

The ethical issue in the case of selected football supporters: deontology or consequentialism?

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Abstract:

This article deals with the ethical approach of the selected football supporters to some negative features appearing in football visitors' behavior. The group of respondents consists of 158 supporters of Slavia Praha (Czech football club). Within the questionnaire survey, which was made in the seasons 2015/16 and 2016/17, seven negative phenomena were selected and examined. Respondents' opinion about the rate of negative influence, as well as the rate of active participation, were collected and expressed via Likert Scale. The statistical evaluation of the data included correlation matrices, cluster analysis and correspondence analysis. The deontological and consequentialist positions determining a major character of the ethical approach are described in the next part of the paper in short. The role of deontology for care of duties and obeying rule is explained within discussion. In conclusion, we argue that the evaluation of the results does not evince any signs of deontological approach apparent within the selected group of respondents.

Key words: Cluster analysis, correlation matrices, correspondence analysis, deontological position, ethical approach, ultras.

Introduction

Within our study, we focus on some ethical aspects of a selected group of football (soccer) supporters. We examined the behavior of supporters during football matches, and, at the same time, we investigated their opinions about some controversial ways of football supporter's actions. We selected a specific group of visitors, which consists of supporters (ultras). We did it for the next reasons: supporters present a very active group of football visitors and they are strongly engaged in many actions. They are the bearers of choreography in a match, use pyrotechnics to support their teams, banners, singing, and show their disapproval against the movement 'Against Modern Football'. Supporters take every match very seriously and are interested in club life. During the match, they support a team and players from the side terraces behind the goals (ends). Nearly every fan is dressed in a club uniform, T-shirt, or at least owns a scarf of their favorite club. Opposite to hooligans, supporters mostly avoid criminal actions and the majority of visitors usually accept their support of the teams in a positive way. On the other hand, sometimes they participate in some controversial behavior of football visitors.

In this paper, we would like to pay attention on the declared proclamations towards some negative symptoms of football supporting and to compare these expressions with the rate of their real participation in some problem events. Supporters are proud on keeping some rules and they use some positive behavior patterns. Therefore, we can undoubtedly speak about a specific ethics of supporters. Our aim is to examine the nature of these ethics in more detail and in a philosophical discourse distinguishing between the approaches based on deontology and consequentialism. We consider that supporters present a very diverse and inconsistent group of football visitors in which we can find many extremes. Our research describes just one group of visitors which can hardly be taken as representative in a large European scale. We examined the Czech supporters, and we argue that some (of course with the limits which we describe in the next lines) quite general outputs obtained from the research can be provided. We tried to make a proper selection of respondents and the size of the group is large enough for basic statistic evaluation. However, our aim was not to interpret the exact results but to display some trends uncovering the ways of thinking of the selected respondents' basic ethical issues. That is why our results coming from the quantitative research methods and their statistic evaluation present just a frame for the interpretation of some ethic approaches.

Football fans and supporter behavior has been already examined in Europe from the perspective of possible negative effects since 1970s (e.g. Taylor, 1971). However, even if we focus on some more modern investigations (after 2000), we can hardly find any investigations which are directly related to some principal ethical issues coming from the philosophical viewpoint. Here we mean distinguishing between the major discourses based either on deontology, or on consequentialism. The ethical problems in football were examined in the context of racism (Alegria, 2012; Amara & Henry, 2010; Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Cleland, 2013), in

the context of new technologies (Griffiths, Light & McGarrie, 2008; McLean & Wainwright, 2009), or on the local level describing situation in different countries, like Poland (Gonda, 2013), Romania (Gutu, 2018), Serbia (Djordjevic, 2018), Turkey (Battini & Kosulu, 2018), or Italy (Guschwan, 2017). Recently there have been published some more general studies about football and football fandom from the broader philosophical perspective (Borge & McNamee, 2017; Davis, 2015). Some more specific topics, like gender problems (concerning female football), connected with ethics have been recently investigated, as well (Berg, Migliaccio & Anzini-Varesio, 2014). The feministic approach examining the sexual assaults in media was applied in the study of Waterhouse-Watson (2016). Some publications were also devoted to violence in football (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Davis & Ryall, 2017), or some other negative features of fandom, like homophobia (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Frosdick & Marsh, 2005; Krøvel, 2016), or alcohol (Ayres & Treadwell, 2011; Dunning, Murphy & Williams, 1988; Frosdick & Marsh, 2005; Palmer, 2014). We should also mention some concrete analyses of players' behavior, which can influence the ethics of supporters (Amster, 2015; Gibbons & Nuttall, 2017).

