

Football Fans' Opinions On The Source Of Violence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to guide people toward the essence of sports, whose primary purpose is friendship, brotherhood, and competition, by gathering opinions about the source of violence among football fans. Therefore, the aim of the study is to identify the factors that cause violence in football based on various variables and to help take the necessary precautions after assessing the situation.

A descriptive survey model was used in the study. Along with the descriptive survey, the "Fans' Views on the Sources of Violence in Football" survey was administered to the study group to assess the tendency of football fans in Turkey towards violence. The study group consisted of 905 football fans randomly selected on a voluntary basis, both in physical settings and through social media fan groups. It was concluded that referee decisions and sports media are the most significant factors that increase violence in football. It can be said that male and young fans are more prone to violence. The average level of violence increases with decreasing educational attainment. Concepts such as respect for decency and honesty positively influence fans' tendency towards violence.

KEYWORDS: Football, Violence, Fans.

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INTRODUCTION

Football is a team sport played with a ball, known and embraced by a wide audience all over the world today. With a history dating back approximately two thousand years, football is considered a game that spread across many different regions, from China to Japan, from Rome to Central America (Stemmler, 2000; Orejan, 2011). According to FIFA, the first game resembling football may have been inspired by a game called cuju, played by soldiers in China around 300 BCE for training purposes (Wikipedia, 2025). The origin of modern football traces back to the mid-19th century, to various forms of football played under different rules in private schools in England (Winner, 2005). It can be clearly said that the current understanding of football has been shaped by contributions from various countries and cultures. Furthermore, millions of people around the world are involved in this sport. According to a report published by FIFA in May 2007, over 270 million people play football globally, with more than 840.000 referees and over 113.000 professional football players (Kunz, 2007).

Football has become an economic sector today. From this perspective, football has even surpassed the arms and pharmaceutical industries (Kaplan, 2015). The game's approach to offense and defense resembles a form of unarmed warfare, allowing fans to participate in this "war" in a passive role (Öğütker, 2007).

In recent years, spectators and their behaviors, as well as their personality traits, have become a topic of discussion. Although opinions based on impressions and scientific studies on this matter vary, the general consensus is that stadium stands have become problematic areas, and undesirable behavioral changes have occurred among spectators and fans (Yüksel et al., 1998).

In cases where the number of supporters in fan groups is not equal, the side with fewer members tends to have a lower desire to attack but a higher expectation of being attacked. In stronger groups, the opposite is true (Hortaçsu, 1998). Fans are negatively affected by the vulgar and insulting chants made by opposing fans toward themselves, their teams, coaches, and players. As a result, they may carry out attacks with stones, sticks, or firearms both inside and outside the stadium, causing serious material and emotional damage (Kaplan, 2015; Kuru, 2000). In light of these observations, violence can be defined as any individual or collective behavior and attitude that involves the use of force or domination, and that causes or poses a risk of causing harm in a physical, psychological, sexual, economic, or political sense, either directly or indirectly (Bufacchi, 2007).

Violence in sports refers to harmful and inappropriate behaviors exhibited or carried out by players, coaches, fans, and other stakeholders in relation to sports events or activities. These behaviors violate the rules and spirit of sports and can lead to physical injury (IvyPanda, 2022).

Sports can be considered as activities that have been practiced from the past to the present for the purpose of having fun, spending

free time, staying physically and mentally healthy, and satisfying people's competitive spirit. Football, especially, can serve different purposes as it involves competition and the desire to win (Arıkan, 2017).

Football fans who watch matches act with different identities in their daily lives and find themselves in an environment where desired or undesired events occur due to the effects of various expressions caused by forgetting their identities when they enter large groups (Şanlı, 2009). Among the causes of these incidents are factors such as competition, national pride, a culture of violence, alcohol, and drugs (Talimciler et al., 2011). When all these factors are considered, violence in sports is inevitable, and this situation is seen as an important factor affecting sporting activities (Yücel et al., 2015). There are many studies in the literature on violence in football (Çağlayan and Fişekçioğlu, 2004; Finn, 1994). These studies examine the factors affecting fan violence according to certain variables (Polat and Sönmezoğlu, 2016).

Football is a sport that appeals to most segments of society. People with different economic and socio-cultural values who play the roles of spectators, athletes, or managers can be considered actors in the sport. The fact that similar studies in the literature remain at a more local level, and that research on the sources of violence in football, which may be attributed to social, cultural, and economic variables, remains local and insufficient, highlights the significance of the present study.

