

Domestic violence during football season criminology essay



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Domestic violence is a type of violence that occurs between family members or intimate partners when one person tries to control another. It may include physical, sexual, financial or psychological/emotional abuse. Domestic violence transcends all lines; anyone could be an abuser and anyone could be a victim. Individuals of different economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds are affected. Wives, husbands, children, young and old are affected. However, most often, domestic violence is committed by men against women. Renowned advocacy organizations for victims of domestic violence avers that over half of married women (over 27 million) women are battered by men during their marriage and over one-third of married women are beaten repeatedly (Dutton, 2006). On the same note, Dutton (2006) further notes that about 4 percent of all families have members who engage in severe violence that includes kicking, punching, or using a weapon. Domestic abuse typically happens behind closed doors. It is a crime that is not always reported to the police. Many times neighbors and friends do not realize the abuse is happening. Unless visible physical signs are present, it is difficult to know what occurs in someone's home.

Bebber (2008) documents that for centuries, violence against women and children has not only been tolerated and accepted as normal practice, but it has also been encouraged. In patriarchal societies all over the world, women and children have long been considered to be subservient family members, while males have held dominant roles. Society and laws have often upheld a man's right to control his family, even by using violence from ancient times to modern day. In patriarchal society, women and children are viewed as properties of husbands. Women are also viewed as being inferior to men on

many levels: intellectually, emotionally, physically, sexually and spiritually. Domestic violence is rooted in this view of male dominance within families and in societies that do not value women's rights.

The increase of domestic violence during football seasons has a serious impact on police forces as it pulls officers off of their other duties to deal with the domestic violence calls. In a study by Sachs and Chu (2000) the records of Los Angeles county sheriff department were examined for a 3-year period during which time police units were dispatched in response to 26, 051 domestic violence calls. Several intriguing increases in dispatches were observed over two seasons of football, especially during the 1993-1994 seasons. On football Sundays, dispatches increased 100% from the previous Wednesdays while the playoffs saw a 147% increase. During super bowl week, there was a whopping 264% increase in units dispatched on domestic violence calls.

The cycle of domestic violence

Violence in a relationship follows a predictable pattern or cycle. It will keep going unless intervention is sought. The cycle keeps churning but as time goes by, it happens more and more and often with greater intensity. First, all is well until the pressures of life begin to build up. Pressures include financial problems, marital conflicts, illness, legal problems, misunderstandings or conflict over children or in-laws. The stress provoking events may be something catastrophic (such as war, rape, floods etc.), major life changing events (such as loss of job or bankruptcy), or just the daily hassles of life (one's team losing a game). Second, the tension builds to the point that

something little finally ignites an explosion (Guilianotti, Bonney & Hepworth, 1994). Violence erupts, probably starting with verbal abuse, and then escalates to physical violence of some sort. Things are broken or thrown, people are shoved and hit, and damage is done to the relationship. If children are watching, an indelible scar is carved in their psyche. During the explosive episode there is a release of energy, and tension eventually subsides. The abuser may first feel a physical relief and some sort of a moral superior feeling.

Third, second thoughts crop up. Perhaps the abuser begins to feel remorse and guilt for the damage done. They may fear the victim will leave, or tell police. The victim will feel fear, humiliation, confusion and disrespect – along with the pain. They may wrongly blame themselves for causing the abuse.

Fourth, the honeymoon period starts. Most abusers are sorry about the violence afterwards. Remorse is part of the violence. The abuser asks forgiveness, may offer to go counseling, promises never to inflict pain again, ratchets up the charm and may buy presents – anything to bring things back to normal. The victim may believe the abuser and they make up.

Unfortunately when things settle down and the victim returns or has forgiven, the cycle kicks into action again. Guilt and apologies give way to resentment and more violence.

Domestic violence and football

Violence is prevalent throughout sports. Many sports are violent by nature, but the instances of domestic violence by both sportsmen and fans are becoming quite more of a common occurrence, both on and off the field.

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According to Raney and Bryant (2006) longstanding interest in the relationship between televised football and domestic violence is related to the popularity and violent nature of the sport. Football games draw a large and predominantly male audience, whose motivations include following their favorite players and teams, enjoying the excitement and tension associated with the action, relaxing and unwinding, and perhaps conversely getting psyched up (Hillman et al., 2000). The games feature generally controlled aggression, with video replays of most plays, including bone-jarring tackles. Suspense and violence associated with the games are linked with viewer satisfaction (Raney & Bryant, 2006) among those prone to aggression; sports violence is associated with maximum viewing enjoyment (Russell, 2008). Televised football abounds with violent clashes, and prolonged exposure to nonsports-based media violence has shown to initiate hostile behavior in unprovoked individuals - and this effect was greater for men than for women (Russell, 2008).

