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The Social Representation of Violence of Sports Events Spectators

Beatrice ABALASEI¹, Adrian COJOCARIU²

Abstract

The social representation decodes the environment, can decrease the intensity of conflicts through knowledge, it educates the social actors towards coherence by simplifying the object in the public discourse by making it simple and comprehensible. The present study aims at analyzing the content, identifying the structure and the organization of the elements of the social representation of violence in sports in a population of students who were spectators of sports events: the subjects are familiar with sporting events (they are students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport PES) and subjects who are not familiar with sporting events (they are students in the Faculty of IT – Automation and Computers AC). The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire consisting of a set of 30 statements offered for evaluation through a Likert type scale in four steps (ranging from 1 – agreement to 4 disagreements). Depending on the cumulated / aggregated values, saturation and variance, factor analysis has helped to establish the elements / dimensions of the social representation of violence in sports. The results could lead to solutions for a decrease in violence in the sports arenas, to a change in the behavior of those spectators who misinterpret sports values when collective exaggerated behavior become ritualistic, specific rather of a social movement or a subculture and thus alter the organizational structure of sport.

Keywords: social representation; collective violence; sport; spectators; social behaviour, attitudes, social patterns.

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Introduction

The concept of social representation is linked to the attitudes, images, beliefs formed in connection with a certain object/topic in the interaction with the persons from the group they belong to or through the mass media with the aim of creating a stable, familiar, ordinary world (Moscovici, 1988; Jahoda, 1988). Ideas and opinions are transmitted, circulated through communication; this process is enhanced by the dissemination, propagation and propaganda (Moscovici, 2001; Abric, 2002) of a new bit of information, of a group of ideas presented to the public interest. Wiliem Doise postulates that “social representations are principles which organize attitudes related to insertions specific in a set of social relations” (apud. Moscovici, 1997); these social representations are meant to organize the symbolical processes imbued in social relations (Neamtu, 2009). The authors refer to values that vary from one group or from one individual to another, to ideological or cultural differences, to affections, to the taking of stands manifested through opinions and attitudes (Driscoll, Zinkivskay, Evans & Campbell, 2006; Mesoudi, Whiten & Dunbar, 2006; Pascaru & Todor, 2012). The study of social representations must emphasize common knowledge, the organizing principles of an individual’s positions by relating to the index points offered by common cognition and the anchoring of such positions in the psycho-social field (Neculau, 1996; Clemence, Doise & Cioldi, 2001). Social representations are complex, active phenomena which are present in social life and emphasize the real nature of a group, the actual state of a collection of individuals considered through the interpretations they give to the abstract phenomena and factual information. Communication is achieved via the media or informal sources that contribute to their creation of social representations; this permits the access to influencing or manipulation strategies and create common view regarding actual existence (Jodelet, 1997). At the level of the individual, a number of processes and actions take place, through which each individual will approach the new information according to his insertion in a social field (Curelaru, Iacob, Abalasei, 2009); this diversity accounts for the manifold individual expressions that specific of a social representation (Doise, 1997). In his theory of the principles organizing attitudes Doise presents social representation as a social metasystem which regulates individual behaviours, which consists of principles, socially originated norms to help the social actor to perceive the world and integrate in the environment he is creating for himself in order to get acquainted with the space.

If in the theory of the researchers at Aix-en-Provence, the central and the peripheral systems are significant of a certain social representation from the point of view of the principles organizing attitudes, there are three levels of analysis: the level of common cognitions within a population which reveal the similarities within the group regarding the beliefs specific of a certain social stake, this level is created through communication and has common language as a starting point.

The level of inter-individual dissimilarities resulting from the individual's own system of knowledge which in its turn emerges from attaching himself to various beliefs (Cadinu & Galdi, 2012; Kavussanu et al., 2009; Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2011); the level of interindividual dissimilarities considered from the point of view of anchoring the social representations in the collective realities or in the perceptions that the social actors interact with the social groups and categories (Clemence et al. 1994; *apud.* Neculau & Curelaru, 2003; Borrego, Cid & Silva, 2012). A social representation is elaborated by a certain group in relation to another that is why the social representation of violence in sports occurs in society in several forms. Violence in sports, or rather of the sports audience, is a post 1989 phenomenon in Romania, a newly emergin object in the discourse of the media, which has been conducive to attempts at elucidating its role, causes, its impact in society.

Methodology

The aim of the present study is that of investigating common knowledge within the group, the inter-group variations with respect to the assessment of the factors inducing violence in the sports arenas according to a number of independent variables. The research instrument was the questionnaire containing certain items specific of the dimensions of violence in sports (which were identified by means of a preliminary study based on content analysis); the questionnaire was interpreted through factor analysis of main components, using the Varimax method; to identify the main effects the t significance test between means were done; to analyse the interactions, the univariate analysis, the univariate model, was used.

