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## Sport at risk due to the growing wave of violence

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### Abstract

Violence in sport is as old as the sporting phenomenon itself and, because of its severity, it is extremely complicated. Over time there has been violent behaviour among practitioners, referees and judges, fans and spectators, etc. This is contrary to the reason and essence of sport, which is based on fair play, solidarity, loyalty and friendship, so that the competition is true and fair.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the difference between forms of violence that occur around the world in different sports, their consequences and efforts to stop it. This study also aims to increase knowledge on the subject, understand the seriousness of the problem and know some of the factors that influence it in the sports environment.

For this purpose, we used a methodology based on a literature review of recent articles that discuss the study of violence in sport.

This article concluded that violence is greater in sports that are not as violent as football compared to rugby. It should be noted that violence can be both physical and verbal and in the latter way racism is an example of this violence. Also in e-sports it was noticed that the reality created around a computer game can influence certain violent and aggressive behaviors, especially in children and young people. In short, violence is transversal to sport, but its existence causes in sport its loss of natural essence that is to contribute to balance the physical and mental balance of the human being.

**Keywords:** violence, sport, MMA, racism, football, e-sports, rugby

### Introduction

According to history, violence is a Latin word, derived from visions, strength, and we use it in countless ways: the force of nature, of the sea, of the wind, of the elements, the physical force that forces a human being to do what he does not want, the social force that keeps the oppressed and exploited in their places, the moral and intellectual force that dominates our minds and makes us think of our own world as normal. In physical violence, the instigator uses force to produce damage to the opponent's body, in psychological violence, the instruments are the offensive words and phrases, which intend to offend the other and provoke his or her psychological instability (Ferreira, Victor & Barbosa, 2017) [13].

The term aggressiveness originates from the Latin word *aggressio*, which derives from *aggrendi*, which means achieving something or taking a step towards something (Colossi, Marasca & Falcke, 2016) [7]. Therefore, it seems that aggressiveness itself is not something that should be considered as something evil in its essence and that its effect depends on how it is used. Thus, aggressiveness, under the view of psychology, is a direction of energy (*libido*) in the search for self-affirmation or self-protection and it is the incorrect use that conceives the deviations of behavior that are expressed as violence or impulses of destruction (Motta, 2016) [26], but violence can have some different connotations depending on the context in which it is found (Guarinello (2007) [16].

The increase in violence has led to bizarre, dramatic, comic and even euphoric episodes that in some cases end with the death of innocent people. It is not only found in combat sports, or is exclusive to football, where cases of violence have greater repercussions due to the global dimension that the sport reaches, but other sports such as handball, volleyball, swimming,

tennis or badminton have already registered cases of violence. This fact contradicts the reason and the essence of what is sport, which has as its premises fair play, solidarity, loyalty and friendship, so that competition is true and the best wins in a fair victory. It is this lack of reasonableness that leads to the loss of credibility and status of sport.

Sport is a socio-cultural phenomenon involving a large number of people, where conflicts of violence between young people are increasingly occurring in our society. The violence in sport that has emerged in the world and also in Portugal, abundantly widespread in the media, has been stigmatized by an image and culture of hostility, confrontation and unaccountability that misleads the most basic principles and values of sport in civic education and social cohesion (C.O. Portugal, 2017) <sup>[31]</sup>.

Some of the reasons pointed out for the empowerment of sport are: social factors that have changed the perception in the family field, the mobility of families, the increase in parents' time spent at work, the increased exposure of children to issues such as violence and the use of drugs and alcohol, global change and complexity, multiculturalism, education and social skills derived from a highly competitive environment, etc.

Some youth sporting activities, children are faced with examples of fair or dirty play, even by professional athletes, where competitiveness is very present. In this way, sport unintentionally conveys a perception that physical aggression is automatically manifested. It is therefore necessary to create specially planned intervention programs that combine sports-related objectives with socially accepted objectives in order to prevent this learning process by young people.

Tackling this situation presents structural problems linked to the integrity of sport and remains far from being solved through communication approaches that divert situations associated with violence in sport from the media agenda. Law no. 39/ 2009 of 30 July 2009 contains the legal framework to combat violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sports events. Violence orchestrated by fans or spectators, being an exogenous violence to sport, is still associated with the sports phenomenon and all its contingencies. In Portugal there are few records of incidents of violence associated with large-scale sport. The majority of incidents are determined by the behaviour of certain supporters, and the motivations are usually related to issues related to the game.

In an attempt to curb the problem, international bodies such as the European Commission try to create awareness action plans, notably through the White Paper, which consists of a set of actions to guide sport (e.g. fair play, team spirit, etc.).

## Theoretical reference

### 1. Violence as a sports spectacle

The concept of violence is not easy to define and is common to all. Violence, as a subjective concept, evolves and changes over time. What is not violent today can be considered tomorrow, and vice versa. There is no way to maintain a precise and immutable concept of violence. What we have as a starting point is that it comes from force, but with countless origins and purposes. In ancient Rome, since the 1970s, for example, gladiators faced each other in the arenas in bloody struggles, whose end for the vanquished was a dignified and honorable death. Instead of fighting uselessly for life, the vanquished gladiator offered his neck to his opponent and to the public so that he could obtain the end of life with a dignified death in a glorious combat (Guarinello, 2007) <sup>[16]</sup>. It is evident that, although bloody, the spectacle performed by

the gladiators was acceptable and appreciated, to the extent that the violence applied in the confrontations was allowed by society. Since then, despite the constant changes in society over the centuries about the concept of violence that is acceptable or not, it is certain that the violent universe continues to be present in modern sports shows, especially in martial arts fights, rugby, etc. (Soares, 2016) <sup>[37]</sup>.