However, the basis of football supporters' ethics, or more concretely deontology versus consequentialism issue, was sufficiently analyzed neither in the theoretical, nor in the empirical frame in the scientific literature yet. Our research and its interpretation present just a small piece of contribution which could open this (as we hope) challenging chapter for the future. We examined a selected group of Czech football supporters within a broader research, which primarily investigated behavior of the respondents during football matches and their opinions about some negative phenomena appearing in football stadiums.

The situation in Czechoslovakia and Czech football developed in a similar way as it was in the other Central European countries but there can be also some specific features reminded coming from the long football tradition and some successes in Czechoslovakia national football teams (vice-champions in World Cup 1934 and 1962, or European champions 1976). After 1989 some changes in the organization structures of Czech football came (Strachová, 2013) which led, together with some political developments, towards changes of Czech football supporters' behavior. Some trends to their radicalization and rise of aggression towards referees, their rivals' fans (or players) appeared. On the other hand, Czech national team got silver medal (Euro 1996) and bronze medal (Euro 2004). The negative phenomena visible in fans' behavior were examined within some elite Czech football clubs, like Bohemians Prague 1905 (Ďurica, 2016), or Slavia Prague (Scholz, 2016).

We argue that some contradictions between the proclaimed perception and real behavior of football supporters, which were examined in our research, can help to understand the ethics of the selected respondents more in detail and from a bit different point of view than it is usually applied.

Material & methods

Our empirical research was focused on the supporters of Slavia Prague (a Czech football club). Within the survey, we obtained and analyzed data about the mutual relationship between supporters' opinion about some negative demonstrations of football visitors' behavior and about their actual violent behavior.

Primary data were collected by a questionnaire survey mainly at the Eden stadium in the seasons 2015/16 and 2016/17 (25 matches). A total of 158 respondents aged 23.01 ± 10.11 years old participated in this research, all the respondents were attending in a stand of home team supporters. Six questionnaires from supporters were answered incorrectly and incompletely, therefore, they were not included in the research. The selection of respondents was based on carefully pre-defined factors; e.g. seats 1, 3, 5, 7 in the first row; seats 2, 4, 6, 8 in the second row etc. from all the rows. The respondents were informed about the research and anonymity of the questionnaire. Once they answered the questionnaires, each of them received a small Slavia club badge. They had also the opportunity to contact the interviewer on the email stated on the questionnaire list to be informed about the research results.

For the purposes of our research, we selected seven kinds of demonstration of violent behavior: firing of pyrotechnics, using vulgar expressions, demolishing stadium, expressions of racism, throwing of objects onto the pitch, pitch incursion and boos. The responses were scalable, where respondents recorded on Likert scale (1-5) their opinions about these activities. The least serious activity was rated as 1, the most significant activity received 5. Behavior was also examined via Likert scale where the rate of participation in the activity was evaluated like this: 1 = always, 2 = often, 3 = rarely, 4 = never.

For the evaluation of the results, Statistica 13 EN Program was used.

The point of the analyses consisted in examining mutual relations between the proclaimed opinions and the actual ways of behavior. The basic postulate here was that if the respondents evaluated the concrete way of acting as more serious problem, then their rate of participation in it would be lower. More detailed explanation of this strategy is included in the discussion part of this paper.

In the phase of evaluation of the data, some main statistical outputs were obtained and evaluated. Normality of data distribution was evaluated, and the normal distribution was confirmed. The Correlation Matrices (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient) were used as the basic instrument for examining the selected and followed relations. Some other instruments were used to support the interpretation of the results. For better understanding of them within this paper, we selected two of the statistical methods, which had seemed to display some interesting outputs: the Cluster Analysis and the Correspondence Analysis.