The research objective

The research objective is to identify the factors of violence in sports and to capture the possible differences in their quantitative evaluation depending on independent variables such as faculty, gender, type of audience.

Hypotheses

General hypothesis 1: There are differences in the assessment of the factors of social representation of violence in sports according to the group that the subjects belong to, depending on the three independent variables: gender, faculty, type of audience.

Specific hypothesis 1.1. Female subjects have a different evaluation from male subjects of the components of violence in sports, more precisely, female subjects

will be less tolerant towards the male subjects regarding violent behaviour specific of the sports arenas.

Specific hypothesis 1.2: We estimate that the components of the social representation of violence in sport will be evaluated differently depending the social-professional group the subjects belong to; thus, subjects from the ACCE Faculty consider violence in sports as more serious than those at the PES, who tend to downplay the importance of this phenomenon.

Specific hypothesis 1.3: The audience more knowledgeable in terms of sports consider that violence is tolerated by society in comparison with a less knowledgeable audience.

General hypothesis 2. There are interaction effects of the variables gender, faculty and type of audience on the components of violence in sports.

The research sample

The study was conducted on a number (N=502) of subjects from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports (PES), “Al. I. Cuza” University and from the Faculty of Automatic Control and Computer Engineering (ACCE), the “Gh. Asachi” Technical University, Iași, Romania.

Variables

We establish three independent variables. For the variable “faculty” the subjects were selected randomly and only their number counted. (*Table 1*). The other independent variables were gender (male, female) and the type of audience (*Table 1*).

Table 1. Independent variables

Independent variables	Independent variables	Number of subjects	Relative frequency
Gender	Male	394	78.5%
	Female	108	21.5%
Faculty	PES	250	49.8%
	ACCE	252	50.2%
Type of audience	The more knowledgeable -4	130	25.9%
	The less knowledgeable -1	131	26.1%

Dependent variables: the dimensions of violence in sports, factors resulting from processing the data in the items concerning the social representation of violence in sports using factor analysis.

Data collected

The questionnaire was applied during the training classes (seminars) of the discipline Handball (PES) and the training hours for the discipline Physical Education and Sports in the curriculum of the ACCE Faculty) respectively, in groups of 30 students each. The subjects were promised the confidentiality of their questionnaire and were asked to answer individually the questions in the questionnaire. An initial study was necessary in order to identify the audience typology at the sports manifestations and the specific dimensions of violent manifestations in sports. What we identified was related to sports violence and its four dimensions, with elements specific to the violence typology as suggested by specialists (Cottingham, 2012; Katovich and Reese, 1993; Turner and Stets, 2006, Mehus, 2010; Hausmann, Jonason, & Summers-Effler, 2011) (physical, material symbolic violence): the dimension “*causes of violence in sports*” (social, historic, economic, political), the dimension “*evolution/perspectives of violence in sports*”, the dimension “*practices of violence in sports*” and the dimension “*fighting violence in sports*”.

The data collected as a result of the content analysis in response to the interview guide led to a questionnaire consisting of close/end question which tries to capture the social representation of violence in sports from the point of view of the theory of attitude organizing principle. This instrument contains 30 statements specific of the violence of the audience of sports events. During the pre-testing stage, the questionnaire was applied to 90 subjects (30 students from ACCE and 60 from PES); the value of the Alpha Cronbach internal consistency coefficient of the items was 0.7. The value of this index demonstrates that the instrument is appropriate to actually measure the intended factors.

Results

From the factor analysis on the data resulting from applying the questionnaire to the LOT the value of KMO index was 0.702, $p \leq 0.001$. *Table no. 2* presents the factors, values, saturation sense and the variances as they are calculated for each individual factor and by the totality of factors together. The initial form of the questionnaire focused on four dimensions of violence in sports; the factor analysis of the main components by using Varimax, however, revealed five factors which define the social representation of violence in sports.