PURPOSE

The present study aims to guide individuals toward the essence of sports, which is friendship, solidarity, and competition, by gathering opinions on the causes of violent incidents committed by football fans. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to identify the factors that cause violence in football according to various variables and to help take necessary measures based on the findings.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A descriptive survey model was applied in the study. In the survey model, situations are conveyed without being altered (Karasar, 2012, p.77). Along with the descriptive survey, a questionnaire titled “Fans' Views on the Sources of Violence in Football” was administered to the study group in order to assess the tendency of football fans in Turkey toward violence.

Study Group

The study group consisted of 905 football fans randomly selected on a voluntary basis from physical environments and social media fan groups.

Data Collection

Permission was obtained from the scale developers in order to conduct the surveys. Informed consent forms were sent to the participants who took part in the survey. Surveys were conducted and collected on a voluntary basis among spectators in the stands and fan leaders at football matches, both on social media groups and in physical environments. Incomplete or incorrect surveys were excluded from the analysis, ensuring that only surveys completed in accordance with the study's objectives were included. Scientific publication and ethics committee approval numbered E-67796128-819-2500022096 and dated July 4, 2025 was obtained.

Data Analysis

The 25-item “Fans' Views on the Sources of Violence in Football” scale developed by Reyhan et al. (2020) was used. The demographic variables for the study included gender, age, economic status, educational status, and favorite team. In the reliability analysis conducted for the scale, the reliability coefficient was 0.82 for the overall scale, 0.60 for the sub-dimension of violence originating from sports media, 0.62 for violence originating from referee decisions, 0.70 for violence originating from coaches and managers, 0.74 for violence originating from fans and fan leaders, and 0.70 for violence originating from athlete behavior. A software package was used for data analysis.

FINDINGS

Table 1: Normality Test

FACTORS	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	-,424	,728	2,151
Violence from Sports Media	-,467	,170	2,302
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	-,883	,840	3,373
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	,376	-,444	3,067
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	,065	-,318	2,702
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	,187	-,322	2,819

Based on the values obtained in Table 1, it was decided to perform parametric tests.

Tablo 2: Reliability Test

FACTORS	Reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha)
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	,70
Violence from Sports Media	,80
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	,77

Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	,74
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	,78
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	,78

Table 2 shows that the scale and all sub-dimensions are within reliable ranges.

Table 3: Personal Information

Personal Information	Variables	Frekans (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Women	258	28,5
	Male	647	71,5
Age	18-28 Age	225	24,9
	29-39 Age	373	41,2
	40-50 Age	248	27,4
	51 Ages and Above	59	6,5
Economic Situation	Low	91	10,1
	Middle	642	70,9
	Well	172	19,0
Educational Status	Primary and Secondary Education	70	7,7
	High school	135	14,9
	University	577	63,8
	Master's Degree and Above	123	13,6
Team Favorite	Besiktas	210	23,2
	Fenerbahce	265	29,3
	Galatasaray	372	41,1
	Trabzon Spor	58	6,4

According to Table 3, 71.5% of the participants are male and 28.5% are female. When the distribution by age group is examined, 24.9% are in the 18-28 age group, 41.2% are in the 29-39 age group, 27.4% are in the 40-50 age group, and 6.5% are in the 51 and older age group. 10.1% of participants have low income, 70.9% have medium income, and 19% have high income. In terms of education, 7.7% have primary or secondary education degrees, 14.9% have high school degrees, 63.8% have university degrees, and 13.6% have a master's degree or higher. In terms of favorite team, 23.2% of participants are Beşiktaş fans, 29.3% are Fenerbahçe fans, 41.1% are Galatasaray fans, and 6.4% are Trabzonspor fans.

Table 4: Dimensions and Subdimensions

	N	X
Violence from Sports Media	905	3,456
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	905	3,674
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	905	2,660
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	905	2,812
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	905	2,595
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	905	3,076

According to the table, the participants' average score regarding the source of violence was found to be 3.076. It is observed that participants believed the primary source of violence was referee decisions ($X = 3.674$), followed by sports media ($X = 3.456$).

Table 5: Gender Variable T-test

	Gender	N	X	Sd	T	p
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	Women	258	2,8709	,60632	-6,977	,000
	Male	647	3,1633	,46341		
Violence from Sports Media	Women	258	3,2022	,66287	-7,542	,000
	Male	647	3,5574	,57743		
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	Women	258	3,3279	1,02236	-6,777	,000
	Male	647	3,8114	,81999		
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Women	258	2,5804	1,09477	-1,408	,160
	Male	647	2,6913	1,00127		
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Women	258	2,6738	,61440	-4,214	,000

	Male	647	2,8676	,64980		
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	Women	258	2,3886	,78899	-4,994	,000
	Male	647	2,6774	,77633		

When Table 5 is examined, it is observed that there are clear differences between the gender variable and the sub-dimensions of the scale regarding the sources of violence. In particular, statistically significant differences in favor of male participants were observed in the sub-dimensions of “Violence Originating from Sports Media,” “Violence Originating from Referee Decisions,” “Violence Originating from Fans and Fan Leaders,” and “Violence Originating from Athlete Behaviors.” However, when the relationship between the gender variable and the sub-dimension “Violence Originating from Coaches and Managers” was analyzed, no statistically significant difference was found.

