Original Article

Czech Football Hooligans' Behavior

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Abstract

Football is the most popular sport all over the world but this beautiful game has a dark side: corruption, homophobia, violence, and racism. The goal of this paper is to analyze the relationship between hooligans' verbal and other expression and their violent behavior at selected football stadiums in the Czech Republic. Primary data were collected by a questionnaire survey (PAPI method) mainly at the Eden stadium and in part also on other first league football stadiums in 2015 and 2016. A total of 32 respondents (men aged 23.06 ± 10.23 years old) participated in this research and all of the respondents were attending in a stand of home team supporters. In our research, we found that expressions of racism are considered the most serious expression of violent behavior by 31.25% of the hooligans. The same result was mentioned about demolishing the stadium and other disturbances. Almost one fifth of the hooligans (18.75%) marked that a pitch incursion is the most serious activity. On the other hand, 93.75% of the hooligans stated that boo is the least serious problem.

Key Words: English disease, football club, Slavia Prague, violence.

Introduction

Football has been associated with violence ever since its early beginnings in 13th century England (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005). From medieval times, games featuring balls or animals' skulls were played on holy days or as part of festivals; these were wild, unruly affairs, with few rules and little structure. They were also extremely violent, games often resulting in deaths and serious injuries (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014). The term hooligan was coined in the 1890s as an alternative to ruffian. Now readily applied to the wild and unruly football fan of the 1960s, the term and the on-screen images of undisciplined toughs rekindled a Victorian-style moral panic vocalized by the Conservative Party and fanned by the press (Frosdick, March, 2005). The term hooligan derives from the name "Houlihan", a noticeably antisocial Irish family in 19th century east London. Since 1970, the media in the UK have become very attached to the label, judging by the extent to which they increasingly use it (Marsh, Rosser & Harré, 1978).

Football hooligans come together in small groups consisting mostly young militantly oriented supporters. They come to football stadiums and their surroundings with the primary objective cause conflict or fight with other similar groups opposing team. These groups (gangs) have their own names, which are defined against unorganized groups and to other groups. Some of these parts are very well organized and do not unite only club rivalry and hatred of the enemy groups, but also political, racial, religious, national, regional or social motives. Hooligans, unlike fans often do not identify with a football club, but only with their group (Mareš et al., 2004).

Frosdick & Marsh (2005) state that football fan behavior has been for many years a major cause for concern throughout Europe, especially in Germany, Netherlands, Italy and Belgium, as well as in the United Kingdom. Substantial disturbances at football matches have also been witnessed in the Czech Republic, Greece, Denmark, Austria and other countries in Eastern Europe. Veuthey & Freeburn (2015) point to the fact that although the term hooliganism refers to acts of violence or disturbances that might occur among sports spectators, the term is most often associated with football environment. Frosdick & Marsh (2005) said that violent and anti-social behavior amongst football fans is sometimes referred to as the British disease or English disease.

These populist terms have been used by the newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, internet, and by politicians to label the deviant behaviors which have become associated with especially English football from the 1960s onwards. But these labels are based on three failings: that the violence is something relatively new; that it is found at football matches only; and that it is an English phenomenon. None of these statements stands up to scrutiny (Dunning, 2000).

These misconceptions were refuted by examples from history, from other sports and other countries. Olivová (1979) notes that already in ancient Greece, Rome and Byzantine Empire were recorded the first spectator violence. It is also not true that the abnormal behavior occurs only at football stadiums, they are known

cases of ice hockey, basketball, baseball, rugby, etc. There is the evidence that football hooliganism occurs practically everywhere in Europe but also in other continents (particularly in Latin America and North Africa). Canter, Comber & Uzzell (1989) describe football hooliganism as a term which covers many behaviors, both simple and complex. On the other hand, Williams (2002) argues that there is no useful clear definition of football hooliganism available. Frosdick & Marsh (2005) agree with William's statement and note that there are real difficulties in defining this phenomenon. They state term spectator violence would be a more accurate name. However, spectator violence implies something done during spectating. Much of the violence takes place away from the stadium (e.g. unused rail way stations, car parks, meadows, parks, etc.). The next problem of definition is that there are so many variables around this phenomenon (table 1).