Table no. 2. The result of factor analysis – the main factors that lead to violence

Factor	Items	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
F1: social, economic and political causes of violence in	The spectators' violence is the result of the status differences between them and the players	0.662				
	Violence in sports is currently caused by the media	0.609				
	The spectators' violence in the sports arenas is stimulated by banners containing biased messages	0.558				
	Political leaders use the masses on the stadia for their own campaigns	0.515				
	The leaders' behaviour are a model for violence on the stadia	0.437				
	The opposing parties use the supporters making them chant against the parties in office	0.434				
	Club leaders pay the fan clubs and make them intimidate the opponents	0.317				
	Club leaders incite the fans to hooliganism	0.310				
F2: Practices of violence in sports	Violence in sports is when the spectators break the seats in the stadia		0.673			
	Exaggerating the trouble on stadia by the media leads to increased rates of sports programmes and circulation of newspapers		0.601			
	Exchange of physical violence between supporters of the teams playing means violence		0.529			
	Violence is when badges of the opposing team are set on fire		0.500			
	Violence on the stadium means clashes between supporters and guards			0.376		
	You have to be violent or be remarked on by your own peer group				0.603	
F3: Violence seen as a normal state	In the modern age violence is a solution for survival			0.574		
	Violence in sports cannot be fought against			0.582		
	Violence is normal nowadays				0.468	

Factor	Items	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
F4: Historic causes of violence in sports	When the plyers are aggressive towards their oponents in the field, the violence in the stands escalates, too				0.663	
	The supporters' violence appeared at the same time as the games				0.545	
	Ancient stories of the Olympic Games relate of violence in sports				0.509	
	The large numbers of supporters attending an event has been conducive to increased violence				0.397	
	The image of a certain team is strongly linked to the violent acts of the supporters				0.351	
	Violent manifestations are specific to the spectators of team games (such as football, hockey, handball)				0.344	
F5: Fighting violence in sports	Education forms non violent persons					0.638
	Strict legislation in sports would be conducive to decreased violence in sports					0.494
	When supporters are isolated, violenct manifestations will be prevented					0.483
	When chanting against the opposing team subside, violent occurrences will be diminished					0.458
	Violence would be reduced if the family were involved in decreasing the violent manifestations of the supporters					0.382
	Monitoring supporters' behaviour by CCTV would be conducive to a decrease in violent acts					0.323
	Violent people lack education					0.253
	Variance %		8.285	6.786	6.605	6.050
Cumulated variance %		8.285	15.071	21.676	27.726	33.567

An analysis of the global judgments reveal an image of the social representation of violence in sports which indicates a common knowledge and understanding strongly influenced by the opinion of sports experts according to which the research instrument was created. Factor analysis reveals a structure of social representation of violence in sports (with a focus on the spectators of team games) organized around five factors. From the first dimension of the questionnaire, "causes of violence in sports," two factors emerged: social, economic and political causes and historic causes. At the same time, a new factor emerged, violence as a normal state of facts, while the dimension "developments of violence" has disappeared. The resulting factors are presented in detail below:

F1 – *Social, economic and political causes of violence*: the leaders' behaviour are a model for violence on the stadia; the opposing parties use the supporters making them chant against the parties in office; club leaders pay the fan clubs and make them intimidate the opponents; club leaders incite the fans to hooliganism);

F2 – *Patterns of violence in sports*: violence on the stadium means clashes between supporters and guards;

F3 – *Violence seen as a normal state*: violence is normal nowadays;

F4 – *Historic causes of violence in sports*: the large numbers of supporters attending an event has been conducive to increased violence; the image of a certain team is strongly linked to the violent acts of the supporters; violent manifestations are specific to the spectators of team games (such as football, hockey, handball);

F5 – *Fighting violence in sports*: When supporters are isolated, violence manifestations will be prevented; When chanting against the opposing team subside, violent occurrences will be diminished; Violence would be reduced if the family were involved in dealing with violent manifestations of supporters; Monitoring supporters' behaviour by CCTV would be conducive to a decrease in violent acts; Violent people lack education;

Factor no. 1 – Social, economic and political causes of violence in sports

The subjects consider that the violence of spectators attending sports events results from the difference in status between spectators and players, club owners, leaders of political parties in search for followers among the supporters (sometimes conflicts start from the supporters' divergent political views). The extent of the rivalries and conflicts on the stadia is explained through biased banners and also through exaggerated accounts of the events by the media. The media excessively report supporters' violent behaviours, which can lead to an imitation on other stadia.

Factor no. 2 – Patterns of violence in sports

For our research sample violence in sports is visible because of the manifestations of the supporters in the sports arena: violent crashes among supporting fans of the competing teams, burning the symbols and badges of the competing team, according with some previous researches (Palhares, Schwartz, Teruel, Santiago and Trevisan, 2012; Vieira and de Siqueira, 2008; Caldwell & Smith, 2006; Romera & dos Reis, 2009; de Souza & Marchi, 2010). Mass media are again seen as having an important contribution for spreading and propagating these manifestations, promoting them and exaggerating them. The performance heightened by the media induces direct (on the stadium) or indirect (watching the competition on TV) participation to the performance or frequent purchasing sports newspapers.

