

## SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM, CONTROVERSY

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### HOOLIGANISM AS A FORM OF SOCIAL ANOMIE

#### Abstract

*This paper is examining the issue of sport club supporters' hooliganism as a form of violence which represents a broader problem in social context. The explanation of the said problem was derived from a consideration of psychological and sociological causes of dysfunctional and deviant incidents with a focus on hooliganism. The text contains a discrete description of a theory of social anomie which asserts a significance of collective values and moral norms for this subject matter due to social anomie's occurrence as a disorder of regulatory functions of society, values and norms, and the ensuing gap between social aims and the possibility of achieving them in given circumstances, and hence it(the anomie) being a primary source of hooliganism.*

**Key words:** *hooliganism, anomie, society, deviancy, violence*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Hooliganism denotes reckless, useless, aimless action coinciding with general expression of contempt towards individuals or the society as a whole, haughty behaviour which grossly undermines the public order and expresses an obvious scorn for the society (Koković, 2010). Evidently, this term foremost relates to violent behaviour of sport club supporters, and hence this paper will deal with hooliganism as a sport phenomenon.

Before commencing an in-depth analysis of the problem of hooliganism, we will first take a look at Durkheim' theory of anomie, since his insistence on the importance of collective values and moral norms for the society is essential for this problem. According to Durkheim, society is of superior importance than an individual and possesses certain functional requirements, the most important of those being the need for social order, which is a result of the duality of human nature: one part of it is selfish and egotistical (people follow their own interests which further aggravates their integration into society), the second part is the capacity to

believe in moral values. The society must utilize the second part of human nature if it is to realize social life (Durkheim, 1972).

Durkheim singles out *collective representations and ideas* and *moral codes* (which are acquired through the process of socialization) as prerequisites of normal social life. Anomie (literally translated as “lawlessness”) does indeed represent a situation in which individuals do not know what is expected from them and are left on their own means, without a clear and safe foothold. It represents a social disintegration of common values, codes, social institutions and the feeling of common social interest. If society does not properly satisfy the needs of individuals and groups, and if it does not adequately reward or reprimand them, deviant acts by the members of society will follow as a result.

Durkheim claims (Durkheim, 1972) that in contemporary societies there ensues a gradual dissipation of traditional norms and values which do not get replaced by new ones, and further anomie arises when there are no clear norms and criteria which determine the behaviour of people within the society, thus making people feel disoriented which can then bring about deviant behaviour and therefore hooliganism. So, Durkheim believes that weakening of influence of social norms explains social deviancies. It is such conditions that the feelings of aimlessness, insecurity, disorganization come about which then leads to anarchy and disabling of social adaptation.

Anomie denotes a disorder of regulatory functions of society, values and codes, and in those circumstances a gap arises between social goals and the ability of their fulfillment under given circumstances. It is important to point out the distinction Durkheim makes between the *pathological* and the *normal*. He defines the “normal” as the typical, the usual, the frequent and the average as manifested in a given type of society at a certain period of time. Hence, Durkheim regards criminality as normal as long as it takes places within the boundaries of a certain society's average. The state of anomie is related to massive forms of expression of people's deviant behaviour. Since the disorderedness of regulatory functions of society, values and norms, is an expression of anomie of a society, individuals and groups start behaving without any responsibility and obligations towards certain values and norms.

According to Durkheim (Durkheim, 1972), some of the social circumstances that cause deviancy would be the following:

- *enervation of the collective awareness and social cohesion;*
- *ill functioning of social institutions or their malfunctioning;*
- *failure of individuals in the attempt of realizing their function in social work distribution;*
- *disorder of social integration, regulation and control.*

Social deviations can best be prevented, as Durkheim contends, with *mechanisms of social control*, and we can only add that it is pivotal for society to ensure normal preconditions for people's lives, their existence, their safety and also to enable an adoption of an appropriate system of norms and values.

