

**FOOTBALL ADDICTION AS CORRELATE OF AGGRESSIVE
TENDENCY AND ACADEMIC MALADJUSTMENT AMONG
UNDERGRADUATES IN A SELECTED UNIVERSITY**

***Bolanle Ogunbamila PhD¹, Anthony Gbenro Balogun² &
Christy O. Olajugbagbe³**

^{1, 2 & 3}Department of Psychology,
Adekunle Ajasin University,
PMB 001 Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.
e-mail: o_bolanle@yahoo.com. Phone: +2347038675198

Abstract

There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that football addiction can lead to aggressive behavior and maladjustment. However, the extent to which football addiction connects with undergraduates' aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment has not been given adequate empirical attention. Hence, the present study investigated the extent to which football addiction correlates with aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment among undergraduates. A cross-section survey research design was adopted. Participants were 362 undergraduate football fans (300 males; 62 females). Their ages ranged between 15 and 30 years ($M = 22.30$; $SD = 2.88$). The participants responded to Aggression Questionnaire, University Maladjustment Scale, and an adapted version of Exercise Dependence Scale. Results of the correlation analysis indicated that football addiction significantly correlated with aggressive tendency, such that undergraduates' aggressive tendency increased with football addiction [$r(360) = .29$; $p < .01$]. Similarly, undergraduates' level of academic maladjustment increased with football addiction [$r(360) = .26$; $p < .01$]. The implications of the findings were highlighted.

Key words: Football addiction, aggression, maladjustment, undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Researchers (e.g. Aronu & Ojinnaka, 2009; Iloeje, 1992; Ojedokun, Ogungbamila, & Kehinde, 2013) have reported that aggressive behaviour and other related behavioural problems such as academic maladjustment are major growing problems among students in Nigeria. Though, there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that football addiction can lead to aggressive behaviour and maladjustment, the extent to which football addiction connects with students aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment has not been given adequate empirical attention. Therefore, the present study investigated how football addiction was related with aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment among sample of Nigerian undergraduates.

Football addiction refers to the extent to which an individual feels unable to resist the urge to watch football match (Ektrapointa, 2011). It could be characterized by psychomotor agitation, anxiety, craving, hostility, and loss of control, intolerance, withdrawal, impairment of function, reduced decision-making ability and constant attention to football despite its negative effects on social and psychological well-being (Ektrapointa, 2011).

Hausenblas and Symons (2002) identified seven characteristics of football addiction (tolerance, withdrawal, intention effects, loss of control, time, conflict, and continuance). In football addiction, tolerance refers to individuals' tendency to significantly increase the amount of football activities in order to achieve the desired effect. Withdrawal implies that individuals who are addicted to football would experience withdrawal symptoms if they are prevented from watching football. Intention effect refers to a condition in which an individual participates more in football activities than he/she originally intends.

According to Hausenblas and Symons (2002), when football addicts lose control, they have a persistent desire or make unsuccessful attempts to reduce the amount of football activities they engage in. In the case of time, huge amounts of time are dedicated to watching football. When any activity (e.g. social, academic or recreational) competes for attention, football addicts reduce or give up such conflicting activity and dedicate more to watching football. Continuance addiction implies that the addicts continue to watch football in spite of being aware of its adverse effects on their economic, physical, and psychological well-being. Hausenblas et al. (2002) submitted that anyone who displays three or more of these characteristics is a football addict. A football addict strongly identifies himself/herself with his/her team or club than those who are less addicted (Tajfel,

1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wann, Royalty, & Roberts, 1999).

Similar to other forms of addiction, students who are addicted to football may experience neurological complications, psychological disturbances, and relational chaos. They may also suffer from a number of behavioral problems such as exhibiting aggressive behavior before, during, or after football matches towards fans of rival clubs or innocent persons; experiencing difficulty with academics matters; and exhibiting withdrawal symptoms.