Table 1: Variables in the context of football hooliganism

<i>The sport involved</i>	Range of sports (ice hockey, basketball, rugby, etc.)
<i>Criminal offence categories</i>	Offences against the person (e.g. assaults), offences against property (e.g. vandalism) offences against the state (e.g. disorder).
<i>Extent of criminalization of behaviors</i>	Limitation to offenses that are reported as crimes, or even intended to unreported offenses, e.g. drunkenness, or even simple anti-social behavior, e.g. peeing on the terrace, which belongs to the restaurant?
<i>Location</i>	Where do the behaviors take place? Is it inside, outside or even well away from the venue?
<i>Extent of organization</i>	Is it only counting organized violence, e.g. a pre-planned fight between two hooligan gangs? Does it include the spontaneous, e.g. a pitch incursion to celebrate a goal, first title in the league or even historical procedure to the Champions League?
<i>Whether arrests were made or not</i>	Does it count incident for which arrest is made? There are several offences, e.g. unlawful pitch incursion, which are only counted in the official statistics when they are detected as a result of a person being arrested by the police.
<i>Extent of injuries sustained and/or extent of damage caused</i>	What about the outcomes of the violence as a means of categorization? On the one hand, a relatively minor incident may result in a few broken windows or car windows. On the other hand, a fairly serious affray may result in no actual injury or damage but in considerable numbers of people being afraid for their personal safety. This is not a problem in the Czech Republic, a lot of people do not visit football matches. They prefer theatre, cinema, ZOO, etc.
<i>The league or division from which the team's fans were drawn</i>	Was it a first league or second league in the Czech Republic? Or a non-league team?
<i>When the violence took place</i>	Was it before, during or after the football match; or even not on a football match day at all?
<i>Provocation</i>	Whether the behavior was provoked by the actions of the players or the decisions of the match officials; or even by supporters and hooligans of the other team?

Source: Processed under Frosdick & Marsh, 2005.

Dunning (2000) states that the politicians and media personnel who employ the term are liable to use football hooliganism in a 'cover-all' sense which includes among other things: forms of verbal as well as physical violence; the throwing of missiles at players, match and club officials and other football fans; the vandalizing of club and private property; fist fights, fights involving kicking, and fights involving weapons, such as knives and even guns. It is also important to realize that such behavior takes place, not only at or in the immediate vicinity of football grounds, but also involves fights between groups of males who share a claimed allegiance to opposing football clubs and which take place on days other than as well as on match days and in contexts, e.g. pubs, clubs, railway and bus stations, which are sometimes far removed from football stadia per se. In terms of these political and media usages, the label football hooliganism is also sometimes loosely used to cover politically orientated behavior, e.g. that of groups on the political right. It is also used in relation to protests against the owners and managers of clubs and in the condemnation of racist behavior in football-related contexts as well as of more or less directly football-related fighting. As one can see, football hooliganism is a complex and many-sided phenomenon.

Unfortunately, oftentimes ignorance and misunderstanding of football hooliganism determines preview on it. It is important to distinguish hooligans from other people who are interested only in football and watch football matches.

Material & methods

The goal of this paper is to analyze the relationship between hooligans' verbal and other expression and their violent behavior at football stadiums in the Czech Republic. After having stipulated the aim, a research question was set. RQ: Which attitudes, expressions, and speeches are considered most serious by football hooligans of Slavia Prague?

