

Football-Related Violence in Turkey in relation to Collective Violence and Identity Fusion

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Abstract

Football-related violence is an ever-growing problem all over the world. There exist a plethora of studies on the issue of violence in football, yet not many Studies have focused on collective violence and identity fusion as part of these violent behaviours by fan groups. This study mainly aims at investigating whether collective violence and identity fusion exist as reasons behind football-related violence in Turkey, a country hosting various ethnic communities living altogether. Thus, it is crucial to investigate violence in football in terms of psychological and social elements. In this study, sample occasions from violent behaviours of football fan groups based in Turkey, particularly those belonging to football teams playing in the Turkish Superlig, were collected to analyse how and in what ways collective violence and identity fusion occur in the game of football on and off the pitch. According to the findings of this study, it was observed that regarding collective violence, though fan groups are not known to be violent, they follow the collective mind and get involved in protests, riots and violence on and off the pitch and that masculinity is an indispensable part of this violence, particularly in the Black Sea region of Turkey. In addition, it was seen that although identity fusion is not something common among fan groups in Turkey, Çarşı, the supporter group of Beşiktaş team, consists of members who are highly fused and that members of this group do not get involved in violence in football, on the contrary, they have acts such as preserving human rights, giving voice to social issues and helping those in need.

Keywords: Collective violence, identity fusion, Turkey, fan groups

Kolektif řiddet ve Kimlik Kaynařmasına İliřkin Olarak Türkiye’de Futbol řiddeti

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Öz

Futbol řiddeti, tüm dünyada gittikçe artan bir problem haline gelmektedir. Futbol řiddeti konusu ile ilgili pek çok çalıřma mevcut olmasına karřın çok az çalıřma taraftar grupları tarafından ortaya konulan řiddeti davranıřlarının bir parçası olarak kolektif řiddeti ve kimlik kaynařmasına odaklanmıřtır. Bu çalıřmanın temel olarak amacı, kolektif řiddet ve kimlik kaynařmasının birlikte yařayan çeřitli etnik toplulukları barındıran bir ilke olan Türkiye’de futbol řiddetinin arakasındaki sebepler olup olmadıđını arařtırmaktır. Dolayısıyla, futboldaki řiddeti psikolojik ve sosyal unsurlar açasından deđerlendirmek elzendir. Bu çalıřmada, özellikle de Türkiye Süperlig kapsamında oynayan takımlara ait taraftar grupları olmak üzere Türkiye’de bulunan taraftar gruplarının řiddeti davranıřlarından derlenen örnek olaylar, kolektif řiddet ve kimlik kaynařmasının futbol oyunundaki saha içinde ve saha dıřında meydana nasıl ve ne řekilde meydana geldiđini irdelemek üzere derlenmiřtir. Çalıřmanın bulgularına göre, kolektif řiddeti iliřkin olarak taraftar gruplarının řiddet odaklı olmadıkları bilinmesine rađmen, kolektif fikri takip ettikleri ve saha içi ve saha dıřı olaylar, protestolar ve karřařalarda bulunmaktadır ve erkeksilik hususu özellikle de Karadeniz Bölgesinde bu řiddetin ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Bunun yanı sıra, kimlik kaynařmasının taraftar grupları arasında ortak bir olgu olmadıđı görölse de, Beřiktař taraftar gurubu olan Çarřı’nın oldukça kaynařmıř bireylerden oluřtuđu ve üyelerinin řiddeti eyleminde olmadıđı aksine insan haklarını koruma, sosyal olayları dile getirme ve ihtiyacı olanlara yardım etme gibi eylemlerde buldukları gözlemlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kolektif řiddeti, kimlik kaynařması, Türkiye, Taraftar grupları

