

THE ROMANIAN FOOTBALL SUPPORTER:  
SPECTATOR, ULTRAS OR HOOLIGAN?  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VIOLENT  
AND NON-VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR OF THE DINAMO  
AND STEAUA TEAMS' SUPPORTERS

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**ABSTRACT**

Violence on football stadiums represents an important problem today and we talk about vandalism, aggression, hooliganism, delinquency. The football related problems bring two very interesting phenomena: 'ultras' and 'hooligans'.

The main objective of this study was the analysis of violence on the football grounds, the people's behaviour and attitudes in concrete situations related to the topic, trying to obtain a general image interviewing representative groups: common supporters, members of the gallery and police forces. In order to conduct this research we used the methods of interview and observation. For a better quality of the obtained data, the choice of some representative groups for the theme (common supporters, members of the gallery or gendarmes) was very important. Thus, we tried to emphasize the relationship between the supporters' condition and the degree of implication in acts of violence, as well as the relationship between supporters' condition (spectators and members of the gallery) and the perception of violence on the football grounds. One interesting conclusion of the research was the differentiation of spectators and members of the gallery depending on the ways used to support the favourite team and how each of the three investigated groups identifies the culprits and responsibility for the acts of violence.

**Keywords:** football supporter, ultras, hooligans, gallery, violence.

**INTRODUCTION**

There are dramatic images that often appear in the media, which show how a stadium full of people, gathered to support their favourite team, could turn into a fighting ring. We all know a lot of cases when innocent people were victims on the stadium, being seriously injured or even killed in the supporters' fights. It is the

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place where supporters and members of the gallery live every second, intensely, together with the players and other supporters. The effect of the crowd on each person is unchallenged: 'Football is a sport of crowds, of participation and inclusion, of people who find, during the 90 minutes of athletic show, the promise of victory's joy or the threat of defeat. It's not only of the team but ours, of our group' (Raț 2014, 53).

So, aggression and violence on football stadiums represent, according to Muntean *et al.* (2011) a current problem, especially in Europe and we talk about antisocial behaviour, about vandalism, material damages, aggression, hooliganism, fight, arrest, and even sentence to jail. It is very important to understand the fact that violence is seen as a characteristic of some deviated behaviour: 'violence refers to behaviour characterized through aggressive relations, based on verbal or physical, moral, economic, political force aiming at domination, subduing the victim to violence by the aggressor' (Muntean *et al.* 2011,185).

#### **HISTORY AND CURRENCY IN THE FIELD**

The issue of violence, regardless the aimed field or if it is about violence in general or about the violence specific to football shows has generated along the time some speculations concerning the origin of this phenomenon and the moment of its emergence in social life.

There are studies which show that 'the first players, at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, were some murderers and violence would be one of the founding parents of football' (Coakley 2007, 217). Despite this, the major change in the world of football appears in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the sport events developed, more and more people were coming to the stadiums, trying to support their favourite team, ignoring any kind of interdictions concerning the social position, a fact endorsed by Coakley too (2007). Since then the change has become irreversible, 'violence has ceaselessly accompanied, in a symbolic or real way, every football or other sport competition' (Gavriliuță 2010, 126). Violence is not only a residue of the past: 'besides the adaptation of old forms of violence, nowadays there are plenty of new forms which have no connection with the past' (Gavriliuță 2010, 117). They are generated by new expressions of present life, of modern civilization.

Dart (2008) is the one who explains that, if at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the support of the team by supporters was an absolutely normal and spontaneous thing, throughout time, ways of encouragement knew big changes, the same as stadiums where football shows take place. The same author maintains the idea that it is generally accepted the fact that the period from the beginning of the 1960s until mid 1980s was the climax of hooliganism in football, these were registered in books written by real hooligans – autobiographical books, then, he

explains that starting with the '90s, violence on the stadiums around the world has become a daily event.

### **THE PHENOMENA OF 'ULTRAS' AND 'HOOLIGANS'**

The football phenomenon brings in the foreground two very interesting issues: 'ultras' and 'hooligans', although neither of them manage to justify the occurrence of violence acts, when there are football matches, though, in both situations, the show of stands and the means of team support can lead to aggression and violence. Understanding the terms seems to be very important, and authors such as P. Duret (1994) make the difference between the three groups: spectator, supporter and hooligan. 'The spectator appreciates the beauty of the football and sport show and does not develop strong passions for any team or other, the supporter takes part, even sometimes directs the sport show and declares openly the support for a team, desiring their team to win' (Duret 1994, 52 apud Mignon 1995, 96).