Factor no. 3 – Violence seen as a normal state

Violence is seen as normal and essential in the fight for survival. Violent behaviour can derive from the self preservation instinct, which is characteristic of every human being in search of a unique identity.

Factor no. 4 – Historic causes of violence in sports

Ancient stories tell of the violence manifested by the supporters in sports competitions (chariot races, gladiators) which gathered large crowds in Ancient Rome (Manning, 2007). Created to distract the people from social problems, these games have remained to this day in the collective memory as archetypes and myths and activate in emotionally charged situations (Szechi, 1990; Christian, 2004; Lewis & Winder, 2007; Heck, Nierhaus & Luh, 2012). The strong identification of the spectators with the team representing their community and the large crowds in which they amass on stadia creates a hypnotic state conducive to a loss in the self control and the violent behaviour is thus released. Violence on the stadia can be said to be inherited, but it can nevertheless be reduced through programmes for civic education and sports education.

Factor no. 5 – Fighting violence in sports

The solutions to fight violence on the stadia as identified by the subjects of our research refer at: formal education, steps to be taken by the entire society. The subjects consider that a firm legislation adapted to sports problems will create a safe space for sports to become again a performance without any important violent manifestations.

Discussions

There are differences in the evaluation of the factors of the social representation of violence in sports (Barbero & Rodriguez, 2012) depending on the group that the subjects belong to, according to the three independent variables: gender, faculty/school, type of audience. Related with this opinion, the results of our study are presented below.

The *male subjects* evaluate the five components of violence in sports differently from the female subjects. We applied the *t* test for independent samples and the statistical data we obtained show that there are significant statistical differences between the subjects in the two groups regarding factors of violence in sports (social, economic and political causes of violence, patterns of violence in sports, violence seen as a normal state, historic causes of violence in sports, fighting violence in sports). The results are presented in the *Table 3*.

Thus, in the case of Factor 1, the variable *socio-economic and political causes of violence in sports*, female subjects agree to a larger extent than male subjects that violence on stadia is the result of the difference in status between the players and spectators, of displaying biased messages, of the strategies of the mass media meant to sell the articles or reportages by exaggerating the events presented, of the strategies of the political leaders who promote their ideologies in the stadia. The statistics obtained support the statement above ($t(500) = 5,838$ for $p < 0,001$). Female subjects have a different view of the variable “social, political and economic causes of violence in sports”, possibly because they participate less frequently in sports competitions than male subjects.

- Statistical analysis permitted the identification of certain significant differences between the male and female subjects’ opinions, respectively, regarding the variable “*Patterns of violence*”. The results are $t(500) = 5.680$, for $p < 0.001$. Female subjects are to a greater extent than male subjects of the opinion that violence in sports becomes more visible through the practices of the supporters: cases of vandalism, obsessive focus of the media on such events, leading to the promotion of negative models of behaviour.
- Female subjects believe to a significantly greater extent ($t(500) = 5.730$, for $p < 0.001$), that violence is a common, tolerated behaviour in modern society and specific to the stadium and sometimes is actually considered a type of survival behaviour.
- The historic causes of violence in sports are evaluated differently by the subjects of the research depending on the gender variable ($t(500) = 4.507$, for $p < 0.001$); there are significant differences between the male subjects’ and female subjects opinions. The latter agree to a greater extent than the former that violence in sports appeared along with sports competitions. Illustrations of such ideas are to be found in ancient myths, as well as in the

behaviour of certain emerging models in the sports arena; there is all likelihood that this behaviour will be repeated.

- Regarding the element fighting violence on the stadia, significantly more female subjects than male subjects agree that stricter legislation and increased security should regulate such behaviours. The results in the t-test are relevant: $t(500) = 5.062$, $p < 0.001$. Also, female subjects agree that education can be a major factor in the abatement of this phenomenon.

In the case of the *variable faculty/school*, on applying the t-test on independent samples, the statistics indicated that the only significant differences between the subjects in the two groups were related to factors 3 and 5; element 3 is relevant in the sense that it states that violence is a fact that is part of normal life today; and element 5 is relevant as it refers to fighting violence. The results are presented in the *Table 3*.

According to the statistical data presented above, there are significant differences in the evaluation of the components between the subjects belonging to the two groups. The students in the IT school, unlike the students in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, believe to a larger extent that the variable *violence as a normal state* plays an important role in the outbreaks of violence on the sports arenas; the figures support this statement: $t(500) = 3.572$, for $p < 0.001$. Such a set of opinions of the students in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports can be explained by the fact that they participate in sports events more often and are familiar with the associated phenomena and the supporters' behaviours and do not associate the social area with the competition area (Young and Bruce, 2011). A significant difference has been identified between the subjects of our research depending on the variable *faculty/school* in the evaluation of component no. 5, fighting violence in sports, with $t(500) = 2.966$, $p < 0.001$. The students in the IT School agree to a significantly greater extent than those in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports that violence can be abated through education and adequate legislation. The students in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports may not have an equally intense perception of the social effects of violence in the sports arenas. Our hypothesis has been confirmed only for the components no. 3 and 5 of social violence.