Another sport well known from Roman times was chariot racing, or quadruple racing depending on the number of horses that each runner would use. In these races there were no rules, and the only goal was to reach the end of the race safe and sound, together with the horses (Soares, 2016) <sup>[37]</sup>.

In ancient Greece the types of games practiced were not very different from Roman history, in fact most of the games would even be the same with only some changes in the rules. One of the best known sports in Ancient Greece, was the fight to start a pancake, now called Greco-Roman wrestling. This type of fight is still taught to secondary school pupils today, as it is one of the best ways of promoting physical contact between pupils in a more controlled way. However, it has not always been so safe. According to history in ancient Greece, there were only two rules that fighters could not disregard: it was strictly forbidden to bite the opponent, and rip his eyes out, everything else would be allowed (Ramos, 1983) <sup>[32]</sup>.

For (Ramos, 1983) <sup>[32]</sup>, these forms of sports practices served not only for entertainment but also for physical preparation, i.e., the positive side of this violence and aggressions that were taught both in Greece and in Rome served to support the individual and collective development of military skills, so that when called to the armies these fighters already had years of specific training.

On the other side of the world, in Japan, a fight was developed called sumo, whose objective was to throw the opponent out of the ring using only the hands and the impulse of the body. The tournaments were held with the purpose of raising donations for the construction or repair of shrines, temples, and other public works with or without religious purposes.

Cumulatively about 100 years ago, violence in children in schools (Teacher to the student) was common as a form of learning, which is currently inadmissible, because it is illegal and prohibited. Despite the application of force by teachers to children, at the time, in a social and cultural context, the act was tolerable and, for some people, even necessary for learning. In reality, it could be said that for some, it was not even violence. Guarinello (2007) <sup>[16]</sup> argues that the awareness of cultural relativism allows us to appreciate and try to understand the human in all its diversity, but does not exempt us from the duty to establish, for ourselves, individually or collectively, which is the violence that we deem acceptable and which should be repressed or abolished in our lives. With this understanding of the author it becomes easier to perceive the reason for the constant alteration and evolution of the concept of violence within the sports shows. Together with the evolution of society, the conception and tolerance of individuals to the concept of violence is modified. According to Guarinello (2007) <sup>[16]</sup>, violence, in any case, is only present and manifests itself, when it bothers us, when it seems to be beyond our control, when it is beyond the normal understanding or beyond what is expected.

Thus, nowadays sport gives rise to an experience of nervousness instead of relaxation. The affluence to potentially robust places with an agglomeration of huge crowds of people, whose procedures of clubistic and patriotic symbolism in the affirmation of identity, are tendentially seen as power

and supremacy. They accentuate rivalries and increase competitiveness, transforming themselves into strongly undesirable elements, potentiates of very great risk and danger around sporting events. Violence in sports events was admitted as a problem of great importance, of considerable social risk and, of a proper approach in need of emerging resolution (Nolasco, 2016) <sup>[29]</sup>. The evolution of violence in sport is a consequence of the attitude, behaviour and sensitivity of supporters and clubs towards their own violence and the meaning it reveals in themselves. Thus, it is important to highlight that the violence that is inherent to sport is almost always led by athletes and, outside the sports venues, by spectators and fans (Ferreira *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[13]</sup>. Events that negatively mark sport, cause the loss of its credibility and reputation when the creation of urgent measures to stop the escalation of incidents recorded in sports competitions is constantly being postponed (C.O. Portugal, 2017) <sup>[17]</sup>.

In a society destabilized and devastated by ethnic conflicts, the refugee crisis, intolerance, political and religious tensions, nationalist threats and increased risks of terrorism, violence is a situation that is far from being a simple resolution problem (Carvalho, 2018) <sup>[14]</sup>.

### 1.1 mixed martial arts (MMA)

Mixed martial arts, or MMA, originated in the 80's in Brazil by the Gracie family, becoming, later, a sport known worldwide in the 90's from the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) which aimed to determine the supremacy of the best martial art. The fight was beyond the simple confrontation between the fighters, because, in addition, it was questioned which of the sports was superior to all others. At the time, the fighters did not dominate a set of modalities or fights as it happens today, but only one, which each fighter thought and defended to be the most efficient.

Contrary to the current, complex and limiting rules, in the first UFC championships the rules were simple. In the words of Vasques (2013) <sup>[39]</sup>, with the exception of biting and putting the finger on the eye, everything was allowed in the first CFU. There was no classification of weight, rounds, time limit, juries or scores, so the only possible finale was by knockout or submission. Athletes from different disciplines participated in the competition: boxing, karate, wrestling, kickboxing, jiu-jitsu, muay thai, among others, who competed to determine who was the strongest among the strong, or rather, who has more strength, endurance or, then, a combined form of both capabilities (Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006). The objective was to prove that a certain fight modality overlapped the others (Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006). The event was acclaimed by the spectators for being bloody, violent and cruel, because there were no rules or limits. For the brutality of the show, in 1996, Senator John McCain asked the governors to prohibit the events in their states, with the support of the American Medical Association and had some success in this agreement. Of course, the actors and organizers, among others, had some losses that grew between 1997 and 2000 when most pay TV channels accepted the political pressure and refused to broadcast the events. At the time, the UFC almost went bankrupt (Vasques, 2013) <sup>[39]</sup>.