It is necessary to emphasize here that the major task of this paper is not to bring any detailed and deeply elaborated statistical analyses of the gathered data. Our aim is different: we argue a new concept of examining the motivation of violent ways of thinking and behavior of football supporters according to two different approaches – deontology, or consequentialism. Hereby we ask a key question whether it is possible to investigate this problem via a direct comparison of opinions about the negative activities with a direct participation in them. The questioning is more difficult in this case than the answer itself. In this point, our approach is more philosophical than scientific, in its principle. On the other hand, the concrete obtained data and the consequent analysis of them can help us to catch some possible contradictions in the relation, which can be labeled as opinion versus behavior. Provided some contradictions are discovered, we can examine them as some serious obstacles for applying the deontological approach to seven selected phenomena (violent expressions in football). The weaker position of deontological motives could support the position of consequentialism. This trend can contain some strong sociological and psychological aspects.

Definitely, the problem is more complex, we can also speak about “better deontology through consequentialism” (Thomas, 2015, 4), or we can mention some consequentializing attributes of moral theories (Portmore, 2007). A more complex approach to the problem will be examined in discussion more in detail. Here we mention this topic in order to set the methodology in the proper context.

Results

In this part of the paper, we present selected parts of our findings and their statistical evaluation. Some more detailed descriptions of the aims of the complex empiric questionnaire research, as well as more detailed results of have already been published (e.g. Scholz, 2015, 2016).

We established 14 variables (7 cases of opinion, 7 cases of behavior). Spearman Correlation Matrices made in round-robin system (14 versus 14) proved 26 statistically significant items. However, the majority of them present correlations between the same types of items (either opinion, or behavior). Within the matrix based on 7 versus 7 (opinion versus behavior), we found just 2 statistically significant items (Table 1). The first case is presented by the correlation between opinion and behavior concerning expressing vulgarisms. Here the rate of correlation is quite low (0,169) and what is surprising it is negative. The second case is presented by the correlation between the opinion about throwing subjects into the pitch and participation in pitch incursion. Once more, the rate of correlation is low (0,167) and it is negative. Some other data (like a level of statistical significance etc.) are displayed in the Table 1.

Table 1: Spearman Correlation Matrices

Spearman Rank Order Correlations MD pairwise deleted / Marked correlations are significant at p < .05000							
Experience Opinion	Vulgar chants in the stand	Firing of pyrotechnics	Demolishing stadium and other riots	Racism	Pitch incursion	Throwing of object onto the pitch	Boos
Vulgar chants in the stand	-0.169	0.126	0.037	0.026	-0.065	-0.119	0.130
Firing of pyrotechnics	-0.012	0.008	0.103	0.029	-0.046	-0.085	0.083
Demolishing stadium and other riots	-0.048	0.040	0.090	-0.038	-0.045	-0.067	0.036
Racism	-0.050	-0.034	0.069	-0.034	-0.148	-0.136	0.006
Pitch incursion	-0.058	-0.019	-0.127	0.060	-0.109	-0.122	0.070
Throwing of object onto the pitch	-0.027	0.025	0.046	-0.011	-0.167	-0.149	0.067
Boos	0.024	0.019	0.110	-0.021	-0.041	-0.026	0.001

We can argue that this result is relatively surprising because both the scales were based on the similar basis and the number of respondents was high enough to find significant correlations if any are included. In general, we can at least notice that any close relations between proclaimed evaluation of seriousness of the followed activities and practical participation in them have not been found. Our presumption that respondents prove a lower rate of participation in the ways of acting which they consider a more serious problem completely failed.

To understand some specific situations better, we applied some other kinds of statistical analyses. The results of Cluster Analysis are displayed in Figure 1.