In order to understand better this problem it is very interesting to analyse the evolution of the phenomenon 'ultras'. First, this phenomenon was based on the formation of some groups with distinct features, but having common expectations concerning a certain football team, they became fan groups and no aggressive groups: 'the phenomenon is noticed at the end of '50s. It appears to have started in Italy and spread later in Europe, the first ultras group being that of Fedelissimi Torino, in 1995, called Ultras Tito' (Gavriluta 2010, 127). According to Mignon (1995), in the '70s, the phenomenon sees a diversification, under the influence of hooliganism, called 'automatization of rivalry between supporters around the stake which does not interfere in the sport competition' (Mignon 1995, 75). Thus, aggressive acts appear at some matches and even result in dead and wounded, while the distinction between ultras and hooliganism merely does not exist. Then, 'the most tragic event connected to supporters' violence happened in 1985, at the match Liverpool-Juventus, on the football grounds of Heysel from Brussels, when 39 supporters lost their lives' (Testa 2009, 57).

Also, when it comes to violence on the football grounds, one cannot talk only about ultras, those who, theoretically, are responsible for the show and choreography of a match, but also about the 'hooligans' phenomenon which refers to those supporters who dedicate totally to the favorite team and consider that they have to prove that they are physically stronger and are aware that fights with adverse supporters don't have to lack. A hooligan describes: 'We...don't...don't go with the intention of fight, you know what I mean....we are just looking forward to it...it's great' (Murphy et al. 1990, 87 apud Leeson 2012, 217).

De Venanzi (2008) asserts that the term 'hooligan' entered the common language, in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a term which described the gangs of rowdy young men. According to the same author, the Victorian press used this

term to label and disparage all those people and groups who were seen as a threat to society, criminal young men, robbers, members of gangs, and in what sport is concerned, supporters who promoted violence in sport games, such as supporters who promoted violence acts during football matches: pushing, kicking, clashes with the members of the club or with the police, attacking the referees, addressing some insulting words.

### **VIOLENCE ON THE FOOTBALL GROUNDS IN ROMANIA**

The appearance of big football teams incited the interest of football lovers and little by little the football grounds of the country began to host more and more spectators ready to support their favourite team. It is documented the information according to which 'starting with the 1950s, in Romania some violent clashes begin to appear both inside and outside the football grounds' (Townson 1998, 219), but, the first organised groups of Romanian fans appeared much later.

In an article referring to the evolution of the two phenomena: ultras and hooligans, Raț (2014) states that, in Romania, the phenomenon 'ultras' appeared for the first time after the Revolution, seeing a great development around 1995s, this was the time when the first fans of great football teams from Romania appeared.

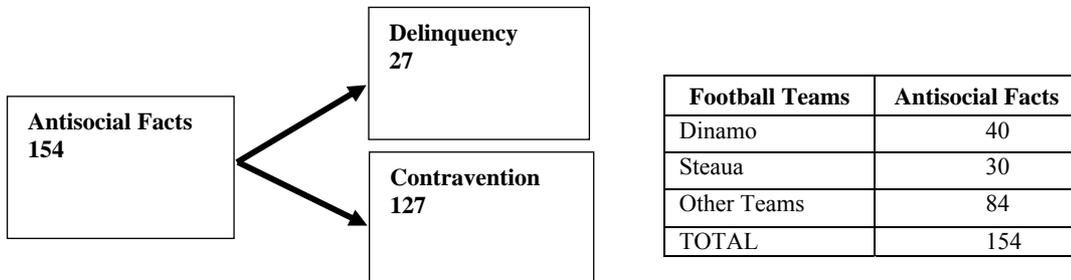
According to Rusu (2014), hooliganism, similarly to the 'ultras' phenomenon, appeared in Romania after the Revolution and characterised, especially, the matches played by major teams of the country. Gradually, the main teams of Romania began to gather more supporters highly influenced by supporters outside the country where violence on the football grounds was an unconquerable problem.

We notice in the case of great Romanian teams a fusion of these three groups, leading to a phenomenon of crowds: 'people who have never been able to show a violent behaviour find themselves in the middle of a reckless crowd' (Gavriluta 2010, 55). In the case of such a phenomenon, a collective behaviour appears, a crowd that tends to follow the same goals and to reach a common identity: 'regardless the social category, the sport consumer has a typical, predictable behaviour dictated by the crowd of supporters and spectators' (Moscovici 1994, 69).

For a better observation of the violence phenomenon on the football grounds from Romania, the statistical data of General Inspectorate of Romanian Gendarmerie are very interesting to analyse: 'National point of information-sport manifestations'. They refer to data concerning antisocial facts (offences and minor offences), registered during football matches in (2012/2013) – Table 1 (2012/2013) – Table 2 in the entire country and individually, for the two aimed football teams. It is also very interesting the statistics of antisocial facts registered on the football grounds in Romania, in 2013 (Table 3).