Aggression is perhaps one of the most important problems in sports today (Sacks, Petscher, Stanley & Tenenbaum, 2003). Aggression refers to any form of behavior that is intended to inflict physical and or psychological harm on another person or object (Horowitz & Bordens, 1995; Wann, 1997). Aggression can be classified into two: hostile or instrumental (Wann, 1997). This is to say that aggressive spectators or fans may inflict pain or injury on the person such as throwing an object at players and officials (hostile aggression) or exhibit aggressive behavior in order to achieve a goal (instrumental aggression). For example, yelling at officials and opposing players to increase their team's chances of success (Bredemeier, 1994; Wann et al., 1999).

Much research attention has been devoted to aggressive behaviors in sports. Previous studies have associated aggressive behavior in sports with unethical behavior (Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000; Stephens, 2001; Tenenbaum, Stewart, Singer & Duda, 1997), team identification (Wann et al., 1999), self-esteem (Wann, 1995), family motivation (Wann & Ensor, 2001) as well as passion and obsession (Donahue, Robert & Vallerand, 2009). However, researchers are yet to examine the connection between football addiction and aggression.

Football addicts are usually more attached and committed to their team; and the team's performances are highly relevant to their sense of self-worth (Wann et al., 1999). Thus, football fans can become aggressive when their teams perform poorly or are defeated by rival teams because such performances have negative implications for self-mage (Wann et al., 1999). Recent research on aggression among sports fans revealed that fans who were strongly identified with their teams displayed higher level of aggression (Branscombe & Wann, 1992a, 1994; Wann et al., 1999) and reported higher willingness to anonymously injure a star player or coach of a rival team (Wann, Peterson, Cothran & Dykes, 1999; Wann, Shelton, Smith, & Walker, 2002) compared with those who were less identified with their teams.

According to the frustration-aggression theory (Berkowitz, 1989; Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears, 1939; Spector & Fox, 2005), the aggressive behaviours exhibited by football addicts may be connected with frustration emanating from perceived blockage to the opportunity of achieving high self-worth (Bushman, Bonacci, Pederson, Vasquez, & Miller 2005; Perderson, Gonzales & Miller, 2000). In other words, undergraduates who are addicted to a football team might become angry, aggressive, and violent towards officials, fans of rival clubs, co-friends, and players when the team performs poorly or loses a match. We, therefore, hypothesized that:

Football addiction will be significantly related with aggressive tendency such that aggressive tendency increases with football addiction.

As Hausenblas and Symons (2002) identified, football addicts spent more time on football-related activities than they intended. This implies that undergraduates who are addicted to football could have difficulties adjusting to academic demands. Academic maladjustment, which refers to the inability of student to deal with educational demands, is characterized by lack of motivation to complete academic work, inability to meet academic requirements, low level of academic effort and low satisfaction with academic environment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

Apart from university-related stressors such as time management, financial problems, sleep deprivation, social activities, and psychological variables (e.g. self-esteem and emotional intelligence) which have been reported to influence college students academic adjustment (Salami, 2011; Balogun, 2012), football addiction is another pivotal variable that could also pose a threat to undergraduates' adjustment to academic demands, and their ability to fulfill of academic obligations (Klapow, 2011). This may be because football addicted students think about football while in lecture room, and miss lectures or other important school activity to watch a game. Such students may also spend most of their quality time watching and discussing football games and monitoring football news on radio, television, news paper, and on the internet instead of attending to their academic obligations.

Studies have shown that college/university students who find it difficult to adjust to academic demands often suffers from psychological distress, reported low academic performance (Salami, 2011), low grade, poor Cumulates Grade Point Average (CGPA), low examination scores, and even dropout of school (Olani, 2009; Abdullah, Elias, Mahyuddin & Uli, 2009). Watching television

programmes (e.g. football matches) could have detrimental effects on psychological and academic adjustment and impede intellectual abilities (Omojuwa, Timothy, & Obiekezi, 2009; Winn, 2002).