Primary data were collected by a questionnaire survey mainly at the Eden stadium and other football stadiums in the Czech Republic in 2015 and 2016. The research is focused on the oldest football club (est. 1892) in the Czech Republic. The next reason for choosing this football club was finding that stands of the stadium (end) are the most occupied by football hooligans. The stand of the stadium for the home supporters is called the end, with the capacity of 3.065 seats. It consists of 5 sectors with 25 seats in 28 rows each. The end is mostly filled up to 2/3, and sold out during matches with attractive away teams e.g. Sparta Prague, Plzeň, and Baník Ostrava.

The selection of respondents was based on carefully pre-defined factors; e.g. seats 1, 3, 5, 7 in the first row; seats 2, 4, 6, 8 in the second row etc. from all the rows. The respondents were informed about the research and anonymity of the questionnaire. Once they answered the questionnaires, each of them received a small Slavia club badge. They had also the opportunity to contact the interviewer on the email stated on the questionnaire list and get themselves informed about the research results. Filled in questionnaires by 32 hooligans were selected of the total 700 questionnaires. Two questionnaires from hooligans were answered incorrectly and incompletely, therefore, they were not included in the research.

A total of 32 hooligans aged 23.06 ± 10.23 years old participated in this research, all of the respondents (men) were attending in the end. They are 35 altogether who visit the football matches. Hooligans mostly stand in the front rows of the end.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-nine questions; some of them were scalable, where respondents rated on Likert scale (1-5) individual verbal and other expression and also their violent behavior speeches. The least serious activity was rated 1, the most significant activity received the highest grade, i.e. 5. This paper uses quantitative research, methods of analysis, mathematical and statistical methods. For the evaluation of the results, Statistica program was used.

Results

a) Social and demographic statistics. 81.25% of the hooligans were single, 6.25% of the hooligans were divorced, and the same numbers were married (6.25%) and decided to answer "I do not wish to express my opinion" (6.25%). Over one half of the hooligans (56.25%) lived with their parents. This result was caused by young age and also 43.75% of the hooligans were students. On the other hand, almost 1/5 of the hooligans (18.75%) lived alone and next 12.50% of the hooligans shared a flat with their lifelong partners. Exactly one half of the respondents came from complete families, almost 1/3 of the hooligans (31.25%) had divorced parents, and 18.75% of the hooligans marked the answer "I do not wish to express my opinion".

More than 1/3 of the hooligans (43.75%) finished only primary school. On the other hand, nearly 1/5 of the hooligans (18.75%) graduated university. Next 18.75% of the hooligans passed their final at high school with General Certificate of Secondary Education and the same percentage (18.75%) were educated in vocational school with certificate of apprenticeship. Therefore, we cannot state that hooligans definitely come from a lower social class, that they did not receive a sufficient education, are unemployed etc. Some of the hooligans in the sample are still students (43.75%); however, in the sample other work positions are represented as well (a roofer, librarian, plumber, cook, financial advisor, cook, and even university teacher). Almost one half of the hooligans (43.75%) were satisfied with their present lives, next 31.25% were rather satisfied, and only 18.75% of the hooligans were dissatisfied with their current lives. Over 1/3 of the hooligans (31.25%) expressed their subjective satisfaction with their economic situation, further 25.00% were very satisfied and only 12.50% were dissatisfied with their financial options. The same percentage (12.50%) marked the answer "I do not wish to express my opinion". Almost 2/3 of the hooligans (62.50%) came from the capital city and also lived there.

68.75% of the hooligans attended their first football matches in the childhood; over one half (54.54%) visited matches with their parents, and over one third of the hooligans (36.36%) went to football matches with their friends. 31.25% of the hooligans went to football matches during adolescence; 80.00% of them enjoyed the matches with their friends, other 20.00% of the hooligans saw their first football matches with their parents. Nowadays, 93.75% of the hooligans visit the football matches with their friends in a group. More than 1/3 of the hooligans (31.25%) played football for a club and actively trained. Besides football other favorite sports of surveyed hooligans are MMA (25.00%), boxing (18.75%), fitness workout (12.50%), and basketball (6.25%).

b) Hooligans' participation on the activities during the football matches.