Table 6: Age Variable Anova Test

	Age	N	X	Sd	F	p	Tukey
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	18-28 Age	225	3,066	,579	2,740	,042	(1,2,3) 4
	29—39 Age	373	3,091	,528			
	40-50 Age	248	3,116	,431			
	51 Age +	59	2,904	,610			
Violence from Sports Media	18-28 Age	225	3,323	,619	8,343	,000	(1,2,3) 4
	29-39 Age	373	3,498	,601			
	40-50 Age	248	3,559	,616			
	51 Age +	59	3,262	,6880			
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	18-28 Age	225	3,749	1,097	6,931	,000	(1,2,3) 4
	29-39 Age	373	3,732	,869			
	40-50 Age	248	3,631	,705			
	51 Age +	59	3,189	,977			
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	18-28 Age	225	2,757	1,098	2,631	,049	1 2
	29-39 Age	373	2,575	1,083			
	40-50 Age	248	2,739	,900			
	51 Age +	59	2,478	,856			
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	18-28 Age	225	2,602	,672	11,898	,000	(2,3,4) 1
	29-39 Age	373	2,847	,623			
	40-50 Age	248	2,934	,588			
	51 Age +	59	2,875	,730			
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	18-28 Age	225	2,830	,794	9,961	,000	1 2,3,4
	29-39 Age	373	2,561	,807			
	40-50 Age	248	2,460	,741			
	51 Age +	59	2,478	,679			

The results of the ANOVA test presented in Table 6 revealed significant differences between the age variable and various dimensions of violence. In the dimensions of “Fans’ Views on the Source of Violence in Football,” as well as “Violence Originating from Sports Media” and “Violence Originating from Referee Decisions,” a statistically significant difference was observed between the 18-28, 29-39, and 40-50 age groups in favor of these groups compared to the 51 and over age group. In addition, in the sub-dimension of “Violence Originating from Coaches and Managers,” a significant difference was found in favor of the 18-28 age group compared to the 29–39 age group. In another analysis, when examining the relationship between the age variable and the sub-dimension “Violence Originating from Fans and Fan Leaders,” notable differences were identified in favor of the 29-39, 40-50, and 51 and over age groups compared to the 18-28 age group. Finally, in the sub-dimension “Violence Originating from Athlete Behaviors,” a statistically significant difference was observed in favor of the 18-28 age group when compared to the 29-39, 40-50, and 51 and over age groups.

Table 7: Income Status Variable ANOVA Test

	Income Status	N	X	Sd	F	P	Tukey
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	Low	91	2,953	,650	3,242	,040	(2,3) 1
	Middle	642	3,086	,498			
	Well	172	3,121	,538			
Violence from Sports Media	Low	91	3,230	,693	11,544	,000	(2,3) 1
	Middle	642	3,446	,618			
	Well	172	3,610	,563			
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	Low	91	3,329	1,235			(2,3)

Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Middle	642	3,710	,838	7,360	,001	1
	Well	172	3,719	,923			
	Low	91	2,645	,983	,511	,600	-
	Middle	642	2,642	1,001			
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Well	172	2,731	1,152	1,876	,154	-
	Low	91	2,838	,724			
	Middle	642	2,831	,630	,276	,759	-
	Well	172	2,726	,652			
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	Low	91	2,549	,574	,276	,759	-
	Middle	642	2,593	,775			
	Well	172	2,625	,935			

According to the results of the ANOVA test conducted in Table 7, significant differences were found between the income status variable and the dimension of "Fans' Views on the Source of Violence in Football", as well as the sub-dimensions "Violence Originating from Sports Media" and "Violence Originating from Referee Decisions." These differences were more pronounced in favor of individuals with middle and high income levels compared to those with low income. However, no statistically significant differences were observed between income status and the other sub-dimensions.