The connection between football addiction and academic maladjustment can be explain using social bond theory (Hirschi, 1969). This theory focuses on how individuals develop social attachment or bond. Early form of bonding or attachment sets the standard for an individual's future attachments to friends, family members, co-workers and even lovers. According to Hirschi (1969), such attachment may be threatened by distractions from equally important bond objects; thereby making the individual vulnerable to depression, anxiety, anti-social behavior, suicidal tendencies and maladaptive behavior generally. Applied to academic maladjustment, the theory suggests that football addicts display academic maladaptive behavior because the bond between the individuals and the academic obligations has been weakened (Rohsenow, 1982; Shoemaker, 1996; Vollrath & Torgersen, 2002) because of addiction to football. Against this background, we hypothesized that:

Football addiction will be significantly related with academic maladjustment such that academic maladjustment increases with football addiction.

METHOD

Design and Participants

Adopting a cross-sectional survey design, we selected 362 undergraduates (300 males; 62 females) who were members of football fans clubs. Their age ranged between 15 and 30 years ($M = 22.30$; $SD = 2.88$). The participants indicated their football fans club. Their responses indicated that 92 (26.5%) of them were fans of Chelsea Football Club, 91 (26.2%) belonged to Manchester United Football Fans Club, 71 (20.5%) belonged to Arsenal Football Fans Club, 17 (4.9%) were fans of Manchester City Football Club, 17 (4.9%) belonged to Liverpool Football Fans Club, 26 (7.5%) were fans of Barcelona Football Club, 12 (3.5%) belonged to Real Madrid Football Fans Club, 2 (0.6%) were fans of Inter-Milan Football Club, 4 (1.2%) belonged to AC Milan Football Fans Club, 9 (2.6%) were fans of Tottenham Football Club, 3 (0.9%) were fans of Stoke City Football Club, 3 (0.8%) belonged to Juventus Football Fans Club, and 15 (4.1%) of the participants did not indicate their football fans club.

The participants also indicated their academic level. Responses showed that 42

(12.0%) were at the Pre-degree level, 76 (21.7%) were at 100 level, 61 (17.4%) were at 200 level, 68 (19.4%) were at 300 level, 78 (22.3%) were at 400 level, 25 (7.1%) were at 500 level, and 12 (3.3%) of the participants did not indicate their academic level.

Measures

Aggressive Tendency: This was measured using Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) by Buss and Perry (1992). AQ was a 29-item scale rated on a 6-point Scale (6 = extremely characteristic of me; 1 = extremely uncharacteristic of me). Sample item included "I have trouble controlling my temper", "I am an even-tempered person" (reverse scored). Oshibowale (2009) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .67 for the scale with an undergraduate sample. In present study, AQ had Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85. High scores indicated that the individuals showed high aggression tendency.

Academic maladjustment: This was measured using University Maladjustment Scale (UMS) developed by Kleinmuntz (1986). UMS was designed to assess how undergraduates respond to challenges in the university. The 33-item was rated on a 2-point scale (1=True; 0 = False). Sample item included: "I have more trouble concentrating than others seem to have". Adekunle (2002) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .86 for the scale. A reliability coefficient of .73 was derived for the scale in the present study. High scores indicated high level of university maladjustment.

Football Addiction: This was measured using an adapted version of Exercise Dependence Scale developed by Hausenblas and Downs (2002). In adapting the scale, statements that reflect exercise were modified to reflect football. The adapted scale was piloted on a sample of 60 undergraduates. Twenty one items were valid. The 21-item scale, which measured the extent to which an individual feels unable to resist the urge to watch football matches, was rated on a 6-point scale (6 = everyday; 1 = a few times a year). Sample item included: "I am unable to reduce how often I watch football". Hausenblas, et al., (2002) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .96 for the original scale. The adapted version had Cronbach's alpha of .90 (pilot study) and .93 (main study). High score indicated high football addiction.

Procedure for Data Collection

Five football viewing centers in Akungba, a university town in southwester Nigeria, were randomly selected using the Table of Random Numbers.

Permission was obtained from the owners of the selected viewing centers. The inclusion criterion was that the individual must be a student in a university. It was difficult to conduct random selection of participants. Therefore, the questionnaire was distributed to individuals who were willing to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed that they were free to discontinue with the research whenever they felt so. Out of the 400 questionnaires that were distributed, 365 were duly completed and found usable. This yielded a response rate of 91.3%.

