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## Young sports fans' approaches to violence and fair play in sports

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the approaches of young sports fans in Kahramanmaraş province of Turkey to violence and fair play in sports. For this purpose, 680 young people, 236 girls and 444 boys, aged 15.6-/+ 0.87, who voluntarily participated in the study, constitute the research group. In addition to demographic information, the participants filled out a questionnaire form containing questions to determine their views on sample situations involving fair play and violence in sports. In the evaluation of the research results, percentage values (%) and frequency distributions of the answers given to the questions, cross table comparisons were calculated and interpreted in SPSS 18 package program. As a result, it was aimed to get the youngs' views on this situation by giving them an example of an incident made by an amateur football player in 1983, which led to the baron pierre de coubertin receiving the fair play grand prize in the same year. Accordingly, 35.3% of the youth found this behavior to be sporting and stated that they would behave in the same way. In order to determine the perspectives of young people on events related to violence in sports, sample events were given to get their opinions. Accordingly, the majority of the youth (66.2%) characterized this situation as hooliganism and stated that they did not find violence in sports appropriate for any reason. In order to determine the perspectives of young people on the events related to violence in sports, sample events were given to get their opinions. Accordingly, the majority of the youth (66.2%) described this situation as hooliganism and stated that they did not find violence in sports appropriate for any reason. As a result of the study, gentlemanly behavior in sports should also be encouraged. In order to develop fair play and sportsmanship, sportsmanship and fair play education for children should be given theoretically both in sports camps and in alternative sports environments such as summer sports schools. Such an education aims to educate children and young people for sport on the one hand, and to educate them through sport on the other. With the implementation of sportsmanship education, a society with more socially functional values can be formed with its fans and athletes. The development of a fan profile that respects the opponent, does not desire violence, and welcomes the winning of the rival team as well as the winning of their own team with maturity will contribute to the development of a healthy society.

**Keywords:** Sports fanship, Violence in sports, fair play

### 1. Introduction

Today, developments in mass communication tools such as the internet, print and visual media have further increased the interest of large masses in sports, so that sports has become a means of excitement and spectacle that drags the masses after it, rather than a simple competition (Kuper, 1996) [7]. The supporter in the sense of sports, it means one who is attached to the values represented by athletes (Turkish Dictionary, 1988) [10], one who supports the activities of sports clubs materially and morally. It is observed that some sports fans exhibit "fanatic" fan behavior from time to time. In this sense, fanatic is someone who is attached to a person, a group or a team with excessive fondness and passion (Turkish Dictionary, 1988) [10]. Violence is defined as an extreme form of aggression and an action with the intention of causing serious physical harm (Berkowitz, 1993) [11]. It can be said that the main distinction between fanaticism and hooliganism is that in fanaticism, the love for the team comes to the fore, while in hooliganism, the tendency towards violence comes to the fore (Kılıcıgil, 2003) [5]. One of the primary objectives of modern sports today is to ensure that the understanding of sportsmanship and fair play is established both at the level of athletes and at the level of fans.

In this context, the virtue of athletes is generally understood when it comes to fair play in sports. However, considering that fans also put pressure on the behavior of athletes, it is important to interpret fair play behavior from the fans' perspective. Fair play is a complex concept that comprises and embodies a number of fundamental values that are not only integral to sport but relevant in everyday life. Fair competition, respect, friendship, team spirit, equality, sport without doping, respect for written and unwritten rules such as integrity, solidarity, tolerance, care, excellence and joy, are the building blocks of fair play that can be experienced and learned ([www.fairplayinternational.org/what-is-fair-play-](http://www.fairplayinternational.org/what-is-fair-play-)).

Aggression and violence behaviors of fans in sports are among the most frequently discussed issues in today's sports. In contemporary sports, fans are expected to show behaviors in accordance with fair-play. In this respect, it is important to determine the behaviors of fans in the direction of violence and fair play in sports. The aim of this study is to reveal the approaches of young sports fans to violence and fair play in sports.

## 2. Material and Methods

The research population consists of young people living in Kahramanmaraş province of Turkey. The sample group of the research consists of 680 young people, 236 girls and 444 boys, aged 15.6-/+ 0.87, who were selected from these young people by random sampling method and voluntarily participated in the study.

For the research, a questionnaire form was distributed to 720 young people who were sports fans in Kahramanmaraş from Turkey in 2023, and questions were asked about demographic and sports fanship, fair play and violence. In the study, 40 questionnaire forms were excluded from the study because they were not completed sufficiently, and the other 680 questionnaire forms were used in the study.

In the evaluation of the research results, percentage values (%) and frequency distributions of the answers given to the questions, cross-table comparisons were calculated and interpreted in the SPSS 18 package program.

