AGGRESSION IN YOUTH ATHLETS

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Abstract
Aggression is an integral part of contemporary sports. Aggressive players who intentionally cause injury to their opponents are common in many sports. The aggressive tendencies in sports area are socially justified because they lead to high level performance in sport competition. The study examines competitive aggression and censive anger in football, rugby and field hockey athletes. Results indicated that the difference between anger and aggression in all three groups’ sports players is significant. The highest values are reached by the group of football players. This is a result of the big popularity of the sport, the commercialization and the significance of public’s behavior which predispose opponent’s. There is no relation between factors as worries, somatization and social anxiety with sport aggression and anger. The aggressive tendencies in sports area are socially justified because they lead to high level performance in sport. In our opinion more important is that the children know how to control and to overcome the anger and the aggressive attitudes out of the sport areas which is the basic task of sport pedagogue.

Keywords: anger and aggressiveness in sports, anxiety, worries, somatization, social anxiety, Questionnaire, analysis of variance

INTRODUCTION
Aggression can be defined as any interpersonal behavior intended to cause physical harm or mental distress. Aggressive players who intentionally cause an injury to their opponents are common in many sports, particularly in collision sports such as Rugby (Maxwell, Visek, 2009). The aggressive attitude towards the opponent and sport hooliganism are object of many social and psychological researches. Representatives of different scientific approaches consider the sport aggressiveness as “ritualized” aggression, a method for sublimation, result of frustration, opportunity for catharsis or special feature of personality, formed by the influence of sport environment. (Kutergin, Ryabushenko, & Gorbotenko, (Кутергин, Рябушенко & Горбатенко, 2010). According to the competitive essence we could consider that sport is already aggressive because during the competition athletes strive to repress the opponent’s desire for victory. It is proved that the aggressiveness of the athletes increases in contact sports (Gardner & Janelle 2002; Silva, 1983; Tucker & Parks, 2001, Gencheva, (Генчева), 2013).

On the other hand sport activity is subordinated by exact, strictly regulated universal rules. It is controlled and each aggressive act exceeding the norms is penalized. The aggressive attitude in some sport disciplines which is in the norms helps achieving the goal. To some extent the aggressiveness in many sports is necessary and it is tolerated. Multitude researches define the youth engaged in sport have better habits for self-regulation towards the aggressiveness and expressed incentive type in young persons not engaged with sports. A research (Slavcheva, Fenerova, & Georgiev, (Славчева, Фенерова, Георгиев), 2008) proves that the aggression in rugby is a specific behavioral form which is determined by the aggressive attitudes in the wide social environment. The presence or the absence of aggressive attitude does not imply the presence or the absence of such in sport.

The results in a study of Gumusdag (2013) demonstrated that Somatic Anxiety was the best significant predictor of Passive Aggression and Assertiveness.

Regarding the age factor the investigations show that in definite sport population (e.g. 10-14 year old children, adolescence, youths and adults) increasing the age the aggression grows (Stephens, 2004.). However, other researches prove that there is no relation between the age and the aggressiveness (Conroy, Silvia, Newcomer, Walker, & Johnson, 2001). This contradiction in sport psychology enforces to continue all scientific investigations in this area.

In this study we wanted to measure aggression and anger in sport competition in young athletes engaged
with collective sports and their correlation with some personal characteristics as worries, somatization and social anxiety.

METHODS

The research included 47 boys. The investigated individuals are 13-18 years old. They are studying in 6-12 different sport schools. The bigger group is the group of 17-18 years old boys, respectively 20,5% and 23%, followed by the group aged 16 years – 19,2%. The 15 years old boys are 17,9%, the 14 years old – 11,5% and the smallest group is the group of boys whose age is 13 and 12 years old, respectively 1,3% and 6,4%. The average age of all participants is 15,96 years. 12 of the children are training rugby, 13 – football and 22 – field hockey.

Competitive Aggressiveness and Anger Scale - CAAS (Maxwell & Moores, 1983) offer only an incomplete understanding and measurement of anger and aggressiveness in sports. Among other things, the measure ignores a whole range of frequently occurring legal, sanctioned aggressive and violent behavior in sports. In addition, it ignores sources of motivation beyond anger which underpin other types of aggressive and violent behavior in sports (Kerr, 2008).

