

Socioanthropological Views on Transgressive Behaviors in Congolese Handball Players

Lucien Litoto Pambou^{1*}, Joachim Magema², Edouard Bouyena¹, Emile Didier Loufoua Lemay², Jean Georges André Moulongo¹, Alphonse Massamba¹

¹Laboratory of Sport Sociology, Higher Institute of Physical Education and Sport, Marien Ngouabi University, Brazzaville, Congo

²Laboratory of "Companies, Sport, Health, Development", Marien Ngouabi University, Brazzaville, Congo

Email: *lucienlit@gmail.com

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Abstract

The present survey is aimed at outlining a picture of the behavioral situation of aggression in the Handball in Congo according to the type of aggression (instrumental, hostile) and that of the gender. In sum, 48 handballers of the senior teams among whom 28 men were observed during the semi-finals and finals 2012-2013 sports season. The videos sequences of various matches have been analyzed by confederal referees on the basis of Coulomb, Rasclé and Pfister methodology. The outcome obtained, enable to observe that men present a highest level of any type of aggression compared to women. Furthermore, the opposition attitudes (percussions, blows, repulsions) are the most experienced. Thus, we are going to support the hypothesis that the congolese handball is the hub of the occurrence of some forms of aggressiveness, legalized in sport like nowhere else.

Keywords

Handball, Competition, Aggressive Attitudes, Congo

1. Introduction

Generally speaking, sport is regarded as a factor of personal and social development (Bouet, 2006). The benefits of sporting and physical activities practice were subjected to many surveys (Gendron, Royer, Potvin and Bertrand, 2003). In fact, the physical activities practice offers benefits on the physical, mental, and social health plan (Gendron, Royer, Bertrand and Potvin 2005; Mignon, 2000; Mulvihill, Rivers and Aggleton, 2000). According to a survey conducted among the French, aged from 18 to 61 years old, the great majority of interviewees men-

tioned that the practice of sport improves their health (99%), favors new friendships, (87%) and procures a best esteem of themselves (85%) (Oppert, Simon, Rivière, & Guezennec, 2005).

According to the statistics of the General Management of Sports of the Congolese Ministry of Physical education and Sports (2012), the handball is the second sport of predilection of adolescents and young adults aged from 14 to 2 years old, after soccer. From 11% in 1978, its participation rate went up to 24% in 2012 to that population (General management of Sports, 180, 2012). Among the other most popular sports, we find karate (15%), basket ball (12%), volley ball (11%) and athletics (8%) (General management of Sports, 2012).

During the last four decades, the Congolese federation of Handball (FECO-HAND) has recorded a constant global increase of its members, to reach in 2012, a total of 13,082 affiliated players (Fecohand, 2013). Taking into account the current stage of the development of handball in Congo, it seems important to check the situation analysis of this sector. Obviously, the culture and the popularity of this sport in the country cannot be compared to the situation of soccer in Africa or elsewhere in the planet. Furthermore, the real craze of the youth for handball in Congo for more than 30 years, this sport does not follow a pace of supported growth, although its development through the country is noticed.

For many years, the violence and its various forms represent a social important issue which keeps on having a magnitude in the political and media speeches (Bufacchi, 2005; Debardieux, 2008). This phenomenon is reflected also in sport (Jamieson & Orr, 2009), the only enclave in space and in time where is granted the limited and codified right to some people to feel free for their aggressiveness (Elias & Dunning, 1994). However, in many sports, the acts of aggressions observed are a serious issue (Bodin, 2001; Conroy et al. 2001; Kerr, 2005). The experts in the area propose definitions, typologies, and different characteristics to understand aggressiveness in the sport environment, which makes more complex the study of the phenomenon (Coulomb and Pfister, 1998). According to Sport Quebec, *violence in sport may be defined as being a verbal, physical and psychological aggression aimed at wounding, hurting and intimidating a person in a situation where this behavior has no link with the regulations and the objectives of the competition in sport* (Sport Quebec, 2007: 1)