The MMA, despite having sports characteristics, should have performance comparisons, universalization of rules, and its own institution, among others because it is a more violent practice than other modalities of sports struggles. It is in this sense that the socially acceptable levels of violence in the practice of the MMA are questioned, as practitioners understand this violence and as viewers perceive this violence

inherent to the fighting (Vasques, 2013) <sup>[39]</sup>.

In order to maintain the spectacle, the sport itself and the money involved, the organization of the UFC, given the social and political appeal, has been imposing stricter rules, so that the fight becomes less bloody, cruel and more acceptable to sponsors and spectators. Soon the original format of the MMA and the UFC itself had to adapt to the tolerance of the concept of violence by society. Despite being one of the most violent sports, the MMA is one of the most successful pay-preview broadcasts today, and violence is even directly linked to this success (Bottenburg and Heilbron, 2006). According to Vasques (2013) <sup>[39]</sup>, the objective is to maximize audience ratings for profit and they knew that it was enough to stimulate violence to get the public's support in a very efficient way. There is a whole staging around this sport because it is a manifestation built in order to ensure the reaction of the public. It is proven through an experimental study conducted by Wenner (1998) that the increase in the athlete's aggressiveness is directly related to the increase in the audience. The emotion provoked in the public has a charming effect, exerting the identification and attraction. The exploration of emotions related to violence is then perceived as one of the main focuses of the MMA show.

### 1.2 Racism in football

Sáenz *et al.* (2015) <sup>[35]</sup> quoting Bredemeier and Shields (1984) state that sport represents the culture of a society and, therefore, should be considered as a lever for the development of personal and social qualities. The same authors add to this thought that a given culture may also enhance anti-sports behaviours. In this reflection, Sáenz *et al.* (2015) <sup>[35]</sup> state that the development and construction of ethical values in a given person is closely related to the sports contexts experienced by that person at school age. The same authors cite Weinberg and Gould (2011) to add that the experiences that athletes have during their training periods may have transcendental consequences on their personality and psychological development.

According to Capinussú and De Menezes (2014) <sup>[3]</sup>, in recent years, violence in football has become the target of many studies due to the high number of players present in the sport and the impact it has on society. The same authors state that football has the ability to extrapolate itself outside the four lines and can sometimes negatively influence the spectators, through unsportsmanlike behaviors. The authors state that violence is currently present not only on the field of play itself, but also on the bench and even outside football stadiums.

For the authors Capinussú and De Menezes (2014) <sup>[3]</sup>, the increase in violence within the four lines of the football field reflects the increasing pressure exerted on the main players in the game, with the aim of achieving victory, sometimes not looking at means to achieve that same goal. According to the same authors, the managers and coaches of the teams themselves do not refrain from encouraging their athletes to resort to violence as a way to achieve the final goal. Commercial interests and the high monetary prizes offered by managers can also lead athletes to use violence, aggression, doping and the use of racism, etc., in a disproportionate ambition to win the game. The sensationalist press sometimes also encourages violence (Capinussú & De Menezes, 2014) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Despite the fact that violence in sport in Portugal is only sporadic, there has been an increase in cases in the last decade and with greater seriousness than in the past. As for the

phenomenon of racism in Portugal, it has not yet reached a major dimension. However, the need to tackle and combat this scourge of violence in sport must not be allowed to advance. Author Moya (2016) states that racism in football is not a new phenomenon and adds that violence and racism in football stadiums are phenomena that, like football, were born in the United Kingdom. According to the author, this phenomenon has subsequently spread throughout Europe and has led to many unfortunate episodes in the main European countries. Cleland (2014) <sup>[6]</sup> also highlights the birth of the phenomenon in England when he gives the example of that country to explain that increasing immigration led to several black players competing as professional footballers in the late 1970s. Although they had played black players in previous times, it was in the late 1970s and 1980s that racism became a common practice in football. The creation of an anti-racism organization 'Let's Kick Racism Out Of Football' in 1997 and led to the issue of racism beginning to be addressed and associated with football.

Almeida (2012) <sup>[2]</sup> proves that the first investigations into racism in the context of football emerged in the 1980s motivated, essentially, by the increase in the number of players from the former colonies. Since then, racism has been a practice associated with specific groups of supporters who, in a more or less organized way, seek to express their ideologies in football stadiums (Testa & Armstrong, 2010; Poulton, 2002; Chaudhary, 2002).

Like other authors, Doidge (2015) <sup>[10]</sup> also highlights in his studies the existence of racism around the world, particularly in Italy, a place of migration of various nationalities. And it is in football that racism is felt most (Podaliri & Balestri, 1998; Testa & Armstrong, 2010). The globalization of migration has restructured migration networks (Castles, 1993). These same migrations eventually put traditional perceptions to the test, as immigrants from Eastern Europe and Africa, in particular, began to suffer discrimination and violence. To take as an example: the Roma camps were attacked in Rome and Naples in 2008, while in Foggia a bus service was established that would effectively be used only by immigrants (McDougall, 2008; Russo, 2009).