In the case of the *variable type of audience* (the most knowledgeable, the least knowledgeable), the data obtained indicate that the various components of violence in sports are differently evaluated and that there are significant differences between the subjects in the two groups. The results are presented in the *Table 3*. As it can be seen from the statistics above, there are significant differences in the evaluation of the five components among the subjects in the two groups (the more knowledgeable, the less knowledgeable). In other words, the opinions on the phenomenon of violence in sports differ significantly between the two groups considered for our analysis for all the components of this phenomenon. The

subjects' opinions regarding the social, economic and political causes of violence in sports demonstrate that the more knowledgeable public agree to a significantly larger extent to the fact that violence in sports is a reflection of social, economic and political troubles and unrest. The results support this statement: $t(259) = 16.074$, for $p < 0.001$. The audience of sports events evaluates the component *practices/manifestations of violence in sports* differently and there is a significant difference in the statistics ($t(259) = 20,208$, for $p < 0,001$.). The more knowledgeable audience of sports events is different from the less knowledgeable as it attends such events more frequently in such events and is familiar with burning the symbols of one of the teams, vandalizing the stadia, while the others have only accidentally contact with such events via the mass media.

The dependent variable *violence as a normal state*, with a $t(259) = 20.555$, for $p < 0.001$, reflects the opinion of the more knowledgeable audience, that this phenomenon is normal in our society and that such manifestations are part of the daily life, to a greater extent than the opinion of the less knowledgeable audience. The statistical analysis has allowed the identification of certain significant differences between the more knowledgeable and the less knowledgeable audience regarding their opinions of the component *historical causes of violence* ($t(259) = 15.304$, $p < 0.001$). The more knowledgeable audience agrees to a larger extent than the less knowledgeable audience that violence in sports competitions are a type of behaviour perpetuated along the time, and has grown in intensity as sports and sports competition developed. Regarding the component *fighting violence in sports* ($t(259) = 17.010$, $p < 0.001$), the more knowledgeable audience knows more about these events, the causes of violence and steps that can prevent or abate violence on stadia, as compared to the less knowledgeable audience. The former believe to a greater extent than the latter that specific legislation adopted and enforced, as well as education against violence of any kind will contribute to the gradual eradication of violence in sports.

Table 3. The means, t values and the significance thresholds for the components of violence in sports according to all variables

Factors	Variables	Number	Average values	t	df	p	
Gender	F1	M	394	2,20	5,838	500	0,001*
		F	108	2,03			
	F2	M	394	1,85	5,680	500	0,001*
		F	108	2,38			
	F3	M	394	2,74	5,730	500	0,001*
		F	108	3,15			
	F4	M	394	2,17	4,507	500	0,001*
		F	108	2,52			
	F5	M	394	2,05	5,062	500	0,001*
		F	108	2,51			
Faculty/school	F1	PES	250	2,28	0,403	500	0,68
		ACCE	252	2,30			
	F2	PES	250	1,90	1,836	500	0,67
		ACCE	252	2,03			
	F3	PES	250	2,71	3,572	500	0,001*
		ACCE	252	2,96			
	F4	PES	250	2,19	1,692	500	0,09
		ACCE	252	2,29			
	F5	PES	250	2,04	2,966	500	0,001*
		ACCE	252	2,26			
Type of audience	F1	Knowledgeable (4)	130	2,92	16,074	259	0,001*
		Not knowledgeable ignorant(1)	131	1,85			
	F2	Knowledgeable (4)	130	2,96	20,208	259	0,001*
		Not knowledgeable ignorant (1)	131	1,54			
	F3	Knowledgeable (4)	130	3,27	20,555	259	0,001*
		Not knowledgeable ignorant (1)	131	1,96			
	F4	Knowledgeable (4)	130	2,95	15,304	259	0,001*
		Not knowledgeable ignorant (1)	131	1,94			
	F5	Knowledgeable (4)	130	3,04	17,010	259	0,001*
		Not knowledgeable ignorant (1)	131	1,70			

* statistically significant for $p < 0.05$

The general hypothesis no. 1 has been confirmed. By comparison with the other subjects, the female subjects, those from the IT School and the more knowledgeable subjects of sports generally consider that the causes of violence in sports lie in economic, political, social and historical circumstances, that it is a normal behaviour in a period of transition (Blair, 2010), that the violence in the arenas is characterized by the manifestations of the trouble-makers, and that its eradication can be achieved through education and legislation. There is interaction between the variables gender, school/faculty and type of audience with effects on the components of violence in sports. To identify the influence of dependent variables on dependent variables (which was considered within general hypothesis no. 2) – here, of gender, school/faculty and type of audience – the variance analysis, univariate model, was performed. The aim was to measure the relation between the variation due to division by groups and the intrinsic variation within groups. Two types of effects were considered: main effects and interaction effects. We have combined the independent variables as follows: gender and faculty/school, gender and the type of audience (the more / the less knowledgeable), and faculty/school and the type of audience.