Surprisingly, more than 2/3 of the hooligans (68.75%) owned a scarf, jersey or T-shirt. On the other hand, the scientific literature dedicated to this topic states that this group intends to blend in with the crowd and mostly

wears branded black clothes e.g. Lonsdale, Umbro, Pitbull, Tapout, and Thor Steinar etc., and do not wear the symbols of the club.

Regarding the emotional response of the watched game, the results were as follows: over one third of the hooligans (37.50%) were excited throughout the football match, next 37.50% were excited occasionally, and only 1/4 of the hooligans (25.00%) were not excited.

Almost one half of the hooligans (43.75%) regretted the loss of the club only immediately after the end of the match, over one third of the hooligans (37.50%) did not care about the loss of the club. If the match is broadcast on TV, over 2/3 of the hooligans (68.75%) opted for watching it at the football match at the stadium. The rest of the hooligans (31.25%) sometimes visited the football match; sometimes they watched the football match from the sofa. The reasons for not going to the football stadium are the lack of money, afternoon or night shift at work, and the lack of time.

One half of the hooligans (50.00%) consciously never took an object to the football stadium which could be used as a weapon. Only 12.50% of the hooligans had a different opinion about this activity and some objects used as weapons (e.g. a flag stick, bottle of water or even a brick from the newspaper – known as a “Millwall brick”). It is an improvised weapon made of a manipulated newspaper. The weapon's popularity appears to have been due to the wide availability of newspapers, the difficulty in restricting newspapers being brought into football stadiums, and the easiness of its construction. The rest of the hooligans (37.50%) sometimes took an object to the stadium and used it as a weapon.

Over 2/3 of the hooligans (68.75%) sometimes participated in firing of pyrotechnics. They agreed with the expression of the supporters “no pyrotechnics, no party”. Only 12.50% of the hooligans did not participate in pyrotechnics, and the rest of the hooligans (18.75%) had a different point of view and used the pyrotechnics every match.

One half of the hooligans (50.00%) sometimes expressed vulgarly. Almost one half of the hooligans (43.75%) used vulgar expressions every football match. Such expressions are mostly addressed to the Head of the Football Association of the Czech Republic and the Head of referee committee; also to the referees and some players of the rival team, who react negatively to Slavia Prague. The chant leader is required to initiate chants in reply to a chant from the opposition fans, supporters, and hooligans. Supporters and hooligans in the end of Slavia chant on the rival fans, supporters, and hooligans (e.g. “Sparta” is transformed into “Sparta (bark bark) or Sparta! (a bunch of fagots)”; “Plzeň! is transformed into “Plzeň (fucking); “Liberec! is transformed into “Liberec (kiss my ass)”; “Hradec! is transformed into “Hradec (a bunch of fagots)” etc. The chants are rhyme with words in the Czech language. Vulgarisms are part of the behavior typical for hooligans. Only 6.25% of the hooligans did not use vulgarisms.

Almost one half of the hooligans (43.75%) never drink alcohol before or during the football match. Over one third of the hooligans (31.25%) sometimes drink at the football stadium and the rest of the hooligans (25.00%) always drink alcohol. Currently, the stadiums only sell non-alcoholic beer during the matches of European League, derby or other risky matches. So, hooligans had to drink beer or some shots of alcohol before the football match. There are some refreshments stands with beer in front of the stadium or they can visit some pubs close to the stadium.

Over one half of the hooligans (56.25%) had some experience with demolishing stadium and other riots; almost one fifth of the hooligans (18.75%) participated often of this activity and 37.50% of the hooligans marked the answer “sometimes”. The rest of the hooligans (43.75%) did not have this experience, and 31.25% of the hooligans considered it as the most severe activity.