There are many football seasons and increased intensity for fans varies with the season. In the US the Super Bowl regularly ranks as the most widely watched single program of the year, drawing over a hundred million Americans (Hillman et al., 2000). For many, the game highlights a day of celebration and partying. Perhaps because of its unique visibility and the disruption it causes in the daily lives of so many, super bowl Sunday had been scrutinized by fans, writers, scholars, and those concerned about the adverse consequences of televised sports. Indeed Scott, Hoggett and Pearson, (2012) observe that super bowl Sunday was one of the worst days of the year for domestic violence against women. Ayres and Treadwell

(2012) concurs with them stating that that 40 percent more women would be battered on super bowl Sunday than on a normal Sunday.

Some researchers have examined relationships between media portrayals of violent football sport and domestic violence. Guilianotti, Bonney and Hepworth (1994) studied the effects of watching a football game on the tendency of male spectators to aggress, finding that hostility did increase after watching a football game, irrespective of win-loss outcome of the game. Russell (2008) linked media of the National Football league (NFL) to incidences of homicides; later Brimicombe and Cafe (2012) looked at professional football games and the hospital emergency room admissions of women suggesting that the identification with an organization that is successful or dominates through violent behavior may stimulate violence towards women in some men.

Sachs and Chu (2000) performed an ecological time trend analysis of the Los Angeles sheriff department data form 1993 to 1995 and noted that domestic violence police dispatches increased during the 1993 to 1994 football season and somewhat more dramatically during playoff and super bowl weeks. It not only during NFL season that domestic violence occurs; Tina Orr-Munro documents that during the World Cup season, domestic violence in England rises by as much as 30 percent during football matches. In some areas of Manchester, there are football posters with the words ' strike her' inscribed on the back. For some in Washington DC area, Redskins do not end with the final whistle. The emergency wards of area hospitals report increases in admission of women in the categories of stabbings, gunshot wounds, assaults and " accidental" falls in the hours following the games. For reasons <https://assignbuster.com/domestic-violence-during-football-season-criminology-essay/>

that are as yet a matter of speculation, the increases occur only after Redskins victories. In a study by Bebbler (2008) examining linkage between professional football and domestic violence, relying on 26102 days of domestic violence reports collected in 15 cities and 1155 professional games, they pointed out a systematic relationship between the two. The findings suggest a tentative link between the occurrence of a professional football game and an increase in domestic violence incidents in that city.

Causes of the increase in domestic violence

One leading explanation for domestic violence during football season involves power motivation. Home team wins are followed by an increase in anti-social behavior because fans derive an increased sense of personal power from observing their favorite team emerge victorious. The resulting increase in power motivation finds violent expression in interpersonal relationships in which disagreements that might otherwise be resolved by negotiation and compromise are settled by force. Football being a violent sporting event has harmful, even deadly, effects on the public at large. The principle is that if one watches something violent, they get worked up. Football provokes violence because it is a violent sport. Brimicombe and Cafe (2008) concur and argue that winning a football match is about power, and violence about women is the ultimate form of society in this patriarchal society.

There is a complicated relationship between football games likely to increase viewer anxiety and involvement (i. e. games expected to be close and/or meaningful) and domestic violence. Unlike baseball, basketball, and hockey,

football fans are forced to live with the results of a bad game for a week. The slate cannot be washed clean as quickly as it would be for those other major televised sports. Combined with midweek frustration, maximal distance from weekend, simmering resentments and, for some, lost bets, this frustration may take several days after the game to go away. Along those lines, those who bet on football need a week to recoup weekend losses. Through this time, those losses may rankle, particularly if one's spouse or family members are aware of the wagering and annoyed with the activity itself of its outcome.

Another cause of increase in domestic violence during football season is the increase in alcohol and drug abuse associated with these periods. People celebrate football game wins with parties and gatherings during which large quantities of alcohol and other substances may be consumed. It is quite reasonable that this heady mixture of macho values and alcohol would lead to higher rates of domestic violence. Many cities and colleges have tailgating areas around footballs where large groups can gather. Tailgating during football matches usually involves high consumption of alcohol, which in turn can affect the judgment of the fans and possible increase in domestic violence and crime generally. Alcohol abuse and drug abuse are highly correlated with violent behavior. Empirical studies of domestic violence and football indicate an increase in alcohol-related domestic violence on football game seasons and the number of incidents is greater when an upset occurs (Ayres & Treadwell, 2012). The use of steroids among football players has also been shown to contribute to violent temper and aggressive tendencies

which are often carried even off the field to the spouses and girlfriends of the players.

