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Social perceptions of the management and control of 'Football fan violence'

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the prevalent social perceptions and representations of violent incidents in football grounds as well as of the measures taken to prevent them. The arguments of the study are supported both by secondary sources and research findings that include: a) the views voiced by part of the sports press regarding the stricter enforcement of repressive measures and b) the parliamentary debate over the latest relevant bill (2022). The key working hypothesis focuses on the fact that, according to the dominant public discourse, stricter and stricter measures need to be taken. This perspective lends support to the view that stricter repressive measures may “eliminate sports violence”. The participants usually designate violent incidents as “exceptional”, “transient” episodes that occur at the margins of “normal” life. In this context, the implementation of tighter sanctions is perceived as capable of eliminating “fan violence”. The study concludes that the public debate on violence should not be restrict itself in the taking of immediate measures to combat a “unexpected”, “threatening” phenomenon. Rather, it should focus on the exploration of the deeper social, cultural, economic factors and the dominant value system that contribute to the production of violence and its resilience in multiple manifestations of social life.

Key words: “fan violence”, perceptions, representations, sanctions, prevention, fan communities, identity.

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