Racism is one of the most discussed topics all over the world among football managers, top officials, players, fans, etc. The campaign to eliminate racism, discrimination and intolerance from football has become a major priority for UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) in recent years – and the European body makes full use of its high-profile platforms to send out a key and unequivocal message: No to Racism. Almost one half of the hooligans (43.75%) did not shout racist insults at black football players. Exactly 25.00% of the hooligans often used racist insults during the football matches.

Booing from football hooligans are for three main reasons: the crowd disagrees with a foul the referee has called or not called; the crowd is holding a grudge against a particular player for some reason and he or she has the ball; and the crowd feels a team is playing cynically through “simulating fouls” by diving or time wasting or playing too passively by passing the ball backwards excessively. Almost each hooligan had an experience with boo the referee (93.75%). Other boos reached approximately similar results if we summed “often” and “sometimes” options. Almost one half of the hooligans (43.75%) booed on the Head of the Czech Football Association.

Almost 2/3 of the hooligans (62.50%) threw an object on the pitch. It is mostly caused by the false verdict by the line referee or at the rival's goal celebration in front of the various kinds of audience. The football pitch is often covered with empty or full plastic beer cups, coins or even lighters. We should consider that the referee decision should catalyze the violent clash, even in the situation when they themselves do not behave in line with the football rules.

Exactly 3/4 of the hooligans (75.00%) had experience with a pitch excursion (table 2). Running to the pitch reached such key values which was influenced by the historical proceed to Champions League in 2007,

when almost all of hooligans celebrated this success on the pitch together with the players. The second occasion was the match with the football team of Hajduk Split in 2014 when 15 minutes before regular playing time the match was ended. Hajduk supporters and hooligans broke into the pitch followed by the Slavia supporters and hooligans. All of these groups greeted at the central circle and yelled together. Both clubs share common history and very friendly relations. In Prague (1911), Slavia assisted for Hajduk establishment in the Brewery U Fleků.

Table 2: Hooligans' participation on the activities during the football matches in percentage

	always	sometimes	never
<i>consciously taking an object to the stadium and use it as a weapon</i>	12.50	37.50	50.00
<i>firing of pyrotechnics</i>	18.75	68.75	12.50
<i>individual vulgar expression</i>	43.75	50.00	6.25
<i>alcohol consumption</i>	25.00	31.25	43.75
	often	sometimes	never
<i>demolishing stadium and other riots</i>	18.75	37.50	43.75
<i>expressions of racism</i>	25.00	31.25	43.75
<i>boo the referee</i>	37.50	56.25	6.25
<i>boo the club</i>	12.50	56.25	31.25
<i>boo the rival players and club</i>	37.50	37.50	25.00
<i>boo the Head of the Czech Football Association</i>	43.75	25.00	31.25
	yes	no	
<i>throw in the object on the pitch</i>	62.50	37.50	
<i>pitch incursion</i>	75.00	25.00	

c) Hooligans' expressions on mentioned activities.

The examined group of the hooligans showed very similar opinions on the pyrotechnics. 81.25% of them considered using pyrotechnics the least serious problem; only 6.25% of the hooligans did not share the same opinion and marked this activity as the most serious issue at the football stadium. Hooligans used pyrotechnics in many cases and brought them to the stadiums.

As far as the vulgarity of the end and vulgar expressions usage, we reached approximately the same values. Such expressions are mostly addressed to the Head of the Football Association of the Czech Republic and the Head of referee committee; also to the referees and some players of the rival team, who react negatively on Slavia Prague. Vulgarisms are part of the behavior typical for hooligans, 75% of them did not find them as the most serious issue.

Over one half of the hooligans (56.25%) considered physical aggression the least severe on the stadium, by other hooligans it was mentioned on 18.75% answers. Almost similar results could be noticed in physical aggression to the Police of the Czech Republic or security. Therefore, we assume that it is influenced by the intention of the hooligans to look for distant vacant areas or visit football matches in order to get a reason for fight.