Many theories, trying to explain the aggression mechanisms, were proposed throughout years (Cox, 2005). Let us simply mention those which may be grouped in four categories: the theory of instinct, the theory of social learning of Bandura, the theory of moral thinking of Bredemeier, and the theory of aggression-frustration reformulated by Berkowitz. Among these ones the theory of social learning (Bandura, 1986) represents an important route within the framework of this present survey from the fact that handball is moving forward in the Congolese sport culture, like the image of soccer from the 1960s. About this theory, Cox (2005) states out that: *the aggression is a function of learning and this phenomenon cannot be explained by a biological drive and the frustration*

(...) *As long as the acts of aggression will be tolerated in professional sports, the practitioners of sport activities will keep on being inspired by aggressive behavior of their models* (Cox, 2005: pp. 257-258). During the last 20 years, the handball at the national and continental level was made accessible to young as well as adult amateurs by the existence of new national leagues and the broadcasting of matches and championships, to which are participating the African and international idols of Congolese handball players.

In terms of aggressiveness, overflowing regularly occur in the handball matches on the plan of missing rules of the games, but also illegal moves or ant sport ones taking the form of various violence's (Collard, 2004; Coulomb et al., 1999). According to the age, the gender, the experience and the level of excellence aimed by the players, the resort to acts of aggression in a strategic way is often encouraged in order to access to victory (Coulomb et al., 1999). Not only aggressiveness and aggression are accepted as related to sport, but their resort is encouraged and provoked in order to increase the athletic performance (Mintah et al., 1999). If there are many surveys about the aggression behaviors in the collective sports, (Coulomb et al., 1999; Margolis, 1999) no survey is related to African sport. In the context of the lack of proceedings about the acts of aggression in the handball of Congo, country which was among the first three ranks from 1970 to 1984, it seems relevant to be interested in a prospect of revitalizing the event. In fact, in its report through space and to anyone, and in the social conflictual framework of the Congolese sport policy, handball is likely to induce aggressiveness behavior. As underlined by Winston Churchill (1974-1965), *if really our homes are made by us, then, they shape us* can we re-state out this argument for the topic about aggressiveness in the Congolese handball? What is the current atmosphere prevailing in handball in Congo among the senior players teams and which findings can we draw with the misleading attitude of these teams during the African tournaments? This is the hypothesis we will try to support from a survey aimed at portraying aggression behavior among the handball players in Congo in conformity with the gender and the competition challenge. The interest of the study is associated with an understanding of the nature and reasons for aggression in the practice of Congolese handball. So the coaches can take them into account in their strategies with regard to the social representations of violence in the studied media.

2. Methods

The survey, through observation and analysis, took place in Brazzaville during the National Championship of handball, 2012-2014 sports season, (men and women events). The period of the study went from 19 to 27 July 2013. However, only the matches of semi-finals (4 events) and finals (2 events) were subjected to our observation. This choice was made possible and motivated by the objectives assigned by this survey. The different events took place in the Complexes Omni sports Alphonse Massamba Debat stadium. This stadium of handball in tartan is homologated by the African Confederation of Handball.

2.1. Subjects

The target population was made up of players from eight teams (4 for men and 4 for women) having participated to the semi-finals and finals of the said championship. In total, 48 handball players took part to the experimentation among whom 24 men. The investment required—and necessary—to achieve the level of expertise in the activity made it difficult and to prevent the event for these specialists, all amateurs, to practice other sports. This “lack” of diversification related to the process of specialization, was often premature to the number of weekly trainings imposed to these sportsmen and women (more than 15 hours/ a week). The choice of players participating to the semi-finals enabled to avoid parlaying, conflicts which could engender a well stuffed practice portfolio (Mignon and Truchet, 2002).