The interesting thing about Durkheim's theory of deviancy is that it, in his own opinion, serves two important functions:

1. Deviancy has an adaptive function, because it brings new challenges, innovations, changes; “*Crime is an integral part of all healthy societies.*”

2. Deviancy preserves the boundaries between good and bad behaviour. A criminal occurrence may provoke reactions of the entire collective which leads to a greater communal solidarity and crystallization of social norms.

Seeing that Durkheim's theory shifts the focus from an individual to social strengths as possible causes of deviant events, it is important for explaining the phenomenon of hooliganism.

The matter of hooliganism is usually associated with football (soccer), but other sports exhibit the problem as well. As a form of violence, hooliganism can be defined as a need for inflicting unjustified damage on others, and it manifests in the form of physical harming, causing of material damage, intimidation, denigration.

Violent behaviour at sport events has become a common, everyday thing. Newspaper headlines, TV news, websites are teeming with information about violent behaviour of sport fans such as verbal abuse, fights at sport games, scheduling skirmishes after a match, and even murders. Such violent behaviour of sport club fans is labeled *hooliganism*. Other determiners of hooliganism include vulgar language in public places, disparaging remarks, annoyance and other similar acts that disturb the public order and the peace of residents – antisocial behaviour in public which can trigger a state of alarm (Koković, 2010). There are numerous examples of deviancy theories in literature, with *deviancy* meaning any acting or behaviour that is an aberration or a violation of values and norms generally accepted by a society, and which provoke negative reactions (Bošković, 2001). So, any kind of deviation from given values, social norms and patterns of behaviour is considered deviant. Anthony Giddens (2007) defines deviancy (transgression) as unrecognizing of a given set of norms accepted by a considerable number of people in a society. *Social deviancy* is a sort of individual and group behaviour which results in socially destructive, pathological and delinquent actions, which provokes a social reaction. Frequently deviancy originates from a social situation, disorganization, imbalance and tension of requests imposed on individuals. Our stance is that deviant behaviour leads to a structural tension, a lack of moral and normative regulation within society, i.e. social disorganization. When defining hooliganism as a deviant phenomenon, we must first explain some terms of violence and aggression and also make a clear distinction between them. According to Simeunović (1989), *aggression* is in the category of *motivation* and *incentive*, whereas *violence* falls into the category of *behaviour*. Although any violence represents a form of aggression, aggression itself does not have to be negative as long as it remains adequately channeled, but violence is always of a destructive character. Sport club supporters' hooliganism is a negative way of expressing aggression.

The terms violence and aggression are oftentimes used synonymously, although there is a difference in motivation that is directed at harming others as an aspect of aggression. Violence denotes harming that is often independent of intention. Olveus claims (1999), single instances of physical assault should be sorted as violence, repeated events of psychological and sociological abuse should be considered bullying, and unrepeated forms of psychological and sociological violence and absence of power imbalance could be considered aggressive

behaviour. Violence can be defined as any form of behaviour directed at inflicting damage or harm of another living being without a motive for avoiding such an act (Popadić, 2009).

**Aggression** is not only a result of predilection of urges, nor are we predispositioned for it on a biological basis – we must also take social context into account as a determiner of aggression and we can define it as an *urge for cruelty, tendency for inflicting pain or destroying an object perceived as hostile* (Koković, 2010).

According to Fromm (1980), aggression designates all *acts which cause intend causing harm to another person*. Fromm made a distinction between *benign aggression* (as a defensive and reactive one which ensues as a consequence of one's vital interests being endangered) and *malign aggression* (as a tendency towards destruction exclusive to humans, towards absolute power and enjoying the aggressive act itself). Malign aggression stems from an interaction of social states and human existential needs, and specifically this type of aggression is related to hooliganism. Therefore, human immanent aggression possesses a vital function and is unrelated to subjective animosity, but destructive aggression is linked to violence and destructive tendencies. Social factors often cause a violent behaviour that can manifest itself as hooliganism. Fromm believes that contemporary civilization, oriented towards the material values and necrophilia (i.e. worshiping of inanimate objects) is bound to produce violence and destruction as mechanisms for escaping the freedom: authoritarianism, destructivism and conformism (Fromm, 1973).