The influence of the variable gender and school/faculty. As a result of the variance analysis for the five components, only main effects of the variable gender were obtained; these effects were studied within hypothesis no. 1.1, and of the variable faculty/school, which were analysed within hypothesis no. 1.2. No interaction effects were identified of the independent variables gender and faculty/school (Table 4).

The influence of the variables gender and type of audience. The variance analysis has identified no main effect of the variable gender on the dependent variables. The Anova Table shows that the main effect of the variable type of audience on the components of the social representation of violence in sports exists, but this will be not much insisted on, since it was analysed within hypothesis no.1.3. The statistically significant interaction effect does exist, in the sense that the respondents' opinion regarding the fighting of violence (F5) are influenced by the interaction between the respondents' gender and the type of audience (Table 4).

On analysing the interaction effect of the two independent variables on the component *fighting violence in sports*, the following results can be seen:

- a) When the subjects belong to the group of knowledgeable audience, significant differences regarding the female respondents' opinions can be identified (N= 51, Med=3.23) in comparison with the male subjects (N=79, Med=2.91). Female subjects score significantly higher compared to male knowledgeable subjects regarding their orientation towards steps to fight

violence on stadia. The results support this statement: $t(128) = 2.777$, for $p < 0.006$.

b) If the subjects belong to the less knowledgeable audience, the differences related to gender are not significant: $t(129) = 1.543$, $p = 0.125$.

c) In the case of male subjects belonging to the group of the more knowledgeable audience, the belief that violence can be fought against is significantly higher than when the male subjects belong to the group of the less knowledgeable audience: $t(200) = 12.621$, for $p < 0.001$.

d) Moreover, female subjects belonging to the group of the more knowledgeable audience believe to a larger extent that violence can be fought against and abated, compared to female subjects belonging to the group of the less knowledgeable audience: $t(57) = 9.644$, for $p < 0.001$.

A graphic illustration of the interaction effect is presented. (*Figure no. 1*)

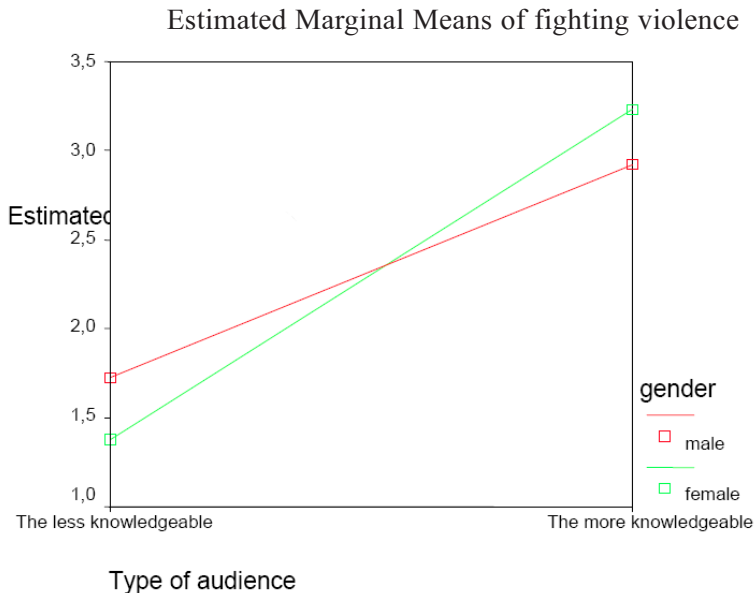


Figure 1. The interaction effect of the variables “gender” and “type of audience” for the component “fighting violence”

It is obvious, then, that irrespective of the subjects’ gender, there are significant differences between the members of the more knowledgeable group and of the less knowledgeable group, as proved by the high scores of the members of the more knowledgeable group. If in the case of the subjects in the less knowledgeable group gender is not correlated with significant differences regarding the abatement of violence on the stadia, in the case of both male and female subjects who are

familiar with the violent manifestations linked to sports in general, significant differences can be identified between subjects, as the latter score significantly higher as compared to the former.