2.2. Protocol of Experience

During the semi-finals, the observation of 48 players enable to analyze the aggressive behaviors of the said sportsmen and women, re-invested in different situations of the games. The matches lasted 60 min and took place in conformity with the international rules of refereeing of the international Federation of handball (IHF). Every team, during the matches, included 16 players (substitutes included). In order to understand the majority of aggressive interactions (the reports about the not having ball taken into account) and to increase the number of interactions among the participants, two cameras, FUJI HP 610, were used. All the players were covered by the insurance of their clubs and that of the federation. The behavior of these sportsmen and women, on the ground, were blindly filmed. All of them accepted in writing the scientific use of their video performances in conformity with the respect owed to the person (anonymously, and non dissemination of images). The space of the game was adapted for the individual space of interaction (Parlebas, 1986) was respected. In fact, the surface area of the ground was: $S = \text{Length (L)} \times \text{width (w)} = 40 \text{ m} \times 20 \text{ m} = 800 \text{ m}^2$ with 32 players; this gives an individual space of interaction of $e = 800/32 = 25 \text{ m}^2$.

Two categories of indicators have been booked to decipher the films of matches. The first one related to instrumental aggression behavior. It is represented by three categories: 1) the percussions, the blows, rush perpetrated on the ball holders and non holders. The bodies touching each other by the limbs or the trunk. Therefore, the denomination which is worth it is the good distance far away: the visual focalization on the other player being a problem, the act, for better efficiency, must be premeditated. It is a form of more brutality which may give way to disbalance, falls, and wounds why not. In handball, only the contact with the trunk is authorized; 2) the repulsions or trouble, characterized by the screens, harassments, preventing the adversary to progress, towards the target having or not the ball; the bodies are close, but not in touch. In sum, Hall (1966) speaks of personal distance the vision of the other is net and enables the protagonists to intimidate without acting; 3) the retentions or the repulsions observed

during the belting of the ball holders or non holders. We speak of the distance, the rudest interactions of antagonisms, that by which the dominating and the dominated in the animal reign. The second category is related to aggressive behavior being hostile. Distributed in three classes, they are summarized to: verbal intimidations (insults, tribal words, in the case of Congo, verbal threats); physical intimidations appreciated from four behaviors (impolite move or spitting) physical violence evaluated by three behaviors (blow with fist or elbow, blow with the intent to hurt). Then we have the aggressions against the referee, the aggressions against the adversary, the aggressions against the partner, the aggressions against the target other than technical officers, spectators, etc.).

2.3. Instruments of Appraisal

Three appraisers (confederal referees) have considered the videos of every match and evaluated the various aggressions behaviors. They indicated during every session each and every aggression behavior on the scale going from 1 to 9 as reported by **Table 1**. This appreciation is inspired by the survey of **Coulomb et al. (1999)**.

2.4. Variables

They are focused on the aggressive attitudes found during the semi-finals and finals, according to the categories and the sub-categories of aggression. Finally, a relation was established between the scores related to aggressions experienced by every team as well as the prediction of the match (victory by 3 points, defeat by 1 point) during the events. The dependant variables were different types of aggressive behavior in according to Buss and Perry aggression questionnaire, and the independent variables were gender and level of competition.

2.5. Statistical Analyses

For every event, the aggression behaviors are presented under the form of figured values, sometimes along with extreme values (extended). The test of student has been used to compare the associated average values for a given aggression

Table 1. Digital descriptive scale of aggressive attitudes.

	Balancing
Instrumental nature aggression	
Percussions and blows	1 - 9
Repulsions	1 - 7
Retentions	1 - 5
Hostile nature aggressions	
Against a referee	1 - 9
Against an adversary	1 - 7
Against a partner	1 - 5
Against a target	1 - 3

Source: From **Coulomb et al. (1999)**.

attitude, between men on the one hand, between the noted values in semi-finals and finals on the other. Besides, a multivariate variance analysis of aggression (MANOVA), through the coefficient Wilk's Lambda, enabled to find out the aggression type effect and that of the gender on the event's issue. The differences between the values are regarded as statistically significant when the critical value of uncertainty is lower than 0.05.