Introduction

Football is an increasingly popular branch of sports that gains reputation on a daily basis, and it seems that this is going to happen in the future as well. Undoubtedly, football has turned into an industry in which a great number of actors and figures are present in terms of all parameters of the game. In fact, what has changed the direction the football game is this transformation. Football is no longer only a means of entertainment and social cohesion but also a field of violence, anti-social behaviours and individual aggression that affects the individual or groups or the society all at once. As pointed out by R. Todd Jewell et al. (2011), while for some spectators, sporting events simply provide entertainment in the form of unscripted drama and tension, for others, watching sports is a social activity, in which individuals of similar cultural or national backgrounds gather to have a community experience. In order to well-understand the state of violence in football, the nature and source of the football-related violence should be investigated. Furthermore, this investigation should focus on two main notions which are collective violence and identity fusion as these crucial notions allow us to see the reasons behind the football-related violence and to analyse the influence of society and individual separately.

Otto M. J. Adang (2011) states that “every society has sporadic and sometimes vehement outbursts of collective violence, be it in the form of urban riots, soccer hooliganism, escalated protest events or festivities gone out of hand.” However, the amount and severity of violence that erupts may vary from country to country with various effects and results in every single one. What remains as certain is that collective violence is out there. Though collective violence is highly important to provide evidence for the roots of the football-related violence, as stated by Adang (2011), little attention is being paid to the fact that collective violence occurs in an inter-group context. That collective violence is ignored when analysing the football-related violence can lead to a superficial investigation of violence as it does not focus on its collective nature.

Identity notion, as the other significant notion, is a visceral sense of “oneness” with a group and its individual members that motivates per-

sonally costly, pro-group behaviors (Swann and Buhrmester, 2015). According to Swann and Buhrmester (2015), upon developing a visceral feeling of “oneness” with the group, strongly fused persons retain their sense of personal agency and channel it into pro-group action. They also point out that rather than focusing on the collective at the expense of fellow group members, strongly fused persons regard other group members as “family” and derive a sense of invulnerability from them (ibid, 2015).

This paper will mainly focus on these two notions to illustrate and investigate the nature of collective violence and identity fusion in football-related violence that occurs in Turkey. In doing so, several fan groups of football clubs in Turkey, particularly those that play in the Turkish Super Lig now, will be analysed in relation to their violent behaviours.

The following section will be composed of a literature review. The third section will focus on collective violence while the fourth section will touch upon identity fusion. The fifth section will highlight the nature of these notions in terms of the football-related violence in Turkey carried out by fan groups. And finally, there will be a conclusion and discussion to summarize the topic.

Literature Review

There has been a scarce amount of research upon the nature of collective violence and identity fusion related to the football-related violence up to present day though some scholars have mainly focused on these issues in their papers. Among these scholars are Martha Newson (2017) with her paper titled as *Football, Fan Violence, and Identity Fusion*, Lucy Strang et al. (2018) in their paper titled as *Violent and Antisocial Behaviours at Football Events and Factors Associated with these Behaviours: A rapid evidence assessment*, R. Todd Jewell et al. (2011) with a study titled as *A Brief History of Violence and Aggression in Spectator Sports*, William B. Swann Jr. and Michael D. Buhrmester (2015) in their study primarily on the issue of identity fusion in detail, and Otto M. J. Adang (2011) who mainly focused on the nature of collective violence and collective events to analyse the initiation and escalation of such violence.

Newson (2017) studied the role of identity fusion to discuss the ways in which identity fusion can help understandings of football violence using British and Brazilian fan cultures which are hooliganism in UK and *torcidas organizadas* in Brazil respectively. She mainly focuses on how and in what ways fans go into action under the influence of identity fusion that is claimed to affect the individual and other group members in certain ways.

Swann and Buhrmester (2015) tried to study the notion and nature of identity fusion in terms of its definition, principles and effects in football violence. They mainly focused on the fusion theory to help better understand the role of the personal self and intragroup relationships in extreme pro-group action by specifically touching upon strongly fused persons in the group that can even sacrifice their lives for fellow in-group members (ibid, 2015).

