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The comparison of the aggression of young and adult athletes in individual or team sports

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to study and compare aggression between the male and female, young and adult athletes competing in four different sports including volleyball, football, judo, and wushu. The members of the sample taken from the statistic population have received the aggression questionnaire of Bredemeier, in which three subscales of aggression including instrumental, hostile, and general have been introduced. They had to answer 30 questions with a 4-point scale to compare aggression of male and female athletes in two age group of young and adult. The reliability of the questionnaire has been equal to 0.86 based on Cronbach's alpha. After describing data statistically, the results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) at the alpha level of 0.05 percent show that there is a significant difference between the aggressive behavior of the young athletes and that of adult athletes, in such a form that the young athletes, whether male or female, have been more aggressive that adult athletes did. The comparison of the aggressive behaviors of male and female athletes shows that male athletes are more aggressive than female athletes are. However, there is no difference between the aggression exhibited by both male and female adult athletes.

Key words: Aggression, Individual Sports, Team sports, Athletes, Sport psychology

INTRODUCTION

Sport psychology is the science of human's behavior during sport trainings and competitions, and its objective is to improve the performance of athletes in competitions. Aggression as the representation of angry and hostile behavior is a factor effective in the performance of athletes. According to Kaufman (1970), aggression is emotional anger accompanied with physiologic arousal with the intention to injure and cause damage to the other individual. Aggression is exhibited by athletes in different forms including physical aggression, abusiveness, or even encroach other's rights [7]. The results of the researches show that there are different factors including sensitivity of competition, performance of referees, provocation constituted by audience, personality traits of athletes, and gender, that are effective in aggressive behavior. The results of a research conducted by Chris [1] confirm the effectiveness of cultural factors in aggressive behaviors of professional ice hockey athletes. Silva suggests that an aggressive act in sport is intentional and observable, committed with the intent to injure, and personal. Aggression in sport is classified into instrumental, hostile, and general aggression. Instrumental aggression is done to attain unaggressive objectives, e.g. when an athlete fouls to score a goal. In contrast, hostile aggression is carried out by an athlete who

intends to injure another person. Kemler [2] studied the effects of the different sports on the aggressive behavior of athletes. For this purpose, he conducted a study to compare two types of instrumental and reactive aggressions in contact and noncontact sports. The results of this study show that male athletes in contact sports express lower instrumental aggression, and higher reactive aggression than female athletes do in noncontact sports. The results of this research also show that competition increases aggressive behaviors in all tests. Silva argues that aggression undermines athletic performance because aggressive athlete shifts his/her focus to the aggressive target against the rival and this shift causes an interruption in the competition [4]. The results of the studies show that aggression has negative effects on the performance of athletes, and their abilities are lost after reacting aggressively. Aggressive behavior is affected by different factors attributed to the personal differences including gender of the athletes. According to these studies, the athletes with the same or higher status than their opponent begin to exhibit aggressive behavior unilaterally [5]. Aggressive athletes have not been sufficiently studied using scientific methods. Defining aggression continues to be a primary methodological problem. Research has limited an informed discussion of this subject. Research has focused too much on the negative aspects of aggression and pessimistic behavior cause that young people react often defensively, and in case no attention is paid to such a behavior, it may pose obstacle to the development of their abilities and capacities and lead to a disorder in their social understanding and socialization [3, 6]. This research aims to study the variable age as a probable factor effective in aggression considering the different natures of sports, observe it as a factor that paves that way for aggression in athletes, and finally compare the aggressive behavior of the young and adult athletes in team and individual sports.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research, which is an ex post facto one in terms of the time of data, uses causal – comparative method and collects data by fieldwork. The statistic population of the research includes all young (13 to 17 year-old) and adult (20 to 35 years-old) professional athletes, who are in volleyball, football, wushu, and judo teams in 2011. One hundred forty eight athletes have been selected for the sample of this population. To assess aggression, the sport aggression questionnaire prepared by Bredemeier (1983) with the reliability of 83% has been used. This questionnaire contains 30 questions and 3 subscales of hostile (14 questions), instrumental (14 questions), and general (2 questions). The 4-point scale (disagree to strongly agree) has been used. The normality of the data has been assessed by Smirnov-Kolmogorov test, and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) at the alpha level of 0.05 percent. The results of the data analysis show that there is a significant difference between the aggression of adult and young athletes in team and individual sports, in such a way that young athletes exhibit more aggressive behaviors than adult athletes do. Moreover, the results provided in the table 1 show that the athletes competing in teams are more aggressive than those ones in individual sports.