The influence of the variables type of audience and faculty/school. The ANOVA Table shows that there is a main effect of the independent variable type of audience on the five dependent variables considered; they have already been analysed within the secondary hypothesis 1.3. There is, however, a main effect of the independent variable faculty on the dependent variable social, economic and political causes of violence in sports. Interaction effects of the independent variables type of audience and faculty on the component fighting violence in sports have been identified (*Table 4*). There is a statistically significant interaction effect in the sense that the respondents' opinions regarding fight against violence are influenced by the interaction between the type of audience and the subjects' faculty. Thus, for the subjects in the group of the less knowledgeable audience, the differences related to the component faculty are not significant: $t(129) = 1.035$, $p = 0.305$. The respondents in the group "the more knowledgeable audience" have significantly higher values for the opinion that measures are necessary to fight violence in the case of the students in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports than in the case of the students in the ACCE Faculty: $t(128) = 3.864$, for $p < 0.001$. Similarly, in the case of the students in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports belonging to the group "the more knowledgeable audience", there is a significantly higher belief that violence can be prevented than in the case of the students in the same faculty (Physical Education and Sports) belonging to the group "the less knowledgeable audience". The results in the t-test support this statement: $t(133) = 18.551$, for $p \leq 0.001$. The subjects in the group "the more knowledgeable audience" from the ACCE Faculty consider to a higher extent that violence can be prevented than students from the same faculty in the group "the less knowledgeable audience": $t(124) = 8.232$, for $p < 0.001$.

Table 4. The variance analysis for the interaction effect of the variables

Vd	Vi	F	P
F1	gender	36.660	p < 0.001*
	faculty	2.647	p = 0.104
	gender + faculty	0.612	p = 0.250
F2	gender	42.179	p < 0.001*
	faculty	5.507	p < 0.019*
	gender + faculty	0.053	p = 0.818
F3	gender	27.080	p < 0.001*
	faculty	8.768	p < 0.003*
	gender + faculty	0.883	p = 0.348
F4	gender	26.015	p < 0.001*
	faculty	4.345	p = 0.03
	gender + faculty	0.077	p = 0.782
F5	gender	31.012	p < 0.001*
	faculty	11.173	p < 0.001*
	gender + faculty	0.293	p = 0.588
F1	gender	2,301	p = 0,130
	type of audience	107,059	p < 0,001*
	gender + type of audience	2,529	p = 0,113
F2	gender	2,929	p = 0,088
	type of audience	150,245	p < 0,001*
	gender + type of audience	0,457	p = 0,500
F3	gender	0,011	p = 0,918
	type of audience	177,455	p < 0,001*
	gender + type of audience	0,504	p = 0,169
F4	gender	1,914	p = 0,168
	type of audience	78,939	p < 0,001*
	gender + type of audience	0,000	p = 0,996
F5	gender	143,708	p < 0,001*
	type of audience	0,017	P = 0,896
	gen + type of audience	6,807	p < 0,001*
F1	type of audience	286.132	p < 0.001*
	faculty	18.893	P < 0.001*
	type of audience + faculty	0.384	p = 0.536
F2	type of audience	377.123	p < 0.001*
	faculty	3.836	p = 0.051
	type of audience + faculty	3.019	p = 0.083

Vd	Vi	F	P
F3	type of audience	334.122	p = 0.001*
	faculty	1.600	p = 0.207
	type of audience + faculty	1.117	p = 0.292
F4	type of audience	222.622	p < 0.001*
	faculty	4.076	p = 0.045
	type of audience + faculty	3.633	p = 0.058
F5	type of audience	266,400	p < 0,001*
	faculty	2,103	p = 0,148
	type of audience + faculty	9,104	p < 0,003*

*statistically significant for $p < 0.05$

A graphic illustration of the interaction effect is given below. (Figure no. 2)