Adang (2011) had a glimpse on collective events, and factors that may contribute to the initiation and escalation of collective violence. Thus, he collected data through systematic observations around 60 football matches and 77 protest events in the Netherlands that are regarded to constitute a risk to public (ibid, 2015). According to him, the interaction between participants from various groups and the relationship between them are main reasons behind the initiation and escalation of collective violence.

Collective Violence

The word 'collective' derives from the Latin word 'colligere' which means 'gathered together' as the base form of the verb 'collect-', and from the Old French word 'collectif' or Latin 'collectivus'. This word is highly used in today's world to explain as many concepts as possible so as to well-understand how things happen in the world. One of the fields that it is also applied to clarify a specific issue is the field of football, and particularly the field of football-related violence. As a result, the notion of "collective violence" emerges out of the violence that erupts on or off the pitch in this sense. In fact, as stated by Adang (2011), a transformation is supposed to occur where people change and display other behaviour purely as a consequence of the fact that they are part of a crowd. Football is a sports

branch that involves huge crowds and thus is open to any type of behaviours or behavioural changes triggered by the relevant crowd. In fact, the notion of collective violence does not solely refer to the collective nature but also to the individual him/herself. Collective violence is not only about the collective mind of those who are involved in the violent protests, riots or any other type of violence but also about the thoughts, behaviours and relations of hooligans or hooligan groups. To elucidate the notion of collective violence, it is highly crucial to cite N.A.J. Taylor (2011). Taylor (2011) asks two questions related to collective violence: "Why does collective violence tend to 'concentrate in large waves – often with one violent encounter appearing to trigger the next – then subside to low levels for substantial periods of time'?", and 'How and why do people who interact without doing outright damage to each other shift rapidly into collective violence and then (sometimes just as quickly) shift back into peaceful relations?'. According to him,

"To answer questions of collective violence, however, football hooliganism must first be understood in its many forms. According to Charles Tilly, the existing scholarship into collective violence may be classified into three alternative approaches: 'behavioural', 'ideational' and 'relational'. The relational approach elevates the influence of conversational transactions between people and groups, such that 'collective violence therefore amounts to a kind of conversation'. To advocates of the relational approach then, interactions, motives, impulses and opportunities inherent in social relations go some way in explaining the variability of violence over time. The ideational approach, most commonly adopted by those formulating preventative policy to combat football hooliganism, emphasises the ideas and actions of the individual in instigating and maintaining violent incidents such that targeted, aggressive policies might 'suppress or eliminate destructive ideas'. While the behavioural approach stresses the role of the individual, factors such as the primal instincts inherent within masculinity, the pursuit of respect from peers and a sense of belonging are considered as core drivers of collective violence. The behavioural approach is evident in the existing sociological accounts of football hooliganism, whereas the ideational approach is predominant in government and inter-governmental policy responses to combat violence at football matches." (2011, p.1753).

These approaches can allow us to understand the notion of collective violence in terms of various parameters that can have influence on the issue of football-related violence. Collective violence should be analysed based on these approaches to lead and maintain a strong understanding on violence on and off the pitch.

Identity Fusion

In order to better understand what identity fusion implies, we primarily should know what exactly identity and fusion refer to separately. In fact, identity is a complex word that can refer to various meanings. To illustrate, in his study titled as *What is identity? (As we now use the word)*, James D. Fearon (1999) argues that

“...“identity” is presently used in two linked senses, which may be termed “social” and “personal”. In the former sense, an “identity” refers simply to a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes. In the second sense of personal identity, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable.”

Fearon (1999) also argues that although everyone knows how to use the word properly in everyday discourse, it proves quite difficult to give a short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its present meanings. In fact, it was Eric H. Erikson, the prominent theorist, who mainly focused on the concept of identity and led it to be studied thoroughly up to the present day. Erikson puts the concept of identity into the fifth stage of ego along with confusion, a stage which occurs during adolescence between the ages of 12 and 18 (1963; 1968; 1982). Ego "identity is never 'established' as an 'achievement,'" as something static or unchangeable, but is a "forever to-be-revised sense of reality of the Self within social reality" (Erikson, 1968). Thus, it can be implied that identity should not be investigated in relation to only individual characteristics but also social features. In this sense, identity is to be well-understood. As stated by Swann and Buhrmester (2015), identification refers to an alignment of people's personal identities (i.e., aspects of self that make people

unique) and social identities (i.e., aspects of self that align them with groups—e.g., being Jewish or Catholic).