Football supporters' associations are favorable for expression of aggressive behaviour of individuals and as such are often used as instruments for achieving different goals that are unrelated to sport – among them opposition to the social system and its institutions. Social disorganization encourages aggressive behavior of hooligans.

The sense of belonging to a sport club supporters' association is very important to its members because it represents a kind of alternative reality, i.e. a subculture in which the values of conformist society are not valid, and every member has a chance to climb the ladder of social ranks within the group (Kovač, 2005).

Certain sources state that the term **hooligan** originated from the name of an Irish family, specifically from a certain Patrick Hooligan who was a criminal sentenced to death. The expression was used to denote a rover or a bum, but today hooliganism represents a form of violence linked to sport club supporters, exclusively male ones. However, we should stress that *not all sport fans are hooligans*, although all hooligans are sport fans. The phrase sport club fans refers to all sympathizers and supporters of a certain sport club, that is, individuals who root for their respective national teams. Sport fan associations include certain rituals: **verbal expression** (singing or chanting), **visual expression** (printed support signs, banners, scarfs, pyrotechnics) **expression of physical and bodily violence** (characteristic of hooligans).

The phenomenon of organized sport club support appeared first in 60's England and subsequently spread to other countries of Western Europe, and eventually Yugoslavia. It should be mentioned two schools of sport club supporting emerged in Europe: the Italian (comprises incessant anthem and song performing, doing choreography, standing up for the entire duration of the game, pronounced use of visual effects...) and the English one (more extreme, with accompanying unrest and fighting). At the time Yugoslavia was a socialistic

country, and both the affluent and the indigent attended the games, with no intent on lollygagging and thus the stadiums resembled theaters, where one could go without fearing violent incidents. By the end of the 60's and the early 70's a crisis began to take hold of the contemporaneous Yugoslavia (the great social stratification, brain-drain, emigration of sportists). The fervor on the stadiums started heating up, but the police force of the 70's prevented any real incidents. Following the death of president Tito in 1980 and further signs of a looming economic crisis, a gateway for extremist club support appeared - a situation that would carry on to the present.

The 80's saw the formation of the core group of supporters' associations. In order for a supporters' association to be taken seriously it must be well organized, having numerous members and ready to make an incident. At that time hooliganism intensified, and the violence from stadiums spread to the streets, with underage individuals taking part in hooliganism. The most notable associations in that regard (which therefore had the most violent fans) in Yugoslavia were: *Delije* (supporting Red Star FC, with its subgroups branching off gradually, ones like Ultra Boys, Belgrade Boys, Ultras, Red Devils...), *Grobari* (supporting FK Partizan, subgroups include: Alkatraz, Zabranjeni, Ludaci – Padinska Skela, Anti-Romi, South Family, Head Hunters, Irricucibili – NBG, Shadows, Extreme Boys, Brain Damage...), *Manijaci* (FK Željo), *Horde Zla* (FK Sarajevo), *Bad Blue Boys* (Dinamo Zagreb), *Torcida* (Hajduk Split).

Until the 90's regional club supporting was of a more benign character, with conflicts taking place mostly between the rival clubs, but at that point hooliganism rises in its truest meaning. The period was characterized by numerous crises and tensions and a search for a new identity. This situation spread to sport events, which further led to the escalation of nationalism in Socialistic Yugoslavia. In 1990, at a World Cup game between Yugoslavia and the Netherlands 40 000 fans started whistling at Yugoslavian national anthem. The violence of hooligans did not diminish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but conversely grows in its extremism, spreading in parallel with the global economic crisis, numerous wars, increase in nationalism and religious intolerance.