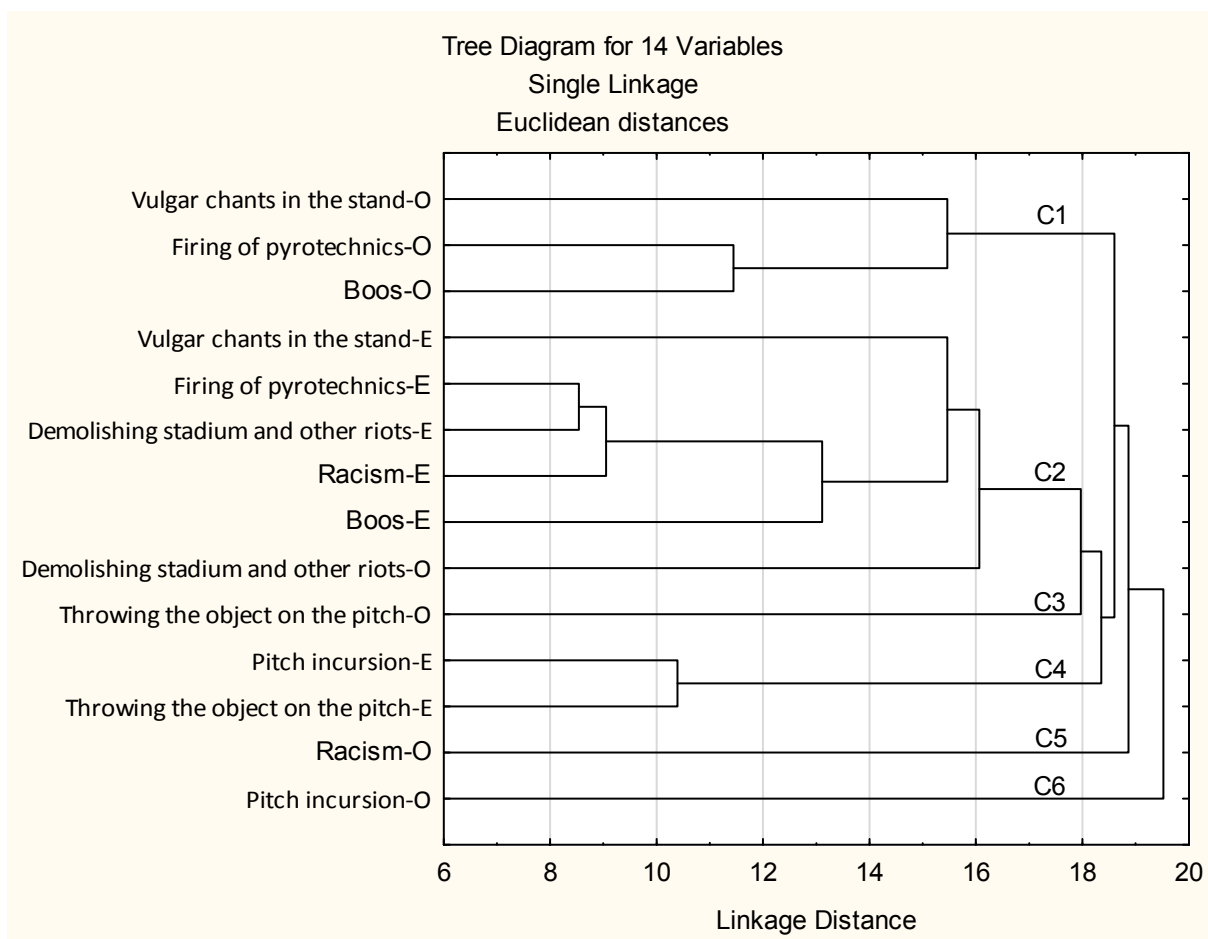


Fig. 1. Cluster Analysis

In the Linkage Distance of 17 we can find six clusters. The first (C1) consists of the opinion on the phenomena generally evaluated as less serious problems (vulgarisms, boos, firing of pyrotechnics).

C2 contains participation in the similar phenomena (vulgarisms, firing of pyrotechnics, boos) and in two more serious problems (racism and demolitions of stadium and other riots). The last item included in this cluster is opinion about demolishing stadium and other riots.

The clusters C3, C5 and C6 are presented each by one phenomenon. C4 combine two kinds of participation – in pitch incursion and throwing objects into the pitch.

Our interpretation of the Cluster Analysis confirms the results of the correlation matrices. There are some relations between different phenomena within the expressed opinions, as well as within the self-confessed participation. No specific significant relations within one phenomenon based on the link between opinion and participation were found.

For more detailed findings, we applied the Correspondence Analysis, which was made for each of 7 phenomena. Here all the responses in the scale are displayed, 1–5 in the case of opinion (row coordinates) and 1–4 in the case of participation (column coordinates). In three cases (pitch incursion, throwing objects into the pitch and demolition of stadium) we did not find any significant result. Figures 2–5 display the corresponding results caught within the other 4 phenomena.