Table 1. The Results of MANOVA Test for the Variables in Young and Adult Athletes Competing in Team and Individual Sports

| | Research Variables | MANOVA Index | Degree of Freedom | P |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|
| Age Group of the Young and Adult | Hostile Aggression | 6.025 | 1 | 0.16 |
| | Instrumental Aggression | 1.514 | 1 | 0.222 |
| | General Aggression | 1.199 | 1 | 0.276 |
| Team and Individual Sports | Hostile Aggression | 0.035 | 1 | 0.853 |
| | Instrumental Aggression | 2.613 | 1 | 0.109 |
| | General Aggression | 29.177 | 1 | 0.000 |
| Team and Individual Sports | Hostile Aggression | 6.829 | 1 | 0.010 |
| | Instrumental Aggression | 3.413 | 1 | 0.068 |
| | General Aggression | 18.749 | 1 | 0.000 |

Moreover, the young athletes competing in individual and team sports were more aggressive than the adult athletes, who were in team and individual sports, were. The comparison of the adults in teams and individual sports showed that the adult athletes were more aggressive in team sports. In contrast, the young athletes were more aggressive in individual sports in comparison to the young athletes in teams. The following table 2 presents the results of the comparison of three subscales of aggression in the different age groups and several team and individual sports.

Table 2. The Results of the comparison of three subscales of aggression in the different age groups

| Research Variables | Age Group | Sports | Mean |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|--------|
| Hostile Aggression | Adult | Team | 30.077 |
| | | Individual | 27.318 |
| | Young | Team | 29.926 |
| | | Individual | 32.318 |
| Instrumental Aggression | Adult | Team | 34.962 |
| | | Individual | 31.227 |
| | Young | Team | 34.296 |
| | | Individual | 34.545 |
| General Aggression | Adult | Team | 5.923 |
| | | Individual | 5.591 |
| | Young | Team | 6.926 |
| | | Individual | 3.909 |

The data stipulated in the table 2 show that the variable age and sport type are effective in aggression ($P < 0.05$). The data of this table show that there is a significant difference between the hostile aggression and general aggression exhibited by the young and adult athletes of individual and team sports ($P < 0.05$). Moreover, there is a significant difference between hostile aggression exhibited by the adults and that one exhibited by the young athletes ($P < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this research confirm that young athletes are more aggressive than adult athletes are, and this result is compatible with that of Henin [7]. Aggression in the young generation has negative consequences that misguide the young people to crime, misbehavior, and social maladjustment. The young generations are more affected by emotions and less skilled in the control of emotions communicative skills and have little social experience in comparison to the adults. According to social learning theory, the aggression exhibited by adults in sport fields is followed by the younger generations as their role model. Therefore, it is required that psychologists control aggressive behaviors by interfering methods to direct such misbehaviors to its correct path. For this purpose, trainers are also required to train the players how to control their feelings and emotions important competitions of high sensitivity. The results of this research are however incompatible with those obtained by Kemler (1988), arguing that instrumental aggression are seen little in sports such as football. In contrast, the results of our research are in accordance with the argumentation that hostile aggression is exhibited considerably by professional athletes. According to Silva [4], aggressive behaviors are perhaps repeated specifically by the younger athletes because they receive positive feedbacks externally from their trainers and friends. However, adults are less affected by external factors and affective emotions because of their higher social experiences, while the young athletes are more affected by their environment. Therefore, the easiest way to control and reduce such misbehaviors is to prevent showing such positive feedbacks in sport fields. In conclusion, teaching psychological skills to the young generation can effectively prevent aggressive behaviors in adulthood. Moreover, trainers are to be acquainted with psychological skills and they can apply trainings with participatory purposes to control the aggressiveness of the athletes.

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