In 2010 a group of Italians decided to throw rifles at African immigrants, who were working on fruit harvesting (Doidge, 2015) <sup>[10]</sup>. The author adds that during the 1980s, racism spread to Italian stadiums as many supporters became ideologically affiliated with extreme-right politics. Racism in stadiums became more evident after the Bosman law, which now allows players to be free to change clubs when their contracts expire (Giulianotti, 1999; King, 2003; Maguire & Stead, 1998).

The author Doidge (2015) <sup>[10]</sup> lists and describes some episodes of racism in the Italian league:

- a) The Japanese Shunsuke Nakamura suffered from racist abuse while playing for Reggiana;
- b) African players suffer constant attacks of racism: through noises imitating a monkey, through whistles whenever these players touch the ball or through racist chants;
- c) In a game between Inter and Cagliari, the referee stopped the game and threatened to leave the field when Cameroon's Samuel Eto'o was the target of racism;
- d) Kevin-Prince Boateng, then AC Milan player, eventually left the field in protest after being the victim of racist chants from Pro Patria supporters during a friendly match.

According to Doidge (2015) <sup>[10]</sup> for some Italians there is a

difference between an individual's race and nationality. The author cites Back *et al.* (2001a) to explain that black foreigners are differentiated from black nationals by some supporters. The chants and banners claiming that "there are no black Italians" and explain this same differentiation made.

For King (2004), academic literature has focused essentially on racism within football stadiums and on the field of play itself, forgetting that social networks have opened up new opportunities for fans to spread racist comments. Cleland (2014) uses the example of English football to explain that, despite the decrease in the number of racist chants in stadiums, the number of cases of racism in the country has not decreased because the emergence of social networks has enabled supporters to express racist thoughts in a new way and even with the possibility of doing so anonymously.

Doidge (2015) <sup>[10]</sup> quoting Nowell-Smith (1979) states that during the week several supporters talk about football in bars, workplaces or clubs. However, using social networks the exchange of ideas is much simpler and can extend from a restricted group to a larger one (Williams, 2008). Moya (2016) states that the presence of radicals, racists and xenophobes on the internet provides a new kind of racism as the number of racist web pages has risen considerably in recent years. The author calls this form of racism cyber racism. For Moya (2016), many young people take refuge in violence and racism as a way to deal with their fears or phobias. To this end, they transmit their racist ideas through social networks, where they strengthen ties with any other football fan, from anywhere in the world, with the same ideals. Cyber racism is a reality in the 21st century, existing in society in general and also in football (Moya, 2016). The same author presents an example of racism coming from a coach and sports director on social networks: Malky Mackay, a football coach, saw the opportunity to train at Crystal Palace denied to him after discovering messages with sexist, racist and xenophobic content that he had exchanged with the then director Moody, when they worked together in Cardiff. As a result of these offensive messages, Mackay was discarded for the position of coach and Moody resigned from the position of sports director at Crystal Palace.

Social networks can bring the dark, intimidating and offensive side, but they can also bring the opposite, though not to the same extent. Moya (2016) believes that social networks can be positive and used to raise awareness in the fight against racism, given the ability to spread in these media and presents as an example: Patrick Evrá, then a Juventus player, used his Instagram account to launch an original anti-racist message. The Frenchman dressed as a panda and in the end made people aware of the issue: "Like a panda, I am black, I am white, I am Asian, I am chubby and I am full of love. I love this game. Say no to racism.

In relation to existing legislation, author Moya (2016) refers to international recommendations that try to put an end to crimes such as cyber racism. In December 2008, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) said that legislation should also cover racist crimes committed over the internet. In Spain, with the Law 19/2007 against violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sport, it has led to a decrease in the number of episodes, but despite this, the author considers this to be an endless task as acts of racism can happen at any time (Moya 2016).

In 2004, Portugal approved a Law with preventive and punitive measures to be adopted in case of manifestation of violence associated with sport, Law No. 16/2004 of 11 May. From this law derives the creation of a body with competence

to promote and coordinate the adoption of measures to combat manifestations of violence associated with sport, as well as to evaluate its implementation called the National Council against Violence in Sport (CNVD). Later in 2009, it

strengthened the legislative framework with another law, Law no. 39/2009 of 30 July 2009, which contains the legal regime to combat violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sports events (Carvalho, 2018; C. O. Portugal, 2017) <sup>[4, 17]</sup>.

