, guiding and directing their behavior and needs. In our case, the supporter has his father as ultimate childhood model of masculinity (perception), of behavior at home and in the bleachers (memory), but his perception about the forms of violence and aggressiveness will guide him and will make him display his masculinity in other forms.

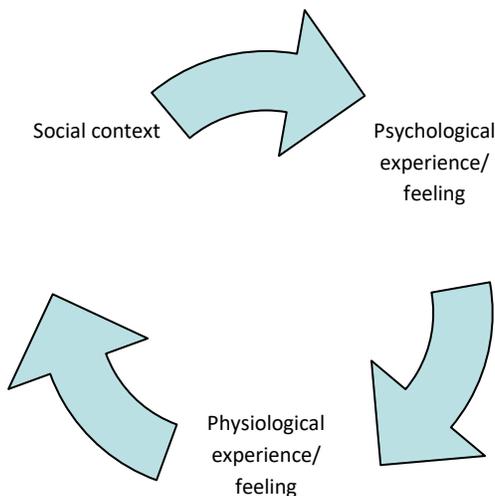


Figura 1. Sursa Wellard, I. (2012), p.27.

The three basic elements are at the forefront of the motivational cognitive theories. The idea of pleasure, was more recently analyzed by Wellard (2012) in terms of bodily-reflexive activity inducing specific bodily experiences. For some teenagers, pleasure is generated by their outer beauty and health, while for others pleasure consists in the fact that they are on the same team with their friends.

Stability and predictability are given by the personality traits (Eyseneck 2000). The character traits of an individual, such as the optimism, define his or her behavior. A supporter is, by its behavior, optimistic, seeing only the positive side of the situation of his favorite team. As representative of this trend, Mischel (Mischel & Shoda 1995) believes that predictability and

individual behavior can be explained as determinant based on the given situation. In some cases the experience and past history of an individual influence his/her individual behavior. The two determinants of behavior are characteristic situations and the interaction between the character traits, creating explanatory paradigms. The behavior of the supporters on stadiums can sometimes deviate or become delinquent. We will try to present a few explanations by using certain behavior patterns and learning paradigms perspectives. In our case, the interaction between individuals creates, for each individual, an environment that favors the learning and picking up of delinquent behaviors (from those people susceptible to become delinquents or deviants), also known as distinctive association (Sutherland 1966). Individuals pick up both conformist as well as nonconformist behaviors, and the latter then become natural for them and unnatural for the society. Sutherland explains the deviant behavior in terms of delinquency as being taught, practiced, not as a genetic inheritance. The (verbal/non-verbal) communication, violation of the laws and social regulations and their learning become contact ideas for the individuals with the same type of behavior. On stadiums, deviant supporters repeat and practice the concealing of white weapons and pyrotechnic materials etc., improve their conduct, becoming more “special” among the supporters (Merton 1938).

Considering the cultural and social point of view in what concerns deviant behavior, deviance is the product of economic inequality. The inability of the individual to succeed, through legal ways, is the main factor, according to Cloward and Ohlin (1966). Individuals that are present on stadiums adhere to a group of supporters, individuals born/raised in neighborhoods and who, by becoming nonconformists, try to gain prestige and respect. The explanations given by the labeling theories first consider the mentioned behavior as not being deviant. For example, a vulgar joke told by a supporter to his group can be regarded as an attempt to release tension, while the same joke told by a student in class to a teacher would be evidence of a deviant behavior. There are also situations when a behavior is automatically viewed as deviant due to the existing preconceptions. If a person is labeled (as thief, drug addict, alcoholic, coward) he/she will have to live with it and deal with the fact that the society will not accept him/her. Therefore, supporters will usually be catalogued and considered as hooligans, punks etc., labels that associate them with delinquent behaviors, a delinquent being “bad by definition”.

In order for an act to be considered a crime it represent more than a mere deviation from the regular way of doing something, namely it must generate a certain reaction from the others, a

reaction that occurs when the collective feelings affected by the crime are alive and strong. The definition of crime therefore includes two types of elements: a purpose that affects the collective consciousness, on the one hand, and a special reaction in the form of a punishment or penalty, on the other hand.