Concerning firing of pyrotechnics, we can notice the circled results (Figure 2). Row coordinates (opinion) including the low level of seriousness correspondent with those columns that prove the low level of participation (rarely, or never). In the case of using vulgarisms, we can find the lowest level of column coordinate (always participate) correspondent with the responses displaying the high level of row coordinates (rate of seriousness) in the circled zone (Figure 3). In the case of boos we can register corresponding relations between the low level of row coordinates and the middle level of column coordinates in the circle zone (Figure 4). The last case includes the expressions of racism. In the circled zone, we can find high level of column coordinate (no participation) correspondent with low level of row coordinate (low rate of seriousness) in Figure 5.

These results display remarkable trends and include some exact partial outputs. We would like to describe the results more in detail within discussion.

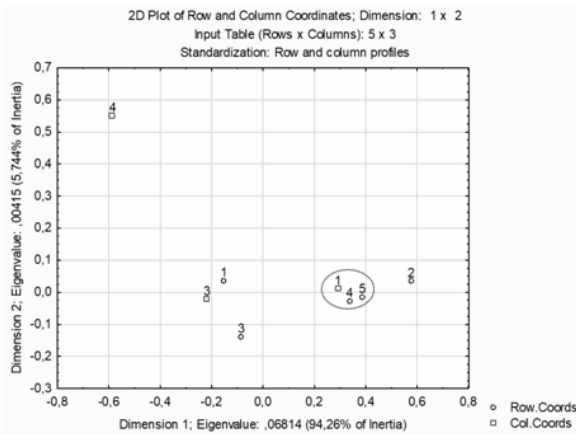


Fig. 2. Correspondence Analysis – firing of pyrotechnics

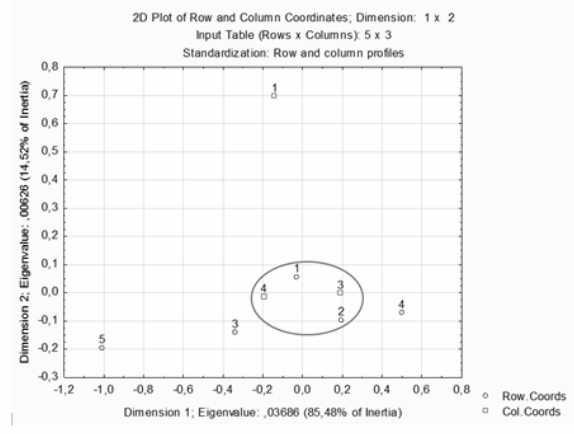


Fig. 3. Correspondence Analysis – vulgarisms

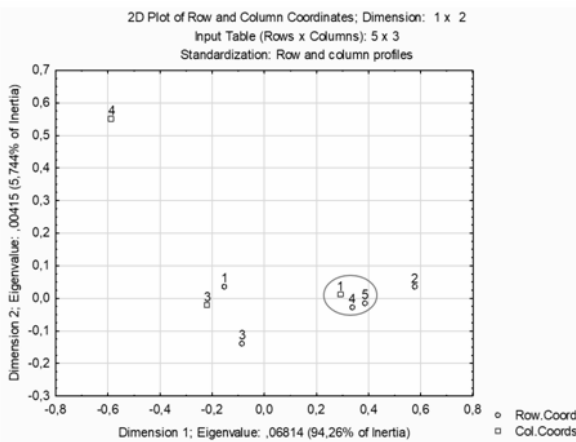


Fig. 4. Correspondence Analysis – boos

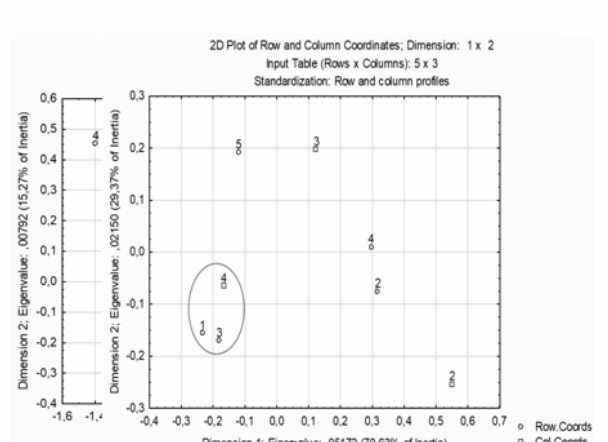


Fig. 5. Correspondence Analysis – racism

Discussion

In this part of the paper we focus on the interpretation of our results from the logical approach coming from the ethic discourse. There is no place here to describe the principles of deontology and consequentialism within this chapter. We can just mention Rawl’s explanation that the deontic values (justified under justice as fairness) are anchored to well-defined distributive outcomes, “and dependent upon the acquisition of primary goods” (Rawls 1972, 72). We would not like to argue for any moral position here. As Paterson (2010) says, consequentialists can honor the special moral status of persons in a very significant way. There have been many studies published recently which provide very diverse approaches to this issue (deontology and/versus consequentialism). We can also register some very concrete investigations of this topic in the application sphere, e. g. medicine ethics (Playford, Roberts & Playford, 2015).

Our logical link is quite plain and reflects the essential difference between deontology and consequentialism. It is presented by this key question: are we concerned more about duties (deontic position) approach, or more about consequences (consequentialist position)? No matter how this question presents just an introduction to the complex and complicated topic in a very simplified form, we argue that it makes a good sense to ask this question.

However, at this place we should emphasize that we know about the limits of our examination from the quantitative point of view. We have the exact statistical analyses of the obtained data available but we do not want to argue that any partial output could be understood as a proof of our interpretation. What is important for our explanation is the basic trend apparent if we put more partial outputs together. This fact presents a difference between our research and majority of researches which are patterned on the quantitative form. We applied the statistical evaluation of the data and obtained the detailed quantitative survey items but our interpretation consists much more in the qualitative way of expression. In fact, it means that we follow the general trends, especially, and the measurable outputs signify just the background for our interpretation.