**Table 1:** Examples of violence in sport

Place and date	Event description
Peru, 1964	At the National Stadium in Lima, Peru, where the Olympic Games were taking place, in the qualifying match between Peru and Argentina, the violence occurs following the cancellation of a goal to the Peruvian team, the final result was devastating, 318 dead.
Turkey, 1968	Clashes between Kayserispor fans and Sivasspor resulted in 44 deaths.
Scotland, 1971	At Glasgow's Ibrox Stadium in the Rangers-Celtic match, Rangers fans set fire to a bench, with the effect of destruction causing 66 deaths.
Belgium, 1985	At Heysel Park Stadium, in the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus in Turin, English fans invaded a bench with Italian fans, 39 people died.
Hamburg, 1993	In tennis, in the quarter-finals of the tournament, the athlete Monica Seles meets Magdalena Maleeva and is winning the match, but in a game break is stabbed by an individual coming from the bench.
Ghana, 2001	At Accra Stadium, in a game between Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko, fans of the visiting team threw glass bottles and chairs onto the pitch. The police scattered the crowd with tear gas but the situation got out of hand and ended up getting worse, resulting in 126 deaths.
Greece, 2010	In the Acropolis tournament, in the Athens pavilion, Greece and Serbia meet and the result is 74-73 in favour of Greece. With two minutes to go until the end of the game, an outdoor battle begins between the players, who were beaten with punches and chairs. The confrontation began when the Greek Antonis Fotsis protested with an aggression against the Serbian Milos Teodosic, who had committed a foul. As a result of the incidents, Serbian Nenad Krstic spent the night detained, the player throwing a chair against the head of the opponent Ioannis Bourousis, who did not play for injury. Krstic, who last season played in the NBA for Oklahoma City Thunder, also strangled Greek Fotsis.
Egypt, 2012	In Puerto Said, at the end of the Al-Masry-Ahly match, home fans are chasing visitors, resulting in 74 deaths and more than 1,000 injured.
France, 2016	The European Football Championship in France, UEFA 2016, is at its beginning marked by actions of great violence.
Portugal, 2017 <sup>[17]</sup>	In April 2017, a Sporting C.P. fan died in a car accident following confrontations between Benfica and Sporting fans, which started at the Alvalade stadium.
Portugal, 2018	In May 2018 some Sporting C.P. fans invade the club's academy, attack the athletes, the coach, vandalize the facilities and flee. The result of this episode has 40 people arrested, injured athletes, others terminate the contract and, cumulatively, with the bad reputation that the cheerleader of Sporting C.P. had after the incident.

**Source:** the authors.

There are multiple events with confrontations and a tragic ending. Many more could be listed, but they can comprehensively cover different sports. One of the ways in which these tragic facts can be diminished is through the teaching of sport through the physical education of young people in schools. Fair play should be included in the structuring of physical education, with the aim of including in young people skills, strategies and aspects of sports culture, with the strong presence of social skills, thus also promoting socialization. It is up to physical education teachers to implement strategies in the curriculum, capable of promoting social behaviours (fair play behaviours, such as respect for teams and opponents, accepting defeats), so that students use these competences in the subject and outside the context of a lesson. Competition can only be said to be healthy if our children and young people have the necessary tools to deal with the challenges and obstacles in order to overcome and achieve the proposed goals. These children and young people will in a few years be fans, athletes, referees, leaders or other elements that relate to the sports environment, and that, given their past, can be more or less violent.

### 1.3 Violence in e-sports

Since the beginning of the year 2000, the growth of e-sports has been rapid, which has meant that some competitions now produce more than 30 million unique online views (Holden, Kaburakis & Wall Tweedie, 2019) <sup>[17]</sup>.

If violent video games cause aggression and the extent to which it occurs, it has been a hot topic in academic literature for decades. Despite extensive research, there is no consensus among members of the academic community about the reality

of the relationship between violent video games and aggression (Copenhaver, Mitrofan & Ferguson, 2017) <sup>[8]</sup>. Given the widespread popularity of video games among children, and the large proportion of hours to look at them, have led to several scientific studies to ascertain whether the effects of these games are important both for practical and theoretical reasons, and for health and sports doping (Gentile, Bender & Anderson, 2017) <sup>[14]</sup>.

The violent and horrible acts that are visualized in video games date back to their birth and the concern became more public and widespread after the launch of Mortal Combat in 1992. This is a world-renowned game, often linked to moral panic about video game violence, and perhaps because of this, it has a political interest in the subject (DeCamp, 2017) <sup>[9]</sup>.

According to Copenhaver *et al.* (2017) <sup>[8]</sup>, some individual studies have associated violent games with aggression. In his study, he found that some academics made unfounded claims by linking violent video games with criminal behavior. For example, when commenting on the criminal impulses of a serial killer influence their future behavior, without conducting effective studies and with samples of serial killers. If we look closely we can find three gaps that require further research, because the scarcity of studies on the subject, particularly with the participation of children, is fundamental (Gentile *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[14]</sup>. First, it is necessary to determine the effects of playing a violent video game (versus a non-violent game) on cortisol, the stress hormone. These two studies produced contradictory results, highlighting the question of whether there is a link between violent video games and the release of cortisol in children. De Camp studied the effects of violent video games on the levels of salivary cortisol, heart

rate and arousal in children. Cortisol is a hormone that is released by the adrenal gland and is a physiological indicator of activation of the sympathetic nervous system, especially the fight or escape response. Cortisol is an indicator of stress and fighting or escape reaction, both behavioral and psychological factors have the ability to release cortisol throughout the body (DeCamp, 2017) <sup>[9]</sup>. The author came to the conclusion that playing a violent video game led to more aggressive thoughts, activated in semantic memory, and higher levels of cortisol during the game for elementary school children, compared to playing an equally exciting, but not violent game. These effects occurred even when frustration with the game was controlled. The results of cortisol suggest that, for children, violent video game play can activate the sympathetic nervous system resulting in increased release of the hormone from stress.