Table 8: Education Status ANOVA Test

	Educational Status	N	X	Sd	F	P	Tukey
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	Primary-Secondary School	70	3,011	,622	4,608	,003	4 1,2,3
	High School	135	2,977	,574			
	University	577	3,084	,483			
	Master's/Doctorate	123	3,207	,568			
Violence from Sports Media	Primary-Secondary School	70	3,159	,619	13,273	,000	4 1,2,3
	High School	135	3,312	,595			
	University	577	3,480	,629			
	Master's/Doctorate	123	3,669	,530			
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	Primary-Secondary School	70	3,345	1,088	6,451	,000	4 1,2,3
	High School	135	3,491	1,033			
	University	577	3,753	,847			
	Master's/Doctorate	123	3,684	,869			
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Primary-Secondary School	70	2,864	1,093	2,975	,031	4 1,2,3
	High School	135	2,533	1,086			
	University	577	2,627	1,004			
	Master's/Doctorate	123	2,833	1,018			
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Primary-Secondary School	70	2,726	,742	8,993	,000	4 1,2,3
	High School	135	2,664	,797			
	University	577	2,805	,582			
	Master's/Doctorate	123	3,058	,619			
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	Primary-Secondary School	70	2,946	,855	8,060	,000	4 1,2,3
	High School	135	2,748	,744			
	University	577	2,532	,794			
	Master's/Doctorate	123	2,518	,707			

According to the results of the ANOVA test in Table 8, significant differences were identified between the education level variable and the dimension of "Fans' Views on the Source of Violence in Football" and all of its sub-components. These differences were found in favor of individuals with postgraduate (master's/PhD) education, compared to those with primary/secondary, high school, and undergraduate education.

Table 9: Favorite Team Variable ANOVA Test

	Teams	N	X	Sd	T	P	Tukey
SOURCE OF VIOLENCE SCALE AVERAGE	Beşiktaş	210	2,924	,568	9,161	,000	2,3,4 1
	Fenerbahçe	265	3,085	,455			
	Galatasaray	372	3,152	,527			
	Trabzon	58	3,154	,532			
Violence from Sports Media	Beşiktaş	210	3,205	,648	19,881	,000	2,3,4 1
	Fenerbahçe	265	3,444	,623			
	Galatasaray	372	3,563	,566			
	Trabzon	58	3,729	,594			
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	Beşiktaş	210	3,572	1,110	2,375	,069	2 1
	Fenerbahçe	265	3,767	,828			
	Galatasaray	372	3,687	,829			
	Trabzon	58	3,524	,897			
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Beşiktaş	210	2,500	1,065	2,659	,047	3 1
	Fenerbahçe	265	2,653	1,017			
	Galatasaray	372	2,733	1,036			
	Trabzon	58	2,793	,843			
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	Beşiktaş	210	2,680	,662	5,580	,001	3,4 1
	Fenerbahçe	265	2,793	,551			
	Galatasaray	372	2,874	,691			
	Trabzon	58	2,982	,604			
Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	Beşiktaş	210	2,482	,720	4,626	,003	3 1,2,4
	Fenerbahçe	265	2,564	,747			
	Galatasaray	372	2,703	,883			
	Trabzon	58	2,448	,441			

According to Table 9, a significant difference was found in favor of Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, and Trabzonspor between the “Source of Violence” dimension and the “Violence Originating from Sports Media” sub-dimension among fans of Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, Trabzonspor, and Beşiktaş.

For the sub-dimension “Violence Originating from Referee Decisions,” a significant difference was observed between Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş, in favor of Fenerbahçe.

In the sub-dimension “Violence Originating from Coaches and Managers,” a significant difference was found between Galatasaray and Beşiktaş, in favor of Galatasaray.

For the sub-dimension “Violence Originating from Fans and Fan Leaders,” significant differences were found among Galatasaray, Trabzonspor, and Beşiktaş, in favor of Galatasaray and Trabzonspor.

In the sub-dimension “Violence Originating from Athlete Behaviors,” significant differences were observed in favor of Galatasaray between Galatasaray and Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Trabzonspor.

Table 10: Pearson Correlation Test

	Pearson Korelasyon	1	2	3	4	5
Violence from Sports Media	r	1	,321	,194	,256	,076
	p		,000	,000	,000	,022
	n		905	905	905	905
Violence Resulting from Referee Decisions	r	,321	1	,491	,220	,295
	p	,000		,000	,000	,000
	n	905	905	905	905	905
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	r	,194	,491	1	,465	,479
	p	,000	,000		,000	,000
	n	905	905	905	905	905
Violence from Fans and Cheerleaders	r	,256	,220	,465	1	,308
	p	,000	,000	,000		,000
	n	905	905	905	905	905

Violence Caused by Athlete Behavior	r	,076	,295	,479	,308	1
	p	,022	,000	,000	,000	
	n	905	905	905	905	905

According to the correlation test conducted in Table 10, a significant positive relationship was observed among the sub-dimensions of the scale. It can be stated that the elements considered as sources of violence have the potential to trigger one another.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study, which investigates football fans' views on the sources of violence, compares the findings with similar studies in the literature. It was found that 71.5% of the participants were male, 41.2% were in the 40–50 age group, 70.9% had a medium income level, 63.8% were university graduates, and 41.1% were supporters of Galatasaray. Therefore, it can be stated that the study sample mostly consisted of fans who are male, in the 40–50 age range, have moderate financial means, and hold a university degree. This suggests that more knowledgeable, experienced, and conscious fans participated in the study.