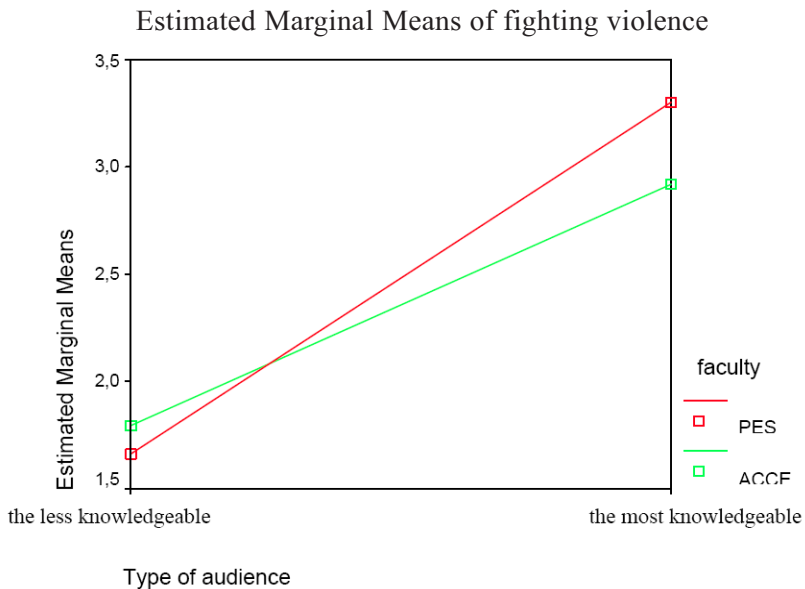


Figure 2. The interaction effect of the variables “type of audience” and “faculty” for the component “fighting violence”

Regardless of the faculty, there are significant differences between the subjects in the groups the more knowledgeable and the less knowledgeable audience, in the sense that students in the group the more knowledgeable audience score higher compared to those in the group the less knowledgeable audience; however, if the component faculty does not result in significant differences regarding the subjects' opinion on the necessity to take steps increase security and fight violence for the group of the more knowledgeable subjects; significant differences between the two groups appear and the students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports score significantly higher than those in ACCE.

The results from the variance analysis, the univariate model, demonstrate that the hypothesis regarding the combined effects of the independent variables is partly confirmed. The component *fighting violence in sports* is influenced by the interaction between the type of audience and gender and the interaction between the type of audience and faculty.

Conclusions

The present researcher has focused mainly on the identification of the social representation of violence in sports in the case of the more knowledgeable / less knowledgeable audience of the sports events by using the techniques suggested by the theories of social representations. We have identified the main components of the social representation of violence in sports and emphasizing the common beliefs shared by the population considered for the study. The first component – social, economic and historical causes – was shown to be divided into two sub-factors: social and economic causes on the one hand, and historical causes on the other; a new component emerged, violence as a normal state/fact. The subjects consider that violence in sports is caused by social stratification, by the behaviour of the leaders of the football clubs and of the political leaders, as well as by the mass media in search for the sensational and offering an exaggerated image of it.

The new component, *violence as a normal state/fact*, reveal the subjects' opinion that violence is a type of behaviour which is part of the survival strategy, which indicates adaptation to the environment, as well as the desire to obtain social recognition by the social actor. By applying the t-test, the various differences between the groups under study were identified, depending on the variables gender, faculty and type of audience with respect to the new components. In terms of the steps to prevent violence, female subjects scored significantly different from the male subjects. The female subjects reveal a different evaluation of the five components of the social representation of violence in sports and agree to a larger extent with the statements that outline the dimensions of the phenomenon. Their opinions result from the information circulated by the mass media and from informal communication more than it does in the case of the male subjects. The

latter may not objectively perceive the impact on society of violence in sports on account of attending and getting involved in sports events, as well as watching such events.

The subjects who study at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports are more familiar with violence in sports and evaluate it in a different manner the dimensions of its social representation than the students in the Faculty of Automatic Control and Computer Engineering. The latter, unlike the former, believe to a significantly larger extent that the variable violence as a normal state/fact contributes to the appearance of violence on the sports arenas. The same was observed for the component fighting violence. The type of audience the subjects belong to influences their opinion regarding violence in sports, in the sense that those who frequently attend events on stadia – the more knowledgeable group – consider to a larger extent that violence on stadia is the result of class differences and the current state of society, of the fact that it is stimulated by the mass media, also that they are an inherited behaviour, as compared to the group of the less knowledgeable audience. Interaction effects were identified on the component fighting violence through the combined effect of the variables gender and type of audience, as well as the variables type of audience and faculty. This demonstrates the combined effect on the dependent variables. Thus, we have used various methods to study the social representation of violence in sports (with a focus on the spectators of team sports) to complement the definition of this phenomenon. Therefore, we can say that the hypotheses proposed by this study have been partly confirmed.

Violence in sports (with a focus on the spectators of team sports) is initiated through verbal violence and lack of fair-play. Peripheral elements of the social representation, such as obscene gestures, the violence of the police and guards, the use of drugs and other illicit substances, and the mass media, can constitute themselves in triggering elements of the expressive, violent behaviours, while conflicts in society may result in such acts. The sports arenas lose their initial function, move away from their aim of an area where feelings of joy, hope and livelihood can be expressed and turn into an area where social unrest and anxiety, the social actors' frustrations or the political parties' interests are manifested. The results of this study are important as they can be applied to a society in transition, in search for a social, economic and political identity.

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