Table 1

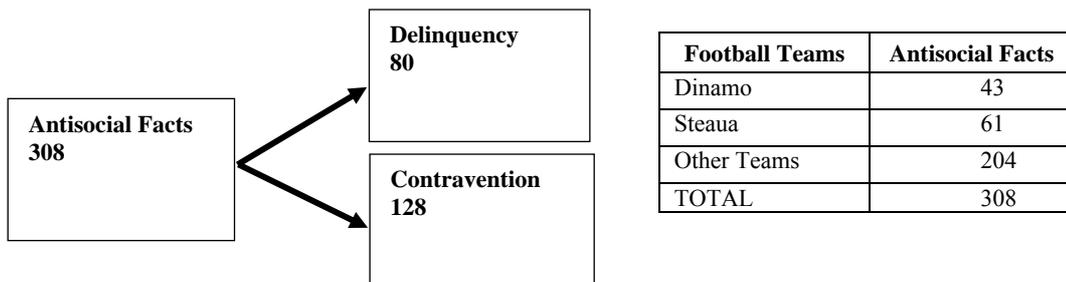
The statistics of antisocial facts registered on the football grounds in Romania, Retur 2012/2013.



Source: General Inspectorate of Romanian Gendarmerie.

Table 2

The statistics of antisocial facts registered on the football grounds in Romania, Tur 2012/2013.

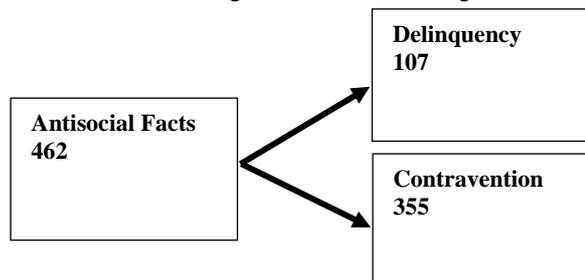


Source: General Inspectorate of Romanian Gendarmerie.

Data show that teams Dinamo and Steaua recorded most antisocial facts. They account for half of the total (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 3

Statistics of antisocial facts registered on the football grounds in Romania, in 2013



Source: General Inspectorate of Romanian Gendarmerie.

In 2013 the number of contraventions was about three times higher than delinquency, on the football grounds in Romania (Table 3).

Also, it is interesting that the number of antisocial facts increased between 2012 and 2014.

#### **THE ANALYSIS OF THE VIOLENCE IN THE STADIUMS OF THE TEAMS DINAMO AND STEAUA**

##### **The presentation of the two teams: Dinamo and Steaua and their supporters**

At the base of the present study there are two of the most important and popular football teams in Romania: Dinamo and Steaua, teams which met, over time, an excessive media cover, both because of the results obtained by each team in part, but also due to the rivalry between the two teams, the derby Dinamo-Steaua being the most loved by football lovers. Also, this rivalry that I was talking about, between Dinamo and Steaua, it is one that often keeps the front pages of newspapers, being very interesting to analyse the groups of supporters of the two teams: ‘born in full communist heave-ho, in the obsessive 6th decade, shortly after the establishment, after 1974, of the two teams, the rivalry between Steaua and Dinamo Bucharest rewrites, on a small scale, the Socialist Romanian history itself’ (Rus 2014, 44).

It is known that ‘Steaua-Dinamo is a story with all ... a story about integrity, about ambition and obtuseness, about the absurd and sublime, about great abuses and stupid gestures. Thus, the rivalry between Dinamo and Steaua is a story without which the black and white televisions would have been truly unbearable’ (Rus 2014, 44).

The terrible passion of the ‘Red Dogs’, as they call themselves and their fans, it is very well known, sometimes leading to violence on the football stadiums or outside, being encountered instances where objects are thrown either on the ground or there are lit torches and fumigants, there are grounds set on fire, there are also players of the opposite team injured, and these acts of violence are animated by the Red Dogs’ desire to show their superiority to the opponent.

The rivalry between the two teams is sometimes taken to extreme, and the derbies are the most loved by the hooligans, but also by simple fans, especially due to the fights between them, each trying to maintain its superiority in front of the opposite team: ‘on 10th of May 1997, the Red Dogs supporters burned the ground where they were hosted in Steaua’s Stadium, managing to destroy it almost entirely. Since then, every year the members of the gallery celebrate the destruction of their rivals’ house.’ (Raț 2014, 2)

##### **Research methodology**

Due to the massive growth of interest for football, but also because of the development of sport, not only in Romania, but also at international level, the appearance and infiltration in the sphere of international sport of some acts violent

of nature is unavoidable. At the level of two football teams: Dinamo and Steaua, have been noted, over the years, attempts at self-assertion, attempts to control and to look with superiority over opponents, not-so-unusual things, but, often, carried to the extreme.

Research carried out at present in this area seem to trace a barrier between the three categories of supporters: simple ones (also called viewers), ultras and hooligans, and the two teams: Dinamo and Steaua, knew, and yet very well, what means violence in stadiums, although in the country, the number of studies that analyse this problem has been and continues to be insufficient, despite the countless examples of violence on the football stadiums, we receive from the media. It is very interesting to see how this phenomenon is seen in three different directions: simple supporters, members of the gallery and police forces, but also the predominant age for each class, their concepts about the sports world, the way they live the passion for their team and the way in which they see, from the outside or from inside, the acts of violence.