According to this is necessary to verify what is the effect that violent video games have on the cardiovascular system of excitement using as participants children, and in this case it was possible to realize that only one meets the criteria of best practices (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). Third, it was found in an experimental study of best practices, in children, that the effect of violent video games can develop an aggressive cognition (Gentile *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Several studies have been carried out after these questions, particularly because the world, through the media, brings about new daily events that make us question the relationship between video games and violence. Let's take as an example the young man who did the 2016 shooting in Munich and who had played Counter-Strike. Police sources say indiscriminately that this game is played by almost all known killers. It is known that to date Counter-Strike has sold more than 60 million copies, so even if the claim is factual (no evidence is available to suggest that it is), it omits that less than one hundredth of 1% of the players of this game is (De Camp, 2017) <sup>[9]</sup>. There are even authors who argue that homicide rates in countries such as the United States of America have decreased with the increased use of violent video games (Copenhaver *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[8]</sup>.

Hundreds of studies have been conducted on violent video games, but almost all have focused on the potential outcome of playing violent video games. In contrast, there has been little investigation into who plays violent video games (DeCamp, 2017) <sup>[9]</sup>. But this author obtained some interesting results in terms of gender, he can verify that this was a strong variable in terms of diagnosis and more powerful than any other effect, even if compared to the effect of the time spent playing video games. At the family level, it was found that the children of parents who lost their jobs became more violent video game players, which suggests that those without support networks may be more inclined to play these games. In the case of single-parent families, children living alone with their mothers are not as likely to be able to play this type of violent games, which is associated with the idea that older children represent a brake on the use of these games (DeCamp, 2017) <sup>[9]</sup>. Together, the parents of children who are interested in their daily lives, who stimulate conversations and seek to control the use of the telephone or the internet are also as likely to be able to play this type of games. The author also concludes that, both in boys and girls, who know that this is a game that is not real, its use can accelerate their heart rate. Those young people who feel safe in school, with their neighbors and supported by their teachers are less likely to play violent games. Good students who come home after school to do their homework and have devoted themselves to

academic study are less likely to play violent video games. In contrast, students who have been victims of crime in a neighborhood are more likely to play violent games (De Camp, 2017) <sup>[9]</sup>. According to Agina and Tennyson (2013) <sup>[1]</sup>, we can find a way to differentiate the effect of video games, when the entertainment is positive and educational and playing these games does not harm the behavior of a child. But the opposite, negative entertainment increases violent excitement and can affect a child's behavior in society, although the authors are of the opinion that in certain cases it can have a positive effect on children's development, especially on self-regulation and thinking aloud (Agina & Tennyson, 2013) <sup>[1]</sup>.

#### 1.4. Rugby - is there violence in this sport?

Unfortunately, there have always been manifestations of violence associated with the phenomenon of sport. However, we should be able to differentiate if it is the nature of sport that causes this violence, or if it is caused by other external causes (Ramos, 1983) <sup>[32]</sup>.

The fact that Rugby has been chosen as a sport with a load of aggressiveness and constant physical contact is, however, one of the collective sports where there are fewer cases of violence. Moreover, it is a sport that is not new. The story goes that it was during the Renaissance period that a sport was born in Italy that would be at the origin of rugby, called "Calcio Storico". This game would be a traditional festival in the Florentine area held only once a year, where some areas of the city would come together to find out which was the strongest neighborhood of that year (Christophe & Benjamin, 1998) <sup>[5]</sup>.

This sport is known as one of the most violent sports in the world and is still practiced today, being the function of several sports within an enclosure. In short, this sport was inspiring for the creation of some sports that exist today, such as football and the MMA (Christophe & Benjamin, 1998) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Calcio Storico wouldn't have many current Rugby rules, there are only 2 teams of 27 players each on the field. The aim is to take the ball to the opposing area, where it was not possible to hit opponents on their backs, hit someone who was already on the ground, and cumulatively there could not be fights of numerical inequality (Christophe & Benjamin, 1998) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Despite all the violent connotation of this sport, according to the reports of the season, at the end of each meeting the players would all come together in the center of Florence, where a big banquet was held for the whole city. Already at that time we could verify that despite the violence that happened in the game venue, there would be a great responsibility on the part of the players since everything that had happened on the pitch would stay there, there would be reported cases of events in which people were resentful for a year, however they could only solve that problem on the pitch, if that did not happen the players would be expelled from the sport. With the imposition of these sporting values, something we see nowadays in rugby that despite all the physical contact is one of the sports where there are less cases of violence, thus there is an awareness on the part of all sports agents inherent in the sport (Christophe & Benjamin, 1998) <sup>[5]</sup>.

However, as not everything is perfect, there are isolated cases of certain players who can't control their impulses and end up fighting inside the game. In order to keep the sport clean of this type of behaviour, the competent bodies have carried out a set of rules in order to suppress those who do not comply with the basic rules of the sport (Christophe & Benjamin, 1998) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Today there are several studies that know the sport as a form of controlled violence, insofar as different types of values and attitudes have been discovered that allow differentiating this sport from other collective sports. In multiple studies there are authors who consider this modality as a school of life (Kendellen & Camiré, 2019) <sup>[18]</sup>. In Portugal, the modality does not present a major expression, but there are several national inclusion projects through Rugby due to all the values inherent to the modality. According to a study conducted by (Kendellen & Camiré, 2019) <sup>[18]</sup>, the psychology used in Rugby is something of great benefit because it teaches certain unique values, not only at the sports level, but also at the social level, i.e., it allows us to see certain aspects of our society in a different way.