3. Results

The outcome concerning the weight averages of the three types of instrumental aggression attitude according to the gender, during the semi-finals, are presented in **Table 2**.

As a whole, the percussions and blows were predominating, followed with acts of repulsion. The sex effect was found in both cases, in favor of men: gap of +8.8% for the percussions and blows, +138.5% for the acts of repulsions. Unlikely, women distinguished from men by the acts of retentions, +15.1%. As for what is related to aggression attitude of hostile nature, (**Table 3**) the acts of aggressiveness were more observed in women (+37.5%; $p < 0.01$) as against men where the aggressions against the referee are in top (+97.7%; $p < 0.001$).

During the finals (**Table 4** and **Table 5**) the statistical analysis is emphasizing the weight of the acts of repulsions in men, (+41%, $p < 0.001$) as against women. These latter are expressed by the acts of retention (+13.5%; $p < 0.05$). At the level of hostile nature attitude, there are rather acts of aggression against the referee, found more in men (+141.7%; $p < 0.01$). As for the aggressions against a partner, although second in rank, their frequencies were compared between both genders.

Table 2. Comparative data of instrumental nature attitudes between men and women in semi-finals.

	Men (n= 24)	Women (n=24)	<i>P</i>
Percussions and blows (/9)	7.4 ± 0.2	6.8 ± 0.4	<0.01
Repulsions (/7)	6.2 ± 0.3	2.6 ± 1.2	<0.01
Retention (/5)	3.3 ± 0.5	3.8 ± 0.7	<0.02
Aggregate	6.1 ± 0.2	4.7 ± 0.5	<0.01

Table 3. Comparative data of scores relative to hostile nature aggressions attitudes in men and women in semi-finals.

	Men (n=24)	Women (n=24)	<i>P</i>
AAA (/9)	5.6 ± 0.5	7.8 ± 0.5	<0.01
AAR (/7)	8.3 ± 0.3	4.8 ± 0.3	<0.00
AAP (/5)	2.7 ± 0.2	2.1 ± 0.2	>0.05
AAT (/3)	1.3 ± 0.5	2.3 ± 0.3	>0.05
Aggregate	5.3 ± 0.3	5.0 ± 0.3	>0.05

AAA: against an adversary. AAR: against a referee. AAP: against a partner. AAT: against a target.

Table 4. Comparative data of instrumental nature attitudes between men and women in finals.

	Men (n=24)	Women (n=24)	<i>p</i>
Percussions and blows (/9)	6.9 ± 1.1	6.3 ± 0.2	>0.05
Repulsions (/7)	6.8 ± 0.1	4.8 ± 0.7	<0.001
Retentions (/5)	3.7 ± 0.2	4.2 ± 0.5	<0.02
Aggregate	6.1 ± 0.5	5.3 ± 0.4	<0.05

Table 5. Comparative data of hostile nature attitudes between men and women in finals.

	Men (n=24)	Women (n=24)	<i>p</i>
AAA (/9)	8.7 ± 0.2	3.6 ± 0.1	<0.001
AAR (/7)	6.3 ± 0.5	6.4 ± 0.2	>0.05
AAP (/5)	1.0 ± 0.3	1.3 ± 0.4	>0.05
AAT (/3)	0.9 ± 0.1	2.1 ± 0.3	<0.01
Aggregate	5.4 ± 0.3	3.7 ± 0.2	<0.01

AAA against an adversary. AAR: against a referee. AAP: against a partner. AAT: against a target.