Also, the rivalry between Dinamo and Steaua is known even from the early years of the two teams and the intensity continues higher and higher nowadays. And how else can we get information and statements more suitable and effective than speaking directly with those involved, referring here to supporters, members of the gallery and the gendarmerie.

### **Objectives**

The objective of this study is to analyse violence in stadiums, to analyse people behaviour and attitude in specific situations, trying to obtain an overview, by analyzing the simple answers of supporters, gallery members and police forces.

It was also pursued the analysis of violence in stadiums of the two teams: Dinamo and Steaua, pointing out several aspects:

- Highlighting the relationship between the supporters' status and their involvement in acts of violence.
- Examining the differences in perception of violence in stadiums between the two teams: Dinamo and Steaua.
- The analysis of the way in which the three groups investigated identify the guilty individuals and those responsible for the acts of violence.
- The analysis of differentiation of spectators and members of the Gallery, according to the modalities used to support their favourite team.

### **Hypotheses**

The general hypothesis explores the relation between the supporters' statute (the simple spectators and members of the gallery) and how they perceive see violence in stadiums or they get involved in such violent acts. There were established a number of working hypotheses:

1. If supporters are from the categories of ultras or hooligans, then the risk of taking part in acts of violence raises.

2. The more attached to their own team the members of the gallery are, the better we can identify them with the groups 'ultras' and 'hooligans'.

3. If supporters and members of the gallery are supporters of different teams (in this case, Dinamo and Steaua), then there is a difference in perception of violence in stadiums.

4. If there is a difference of statute (spectators, members of the gallery), then it differs also the way they support their team and the way they see violence in stadiums or violent acts.

5. The more media incites to violence in sports, the bigger the risk of violent acts on stadiums is.

6. The younger the teams' supporters are, on the contrary, past middle age, the more pronounced is the feeling of insecurity when it comes to violence in stadiums.

### **Key concepts**

**Supporters** – are 'people who sympathize and passionately support a team or certain athletes, when they held competitions with their participation' (Ulici 2003, 648).

Supporters are people who go to the stadium for the beauty of the performance on the pitch, because they support a certain football team and live with the excitement of its evolution.

**Ultras** – are considered the passionate supporters of football clubs, very active, as they exhibit strong attachment to their own team. Ultras are those who 'attempt, at any cost, to show their supremacy over the opponent, wearing the Club's notes, preparing the great choreographies and songs, slogans, outrages' (Dâncu 2014, 52).

**Hooligans** – means 'people who violate coarsely the rules of normal conduct in society -commit acts of hooliganism, disturbing the public order through uncivilized manifestations' (Ulici 2003, 312). More exactly, 'hooligans are active and they produce far-reaching acts when the event is carried out in their territory and they try to move the show from the ground to the stands, considering that this brings them reputation' (Florian 2007, 81).

### **The population investigated**

The population investigated in this study is represented by the supporters of football clubs: Dinamo and Steaua, indifferently whether they are from the category of simple spectators or they are members of football galleries.

In the case of the interview, I tried as far as possible, the choice of the people who possess the essential characteristics of the targeted population of Dinamo and Steaua team supporters, members of the Gallery of the two teams, but also of the gendarmerie, who took part, as forces of law and order, in stadiums, at football matches. There was a number of supporters – 37, aged between 19 and 56-years-old, with different jobs, like: soldiers, teachers, fire-fighters, students, accountants, salesmen, directors, police officers.

Then, the number of members of the Gallery interviewed was 32, aged between 23 and 44-years-old, with occupations such as: economist, photographer, travel agent, production assistant at a manufacturing company's advertising and the list goes on.

Very important, but insufficient in number, may have been the two gendarmes interviewed, aged 26 and 32 years respectively, who took part in football matches in Bucharest, in order to maintain peace and order, both on the stadiums, as well as outside them.

For a better analysis of data, there were elected representative subjects of each class: there were interviewed 37 supporters, namely Dinamo supporters have 18 and 19 of the team's Star, and 32 members of the Gallery: 17 of Steaua Gallery and 15 members of the Dinamo Gallery.

### **Methods of investigation**

This investigation is a qualitative one since this is the only way to discover some surprising things, allowing greater freedom to the researcher in the subject of the investigation.

Trying a more complex analysis of this phenomenon, it was decided to use sociological investigation and observation, and as tools, the interview and observation guide.

The primary method of data collection was the survey interview, in order to test the hypotheses and obtain useful and effective information. In order to get the most real and representative data of the chosen topic, there were used three interview guides, applied to different groups: simple supporters or, more correctly, the spectators, members of the gallery and the police forces.