On the other hand, fusion explains individual differences and may thus be useful for comparing cultures, though not necessarily explaining societal differences (Newson, 2017, p.13). According to Swann and Buhrmester (2015), fusion theory describes a particularly intense form of group bonding whereby the boundary between personal and group identities becomes porous, i.e. the personal and social selves become fused. Both actors influence one another towards a specific purpose to fulfil a kind of psychological need, notably related to football. Although the observations derived from sociological and anthropological research may be informative, few address the psychological underpinnings of extreme fan violence or of inter-group conflict. Therefore, fusion theory allows us to focus more on the psychological aspect of fan violence with its directions. Newson (2017) points out that

“Fusion theory would suggest that fans who are happy to wear a team shirt, sing team chants and watch games are experiencing a different psychological phenomenon in relation to those fans who in addition to such behaviours, engage with feelings of deep personal investment, self-sacrificial behaviour and extreme pro-group endorsement.”

Reflections on the Football-related Violence in Turkey

Please As the notions of football itself and the football-related violence are complex notions, it is essential to touch upon the notions of collective violence and identity fusion to highlight the roots, causes and reflections of violence in football in Turkey. From time to time, Turkey experiences peaceful and rather violent occasions related to football both on the pitch and off the pitch. Some specific examples will be given related to violence in football in Turkey based on collective violence and identity fusion with occasions related to the former first. In addition, these examples will be based on fan groups of the teams that are based in the Turkish Superlig and the TFF First League, which is the second level of the Turkish football system. Among these groups are Çarşı, which belongs to Beşiktaş football club, UltraAslan of Galatasaray football club, Nefer, which includes fans of Eskişehirspor football club, Yiğidolar of Sivasspor football club, Texas

belonging to Bursaspor football club, Genç Fenerbahçeliler of Fenerbahçe football club, Çılgınlar of Trabzonspor football club, and Turbeyler of Adanaspor football club.

Regarding collective violence, there exist a plethora of violent occasions triggered, created and elevated by fan groups related to football. One of the most outstanding occasion or series of occasions has been carried out by the fan group of Trabzonspor, though it is not possible to clearly state that a specific group of Trabzonspor has carried out these violent occasions. Trabzonspor is based in the Black Sea region of Turkey, which is labelled as masculine people. This label is known all over the country, and occasions related to masculinity almost always occur in this region, particularly related to football violence. As of the very beginning of 2000s, a harsh and violent atmosphere has been created not only between Trabzonspor and Fenerbahçe fans but also between executives of both teams. In fact, violence reached to a peak during the relevant period. Based on the ideational approach of collective violence, it can be stated that fan groups and club executives both clubs featured a hostile rhetoric and stance against one another leading to violent protests and occasions before and after the matches between them. To set an example, Trabzonspor fans did not let the match end from time to time and threw objects into the field causing huge damage to the away team. In addition, on April 4 2015, Fenerbahçe's team bus was shot at by a gunman after the match between Fenerbahçe and Rizespor. The driver was badly injured after the bus was shot, and a disaster was prevented after the driver carefully managed to stop with the help of someone in the bus. Finally, Trabzonspor presidency passed into the hands of İbrahim Hacıosmanoğlu, who later on started a severe atmosphere in the history of football in Turkey with his bad remarks and harsh criticism against other teams, particularly Fenerbahçe team. The masculinity of both fan groups and executives of Trabzonspor spread all over the region and created a violent atmosphere which is still active on and off the pitch. In fact, executives of the rival team Fenerbahçe also did not refrain from stating bad remarks, though these remarks were not as harsh as those stated by Trabzonspor executives. In another occasion triggered by the fan group of Galatasaray, UltrAslan during the match on May 19 2007 between Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe teams as eternal rivals, the derby turned into a chaos following on-pitch