The social inclusion that rugby allows can be extended to multiple areas of our society and, in Portugal, there is a social inclusion project that aims to remove young people aged between 6 and 20 from the streets of problematic neighborhoods such as "Cerco" and provide them with other alternatives. The project has been in practice since 2013 and has been attracting more and more young people who easily adhere to this and other modalities offered (Moura dos Santos & Gouveia, 2019) <sup>[27]</sup>. There is also a project in Portuguese prisons called "A rehearsal beyond the bars" which, as its name indicates, is a Rugby project that currently connects only 2 cities in the country: Lisbon and Porto. The inmates score, fall, get up and take lessons. Rugby brought them together, some of them from different cells, breaking down walls at each training session with the sharing of a common feeling: the feeling of momentary freedom (Morgado & Marques, 2018) <sup>[25]</sup>. During the game time the players of both teams are in constant physical contact, and often that contact becomes even aggressive. Faced with this fact, one would expect that situations of violence would occur almost constantly in a rugby match.

However, several studies point to exactly the opposite. According to Kerr (2017) <sup>[19]</sup>, Rugby has been taking measures in order to praise the sporting truth and the values of the sport. A former English international player also presented some attitudes that happened in his time and that have now been eradicated from Rugby for the first time. Still according to the study, the author argues that perhaps because of the way sport is seen in some areas of the world, where the populations are smaller and with fewer economic sources, it has been gaining more and more space as a sports modality such as Fiji. Some authors argue that the fact that countries such as Fiji, New Zealand or Samoa enter the world of rugby and are involved in this sport has made people look at these countries in another way, thus increasing their tourism, and their economic power in the world (Werner, Dickson & Hyde, 2016) <sup>[41]</sup>. All it takes is for some countries to start getting involved in this type of sport and tourism ends up changing their trends.

We can infer that if on the one hand the degree of severity of violence inflicted on players is not as high as it seems, on the other hand the rules and precautions regarding anti violence measures have controlled this sport. Measures such as the use of the Referee Video in the Rugby World Cup in 2011 helped a lot to reduce even more the number of aggressions during the game, and according to the World Rugby (Entity that organizes and regulates international competitions) there was an increase of 65% in the correctness of the referee's decisions, thus having even less space for players to take less correct attitudes on the field.

The beginning of the rugby practice took place in England in

a college, so we have to pay attention to aspects such as fair play, respect and integration of all who are of today's times, thus creating a way of being in the sport different from that experienced in other sports. Nowadays any athlete who enters the world of rugby is immediately faced with a posture of being in life and an interaction with others that will hardly take some kind of more violent attitudes (Roberts, Sojo & Grant, 2019) <sup>[34]</sup>. The authors are of the opinion that this way of acting in Rugby is due to the skills of the trainers themselves and the adequacy of the rules of the sport that created this differentiated mentality in sport.

In amateur sport, there are more cases of violence than in federated sports (Gonçalves & Vaz, 2017) <sup>[17]</sup>. There are countries, such as Brazil, in which this practice is not very common and in these cases has less capacity to control and eradicate players who commit acts of violence during the games, unlike World Rugby, which appoints an accredited and authorized delegate for each game to take decisions in cases of this nature. However, this measure is unbearable for countries where the practice of the sport is lower and consequently the obtaining of revenue does not allow to support expenses with delegates / referees or other similar actors.

As there are exceptions, just to provide an example that occurred in Portugal, of what is a shame for sport on a national and global scale. In Portugal, during a semifinal of the national championship, some players and supporters of Agronomy and Law were involved in physical and verbal confrontations, triggering a where of negative comments and thoughts that in no way dignify, nor represent the sport. As a form of punishment, the Portuguese rugby federation punished a total of 11 players and 2 sports agents of both teams, not staying here, also suspended from the national team any athlete who has been involved in the matches, and even suspended the national championship until the problem was solved (Domingues, 2018) <sup>[11]</sup>. Subsequently, the World Rugby punished the athletes referred by the Portuguese federation not allowing their participation in any international events. With this measure, Gonçalo Uva, one of the international athletes most recognized by the Portuguese public, saw his career end stained by a situation that in no way dignifies his entire professional career (McRae, 2015) <sup>[23]</sup>. A similar case occurred in the Super League final in Wales, where Ben Flower was sent off the game after beating an unconscious opponent on the ground. This behaviour earned him the immediate expulsion from the final and an internal procedure was initiated by the club, since these attitudes do nothing to dignify the sport. In this case, the legal committee of World Rugby went further and punished the athlete from participating in any championship for at least 6 months, a pity that the athlete fulfilled by getting a clause in all professional contracts after punishment that if he engaged in any other type of behavior of this kind would be eradicated from all competitions of the sport (McRae, 2015) <sup>[23]</sup>. With these measures, World Rugby clearly demonstrates the direction it wants the sport to go, thus obtaining an advantage compared to all other sports. Measures such as this on the part of the sports organization committees would only increase their positions with regard to combating violence in sport, where all stakeholders would win, among athletes, fans, and even sponsors.

## Conclusions

Violence is a deliberate conduct that causes harm to others both physically and psychologically. It is a worldwide

problem, which Portugal has also debated and which, unfortunately, has increased exponentially in recent years. We have managed to understand that the evolution of society goes hand in hand with the acceptance and alteration of the way in which violence is conceived and tolerated by individuals.