This study is also based on a second method of investigation, namely the observation method. It was used on a stadium, on the occasion of a Steaua – Dinamo derby from this football season. The target of the observation was an analysis of the spectators' behaviour, of how prompt the police was in case of an incident and of the verbal or physical interaction between the supporters of the two different teams.

### **The Data Collecting Process**

Taking into account that the main instrument of data collecting was the interview, the analysed population being represented by the supporters of the two teams, but also by the police, the data collecting process demanded that all the interviewees should meet face to face. Parts of the interviews were conducted right before football stadium of the two teams' stadiums, but also in different public places. The interviews were taken face to face, without any other means of intermediation, with the intention of obtaining as many relevant answers and data for the study as possible.

A second modality of investigation was represented by observation on the stadium, which required presence on the National Stadium of Romania, more exactly 'National Arena', on April 17, 2014, during the Dinamo – Steaua derby, a match that started at 8.30 p.m. The target of the observation was the way that the spectators managed to support the players through their own attitude, the way they made atmosphere on the stadium but, more importantly, whether they were violent, what exactly led to violence, and also in what way the police and the authorities chose to interfere when necessary.

Despite the fact that the research was accomplished within twelve months, the interviews were taken within five months: the process began in December 2013 and was complete in April 2014.

### THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

The data obtained from the observations on the football stadium along with the analysis of the interviews that were applied to three different groups generated some information that can create a complex image of football shows, stadium violence and types of supporters.

#### *Modalities of Expressing the Attachment to a Favourite Team*

Common supporters show their attachment wearing their favourite team's club signs: 'I have had my car painted the same colours that represent my idols, the fence of my house is red and white and I possess photos of all the players of the team'. Yet, some of the fans have also used their passion in important moments of their lives: 'I proposed my girl-friend at a football match'. The gallery members seem much more attached to their favourite team, sustaining that 'you show your passion towards a team going to the stadium and encouraging it, regardless of the result at the end of the match'.

This passion is vividly shown, especially by the galleries: 'How I show my love for Dinamo team? Firstly, I fell for the colours of this team, and my house is decorated with a lot of symbols of the kind: from bed sheets to watches, equipments, photos. Dinamo is everything to me. I'm not exaggerating. I told my parents, who are in Spain: if I happen to die, this will be written on my funeral cross: <A Dog until death and beyond it>. Look, I tell you something more, I've got some friends who have dogs; we take them to the stadium and train them to tear up Steaua's flag. Isn't it cool?' The same difference has been recorded regarding how frequently supporters go to the stadium for their team's matches. Whereas the common spectators do it when they have time, when an important match is being played, occasionally, once a month, the gallery members will come to the stadium 'for almost every match in the country', an idea supported by other members too: 'How often? I go to all matches. I've missed the last four matches because they made me feel bad. I used to suffer a lot after each loss, but that was not a solution'.

*Differences in Preparations for the Favourite Team's Matches*

Gallery members prepare for their team's matches much more carefully. Unlike the common supporters, who wear their favourite team's equipment, go to pubs, have beer and snacks, eat popcorn and meet their friends, gallery members are much more preoccupied with the show in the stands: 'For the important matches, I usually get involved with choreography, I help preparing stuff like banners, choreography paper boards, drums, pyrotechnics'. Yet, others explain everything in more details: 'For matches, I take part in the choreography. Now don't imagine we dance. It's much more complex: all kinds of materials, songs, anthems, and also perfect synchronisation'. Some others take pride in their gallery achievements: 'Have you ever seen that banner with a big dog? It looks like Tom and Jerry, I don't know how else to describe it. I'm proud of it because I made it ten years ago, painted it in front of my apartment building'.

However, few gallery members tell us about the materials illegally taken to stadiums, but those who took pleasure in talking about it gave us every detail: 'On a Barcelona match all of us bought the same type of shoes, with high soles, got rid of the inside soles and replaced them with torches, all of us. It was pure madness and we were lucky not to be caught. Such smart crooks we were...' that was the account of an experience given by a Dinamo gallery supporter.

On an interview, a gallery supporter of Steaua offered some information about choreography: 'When we play at Ghencea, it is there that we make the choreography. When we are on National Arena, we make our choreography there as we are allowed to. Now it depends on how long it is... A more complex choreography took us eight hours, but in case of a more common one we take four or five hours. Now don't believe we have the complete choreography within these hours. It is only the process of painting that lasts this long. The form, the message, the design, and the way it is going to be activated, must be prior to that'.

*Types of Behaviour in Case of Victory / Failure*

Regarding victory or failure, both gallery members and common supporters choose to celebrate with their friends somewhere in a pub, or mark their failure through sorrow: 'We usually gather in a pub and celebrate our idols' victory. In the past we used to go to Red Dogs, a pub in front of the stadium. When they lose, I don't feel like leaving the stadium anymore and when I have to, I go straight home'.