Researchers have concluded that four primary emotions surface when individuals and groups with equal or different statuses and powers interact: fury (caused by the loss of status), fear (caused by the loss of power), sadness (caused by the irremediable loss of status) and pleasure (caused by the boost of status). Applying the power/status theory, Theodore D. Kemper (1981) analyzed the emotions generated by the extremely violent terrorist attack on the Twin Towers on September 11th, 2001. On the other hand, Steven L. Gordon (1990) developed this approach, differentiating between the emotions according to their nature and classifying them into “biological emotions” (such as fury and fear) and “cultural emotions” (such as love, friendship and jealousy). The former are a combination of sensations and gestures, coming as a response to different stimuli, while the emotions of the second category are the product of the bodily sensations, gestures and cultural meanings learned within the groups we belong to.

The most important component in the study of violence and aggressiveness is the explanation of the violent and deviant behavior, since deviance is no longer considered an objective act, with a strict rigid nature, but a matter of significance, subjective evaluation, depending on two points view:

- The point of view of the public who perceives and defines a behavior as deviant;
- The point of view of the social actor involved in the actual act of deviance.

Therefore, a first conclusion on the characteristic elements of those acts considered as deviant is that they are disapproved by a significant number of individuals. Therefore, a deviance is a behavior that disturbs an expectation, a habit or a social norm in force or a generally accepted social value. For this reason, we can assume that some deviant behaviors relate to the social rules, values and norms that govern social life and that deviant behaviors can be defined by reference to the regulatory order of a society.

As a form of deviance, delinquency is a complex phenomenon that defines all behaviors that are in conflict with the values protected by the society and the legal standards. The factors generating or contributing to delinquency or crime, as phenomenon specific and particular to a

deviant behavior, can be divided into two big categories: a) internal, individual factors; and b) external social factors.

The first category includes the features and neuro-psychological structure of the individual characteristics of each individual's personality. The second includes the socio-cultural, economic and educational factors of micro and macro human groups which integrate an individual, starting with one's family.

Following the biological perspective, the second major theory is attributed to psychology. According to several studies, frustration is the key element determining participants to sport activities to become violent. This means that the occurrence of violence in sports is dependent on the emotions that have been created in the minds of the competitors especially by coaches. For instance, in the case where a coach emphasizes winning and nothing less, frustration may accumulate when the players do not achieve this aim triggering the occurrence of violence.

The social learning theory stands as the third major viewpoint. According to the theory, persons learn new behaviors through modeling and also through modeling by the use of punishments and rewards. In sports, players perceive their sports heroes as role models and as a result, they imitate their behaviors. At the same time, coaches, team mates, and parents may also be taken to be role models and may depict support for violent playing styles. Therefore, violence in sports can occur due to young sports persons imitating the behaviors of their role models which may suggest aggression. Jamieson and Orr (2009) point out that one of the major social influences in sports include coaches. Coaches depict the values and skills of sports that are esteemed by youngsters and that is why they tend to imitate these values and skills. Primarily, within any given social environment, actions that are exhibited are usually motivated by others and the social circumstances present. In terms of leadership and role models, the behaviors they hold up are the behaviors that will be imitated by those that they lead.

2. Mass-Media: Role in Violence and Aggressiveness in Sports

From a complex, scientific perspective, the mass media is represented by social institutions, both cultural as well as economic, which provide communication in the society.

From the emergence and wide spreading of printed media in the 19th and early 20th century, contemporary forms of media mainly include visual-based channels, such as television and more recently the internet. Many researchers consider that violence has gradually replaced the sense

of belonging and traditional forms of identity (Bertrand 2001) in physically-related activities, and that contemporary media has unfortunately contributed to escalating violence inside and outside stadiums. Young people have also been influenced to enjoy violent physical contact, and the role of parents and educators has thus become more and more difficult. In a rather contradictory way, media has taken over the role of encouraging all generations, but especially young people, to engage in sport and physical recreation, and managed to influence consumers towards a violent behavior.

Mass-media has played an important role in the transformations suffered by the sports phenomenon. First of all the written press, printed materials, cinemas, radio, TV and, more recently, the internet have managed to familiarize the increasingly larger public with the sports events has contributed to the explosive development of new sports, has attracted many sportsmen and also non-sportsmen, and viewers respectively. But in reality there is a true symbiosis between sports and mass-media. Sports has managed to develop mass-media, by the fact that sports is of great interest for the public by its events, as well as by the fact that sports activities have become an extensive financial business, involving mass-media organizations as well. In what concerns the types of influence on sports violence, Sorin-Maxim Tudor (2006) has provided a very well organized structure. Numerous specialists have pointed out that mass-media, especially television, can have both a beneficial role as well as a negative one in what concerns sports violence. Consequently, children access examples of sports violence which they may emulate. Some of the commentaries may provide the viewers with descriptions that suggest a link between excitement and violence.