Hooliganism occurs most often at football stadiums, although it appears in some other sports as well (for example, in 2006 there was an incident at a game between Red Star and Partizan, and the same thing happened again in 2015). Not even tennis is hooliganism-free: Serbian and Croatian fans were removed from a 2007 Australian Open match because of fighting. The origin of hooliganism in football is linked to the 1960's Great Britain, namely to the TV broadcast of a match between Tottenham and Sunderland which showed scenes of violence, vandalism and provocation aimed at police officers. The Great Britain was also the first country to introduce penalties for violent behaviour of club supporters.

Henceforth we will examine the effect of... Inherent, biological and psychological factors can influence a person's predisposition for expressing aggression and violence through hooliganism, but the state of chaos caused by social disorganization also has a part in the violent behaviour of sport club supporters' associations (abbreviated as SCSAs). The problem of hooliganism is not confined solely to stadiums or sport arenas but also stretches into the society itself.

A notion similar to hooliganism is **vandalism** – causeless propensity for destruction. “Vandalism primarily refers to *wild, unmotivated destruction or damaging of physical property without any benefit to anyone and least of all to the perpetrator*” (Koković, 2000: 145), but hooliganism includes violence towards people as well. Unlike vandalism, hooliganism is always a premeditated and organized violence, with the common characteristic for the two being a usually irrational utilization of violence.

“**Hooliganism** comprises damaging, insulting, harming the lives and health of the rival team supporters, rival team players, referees, the police and even of the team the hooligan supports, because of discontent with game result, and furthermore violating and disturbing the public peace and order and destruction of public materials and goods”(Vejnović, 2011: 22). Hooligans adhere to the unwritten rule: if the club loses, the supporters' association must not. Important traits in the process are *intention* and *destructivity*. Furthermore, one should distinguish club supporters' associations and hooligan groups. “**Club supporters' associations** are structured, steadfast, comprised of individuals who share common goals, system of values, awareness of group belonging, codes, established roles of members, routines, and violence is not one of their fundamental characteristics” (Kuljić, Koković, 2009: 338). For hooligans, club supporting ceases to be the primary occupation and they start attending games only to wreak havoc and spread hate speech. Hooligans are a special kind of audience who, motivated by sport affairs, use violence as their modus operandi.

Manifestations of hooliganism would include: swearing, offensive remarks, disturbance of public order and threat to citizens' safety, antisocial behaviour in public, fighting among club fans, opposition to authorities. One of the key features of hooligans is exhibition of violence, where violence denotes any form committed or repeated verbal or non-verbal behaviour that results in concrete or potential endangerment of certain person's or group's health – the destructive behaviour of hooligans often includes infliction of light or severe physical injuries, which can eventually result in victim's death”(Tramošljanin, Latinović, 2011: 69). **Violence in sports** is a chronological deviation which exhibits a pronounced absence of basic social norms in sport.

The following are instances of social determiners of hooliganism: difficult economic situation and state of chaos in a society, wars, malfunction of social institutions, disregard of laws and inadequate punishments, i.e. weakening of social control mechanisms; lack of individual's integration in society due to a loss of familial and social cohesion, improper socialization. The influence of the said factors induces dissatisfaction and many club fans happen to perceive stadiums as their discontent valves or a means to catharsis.

A perfect example of a country where anomie has effected an increasing spread of hooliganism is Poland. Polish hooliganism escalated after the eclipse of communism in 1989 and during the economic crisis that befell the entire Eastern Bloc. Due to unemployment, economic crisis and indigence Polish youth started gradually turning to hooliganism in sport. Young boys who could not prove themselves in school or on their jobs saw in stadiums a place where one could shake off anger and frustration.