Gallery members follow their favourite team abroad and the answer given by a Dinamo supporter emphasises it: 'Let me tell you something cool. There was a match in Barcelona and I had no money. So I made a 150 million loan. I didn't even tell my parents even though I paid the loan from their money'.

*Perception of Violence on Stadiums*

Asked if they had ever witnessed any stadium conflicts, the common supporters and the gallery members generally answered the same, namely 'yes'. According to them, it is almost impossible to leave a stadium without witnessing a

single verbal conflict, if not a physical one. Gallery members, especially, are the ones who have seen a lot in time and can speak about many things that affected them: ‘Many a time. I even got involved. Once in Cluj I saw policemen evacuating and beating the supporters. They even beat a woman with a child. This I didn’t understand. Why didn’t they beat us if they were so strong?’

Of all the answers to this question, the one given by a Dinamo gallery supporter was really surprising: ‘I’ve never been hurt. This is what I do regret: That I’ve never been beaten by a policeman. I only fought other supporters, but none of the policemen trashed me all right. It would’ve been only this way that I could really feel involved’.

After carefully putting the results of the interviews into perspective, a very interesting aspect will be observed: we can easily notice that the interviewed supporters aged 19 – 25, then the ones aged 40 and above state that they renounced going to stadiums several times because of a potential conflict between supporters. On the other hand, the interviewees aged 25 – 40 state they do not take this in consideration and go to the stadium for matches, not for the rage in the stands.

#### *The Media Clichés – Instigating to Violence*

Asked if they think some media clichés instigate to violence, both the supporters and the gallery members were of the same opinion: ‘Of course they do, especially that the media know about certain groups’ rivalry’. Few of them say that ‘they do instigate, but there is violence without media as well. But if I happen to hear before the match that the Steaua supporters are going to make us KO and all, I lose my temper’. On the other hand, to the same question a policeman stressed on the fact that the messages on banners instigate too, maybe even more than some media headings: ‘Leave the media and come to the stadiums to see instigating messages... And the messages are not all, if only you would hear their abuses! It is natural I get enraged’.

#### *Acts of violence from the perspective of security forces*

Not only simple supporters and members of the gallery have a word to say in the debate regarding violence on football grounds, especially when we refer to Dinamo and Steaua football teams, but the guardians are also able to present their point of view.

There is a certain difference between these two teams, Steaua and Dinamo, in terms of the violence on football grounds. Being able to see things from the outside, and being present at their matches, the security guards can offer a perspective much closer to reality. They consider that Dinamo supporters are far more active, more violent and more involved in conflicts. However, The Red Dogs seem to be better organised, to fight for the team and for its reputation, while Steaua supporters, although quieter, seem to manifest some sort of envy regarding the unity and the organisation of the Dinamo team: ‘Dinamo supporters are crazy,

fanatic, violent, but they are united. I believe Steaua supporters would love to be able to reach such a unity, but I don't think they are made for this'. Quite interesting is the remark made by another guard, regarding the two teams: 'Steaua supporters love results, while Dinamo supporters love their team, especially since lately they haven't had such good results. Maybe, because they no longer win matches, they have to comfort themselves somehow, perhaps through choreography. It is amazing that they do it very well!'

*The way Dinamo and Steaua supporters' behave* – relevant results based on the observation during the Dinamo-Steaua derby – 17.04.2014.

The observation carried out on National Arena, during the derby Dinamo-Steaua, offers valuable data regarding violence on football grounds. The show was great, with impressive choreographies, especially from the Dinamo supporters who had prepared a 3D choreography, on Maurice Ravel's Bolero, and they put up, as part of the show, two very suggestive banners: 'we show choreographies, you show pictures' and 'you watch the opera as the audience', the latter being addressed to the opponent team.

Even before the match started, tens of materials- banners, posters, drums, flags, paper placards- had been brought to the football ground. The exhibited banners presented discouraging messages addressed to the opponent team. Steaua supporters addressed messages to Dinamo supporters: 'The force of the Red Dogs from 'Ștefan cel Mare' varies according to the money in the owner's pockets'. Dinamo supporters were not less fierce: 'in the symphony of football grounds, there have always been great composers'. However, there are messages which truly call for violence, and although quieter and less violent, Steaua supporters attack: 'Since you were last in the European Cups, we have had elections and have changed two governments', or 'wild dogs, leave tamed!' There are also messages that contest the lack of courage of their opponents: 'The fences are full of brigades, when we come over, there is no one on the streets!'

The beginning of the match brought about the first conflict in the Steaua stands, since Steaua fans started fighting and created a tense atmosphere. However, the security forces did their duty all the time and the number of conflicts was a lot smaller than the acts of verbal violence.