The roles of television are the following, according to Crişan & Danciu (2000):

Informative role – The continuous flow of information around the world helps people find out the latest news;

- *Socialization (educational) role* – Television both receives and broadcasts messages that double the specific action of the social institutions which operate in the fields of education, culture, religion and sport;
- *Entertainment role*– Television meets the individuals needs' for recreation;
- *Status granting role* – Television confers status, importance, legitimacy and acknowledgement to certain ideas, persons, organizations, social movements etc.

However, TV also presents a substantial set of **dysfunctions** (Crişan & Danciu, 2000):

- *Message transience* – while a printed message can be read again or can be analyzed more slowly, televised messages cannot be fixed, as they disappear;
- *Time consuming* – according to the latest research, more and more people spend their time by watching TV. Consumption depends on production, but, at the same time, consumption determines production. It was established that dedicating excessive time to watching TV results in the cultivation of commodity, anomia, social isolation, anxiety or potential violence etc.
- *Effects of excessive TV watching* – watching TV programs excessively induces a sort of inactivity in the reception of any type of message;
- *Drop of the cultural level* – Television determines the degradation of the artistic taste of the public by promoting cultural models that are significantly lower than the average level;
- *Creation of false celebrities and events* – the aim being that of winning audience and popularity;
- *Manipulation phenomenon* – dramatized information;
- *High costs* – employees, machinery, equipment, trips, broadcasts and other very large expenses;
- *Narcotic dysfunction* – television induces the emotional and individual isolation of the receptors, thus giving them the feel of real experiences;
- *Lack of feedback* – television does not provide the opportunity to directly contact the producers of the presented shows, and therefore the viewers do not have the opportunity to determine changes.

Yet the media landscape is still dominated by the major television channels, long-established newspapers and their websites, blockbuster films, and a few major social-media sites. **TV news presently** consist of information presented with the help of kinetic images, which have a certain impact both at rational as well as at emotional level; they can influence greatly many audience segments, being a sort of show where images are supplemented by information content, without repetitions, by combining three dimensions that characterize TV news: **image, word and sound**. The feedback loop of the media was once relatively slow—before the spread of radio, audience members could phone complaints or write a letter to the editor. The mainstream media were, typically, fairly disdainful of or patronizing to, their audiences. Today, the first reports of news

events and incidents will often come via mobile phones. People around the world can discuss events as they happen by texting while watching sports news live at home or not. The mobile technology has thus massively substituted watching sport events in front of a TV set, accompanied by other family members.

3. Preventing Violence in Sports

The prevention has become in the last couple of years a key focus of all factors with a decision or active role in planning or carrying out physical education and sport. Measures taken in the last decades have confirmed that the provision of positive role models has a benefic effect: according to studies, violence in sports occurs in professional sports. In order to reduce the possibility of violence, coaches should avoid being associated with professional teams for example by using their names or logos. In addition, coaches should not use coaching techniques that are being used by professional coaches. Instead, it is vital that coaches use coaching strategies that encourage team work and ownership of the team by the players.

Trainers should encourage players to contribute to the success of the team by allowing them to participate in decision making and listening to their feedback about the team. When players develop ownership of the team, friendship and fair play are fostered hence facilitating for better performance. Instructors can highlight the need of team work or good relations among the players. The coach in charge can also create an environment where relations are boosted through the involvement of the larger community and especially parents and sport celebrities. When parents develop relationships with other parents and other children in the team, they will learn to support the team and not an individual child. As a result, there will be a strong team that works together and this will prevent any possibilities of violence erupting among the players in a team and their fans or parents. Ideally, children's participation in team sports should be fun, contribute to their physical development and well-being, help to develop social skills, and promote a desire for continued involvement with physical activity. The objective of physical education in schools should be to encourage development of appropriate exercise habits, with emphasis on the recreational aspects of physical activities.

In terms of improving the national legislation, meaningful measures have been recently recorded (Law 219/2016): firstly, checking sports arenas where a special committee indicates if the location complies with the conditions required by the law; secondly, the county committee

needs to draw up an annual report analyzing undertaken measures and proposals to prevent and combat antisocial acts; and thirdly changes regarding the amounts of contraventions applied to individuals breaking these provisions.