## 3. Findings

**Table 1:** Distribution of Youth by Gender

| Gender | F    | f    |
|--------|------|------|
|        | Girl | 236  |
| Male   | 444  | 65,3 |
|        | 680  | 100  |

According to the table above, 65.3% of the young people participating in the study were boys (n=444) and 34.7% were girls (n=236).

**Table 2:** Distribution of Young People According to Their Age of Being a Fan

| Age of Being a Fan | f   | %    |
|--------------------|-----|------|
| Up to age 5        | 78  | 11,5 |
| 6-9 years          | 402 | 59,1 |
| 10-13 years        | 180 | 26,5 |
| 14 years and older | 20  | 2,9  |
| Total              | 680 | 100  |

Table 2 shows the ages of young people as fans. According to the findings, it was found that most of the young people (59.1%) were fans between the ages of 6-9 and 26.5% between the ages of 10-13.

**Table 3:** Distribution of Young People According to the Importance They Give to Being Known by Their Friends as a Fan of Their Favorite Team

| Importance level | f   | %    |
|------------------|-----|------|
| Never            | 218 | 32,1 |
| Very little      | 88  | 22,4 |
| Medium           | 152 | 12,9 |
| Very             | 96  | 14,1 |
| Too much         | 126 | 18,5 |
| Total            | 680 | 100  |

Table 3 shows the distribution of young people according to the importance they attach to being known as a fan of their favorite team by their friends. Accordingly, it was found that 32.1% of the youth stated that it was "not important at all" and 22.4% stated that it was "very little important".

**Table 4:** Distribution of Young People's Reactions to the Loss of an Important Match by the Team They Support

| The Reactions of the Young Supported Team when it Loses an Important Match           | f   | %    |
|--|-----|------|
| I accept it as normal by saying "In sports, there is both winning and losing"        | 506 | 74,4 |
| I just feel sad  | 102 | 15   |
| I do not want to see the elements representing the team (flag, pennant, crest, etc.) | 12  | 1,8  |
| I would be very upset and it would affect my daily life                              | 44  | 6,5  |
| I would like the team players or the coach to be severely punished                   | 16  | 2,4  |
| Total  | 680 | 100  |

Table 4 shows the distribution of young people's reactions when their favorite team loses an important match. According to this, 74.4% of the youth stated that "there is defeat and defeat in sports" and 15% of them stated that they were "only sad".

**Table 5:** Young People's Opinions on a Sample Event\* Related to Fair Play in Sports

| *Opinions of the Youth   | f   | %    |
|--|-----|------|
| It is a sporting behavior, I would behave in the same way  | 240 | 35,3 |
| Sporting but not professional  | 142 | 20,9 |
| If it was a match of no vital importance, I would appreciate the athlete                               | 144 | 21,2 |
| I do not believe in sportsmanship, the athlete should know how to win no matter what the situation is. | 108 | 15,9 |
| I would like the athlete to be punished by the management.   | 46  | 6,8  |
| Total  | 680 | 100  |

\*(A goalkeeper said that the ball crossed the goal line in a position where the referee did not award a goal, causing his team to lose and be relegated. How would you react to this player's behavior?)

Table 5 shows the opinions of young people about an example of fair play in sports. Accordingly, it was found that 35.3% of the youth stated that this situation was "a sportsmanlike behavior and that they would behave in the same way" and 21.2% of the youth stated that "if it was a match that was not of vital importance, they would appreciate the athlete, but it was not possible for them to forgive the athlete in such a match".

**Table 6:** Young people's opinions on a Sample Event\* related to Sports

| <b>* Opinions of Young People</b>   |  | <b>f</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---|--|----------|----------|
| It is a sporting behavior, I would behave in the same way   |  | 306      | 45,0     |
| Sporting, but not professional  |  | 98       | 14,4     |
| The athlete should score his goal first and then think about helping                                  |  | 172      | 25,3     |
| I do not believe in sportsmanship, the athlete should know how to win no matter what the situation is |  | 88       | 12,4     |
| The athlete should have been punished by the management for this behavior                             |  | 20       | 2,9      |
| Total   |  | 680      | 100      |

\*(In the dying moments of the match, a player, who had a clear goal position, saw that the goalkeeper was seriously injured and immediately helped him so that his team lost 1-0. How would you react to this behavior of the player?)

In Table 6, 45% of the young people evaluated it as a sportsmanlike behavior and stated that they would act in the same way. 25.3% of them stated that "The athlete should have scored his goal first and then thought about helping".