#### *The motivation behind violence acts on football grounds*

In terms of the motivations that lie behind acts of violence on football grounds, the points of view are also different. The simple spectators, whether they support Steaua or Dinamo, believe that those to be blamed for the acts of violence on football grounds are supporters and hooligans, being regarded as 'die-hard supporters, obsessed with their favourite team', but there are also those who 'consume alcohol or forbidden substances and who do not care about the consequences'. Only a few people consider that guilty are the guards or the

referees. Ultras have a different opinion, considering that the main reasons for violence on football grounds are ‘the lack of common sense and the rebellious of some of the people who come to football matches’, or, as another Steaua supporter claims, ‘there are idiots who come to football matches only to commit acts of violence. I believe that they are two different things: the match is one thing and the fighting afterwards is a different one. Perhaps drinking or the guards are also to be blamed, especially the latter since they do not leave us alone and do not understand that fighting is part of the whole experience and gives beauty to the match’. Members of the gallery have a different opinion than simple supporters: ‘if we were to take into consideration what happened at the World Cup, we would realize that what happens in Romania is not very serious, by comparison with what English supporters do’. Another Dinamo supporter tries to motivate his answer: ‘Let’s see things differently: what do acts of violence mean for us? Broken seats, broken teeth, criminal record, a few torches, flares thrown on the football pitch. That’s what we call hooliganism, whereas in other countries it means destruction of entire football grounds, people kill each other’.

*People to be blamed for acts of violence on football grounds*

When asked if the people who throw different objects at football players or the opponent supporters are simple supporters or members of the gallery, the latter considered members of the gallery to be guilty. Thus, out of 37 interviewed supporters, 34 gave more or less the same answer: ‘I believe that only die-hard supporters of both teams are to be blamed because they are looking for a reason to fight’. Only two people consider that ‘mostly members of the gallery are guilty, but also some spectators’ and one person believes that simple spectators are equally guilty.

Things are different when die-hard supporters are asked, because these have the following opinion: ‘those who throw objects are not only members of the gallery, but also simple supporters’.

We can therefore notice that they are all looking for a scapegoat; they all pass the responsibility and the guilt from one group to another, depending on the situation. It is obvious, though, that both members of the gallery and supporters are responsible for throwing objects on the football pitch or at the supporters of the opponent team. The guardians are the ones who can see and understand more because they are directly involved in the attempt to stop these acts of violence.

*Ultras or Hooligans? Ways of identification and self-identification*

The differences of attitude in the two teams, Dinamo and Steaua, are visible. When asked if members of the gallery are ultras or hooligans, there have been differences both among the different categories of supporters and among football teams. The interesting results come from the football teams, since most regular Dinamo supporters claim that members of the gallery are neither ultras nor hooligans, whereas Steaua supporters have a different point of view: ‘most members of the gallery are either ultras or hooligans’.

However, die-hard supporters are more realistic and take things more seriously, saying that ‘die-hard supporters, and I’m referring to Steaua and Dinamo, are mostly ultras, that’s why we have ID cards which testify to that and which give us certain rights, but it is also true that there are few of us who belong to the category of hooligans, too’. A die-hard supporter of Steaua team speaks about the ultras: ‘To be an ultra means to love your team unconditionally, to live for it, to wear its coat of arms and to be proud of them, to prepare and to paint choreographies, to make a show, but without violence’, while another die-hard Dinamo supporter explains what it means to be a hooligan, and declares himself to be one: ‘people don’t know what it means to be hooligans, especially in Romania, where the term is used to mean anything else but its real meaning. Hooligans don’t say what they love, we prove our unconditional love and obsession for our team, even if we have to fight, even if we are arrested or killed, we don’t wear the club’s coat of arms, and we don’t carry banners. We are not afraid of anything’.

Any conflict is considered a way through which football lovers carry the team’s fame further, just like any other means which complete the football show: hymns, songs, choreographies, swearing: ‘What do they expect us to do? Clap our hands while seating comfortably as if we were at a theatre? It is very simple: you want to take your team’s name further. You have to be part of the ultras or the hooligans’.

The ultras are considered non-violent, trying to differentiate themselves through special choreographies, banners, torches, drums, hymns, flares, all of these creating a show aimed at supporting your favourite team and at intimidating the opponent team and its supporters. Unlike the ultras, the hooligans have a more sober appearance, without the club’s coat of arms, concentrating especially on fights with the supporters of the opponent team, since they consider that fights are meant to be part of any football event.

#### *Ways of reducing the number of acts of violence*

When dealing with the topic of violence on football grounds, it is very important to talk about the different ways to reduce the number of such acts, the opinions being many and different, but at the same time useful; during the interviews, there were mentioned: increase of security officers, greater number of intervention forces, harsher punishments. ‘Once, there were torches and flares thrown very close to where I was sitting and I got arrested a few times, until they discovered that I wasn’t guilty; that’s why I am in favour of very reliable video surveillance cameras’.