In relation to this it was developed a special questionnaire: measuring worries, somatic symptoms and social anxiety (Kalchev (Калчев), 2010, 2012). Three items screening social anxiety are added in the questionnaire. Additionally is added the Competitive Aggressiveness and Anger Scale – CAAS (Maxwell & Moores, 1983, according to Visek, Maxwell, Watson, Hurst, 2010). The questionnaire is self-decrypted type. The respondent answers with the help of 5-point Likert scale – “never” “rarely”, “sometimes”, and “always”. The scale contains 12 items. Extracted factors: aggressiveness – 6 items and anger – 6 items.

The authors of the scale found positive correlation between CASS and the five subscales in the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ; Buss & Perry, 1992); Visek, Maxwell, Watson, & Hurst, 2010).

Coaches and parents are preliminary acquainted with the aim of the research. Most of the participants were interested to fill the questionnaire. The rugby players were examined first, then football players, and at the end hockey players. Deliberately we choose collective sports with physical combat.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is the internal consistence of each group of examined factors by Cronbach’s alpha. Worries - α=0,87; Somatization - α= 0,84; Social anxiety - α=0,70; Competitive Aggressiveness - α=0,82; Competitive anger - α=0,85 All scales are consistent i.e. the questionnaires are with high reliability.

We examined the correlation between aggression and anger in sport with the other three factors. (Table 1).

There is no relation between factors as worries, somatization and social anxiety with sport aggression and anger.

Coming out on sport field or in front of spectaculars, the athletes know that they are the main “actors”. The high anxiety expressed by somatic manifestations, worries and social anxiety could have negative effect on the psychological processes in young athletes and the productive execution of sport activities such as anger and aggression.

However in our research there is no significant relation between the measured level of anxiety and aggression and anger in sport competition.

Examining the relations between aggression and anger in sport on Table 1 we find that this relation is statistic reliable.

The difference shows that the two factors give different aspects to the general construct “Aggression” so they should be considered separately.

The anxieties are basic component of generalized anxiety as personal characteristic and they are connected with predicting possible danger. The process repeats many times. In the age of adolescence the anxiety is a cognitive process of foresight which includes repeatable thoughts for future results and their negative consequences when there is no actual threat (Kalchev (Калчев), 2012). Usually the verbal aggression in sport is accompanied by physical aggression. During the sport competition the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Competitive anger</th>
<th>Competitive Aggressiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worries</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. 190</td>
<td>Sig. 562</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatization</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. .157</td>
<td>Sig. .910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social anxiety</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>-.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. .790</td>
<td>Sig. .236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive anger</td>
<td>Sig. 1</td>
<td>.662(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Aggressiveness</td>
<td>.662(**)</td>
<td>Sig. 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
aggression is expressed by abuses, offends, threats, etc. Verbal and physical aggressions are accompanied by eloquent paralinguistic means of expression – mimics and gestures which intend to irritate the opponent.

Often the physical aggression in sport consists in tripping, clashing, kicking or other means for physical impediment.

Table 2 show the mean values of the factor “Anger and aggression” in sport competition of the three groups of youth athletes.

The highest values are reached by the group of football players. This is result of the big popularity of the sport, the commercialization and the significance of public’s behavior which predispose opponent’s. The results of rugby players are unacceptable for us. The environment of this sport is aggressive and the rugby is socially accepted as one of most aggressive sports where the physical violence is expected and it is encouraged by coaches and fans. The results could be caused by the small statistical sample and the lower motivation of the players concerning the lack of popularity of the sport in Bulgaria.

The analysis of Variance (Tabl. 3) presents that the difference between anger (F=13,025, p=0.000) and aggression (F=15,147, p=0.000) in all three groups sports players is significant.

The Dispersion analysis presents that F value is 6,504 and it is statistically significant (p=0,003), which means that the three mean values of different sports - a factor for anxiety, are not equal.

After the factor variances analysis of the internalized factors “somatization”, “uneasiness” and “social anxiety” in boys training rugby, football and field hockey we found out that the three indexes had close mean values and the differences were not significant.