RESULTS

Correlation analysis was performed to test hypotheses 1 and 2. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean, SD, and Inter-Variable Correlations

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Football Addiction	69.00	23.47	.1		
2. Aggressive Tendency	93.94	19.72	.29**	1	
3. Academic Maladjustment	14.70	4.40	.26**	.31**	.1

Note: ** $p < .01$. $N = 362$.

The results in Table 1 indicate that football addiction had a significant positive relationship with aggressive tendency [$r(360) = .29, p < .01$]. This implies that undergraduates who were addicted to football tended to exhibit aggressive tendency. Hypothesis 1 was, therefore, confirmed.

Similarly, there was a significant positive relationship between football addiction and academic maladjustment such that undergraduates who were addicted to football showed higher level of academic maladjustment [$r(360) = .26, p < .01$]. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was confirmed.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to bridge the gap in literature on the extent to which football addiction connects with undergraduates' aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment. The first hypothesis, which states that football addiction will be significantly related with aggressive tendency, was confirmed. The result revealed that aggressive tendency increases with football addiction. This result support Wann et al.'s (2002) findings. The authors found that sport fandom (football addiction) and trait aggression were positively related.

A possible explanation is that undergraduates who were football addicts strongly identified themselves with, and were more attached and committed to their team; and perceived that their teams' performance was highly relevant to their sense of self-worth than those who were less addicted (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel et al., 1979; Wann et al., 1999). Therefore, football addicts became more angry and showed aggressive tendency when their teams were defeated or perform poorly because their team's performance meant a lot to their self-mage (Wann et al., 1999).

The result also extended the frustration-aggression theory (Berkowitz, 1989; Dollard et al., 1939; Bushman et al., 2005; Perderson et al., 2000; Spector & Fox, 2005), which suggests that the aggressive behaviors exhibited by football addicts might be associated with frustration emanating from the perceived blockage to the opportunity of achieving high self-worth. The team's poor performance and defeat might have tampered with the football addict's opportunity of experiencing the much desired self-worth. Studies have also shown that football addicted fans willingly and anonymously injured a star player or coach of a rival team particularly when their team lost or failed to win a football match (Wann et al., 1999; Wann et al., 2002). The results of the present study also confirmed the findings of previous studies (e.g. Branscombe et al., 1992a, 1994; Wann et al., 1999) that addicted fans displayed more aggressive behaviors than non-addicted fans.

As expected, football addiction significantly correlated with academic maladjustments; suggesting that undergraduates who were addicted to football were academically maladjusted. This finding was not surprising because football has gained much recognition and has become the most admirable and popular sport in Nigeria particularly among students. During lectures, football addicted students, might have devoted their thought to football, abandoned lectures for football matches, preferred to pay for football matches than to buy textbooks, or spent more time and money on football-related than academic-related activities; which might have resulted in high academic maladjustment (Klapow, 2011).

The result of the present study was in consonance with the findings of Omojuwa et al. (2009). They reported that non-academic-related television programme had negative impacts on academic achievement. They submitted that television programmes displace reading time and thereby impede intellectual abilities. In line with the postulations of the social bond theory (Hirschi, 1969; Rohsenow, 1982; Shoemaker, 1996; Vollrath et al., 2002), such programmes and football addiction might have displaced reading time and weakened the bond between the

individuals and their academic obligations and resulted in high level of academic maladjustment.

CONCLUSION

The present study has shown that aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment among students were connected with high level of football addiction. The results of this study have extended the frustration-aggression (Berkowitz, 1989; Dollard et al., 1939) and social bond (Hirschi, 1969) theories from general social situations to the specific social conditions of football addiction and academic maladjustment.

A major practical implication of this study is that aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment have been strongly associated with football addiction. In order to reduce aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment among undergraduates, this study has implicitly recommended that undergraduates' level of football addiction should be effectively managed.

Though, the present study has filled the lacuna in sports literature by indicating how football addiction determine students' aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment, it not without some limitations. For example, this study did not investigate the personality characteristics of football addicts. Football addicts could have underlining personality factors that connect football addiction with aggressive tendency and academic maladjustment, which would provide a better understanding of the phenomenon. Against this background, future studies should pay attention to the role of personality characteristics in football addiction.

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