scandals that were full of violence. In fact, all started just days before the match day as Fenerbahçe had guaranteed the title of the league and expected a Guard of Honour and applause from the team players as well as fans that would attend the match. Yet, this did not happen. What happened was a tremendous scandal that would never be forgotten from the pages of newspapers related to football in Turkey and football-related violence on the pitch. As the home team was defeated with a score of 1-2 by the away team, the players of the home team triggered a brawl during the match, and this brawl went out of control and was continued by the fans on the stands. In fact, this occasion was not an expected one as Galatasaray and their fans are known to be noble and docile. Yet, the collective movement by all of them including players and any figure present at the match led to this violence as every single person there felt that they had to interfere in to defend their team. Such collective violence would go on during the next matches between rivals as this collective mind was about to settle in their life.

On the other hand, identity fusion is also present within some fan groups based in Turkey. One of these is unquestionably the supporter group Çarşı of Beşiktaş that was founded in 1982. Çarşı does not have a homogenous structure which means that it does not include people with a specific identity. People from different social backgrounds, cultural environments, and ethnic origins are assembled at the group even though they support opposite ways of thinking in terms of politics or ideologies (Radikal, 2003). This fusion is what makes it special as it is rare to encounter such groups all over the world, particularly when it comes to football or any type of sports. Therefore, identity fusion is highly likely to occur in such a group as every single member of the group is ready to sacrifice something for the sake of the group. However, Çarşı does not employ its potential to create or escalate violence, on the contrary, it is attentive to take care of human rights, preventing violence and giving voice to highlight some social problems. In fact, its principle is based on preserving the rights of people and those who are engaged in football. In this respect, it can be said that its acts are relatively positive. It consists of a highly fused identity which seems to go on eternally. For example, some members of this group went naked in the middle of winter to show that they share the feelings of the people of Van city, which experienced an earthquake. In

another occasion, Çarşı and Çarşı Kadın (Woman), an affiliate of the group, sent a truck full of winter clothes for kids and pupils in the eastern part of Turkey to help them protect from the cold weather. Being enclosed together - be it a football ground, pub, or outdoor viewing space - in the knowledge of their team's and co-fans' shared history, participants are simultaneously bound in an appreciation for their side and against whatever confronts them (Maffesoli, 1996). In this respect, it is clear that Çarşı is a highly fused group which consists of an identity that is shared by each member of the group.

Conclusion

Football-related violence is an issue that has been debated for a long time. Not only football authorities but also governments and other non-governmental organizations take measures to eliminate the issue of violence from the football pitch and off-the-pitch. This paper has mainly focused on two crucial notions related to the reasons of violence in football in Turkey: collective violence and identity fusion. These two notions are so important that they can give us an insight into how and in what ways football fans gather together or share a specific identity to bring about violence in this field of sports.

Based on the occasions given as examples to highlight their relation with football-related violence in Turkey, it is observed that collective violence is more common than violence triggered by identity fusion. In fact, fan groups that were involved in violent behaviours did so with the thought of acting in unison. Collective violence is a typical way of behaviour by Turkish fan groups on and off the pitch considering sample occasions. On the other hand, though it is not common to see an identity fusion among these groups, Çarşı, the supporter group of Beşiktaş team, represents a highly fused organization which consists of non-homogenous members with shared identity who can even sacrifice anything for their teams and who depend on their group members considerably.

Turkey hosts as many nations of different ethnic origins as possible and thus it is not easy to define main social characteristics of this specific country. Therefore, considering football-related violence, it is fairly important to take into account this diversity as social characteristics of a nation can

give us information about how things happen in a specific area. In fact, as stated by Newson (2017), holistic theories of football-related violence certainly ought to address the cognition underlying inter-group violence which, being group based, will necessarily have a social element. If social elements are thoroughly investigated, then football can be a field from which violence is removed totally.

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