Agreed hooligans fight behind outside the stadium was mentioned by 87.50% of the hooligans as the least serious activity. It is certain that all hooligans active in these fights do not consider this as a serious issue. On the other hand, if the rival fan wearing a scarf meets the hooligan, there is no reason for fear. Hooligan that is conscious about this culture would not fight. The true hooligans are highly disciplined in this field. Furthermore, one half of the hooligans (50.00%) stated that the stadium demolition and other riots do not belong to the serious problems. It is interesting, that the stadium demolition mostly happens at the rival's stadium. On the other hand, almost 1/3 of the hooligans (31.25%) considered it as the most severe activity (table 3).

Table 3: Hooligans' expressions on mentioned activities in percentage

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>firing of pyrotechnics</i>	81.25	12.50	0.00	0.00	6.25
<i>vulgar chants in the stand</i>	75.00	18.75	6.25	0.00	0.00
<i>individual vulgar expression</i>	75.00	12.50	0.00	6.25	6.25
<i>physical aggression against rival fans at the stadium</i>	56.25	18.75	6.25	18.75	0.00
<i>physical aggression against police and riot police</i>	56.25	25.00	12.50	6.25	0.00
<i>arranged hooligan fight outside the stadium</i>	87.50	12.50	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>throw in the object on the pitch</i>	56.25	12.50	12.50	12.50	6.25
<i>demolishing stadium and other riots</i>	50.00	12.50	6.25	0.00	31.25
<i>expressions of racism</i>	43.75	12.50	0.00	12.50	31.25
<i>boos</i>	93.75	6.25	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>pitch incursion</i>	62.50	6.25	12.50	0.00	18.75

Note. 1 – the least serious expression, 5 – the most serious expression

Only 6.25% of the hooligans are persuaded that the objects throwing on the pitch is the most serious activity. Over 2/3 of the hooligans (68.75%) has a different opinion on this activity and did not find it as a problem. Booring was unanimously agreed as the least serious activity (93.75%), other 6.25% of the hooligans marked grade 2. Positively is a pitch incursion perceived as a wrong approach on one hand or as a provocation on the other hand. Almost 1/5 of the hooligans consider the pitch incursion as the most serious expression (table 3).

Discussion

For Czech football clubs, hooliganism is a big threat. Nowadays, in tough economic times, football clubs try to attract every fan to the football stadium. We can state that violence at the football stadiums is one of the most discussed topics in the Czech Republic. The media reported that just violent behavior is one of the major factors that discourage visitors and fans from enjoyable atmosphere of the football stadiums. We consider that this is not a true statement because football stadiums in the Czech Republic are safe for the 1st league matches.

The Football Association of the Czech Republic tries to make football attractive as a product. Football matches should become the social events such as in England and other western countries. But it is necessary to say that this mentioned product will not be as attractive in the Czech Republic as in England. The fact that the stadiums are often almost empty and there are not so many families with children is not caused by hooligan fights at the stadiums. There are a lot of different leisure activities (theater, cinema, zoo, etc.) instead of football. We found that expressions of racism are considered the most serious expression of violent behavior by 31.25% of the hooligans. The same result was mentioned about the demolishing of a stadium and other disturbances. Almost one fifth of the hooligans (18.75%) marked that a pitch incursion is the most serious activity. On the other hand, over 3/4 of the hooligans (81.25%) stated that firing of pyrotechnics is the least serious problem; other least serious activities were hooligan fights outside the stadium (87.50%), and boos (93.75).

Conclusions

According to the research, there was found out that, for a hooligan, football is not just an excuse for a fight as it is mostly perceived by the public. We cannot state that the surveyed hooligans definitely come from a lower social class, that they did not receive a sufficient education, are unemployed etc. Hooligans, in many cases, had a very good overview of the results of Slavia in the last seasons, and had a good knowledge of frequently changing football cadre team including current players and football legends.

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