A Dinamo supporter offers a very interesting solution: ‘we should have visual surveillance of the entire activity on football grounds, as it happens during the English championship’; others stress the importance of harsher punishment: ‘people who are responsible for acts of violence should be punished by being forbidden to enter any football grounds for a long time’. A Steaua supporter,

discontent as a result of his own experience, suggests that 'present laws should be applied, and higher fines, as well as imprisonment, should be introduced'.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on a social aspect, less dealt with in the specialised literature, but highly discussed in everyday life, the present study attempts at creating a complete, detailed picture of what we call violence on football grounds.

The results of the study underline the existence of three different categories of supporters: spectators (simple supporters), ultras and hooligans, but it also presents the differences between these three categories; it must also be mentioned that, in Romania, hooligans are less present, but their existence cannot be denied. We notice that simple supporters are emotionally involved when supporting their favourite team, but they come to the football matches for the show on the football pitch, unlike the ultras (members of the gallery) who concentrate on the show in the stands, preparing choreographies, songs, banners, trying at the same time to impose themselves in front of the opposing team. There is also a third group, the hooligans, less developed in our country, who show their supremacy exclusively through acts of violence.

Both simple supporters and die-hard supporters have witnessed conflicts on football grounds, but the latter have more to say about this topic, being present at most matches, both in our country and abroad.

We notice that both groups are guilty for the violence on football grounds, even if the general tendency is to place the guilt on the others. However, while supporters consider that the atmosphere on football grounds is abnormal, die-hard supporters believe that this is the normal atmosphere on a football ground.

We also notice that the motivations behind the acts of violence on football grounds are various. Spectators blame the supporters, the members of the gallery, the hooligans, the forbidden substances or the alcohol, while die-hard supporters believe it is the lack of common sense, rebellious, the drinking, the referees and the security guards who are responsible for these acts. Security guards share these opinions, but, being outside observers, yet getting involved in stopping these conflicts, they offer a more complex and realistic picture of the phenomenon. They believe that the people involved in these conflicts have a great force and a lot of hatred.

It was also interesting to make the difference between these two terms, 'ultras' and 'hooligans', based on the opinions of the ones interviewed, in the attempt to find a few criteria in order to identify the people who belong to the two groups. It has been underlined that, unlike the ultras who are in charge of the choreographies and the show in the stands, and who can be identified by clothing, songs, banners and swearing, the hooligans consider that they can impose themselves only through physical violence.

Both groups interviewed stress the importance of the media clichés in the issue of violence on football grounds. Not only simple supporters, but also members of the gallery agree that some clichés used in the media instigate to violence, while security guards claim that stronger than these seem to be the messages put up by the supporters of both teams during the match, especially since they contain insults towards the opponent team and its supporters.

Moreover, more than 44 of the interviewed supporters and members of the gallery are not married, whereas only 25 have taken this commitment. Furthermore, 39 of the people interviewed have a university degree and 10 a post-university diploma.

#### **Final remarks/considerations**

The present study aims at completing the picture of violence on football grounds.

One of its benefits lies in the fact that it concerns two of the most publicized football teams in Romania, which also occupy the leading positions in the list of the football teams which have caused the greatest number of anti-social acts, and as a result, hold the record of the greatest number of fines and crime. Another strong point of the study consists in the fact that it deals with representative groups specifically chosen for the topic under discussion: simple supporters, members of the gallery, security guards. Moreover, the study is based on observations made on the football ground during one of the derbies Dinamo-Steaua.

Also, in Romania, the number of researches carried out on this issue is very small, the present study offering a more detailed picture of the phenomenon, especially as a result of using the interview as the study instrument, which has led to the acquisition of more information than in the case of using the questionnaire, for example.

In the research, there have also been some difficulties. First, if simple supporters are quite easy to identify and interview, members of the gallery are less open, manifesting a certain lack of trust and suspecting the presence of the media. Another minus of the research was the limited possibilities to record the interviews.

#### **Limits and proposals for future research**

If we refer to the limits of this study, we should first mention the number of the teams chosen as target groups. If we interviewed a larger number of supporters and members of the gallery, we would get a more complex picture of the analysed phenomenon, and we could also notice more clearly the differences between the football teams in Romania.

On the other hand, it is possible that a larger number of members of the gallery interviewed should confer more information, just as it would be very interesting if we interviewed more security guards, since their experience on football grounds during the matches is quite large.

To put things differently, I consider that it would be of great importance if we also interviewed editors or specialists from the media, because this would help us to better understand the way violence on football grounds is perceived, as well as the way in which these specialists conceive the materials which are presented to the public.

Personally, I suggest that if further research is carried out on the same topic, other points of view should be presented, such as those of the leaders of the members of the gallery, since they can also offer a perspective on the entire sporting phenomenon, as well as on the issue of violence on football grounds.

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