As a finishing line, it is understood that sporting events, of whatever kind of sport, of the classes and competitions in question, present risks that may lead to some social problems, namely, different acts of violence triggered from one moment to the next. We can somehow consider that sport is a spark of a society of risk and a weakness conceived by modernity that is aggravated by the transformations of sports activity. Violence in sport is a particularity of sport itself, in the context of societies with risk and violence components. Vulnerability caused by violence cannot be accepted, which is why it is necessary to acquire systems that safeguard security procedures and minimize harmful and socially harmful effects.

The authors Sáenz *et al.* (2015) <sup>[35]</sup> state that the main objective of professional sport is to win. In this sense, the athlete seeks to establish his or her best possible brand in order to overcome records with the intuition of obtaining prestige or financial assets. High performance sports can be seen by some athletes as an activity in which everything is worth to win and at the same time this fact can be an incentive for behaviour aimed at humiliating or avenging the opponent(s). On the other hand, the authors also argue that professional sport can have great potential in the area of education since, if channeled correctly, it can serve to educate and train more civic and better educated citizens. The same authors cite Duran (1996) to state that the main players in sports (coaches, club leaders, institutional representatives, etc.) have an enormous social responsibility as leaders, given their image as models to follow for society, particularly for young people.

Different cases of violence were exemplified and studied as in the MMA, racism in football, violence in e-sports and violence in rugby. In each one of them we could see that there are ways to stop violence, but in any one of them it is difficult without resorting to regulation and strong and effective punishment of offenders and violent agents.

In the case of the MMA, despite having emerged with the permission of violence as a way to transmit the reality of the struggles, the evolution of this sport, from the political and social pressure, has made the show safer and less bloody. However, it remains to be seen whether spectators and consumers in the MMA prefer a more violent fight or a safer fight of the practitioners. One might even ask whether the practitioners themselves prefer a higher level of violence or not. Despite being a violent sport today, the MMA is one of the most successful pay-per-view broadcasts today, and violence is even directly linked to this success. Whether we like it or not, the exploitation of emotion and violence is almost a *sine qua non* to the success of the MMA, but the question remains as to what the acceptable limit of such violence would be.

Regarding the theme of racism, the degree of violence is very different from that experienced by the MMA, which is not without its cruelty, brutality, barbarity and atrocity against someone who has done us no harm and who is only different because of her skin color. In this article we exemplify some cases of racism and the respective social cultures in those same countries, with special focus on Italy and the Italian football championship, in order to understand this phenomenon, which occurs more frequently in the world of

football. In order to avoid this problem, we believe that children should first be educated from an early age through the practice of sports activities where values such as fair play prevail. At the same time, it is important that sports authorities try to create campaigns to raise awareness of racism in order to put an end to it. If, however, it is not possible to avoid situations of racism, it is essential to define strategies and regulations to punish all practices, whether they come from supporters who, in one way or another, seek to mirror their hatred through racist attitudes.

Linked to racism are football matches and violence in football. Violence in football stadiums is often a consequence of the uncontrollable ingestion of alcoholic beverages and the consumption of toxic substances (Capinussú & De Menezes, 2014) <sup>[14]</sup>. Another fact that stimulates violence in football stadiums is the incentive given by clubs to so-called organized cheerleaders, which provide them with a series of unjustified benefits, from the distribution of a large number of tickets to the donation of sometimes large amounts of money (Capinussú & De Menezes, 2014) <sup>[14]</sup>. The transformation of these groups, who previously went to stadiums only to enthusiastically encourage their club, into commercial organizations is also a criticism pointed out by the authors mentioned above.

Like MMA sports, racism or violence in football, e-sports are a way to incite violence or at least misrepresent a reality by an unreality experienced through computer software.

If violent video games can increase violence in children through a literature review we can see that there is an increase in cortisol when playing violent video games. Whether it is real or unreal violence, the levels of cortisol are identical, that is, it is possible that the amygdala, which produces the hormone cortisol, does not differentiate what is real from what is not. We also understand that there are many factors that can influence children to play these video games, such as gender, family context, supportive relationships, social environment, health and nutrition, etc. Violent video games can be positive for children's development in the sense that they can enable good self-regulation, thinking out loud and teamwork.

As has been seen in the course of this research, action can be taken to end violence in sport. For this to happen, it is enough that the organizers want to make sport more of a social inclusion aspect, and not just as a way of making money.

There are still some federations that believe that ending the discussion would end the interest in the sport. This case can be seen in football, because despite the various tendencies to combat racism and violence, there is not a practice of all measures, thus giving sports agents in football a vision that they can do everything and that nothing happens. As we have seen, there are federations that, by taking exact measures and delegating tasks to national federations, are thus able to achieve tighter control, thus putting an end to violence in the sporting world.

Some values that support the possibility of having sports with a lot of physical contact and some aggressiveness, but where violence is almost completely ruled out, values that could be implemented in football, but if we somehow eliminated that, the interest in football would drop drastically, and with that all its influence at world economic level. That way the big sponsors would never let that happen directly or indirectly, despite being the best option for the sports world. Rugby is a game of beasts played by gentlemen, while football is a game of gentlemen played by rude people.

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