

The Affecting Factors in the Behavior of the Selected Fans of Major League Soccer

(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 gathering 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 result of the research one can mention be the relationship between the behaviors of the fans of both teams and the behaviors of the coaches and the favorite players, lack of amenities and services at stadiums, referees, the cost and condition of selling tickets.

Key Words: Fans, Soccer, Anomalous Behavior.

Introduction

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, failure of 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 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. 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, stress in family, having friends and peers with a criminal past and collective heading to the gym and committing aggression and sports violence. Vaez Mousavi et al (2004), in a research titled frequency of aggressive behavior in situation 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. Sarikhani (2006) in a study titled the comparison of the causes and kinds of aggressions among the spectators of men's handball and futsal showed that referee could increase the spectators' aggression in both sports. 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. John Harrington (1986), using questionnaires, direct observations and supplemental data of the police, transportation officials and outreach centers, attempted to publish a report on the conduct of spectators at soccer matches in England. Harrington's report mainly focused on individual pathology and spectators' environmental responses to stimuli. Tanenbaum and Singer (1997), in a research on aggression and violence in sport, 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. 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 behavior of the coach and of the favorite player, lack of amenities and services at stadiums, referee, fees and ticket status 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 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 gathering 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 the behavior of coach and the favorite player and committing anomalous behaviors with 7 items, the impact of the lack of amenities and services at stadiums and committing anomalous behaviors with 5 items, the impact of referee and committing anomalous behaviors with 9 items, impact of fees and ticket status and committing anomalous behaviors with 5 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 the behavior of coach and the favorite player and committing anomalous behaviors	7	.78
lack of amenities and services at stadiums and committing anomalous behaviors	5	.72
impact of referee and committing anomalous behaviors	9	.71
impact of fees and ticket status and committing anomalous behaviors	5	.72
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 the behavior of coach and the favorite player and committing anomalous behaviors	7	.73
lack of amenities and services at stadiums and committing anomalous behaviors	5	.70
impact of referee and committing anomalous behaviors	9	.73
impact of fees and ticket status and committing anomalous behaviors	5	.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 the behavior of coach and the favorite player and fans' committing anomalous behaviors using Cramer's correlation coefficient

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	.451	.001
Cramer's coefficient	.451	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013

The information presented in Table 3 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.451 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.

Table (4) investigation of the relationship between lack of amenities and services at stadiums and fans' committing anomalous behaviors using Cramer's correlation coefficient

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	.742	.001
Cramer's coefficient	.742	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013

The information presented in Table 4 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.742 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.

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

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	.552	.001
Cramer's coefficient	.552	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013

The information presented in Table 5 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.552 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.

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

	Size	Level of significance
Agreed coefficient	.832	.001
Cramer's coefficient	.832	.001
Sample size	714	

Source: authors, 2013

The information presented in Table 6 indicates that correlation coefficient equals 0.832 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.

Discussion and Conclusion

Soccer is a kind of sport which most of all requires an exchange of energy, thoughts and interaction of actual and potential powers of young players. The more the race has a balance of tactics and technique, the more enjoyable it is, hence preventing violence in the match. Otherwise dissatisfaction is culminated in the match and since the audience is aware of the inconsistencies in the match, they show their discontent in the form of protest, offence, bias, conflict and conflict so much so that it leads to serious fights outside the sports environment. 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 the behavior of the coach and favorite player. The results of this research were consistent with those of Kazemi et al (2007) which considered the provocative performance of coaches and players in incidence of aggression high and very high. 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 behavior of the coach could reduce the aggression which is consistent with the results of this research. The results of the research revealed that there was a correlation between the fans' opinion on the subscale of lack of amenities and services at the stadium. Since the country's stadiums are not in proper condition in terms of amenities and that they don't have proper conditions for selling tickets, most of the spectators have to go the stadium the night before the match or early morning on the day of match, especially for sensitive matches, which is very boring and tiresome. The findings of this research are consistent with those of the research by Kazemi which considered lack of sufficient transportation vehicles, irregularity and confusion inside the stadium because of the lack of seat number on the tickets as effective factors in spectators' violence. Also, Jahanfar (2002) in his article points out that creation of a variety of exciting activities can prevent the anomalous behaviors in the audience. Thus, Stadium facilities can help us in this important matter. Therefore, the results of this research are consistent with those of Jahanfar. The results of the research showed that there was a correlation between the opinions of the fans of the two teams about the subscale discontent of referee. And this is because the results of the matches lost are mostly attributed to the referees by fans, managers and coaches in our country and referees are always exposed to the fans' invasion. Also, in a study done by Kazemi, 50 percent of the audience considered the biased performance of referee as very highly affecting the incidence of aggression, which represents the consistency with the results of this research. Also the results of the research by Sarikhani (2006), titled comparing the causes and types of violence and aggression in spectators of men's handball and futsal, showed the referee in both fields can increase the aggression of the spectators, with which the results of the present research are consistent. Thomas et al. (2008), in their research on the Bundesliga teams, concluded that the referee is an important factor in the occurrence of aggression by spectators, and the behavior of the referee has significant correlation with the incidence of aggression. Also, 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 the referee could be effective in reducing the aggression, which is consistent with the results of this research. In another study by Folkson et al. (2002), this result was arrived at that age, experience and the referees' lifestyle have direct correlation with spectators' violence and aggression, that is, the more the age and experience of the referee, the less the violence of the audience. The results of this research indicated that there was a correlation between the opinion of fans of both teams on the subscale of the fees and ticket sale status. Since the status of ticket sale is not proper in most of the country's stadiums, and that is done in completely primitive ways, and that for procuring tickets, especially in sensitive matches, one has to wait in long queues or look for it on the black market, and that the seat numbers are not on the

tickets, these factors can be quite decisive in the fans' anomalous behaviors. The indifference of managers and coaches toward this issue needs to be debated. The results of this research are consistent with those of Kazemi (2007) who studied the problems of ticket sale from the perspective of the spectators in causing aggression and violence, showing that 73% of the audience considered these factors as highly and very highly affecting the aggression.

Using the results of this research this conclusion can be made that that to deal with the fans' aggression, cultural work needs to be done among the athletes so that the improper behaviors of the coaches and players are reduced and that they can control their behavior. This way we will not witness aggressive behavior and anomalous behaviors among the spectators. By holding justification classes for the coaches and players teaching them how to observe ethics and proper behavior in matches, we can take a big step forward in reducing the aggression of the fans and spectators. Another effective factor which causes the spectators' discontent is lack of amenities and services at stadiums. Thus, if amenities such as toilets, food supply, drinking water, installation of cooling water, seat numbering and etc. are provided in stadiums, the discontent and aggression of fans can be somewhat reduced. Another effective factor causing fans' discontent and reinforcing their feeling of defeat and failure is the unbalanced ways of referee in tournaments, which leads to anomalous behaviors among the fans. Therefore, by increasing the levels of knowledge of referee, their job satisfaction, and selection of experienced referees for sensitive matches, the discontent and aggression of the audience can be somewhat alleviated. Also, for future research, the relationship between personality traits and incidence of anomalous behaviors, the impact of race, ethnicity and cultural factors of family upon the incidence of anomalous behaviors and violence of the spectators and players, effective factors in incidence of anomalous behavior in the audience from the perspective of the players and coaches can be investigated.

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