Conclusions

There is a great diversity of prevention programs: educational and social measures, improvement of the relations between the club and the supporters, the promotion of dialogue with the rival clubs, control of the spectators with the help of cameras, police interventions, infrastructure investments, reinforcement of the social role of the clubs, the organization of the ticket offices, appropriate legislation and many others. When a city hosts a sports event, the event requires a genuine hospitality policy: specialized structures for the access and accompanying of the supporters, ensuring the transport, meals and accommodations of the guest supporters, taking the required measures to make sure that the future competition does not make the members of disadvantaged neighborhoods or people who experience problems feel excluded (which are not accepted or do not find cheap game tickets). A few days or hours before the game a pleasant atmosphere must be created in the district where the sports field is located, messages that ask people to keep calm and show fair play. It is also advisable to involve highly appreciated celebrities in events of this type. Violence in sports can be in the form of verbal abuse, threats, or physical injury executed by players, spectators, coaches, parents of young players, and fans or triggered by mass media. However, there are measures that can be implemented to prevent or control violence in sports such as involvement of parents, fan penalties, putting sports in viewpoint, provision of positive role models and integration of values that encourage intervention into sports curriculum. Coordinated efforts adopted by schools, sports clubs, as well as parents and local communities prove that violence can be reduced and the young generation can be educated in the spirit of tolerance and fair play. However, recent improvements of legislation are to be complemented by actions taken by journalists, sports celebrities and influencers active on the internet.

Given all the above, we can conclude that the phenomenon of violence in sports remains an area upon which researchers and specialists will focus their attention the years to come as well, regarding which the media channels will continue to publish news and articles, showing especially sensational and shocking aspects, and with respect to which the authorities and the

civil society will try to act in order to control and prevent aggressive activities; we hope, at the same time, that Romanian supporters will start, and in time will succeed, in having a more controlled, moderate behavior, coming closer to the European standards in force. That is why it is very important for the team spirit to be supported actively by the educators, trainers and coaches of clubs across the country. Given the above, it is only fair to say that education is essential for controlling violence and that curricular and extracurricular educational programs have a basic role in the modeling of the future supporters interested in participating in and acting as civilized fans, regardless of the type of sports competition they attend.

References

- Bertrand, C-J (coord.). (2001). *O introducere în presa scrisă și vorbită*, București: Polirom
- Cloward, R. & Ohlin, L. (1966) *Delinquency and Opportunity*, New York, Free Press
- Crișan, C. & Danciu, L. (2000). *Manipularea opiniei publice prin televiziune*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia
- Eyseneck, H. (2000). *Descifrarea comportamentului uman*, București: Editura Teora
- Freud, F. (2010) *Opere, volumul 3, Psihologia inconștientului*, reviewed issue. București: Editura Trei
- Sigmund, F. (2010) *Opere, volumul 9, Studii despre societate și religie*. București: Trei Publishing House, 2010
- Gordon, S. L. (1990). Social Structural Effects on Emotions. In T. D. Kemper (ed.), *Research Agendas in the Sociology of Emotions* (145-179). Albany: State University of New York Press
- Jamieson, L.M. & Orr, T.J. (2009). *Sport and Violence: A Critical Examination of Sport*, Oxford and Burlington: Elsevier
- Kemper, T. D. (1981). Social constructionist and positivist approaches to the sociology of emotions, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1981, 87, 336-362
- Legea nr 219/2016 pentru modificarea Legii nr. 4/2008 privind prevenirea și combaterea violenței cu ocazia competițiilor și a jocurilor sportive, în *Monitorul Oficial al României*, partea I, 23 noiembrie 2016, <https://legeaz.net/monitorul-oficial-940-2016/legea-219-2016> (accesat 10 februarie 2019)
- Lorenz, K. (2005). *Așa-zisul rău*, București: Editura Humanitas
- Maslow, A. (2008). *Motivație și personalitate*. București: Editura Trei
- Maxim, S., Dascălu, D.I., Popoveniuc, B., Ionescu E. (2006). *Violența în sport*. Suceava: Universitatea din Suceava
- Merton, R (1938). Social Structure and Anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3 (5), 672-682
- Mischel, W. & Shoda, W. (1995) A Cognitive-affective System Theory of Personality: Reconceptualizing Situations, Dispositions, Dynamics and Invariance in Personality Structure. *Psychological Review*, 102 (2), 246-268
- Sutherland, E.H., Cressey, D. R., Luckenbill, D.F. (1966). *Principles of Criminology*, Lanham / Boulder / New York / Oxford: General Hall, 20-46 & 55-61
- Wellard, I. (2012). Body-reflexive pleasures: exploring bodily experiences within the context of sport and physical activity. *Sport, Education and Society*, 17:1, 21-33