Another cause of increased domestic violence comes from the football players themselves. A number of male football players are publicized more often for deviant acts such as domestic violence, sexual assaults and substance abuse. One study based on cases of university violence from 1991 through 1993 found that male footballers, who comprise less than 3 percent of all male students, accounted for 19 percent of the reported sexual assaults and 35 -percent of the reported instances of domestic violence (Guilianotti, Bonney & Hepworth, 1994). In football matches, intensive aggressiveness is considered even necessary for success. This could be replicated by the players even after the games in their homes resulting in domestic violence

Prevention of domestic violence during football season

Many police departments have noted the problem of increased domestic violence during football season and designed countermeasures and recommendations to deal with this rising crime. Each police unit or authorities dealing with cases of domestic violence should identify their top ten offenders of domestic violence, and visit them prior to the football games to reinforce the message that action will be taken in case of reports of any domestic violence. During the season, police should pay attention to these individuals who are known perpetrators of domestic violence as well as known victims. The law enforcement agencies can institute curfews or any other necessary measures that can help prevent domestic violence.

Individuals known to have a high risk of domestic violence should be reminded of the dire consequences that they could face if they commit the crime. These may include jail terms for violence, loss of custody of their children, bans from bars for fighting, and withdrawal of social housing among others. These could significantly discourage any incidents of domestic violence. This approach has been proven effective in Scotland, where the Strachclyde police authorities contacted 800 known offenders prior to a major match - Old Firm Match through text messages (Bebber, 2008). This initiative was associated with substantial prevention of cases of domestic violence.

Domestic violence experts and investigators should be on duty during football matches, offering key support as soon as possible. This has been adopted in Wales and England where police officers and other professionals who specialize in domestic violence are at hand during the matches so as to provide guidance to officers at the scene so that they are aware of what to look out for (Stott, Hoggett and Pearson, 2012). These professionals can also help carry out further enquires. In addition, the police officers should conduct extra patrols in and around town centers during and after the matches. Increased police presence could prevent acts of domestic violence.

Victims of domestic abuse are referred to relevant support networks as soon as possible. The victims should be reminded of the different services that are available to them and warn the perpetrators of the destructive effects of domestic violence. To enhance the reporting of cases of domestic violence, helplines and emergency lines should be availed and campaigns detailing the numbers and highlighting victim support conducted. Victims should be

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assured that when they call for help, it will be provided and necessary action and measures taken. The football authorities should take a more proactive role in addressing domestic violence during the football season since they can reach out to clubs and fans in a more efficient way. Scott, Hoggett and Pearson (2012) highlight an example of such a program - white ribbon campaign, exists in Liverpool which highlights domestic violence, in partnership with football clubs.

In addition, campaigns can be launched to remind the victims of domestic violence should report crimes while warning offenders that their behavior will not be tolerated. The police forces should work together with other agencies such as city and county councils to increase awareness about the increased risk of domestic violence during football seasons. For instance, during the 2010 world cup, the police units in Derbyshire designed posters which gave advice on domestic violence and posted them on public places such as bars, public hospitals, sport centers and libraries (Brimicombe and Cafe, 2012). Other broadcast media such as radio and television as well as posters on buses can be utilized. To encourage the fans to pick up campaign materials such as leaflets, they can be designed with the match fixtures for the season and be widely distributed in bars, shops and businesses selling football merchandise. These campaigns can also incorporate messages of hope from reformed offenders. For instance, during the Euro 2012, reformed offenders teamed together to produce a powerful video that was part of a campaign with interviews highlighting how domestic violence is detrimental to the spouses and other family members who are victims of the crime.

. Since alcohol and other drugs are a significant factor in domestic violence during football season; the police can institute stricter measures and penalties to discourage their use during matches. For example, licensing authorities can place conditions, such as a limit on the hours of operations, so as to minimize excessive abuse of alcohol and reduce disorder. Other measures may include prohibition of alcohol and related drinks in the football stadiums and screening of intoxicated fans coming to watch the game (Ayres & Treadwell, 2012). The football authorities should impose heavy penalties on any of the players who engage in domestic violence even if it's off the field. This will help to uphold the image of these players as role models worth emulating.