**Table 7:** Comparison of the Opinions of Male and Female Youth on a Sample Incident Related to Violence in Fandom

| <b>*Opinions on a Case Study Related to Violence</b>                                 |  | <b>f</b> | <b>%</b> |
|--|--|----------|----------|
| I do not approve of violence for any reason, I condemned this situation              |  | 332      | 48,8     |
| I condemned it, but if there is a justifiable reason, it can be done if necessary    |  | 80       | 11,8     |
| I condemned it, but if there is a justifiable reason, it can be done if necessary    |  | 98       | 14,4     |
| I considered it normal, I thought that the fans would risk everything for their team |  | 52       | 7,6      |
| In my opinion, this is hooliganism. Hooliganism has no place in sports               |  | 118      | 17,4     |
| Total  |  | 680      | 100      |

\*(a - How would you react to the stabbing death of an English fan by a Croatian fan at the end of the European Football Championship match between England and Croatia; b - How would you react to the stabbing death of two English fans by Galatasaray fans before the Galatasaray-Leeds football match in Istanbul?)

**Table 8:** Young People's Views on How Turkish Athletes Evaluate the Use of Doping Substances for Success in Sports Branches such as Weightlifting and Athletics

| <b>Student views</b> |  |   |   |              |
|----------------------|--|---|---|--------------|
| <b>Gender</b>        | <b>The main thing in sports is success. Therefore, every means must be used to achieve success</b> | <b>Athletes should be tested for doping, if available. they can use doping substances that don't get caught</b> | <b>The important thing is to compete honestly Winning comes later</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| Female               | 82   | 16  | 138   | 236          |
|                      | 34,7%  | 6,8%  | 58,5%   | 100,0%       |
| Male                 | 76   | 76  | 292   | 444          |
|                      | 17,1%  | 17,1%   | 65,8%   | 100,0%       |
| Total                | 158  | 92  | 430   | 680          |
|                      | 23,2%  | 13,5%   | 63,2%   | 100,0%       |

#### 4. Discussion

When it comes to fair play in sports, the virtuousness of athletes is generally understood. However, considering that fans also put pressure on the behavior of athletes, it is important to interpret fair play behavior from the perspective of fans. In this respect, it was aimed to get the students' views on this situation by giving an example of an act done by an amateur football player in 1983, which led to the Baron pierre de gubertin receiving the fair play grand prize in the same year (Table 5). Accordingly, 35.3% of the young people found this behavior to be sportsmanlike and stated that they would act in the same way.

In the study conducted by Kayaoğlu (2000) [3] on Bursaspor fans, it was found that fans who were not included in the subgroup were more likely to engage in gentlemanly behaviors such as "accepting defeat" and "applauding the opposing team" than fans who were highly identified with their teams and had acquired a subgroup identity, and in this sense, the values of sportsmanship were more eroded in fans who were highly identified with their teams.

When the findings in Tables 5 and 6 of our study are evaluated together with Kayaoğlu's (2000) [3] study on Bursaspor fans, it can be said that the understanding of fair play and sportsmanship weakens as athletes become more professionalized and fans become more fanatical.

In order to determine the perspectives of young people on the events related to violence in sports, sample events\* were

given to obtain their opinions (Table 7). Accordingly, a great majority of the youth (66.2%) characterized this situation as hooliganism and stated that they did not find violence in sports appropriate for any reason. Yamen (1999) [11] reported that 90.5% of university youth did not want to see violence in sports before and after matches. Our findings are lower than the findings of Yamen (1999) [11] among university fans. Accordingly, it can be said that young people's sports fans harbor a higher level of violence than university students. Based on the above findings, it can be said that the majority of young people do not want to see sports and violence side by side. However, the fact that 33.8% of young people harbor feelings of violence at various levels is striking and should be examined.

As a result of this study, the following suggestions can be made;

For many people, being a fan can be an important part of identity with the variety of identification elements (such as color, emblem, athlete, popularity) it contains (Köknel, 1997) [6]. In this respect, in order for fans to provide a healthy identification, it should be ensured that athletes can set the agenda with their moral qualities as well as their sporting skills. At the same time, gentlemanly behavior in sports should also be encouraged. In order to develop fair play and sportsmanship, sportsmanship and fair play education for children should be given theoretically both in sports camps and in alternative sports environments such as summer sports

schools (Gibbons *et al.*, 1995) <sup>[2]</sup>. Such an education aims to educate children and young people for sport on the one hand, and to educate them through sport on the other. With the implementation of sportsmanship education, a society with more socially functional values can be formed with its fans and athletes (Orhun, 1992). <sup>[8]</sup> The development of a fan profile that respects the opponent, does not desire violence, and welcomes the winning of the rival team as well as the winning of their own team with maturity can contribute to the development of a healthy society.

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