Coming back to the focus on duty (opposite to consequence) we can lay the first postulate: concerns about duty demand a strong interest in the way of establishing processes. It means a need for delimitation of some rules and obeying them in any phase of the process.

The second postulate could be expressed like this: if we believe that some rules are correct and proper (and we claim for them), we should behave in harmony with this belief.

These two plain ideas can help us explain the leading motive of our conclusions. From this point of view, it is not as important how many statistically significant cases are contained in the outputs of the statistical analyses exactly. Much more interesting is searching for some corresponding aspects in relations between the proclaimed opinions of respondents about some negative phenomena in supporter's behavior and between their personal participation in these activities, in general.

Our approach was not established in searching for negative links which could be falsified as scientific hypotheses. We were searching for some positive correlations between opinions and behavior within each of the selected phenomena. For this reason we applied more statistical instruments which should help us to find any links of this type. Within this interpretation we selected three of them – Spearman Correlation Matrices, Cluster Analysis and Correspondence Analysis.

Correlation Matrices (Table 1) display 49 items from which we register just 2 statistically significant cases. In addition, the significance is very low (approx. 0.17) and the relation is negative. The clusters apparent within Cluster Analysis are made by the same type of characteristic (either opinions, or behavior) of the phenomena. There is no cluster here which includes both different types. Thus both 2 instruments prove no proper links between opinion and behavior.

Some more detailed relations could be discovered via Correspondence Analysis because this instrument is focused directly on searching for relations like these. Within 3 selected phenomena (pitch incursion, throwing objects into the pitch and demolition of stadium and other riots) there were no significant result found. Figure 2 (pyrotechnics) displays that the low level of seriousness correspondent with low level of participation. Figure 3 (vulgarisms) presents the cases of high level of seriousness with high level of participation. Figure 5 proves the low level of seriousness corresponds with the low level of participation. These cases present just these items which correspond each other (the other items in both analyses are irrelevant). However, the character of correspondence within these 3 phenomena is negative which means it is opposite to our logical presumption. Figure 4 (boos) displays the low level of seriousness with a middle level of participation. This result can be considered as irrelevant for any meaningful interpretation.

Conclusions

We argue that from our presumptions we could discover some links between opinion and behavior of our respondents within seven selected phenomena completely failed. The deontological approach is based on the care of duties and obeying rules in different phases of processes. If the respondents were led by the deontological principle, some correlation between opinion and behavior would be evident.

The group of respondents is not as representative as we can present our results in more general context. However, concerning this group of respondents we can argue that the active behavior of these respondents does not reflect their evaluation of negative features apparent in football visitors' behavior. Considering this finding we can argue that the ethical approach of the respondents to the examined phenomena does not evince any signs of the deontological position.

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