Another good example is the Arabian region which in 2011 experienced the so-called “Arab spring” which saw an ousting of decades long regimes and a new wave of democracy. Frustrated masses first started uprising in Egypt, and subsequently the discontent started emerging in other countries of the Middle East. In Egypt the regime of Hosni Mubarak was overthrown, and the rule was taken over by Head Council of Armed Forces, with the majority of population opposing the act. Everyone was hoping for democracy, but all they got was an authoritarian regime in a different shape. The first parliamentary elections were won by “Muslim Brotherhood”, which marked a return of pro-islamistic forces. Social-political tensions and the infighting for power showed in 2012, after a football match in Port Said between FC “Al Masri” (adherents of Mubarak) and FC “Al Ahli” (participants of Mubarak's

overthrow). The skirmish between the fans at the aforementioned match counts as one of the greatest tragedies at sport events. FC Al Masri had won and thus the rival club's fans got infuriated. Hooligan fans rushed into the field and started fighting each other. At least 74 persons were killed and more than 1000 were injured. The Supreme Court subsequently effectively suspended FC Al Masri for 2 years and banned matches on Port Said stadium for 3 years. The decision additionally angered hooligans, in an already tumultuous situation. Hooligans then went out into the streets and clashed with the police. A thirteen-year-old boy died in the mayhem. This year 21 individuals were sentenced to death by the Egyptian court because of those events. The sentencing occurred at a very sensitive moment, when the country was shaken with demonstrations regarding the second anniversary of the uprising against Mubarak's regime. Families of the convicted conflicted with the police and attempted to take over the prison facility which held the convicts. Hence the causes of this hooliganistic behavior can be attributed to the frustration due to social tensions which brought about a low life standard and desperation of youth.

## 2. CONCLUSION

In review of the above-written we can conclude the following postulations about social anomia, which also affect incidence and spread of hooliganism:

- **Unfavorable economic conditions** are significant causes of deviant behaviour, and thus hooliganism. Life in frustration that club supporters from crisis ridden countries lead effects the ever-growing frequency of violence. Economic crisis (mass indigence, wide gaps in social stratification, unemployment, low income, general poverty) logically result in in social anomie.
- A society exhibiting anomie affects **family life** via boomerang effect. What ensues are familial crises, disorder of family relations, weakened pedagogical and cohesive functions of family; various forms of deviant behavior are common as well: alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, beggardom, theft, banditry, hooliganism. In that situation love towards the club represents a substitute for the lack of familial love and harmony.
- An anomic society hinders progress, self-realization, purpose, affirmation. People lacking a vision of future find a sense of purpose in hooliganism. Through violence they acquire a status that substitutes the one they could not attain in a disorganized society, providing them with a recognizable **identity**. The pronounced belongingness gives hooligans a sense of power and unison and plays a great role in the construction of their identity. Making a scandal or an incident is equated with prominence, publicity and being talked about.
- The society works through social institutions and organizations. Institutions prescribe and sanction the behavior and goals of people in an organized society, simultaneously imparting certain norms and values. It is social disorganization that makes **institutions** become powerless and cease being a mechanism of control of human

behaviour and actions. In such a situation they are unable to direct individual interests towards expected desirable behaviour. Individuals do not shun violence in a state of no system of values and norms or adequate *reproach*. Often hooligans' violence represents a rebellion against certain institutions or general dissatisfaction with social issues. Hence more frequent attacks on the police and judges by hooligans. By attacking the police hooligans attack the the state itself, one they hold responsible for their unsatisfactory social status. It is important to note that every sport club supporters' association acts with principles of loyalty and obedience. Treason is treated harshly and a proof of loyalty is obtained through violence against other club's fans with a special regard for conflict with the police.

- A considerable amount of research suggests a relation between **inadequate socialization** and hooliganism. In order for a man to realize his role as a social being, he/she must adopt a certain system of values and norms in the process of socialization. The type and intensity of aggressive behaviour largely depends on upbringing and on environment's reaction to expressed aggression, and since social disarray affects all aspects of society, it goes on to affect family as the main functional unit of society, which(family) itself is the main agent of socialization. An anomie closely related to social disarray brings about dissipation of family harmony. Inadequate socialization is frequently a fruit of such a state and can result in aggressive behaviour of anti-social individuals due to emotional insecurity and a sense of rejectedness.



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