The average score regarding the source of violence among participants was 3.076. The highest perceived source of violence was referee decisions ($X = 3.674$), followed by sports media ($X = 3.456$). Similar findings were reported in the literature. Köknel (1996) and Simons & Taylor (1992) noted that referees' intentional or unintentional decisions and controversial moments can trigger violent acts in sports. In the study conducted by İlhan and Çimen (2011) on the role of sports media in promoting or escalating violence, it was reported that 76.2% of sports journalists believed media plays a role in encouraging and fueling violence. It was found that referee decisions and sports media were the primary sources of football-related violence. It was concluded that other factors may amplify the level of violence as they are influenced by these two elements.

The average scores for violence originating from sports media, referee decisions, fans and fan leaders, and athlete behavior were significantly higher among male participants. The participants perceived coaches and managers as less responsible for violence. Similar findings are supported in the literature. In the study conducted by Bilir & Sargün (2013) on Adanaspor and Adana Demirspor fans, and in the study titled "Violence in Football" by Arıkan (2017), it was concluded that male participants tend to be more prone to violence. Bozkurt (2023) also found that male fans are more inclined toward violent behaviors. While male fans may harbor more fanatic sentiments toward their teams, female participants, being generally more gentle, emotional, and sensitive, may channel their fanaticism differently.

Regarding the age variable, significant differences were observed between the 18–28, 29–39, and 40–50 age groups and the 51+ age group in terms of the overall dimension "Fans' Views on the Source of Violence in Football" and the sub-dimension "Violence Originating from Referee Decisions." Older participants reported lower averages in terms of referee- and media-related violence. Fans attributing violence to athlete behavior were generally in the 18–28 age group. Bozkurt (2023) also found significant relationships between age and sources of violence. Yıldız et al. (2007) concluded that respect for referees increases with age. Beşkat (2016) found that individuals under 18 had higher aggression and violence scores than those 18 and older. The literature supports the idea that as individuals age, they tend to adopt a calmer, more moderate lifestyle, which lowers their average tendencies toward aggression and violence.

Fans with middle and high income levels identified referee decisions and sports media as key sources of violence. Karataş et al. (2024) found that as monthly income increased, so did average violence levels, which is in parallel with the present study. However, other studies report different results. Öztürk (2019) found that as income decreased, violence and aggression scores among active athletes increased. Kılıçgil (2003) and Yönet et al. (2016) concluded that higher income levels corresponded with lower aggression levels. Differences in sample groups may account for these contrasting outcomes.

Based on the education level, it was concluded that lower education correlates with higher tendencies toward violence. Participants identified sports media, referee decisions, coaches and managers, fans and fan leaders, and athlete behavior as sources of violence. Education appears to influence fans' attitudes toward violence. Higher education may lead to more conscious, sportsmanlike, and humane behavior. Supporting studies include Şeker (2011), who found that violence and unwanted incidents decrease with higher education levels. Kılıçgil (2003) stated that low education levels increase violence-based responses among fans. Gür (2015) noted that most fans involved in violent incidents were high school graduates.

Regarding the team variable, fans of Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, and Trabzonspor scored higher in identifying the sources of violence, possibly due to the intense rivalry among these teams. On the other hand, Beşiktaş fans had lower scores related to the source of violence. This may be influenced by the club's historical slogan "Gentlemanly Beşiktaş."

It is also observed that coaches, sports media, referee decisions, fans, and athlete behavior interact with and influence each other, contributing significantly to the overall increase in violence.

IN CONCLUSION

- 1- Referee decisions and sports media are identified as the main factors increasing violence in football.
- 2- Male and younger fans appear to be more prone to violence.
- 3- As education level decreases, violence averages increase..

- 4- Values such as gentlemanliness and honesty have a positive influence on fans regarding violence.

Suggestions

- 1- Similar studies can be conducted on other stakeholders in sports.
- 2- The number of professional development seminars for referees can be increased.
- 3- Sports media personnel can receive training on fair play and ethical reporting.
- 4- Schools can introduce lessons on fair play, the harms of violence, and honest play to instill positive values.

SOURCE

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