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Male and female grassroots football players: Yellow, red cards and incidents. What's the difference?

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Introduction

Sport participation has been widely associated to health related behaviors such as diet, prevention of tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse, safe sexual activity and violence avoidance (Pate, Trost, Levin and Dowda, 2000). However, some authors (Jaenes, Cruz, Petrovic, Velázquez, Viñas and Reis, 2017) suggest that is not the participation in sport itself what prevents from unhealthy or violent behaviors. For instance, Forbes, Adams-Curtis, Pakalka and White (2006) revealed that men who had participated in aggressive high school sports, as compared with other men, engaged in more psychological and physical aggression, sexual coercion toward their partners and were more accepting of violence in general. Sterchele (2015) indicates that academic researchers have warned that it is not the inner characteristics of sport. It is important to remark on how values, principles, integrity, fair play and others initiatives are carried out, and a very important idea is to provide new values for childhood and youth in which physical activity and sports also serve to integrate socially-unequal groups.

Sports provide particularly rich contexts for personal growth. On one hand, there is a shared belief that sport contributes to the moral development of young athletes, because the foundations of sport reflect concern for fairness and well-being. On the other hand, it is argued that sportspersonship is worsening in youth sports, due to parents and coaches emphasis on winning at all cost and overemphasis on success, as it happens in professional sport. From a cognitive-behavioral point of view, is that the effects of sport participation in young athletes depend basically on the influences of the different socialization agents: parents, coaches, peers, referees, and officials (Boixadós, et al., 1998; Cruz, Boixadós, Valiente and Capdevila, 1995) and also a stress sources for basketball referees (Jaenes, Bohórquez, Caracuel and López, 2012).

In sports is easy to understand relationships between young people and adults, power and obedience, wishes and needs, dreams and fantasies about been a star in the future so, because of that, discrimination in many different forms are associated to shame or discomfort without the possibility of managing the adequate tools for asking for help, sometimes is difficult to fight against this problem.

Racism and violence, discrimination, match fixing and any other kinds of abuse challenge not only affect the fundamental values of human political and cultural integration but also sports, even young football players, coaches and referees are confronted with a number of threats and grassroots sports in general need to be

protected, such as violence, any kind of discrimination and intolerance, and the manipulation of results or situations like in professional football in Spain where spectators threw bananas to African or Brazilian black players and shouted gorilla sounds.

Folkesson, Nyberg, Archer and Norlander (2002) studied the football referees' experience of threat and aggression; Coulomb-Cabagno, Rascle and Souchon (2005) examine aggression displayed by players and referees' decisions about these behaviors as a function of the gender of the players in French soccer; the findings indicated a significant effect of gender on instrumental aggression and referees' decisions related to these behaviors. Male players displayed more instrumental aggressive acts than female players did. Montes and Márquez (2007) examined the influence of competition level on observed antisocial behaviors in football players, the finding confirm that playing experience may be an important determinant of antisocial behaviors.

Sport psychology professionals individually, as well as sport psychology societies collectively, are concerned about violent behaviours associated to sport participation. In that sense, the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) wrote a position stand relative to aggression and violence in sport (Tenenbaum, Stewart, Singer and Duda, 1997) where a set of recommendations for all sport participants was detailed. Among others, those recommendations included penalty revisions for management sport organizations, relativization of isolated violent incidents for sport journalists, and participation on sport violence and aggression prevention workshops for coaches, managers, athletes and officials.

In the last 15 years, multiple programs, many of them proposed by Spanish authors (Valiente, Boixadós, Torregrosa, Figueroa, Rodriguez and Cruz, 2001; Gimeno, Sáenz, Ariño and Aznar, 2007). These programs have proven its effectiveness to prevent antisocial behaviours in sport participants and have pushed the boundaries of the role for sport psychology practitioners.

Method

The aim of this study is to obtain more objective data on the impact of violence, discrimination, intolerance and other negative practices among young practitioners of grassroots football, examining referee reports after a game, so researches contacted with

the Andalusian Football Federation and used the intranet.rfaf.novanet.es/nfg/ system where the information is saved.

The sample includes two studies: male: 98 teams, 1568 players, 1225 matches, players: infantile 512 players (age 13-14 years old), cadet 512 players (age 15-16 years old), and juvenile 544 players (age 17-19 years old) and a second female sample including 136 female teams who played 1496 football matches: 56 infantile matches, 338 cadets, 132 juvenile, and 970 senior, players age mean 16.5 years old and standard deviation 5.22)

Results

In the male sample a significant difference was found in yellow cards ($t = 8.83$, $p < .05$) between infantile players (age 13-14 years old, $M = 17.48$) and cadet players (age 15-16 years old; $M = 33.84$), also significant differences were found ($t = 8.57$, $p < .05$) between infantile players (age 13-14 years old) and juvenile players (age 17-19 years old, $M = 36.92$).

Regarding red cards, significant differences were not found between two categories: Juvenile (17-19) and cadet (15-16); significant differences were found between two categories: infantile (age 13-14, $M = 13.96$) and cadet (15-16, $M = 15.20$), ($t = -2.463$, $p < .05$). Significant differences were found between two categories: infantile ($t = .960$) and juvenile ($t = 2$), ($t = -2.701$, $p < .05$).

Significant differences were found in female juvenile between players who play in different clubs ($F = 23.45$, $p > .05$) with a wide range of situations among counties. In Seville -between ages 13-14- observing 56 matches, incidents were not found; and the general tendency is to increase the amount of yellow cards, red cards to players, even to coaches.

Discussion

Results show a tendency, both in male and female, to increase with age the number of incidents: cards, yellow or red, even aggressions between players and players and others. Montes and Márquez (2007) found the same tendency between football players. Probably age, which is related with hormonal changes, competitiveness, etc. the amount of incidents and aggressions increase.

However, the number of registered behaviors is not high enough or representative enough with respect to the large volume of matches analyzed, similar to the findings of the study by Gimeno, Sáenz, Ariño and Aznar (2007). Not for this reason we can hide or mask the high cost and great negative impact that this type of behavior has on the development of those who practice some kind of sport.

This study seems to show that in the case of women's football categories the number of incidents is not statistically significant, but seems to suggest that the impact of this type of aggression is better known for its media effect and not so much for the number of times it happens. The social impact of sport is such that it has been able to generate its own specialized communication, sports communication.

Keywords: Grassroots sports, Incidents, Yellow cards, Red cards, Fair-play.

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