The outcomes of comparison according to the challenges (semi-finals vs finals) for each of the types of violence indicated in men (**Table 6**) a significant increase in finals of acts of repulsion (+9.7%; $p < 0.05$) and of retention (+12.1%; $p < 0.05$); aggressions against partners (+170%) other targets (+111%; $p < 0.001$), an adversary (+12.5%; $p < 0.02$) and a referee (+4.8%; $p < 0.0$). However, we noted a decrease of percussions and blows (−7.3%; $p < 0.0$). This decrease of percussions and blows was also observed in women (**Table 6**) with an average gap of −61.9%; $p < 0.001$) similar observation in acts of hostile aggression, except for those touching an adversary (+33.3%; $p < 0.001$).

Finally the MANOVA has revealed a main multivaried effect for the type of violence for the end of the match (Wilk's Lambda = 0.77; $p < 0.01$), thus a significant interaction between the violence type and sex (Wilk's Lambda = 3.04; $p < 0.02$).

4. Discussion

Beyond the differences observed between men and women, all the players during matches resort to the same types of aggressions attitudes. However, the men handball players have the highest scores of instrumental and hostile violence than their women counterparts, during the semi-finals and finals, to some extent. The literature and surveys in the sport domain tend to show a highest level of instrumental aggressiveness in men (Coulomb et al., 2005) (Guiverneau and Duda, 2002). For the survey of Guiverneau and Duda achieved in 194 male and female handball players aged from 19 to 25 years old, the results about the differences on the gender for the attitudes of aggression and breach to the rules are mitigated despite the theoretical framework established by the authors which

Table 6. Comparative Data of aggressive attitudes in semi-finals and finals according to the gender.

	Semi-finals (n = 24)	Finals (n = 24)	P
Cases of men			
Percussions and blows (/9)	7.4 ± 0.2	6.9 ± 1.1	NS
Repulsions (/7)	6.2 ± 0.3	6.8 ± 0.1	<0.01
Retentions (/5)	3.3 ± 0.5	3.7 ± 0.2	<0.02
AAA (/9)	5.6 ± 0.55	8.7 ± 0.2	<0.02
AAR (/7)	8.3 ± 0.3	6.3 ± 0.5	<0.01
AAP (/5)	2.7 ± 0.2	1.0 ± 0.3	<0.01
AAT (/3)	1.9 ± 0.5	0.9 ± 0.1	<0.01
Cases of women			
Percussions and blows (/9)	6.8 ± 0.4	6.3 ± 0.2	<0.00
Repulsions (/7)	2.6 ± 1.2	4.8 ± 0.7	<0.1
Retentions (/5)	3.8 ± 0.7	4.2 ± 0.5	<0.02
AAA (/9)	7.8 ± 0.5	3.6 ± 0.1	<0.00
AAR (/7)	4.8 ± 0.3	6.4 ± 0.2	<0.00
AAP (/5)	2.1 ± 0.2	1.3 ± 0.4	<0.02
AAT (/3)	2.3 ± 0.3	2.1 ± 0.3	<0.05

AAA: against an adversary. AAR: against a referee. AAP: against a partner. AAT: against a target.

mentions the highest rates (percussions, blows, prehensions) in boys. The survey of Coulomb et al. (2006) achieved in adult handball players from 20 to 32 years old, comes to the direct conclusion: *men are more involved in hostile and instrumental aggressions attitudes than women* (Coulomb et al., 1999: p. 41) this observation goes with ours.

Nevertheless, a recension of 94 surveys carried out by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), in Coulomb et al. (1999) reports that 52 showed that the male players are more aggressive than the female players, 5 reported the contrary and 37 did not show any difference between the genders. Among the explanatory hypotheses for this phenomenon, many actors have studied the difference between the genders under the angle of the perception of the legitimacy of aggressive attitudes in sport (Conroy et al., 1999, 2001; Coulomb et al., 1999; Coulomb et al., 2005; Kavussanu et al., 2006). Generally, speaking the male players show the break even points of tolerance higher than those from the female gender (Conroy et al., 2001) According to Coulomb et al. (1999), ... *the girls tend to give importance to fair play (...) and to accept less than illicit and illegal attitudes than their male counterparts (...)* We can expect women, in collective sports, to show less aggression attitudes than men (Coulomb et al., 1999). In fact, in a sport context, there are growing elements about the most frequent resort and with the male perception of legitimacy not found in the female players (Coulomb et al., 2005).