On Table 4 are compared the mean values of the “Worries” and the normal values for the age. It is obvious that there is difference only in the group of rugby players, who demonstrate lower level of this variable than football and field hockey players. Reasons for this are lower popularity of the sport in Bulgaria and the absence of spectators. The other two sports are in the norms for the age but there is a tendency for higher levels in the field hockey players.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance of „Somatization”, „Worries” and „Social anxiety”, „Competitive anger”, „Competitive Aggressiveness”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worries</td>
<td>856,747</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>428,374</td>
<td>6,504</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatization</td>
<td>530,611</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>265,305</td>
<td>3,247</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social anxiety</td>
<td>20,876</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,438</td>
<td>1,487</td>
<td>.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive anger</td>
<td>615,504</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>307,752</td>
<td>13,025</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Aggressiveness</td>
<td>740,217</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>370,109</td>
<td>15,147</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Descriptive characteristics for the variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42,0807</td>
<td>4,94048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48,5522</td>
<td>9,74726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Hockey</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>53,2030</td>
<td>9,40373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49,0769</td>
<td>9,59068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparison of the factor „Somatization” in the three sports presents that there is difference in the values between rugby and football players and the field hockey players. The boys who train field hockey have higher level of somatic manifestations, which is in
relation with the higher level of anxiety compared with the norms. This anxiety usually could cause palpation, blush, trembling, panic attacks, etc. The differences are statistic insignificant.

The data on Table 3 shows the lack of difference of the factor „Social anxiety” between the three groups of boys engaged with sports as rugby, football and field hockey - $F=1.487$

In accordance to Frustration Theory the aggressiveness is a consequence of discrepancy between subjective expectations and the objective reality, which could cause the impossibility to achieve the desired goal. The frustration produces raised anxiety. In youth athletes the anxieties are connected with foresights and repeating thoughts for the future success of the forthcoming competition. In our research the values of anxiety are close to the norms of the age. This is in result of the bigger variation in the age of this subgroup and the fact that the athletes engaged with individual sports have higher responsibility towards the achieved results whereas the responsibility in collective sports could be allocated between the teammates, especially when the athletes do not have enough competitive experience which is necessary for the single combats. The single combats require variation and improvisation accordingly to the changing parameters of the situation, coordination of the efforts for reaching the mutual goal.

It is impossible to compare worries, somatic manifestations and the social anxiety with norm values of youth in Bulgaria. The social anxiety is connected with great fear of negative assessment or failure, fear of humiliation or rejection. This fear appears when there are negative thoughts as it is mentioned above. The athletes could express this fear in pre-start stress of the competition caused by the insufficient appreciation of teammates, coach, friends and fans.

But the real problem is how the athletes’ anxiety causes aggressiveness during the completion. The internalize problems in the development expressed by worries, social anxiety and somatic manifestations have insignificant relations with the aggression because of the fear absence of public appearance in sport because it is a show and it is performed in front of spectaculars. This means that the reason for aggressiveness and anger during the completion is the anxiety of youth athletes in all three collective sports.

The outbursts of anger and aggression in sport are caused by frustration situation during the match. The circumstances (especially in football) as not judging a penalty to the opponent or the opponent team, fouls or unjustly judged penalty, public’s unsportsmanlike conduct supporting the opponent’s team could add additional excitement to the young players. The overexcitement and the anger of young athletes often grow to physical or verbal aggression with opponent’s player or the referee. On the other hand the youths observe the behavior of their soccer idols and role models and internalize their actions. They learn that aggressiveness could be useful for achieving the win.

CONCLUSION
The Competitive Aggressiveness and Anger Scale (CAAS) appears to be a useful measure of athletic anger and aggressiveness. Its ability to discriminate aggressive from non-aggressive athletes should prove useful for future research concerning aggressive behaviour in competitive athletes. Our study appeared serious questions for reflection. The aggressive tendencies in some sports and some sporting situations are a legitimate part of the game, because they lead to high level performance in sport competition, but which is the most important indicator for the accumulation of anger and aggression against the opponent’s players, the referee and the spectaculars during the competition? Whether this indicator is the strong frustration or the lack of forming an attitude for restraining aggressiveness and skills for self-control and overcoming their own emotions or the internalization of role models? In our study there is not the relation between some personal characteristics and aggressive behavior. In our opinion more important is that the children know how to control and to overcome the anger and the aggressive attitudes out of the sport areas which is the basic task of sport pedagogy.

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