Besides, the two types of aggression show the significant difference for the violence's against the adversary and the partner. However, there exist significant differences between men and women, particularly against the referees and the officials and that in favor of men more in semi-finals and less during finals. Beyond the importance granted to ladies in fair play, our observations raise a certain number of questions. Apart from the sport context, the violence is different according to the gender, but they are always frequent in men especially in the role of victims of aggression and as perpetrators of various violence's (Choquet, 2000). Our results, being like those of Choquet (2000) confirm the over representation of the involvement of men with the aggressive attitudes by clarifying that the gap between the gender is less for the aggression against the officials and the partners.

Then, it appears that the victorious teams show less aggressive attitudes of the "retention type", unlikely to percussions, blows and repulsions. This is explained by the fact that the dominating teams are very often in the opponent side; and it is in a defending position that the players are to stop their assailants, objecting thus our observation about the superiority of the associated scores to percussions, blows and repulsions. This attitude is like that Hediger (1955) calls critical reaction in the animal domain. That is the ultimate reaction of legitimate defense; that of the desperate assault of the prey on its predator. Thus, the attitudes of players in defense, (cases of percussions, blows and repulsions) seem to be motivated by the fear to fail. Generally, in most of the social situations, the interacting remains in distance, a distance to flee, so as to repeat the terminology of animal ethnologists. In handball, they are imposed to penetrate in the critical distance of the other team, a distance which helps to change the rescue attitude. The internal logic to which the handball players are faced with, gives way to these aggressive attitudes. Whatever the stake of the event, the ball holders are very often taken as targets by the non holders. This stigmatization of aggressions acts is explained by the regulatory requirements which are in the attitudes. The rules of handball enable in fact to any player to stop the progress of the opponent with the body, and that even he has no ball. This last regulatory precision, apparently odd, predisposes the handball players to show aggressiveness by touching (without using the hands, or the arms and legs) all the players on the pitch having or not having the ball.

Consequently, the context of semi-finals or finals during the Congolese championship urges to emphasize on the aggression attitudes. Anyway, the high score of percussions and blows could fall on the aggregate attitudes of both aggressions behavior in one item of our rating of appraisal. With deep thought, the choice to bring together both attitudes in one item sounds harmful despite the initial rationale having inspired this methodological decision. That is why; taking into account these weaknesses should be subjected to a further study by separating the percussions and the blows. However, limitations characterize our study. First, it is the restriction of aggressive behavior to the semi-final and final matches, thus reducing the size of the sample. It would have been necessary to

extend the observations on other games where the stakes were minor. Second, violence is not only observed in the three collective sports studied. Moreover, it is also found in supporters, throughout the trajectory followed by these. Consequently, further studies must be undertaken in other disciplines and sports players. However, this in no way detracts from the strength of the study, the first in our country.

5. Conclusion

The presence of aggressive attitudes in the Congolese handball is obvious. The confrontation frequently renewed by the handball players to the logic of competition has in fact a socializing effect. This internal logic shows what are the attitudes tolerated during the course of matches. This socialization from the handball logic is enshrined in what Berger and Luckmann (2006) call after Mead (1964) secondary socialization, is *the internalization of institutional sub-worlds* (Berger and Luckmann, 2006). The Congolese handball player, during matches with challenges, internalizes these aggressive attitudes accepted within the event. Then, shall we agree with the hypothesis streamlining that the Congolese handball is the hub of the occurrence of instrumental and hostile violence forms, the player living in a specific sense (Collard and Oboeuf, 2007) which makes rude more or less in the situation of competition. However, in this context, aggressiveness is not an evil that the practice of handball shall eradicate, but a condition of achievement which must be educated and undertaken.

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