

# Examining the Differences in Sports Aggression Tendencies among Players in Selangor Football Club

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## Abstract

Aggression in sports can influence athletic performance in both positive and negative ways. This study examines the factors affecting aggressive behavior tendencies among football players of Selangor Football Club (FC). The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) was used to assess four dimensions of aggression: physical aggression (Aggression Factor I), verbal aggression (Aggression Factor II), anger (Aggression Factor III), and hostility (Aggression Factor IV). The sample consisted of 67 players, and the study analyzed how variables such as educational background, years of experience, and team affiliation relate to aggression tendencies. The results showed that neither educational background nor years of experience significantly impacted aggression, as the p-values for all four aggression factors—physical aggression ( $p = 0.600$ ), verbal aggression ( $p = 0.953$ ), anger ( $p = 0.995$ ), and hostility ( $p = 0.864$ )—were all greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences. Additionally, no significant differences were found among players from different teams ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, a significant difference was observed between national and international players, with international players exhibiting higher levels of physical aggression ( $p = 0.002$ ), verbal aggression ( $p = 0.001$ ), and hostility ( $p = 0.05$ ). These findings suggest that international players of Selangor FC demonstrate higher tendencies for physical, verbal, and hostile aggression than their national counterparts. The study contributes to understanding aggression in football, particularly in the context of player participation levels.

**Keywords:** Aggressive Behaviour, Sports Aggression, Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)

## Introduction

Aggression in sports has been a central focus in psychological and sociological research, given its significant impact on athletic performance, behavior, and team dynamics. Early 20th-

century theories suggested that sports provided an outlet for inherent violent tendencies, viewing aggression as an instinctive drive triggered by frustration or competition. Modern research, however, highlights the multifaceted nature of aggression, shaped by individual and contextual factors. While often seen negatively, certain forms of aggression, such as assertive, rule-abiding behaviors, can enhance athletic performance by intensifying competition (Bredemeier, 1994; Widmeyer & Birch, 1984).

Aggression in sports is often classified into two types: hostile aggression, which aims to harm opponents, and instrumental aggression, which strategically employs aggression to achieve goals, such as gaining possession of the ball (Silva, 1983). Studies suggest that experienced athletes rely more on instrumental aggression, while hostile aggression is less prevalent (Coulomb & Pfister, 1998). Additionally, factors such as gender, playing position, and sport type influence aggression expression, as seen in research showing that male athletes and those in contact sports exhibit higher aggression levels (Muhammad, 2019; Safraoui, 2014). Understanding aggression is vital for enhancing athletic performance, ensuring player safety, and promoting sportsmanship. Football, as a highly competitive and physically demanding sport, frequently involves aggression, both as a strategic tool and a response to intense pressure. While assertive aggression can enhance performance, excessive hostility risks harming players and disrupting team dynamics.

Despite this growing body of literature, there remains a lack of research on the factors driving aggression in football players within the Malaysian context. Focusing on Selangor FC, this study examines how factors such as educational background, experience, and team affiliation influence aggression tendencies. Comparing national and international players offers unique insights into how different levels of participation shape aggression. This research aims to provide actionable insights for coaches, sports psychologists, and policymakers on channeling aggression positively, developing interventions, and fostering fair play. The research objectives are (1) to explore the differences in aggression tendencies based on players' educational background, years of experience, and team affiliation and (2) to compare aggression levels between national and international players at Selangor FC. These findings aim to inform strategies that mitigate excessive aggression, enhance player behavior, and improve team dynamics and performance.

### **Literature Review**

Aggression in sports is behavior intended to harm another individual who seeks to avoid such treatment (Baron & Richardson, 1994). While often seen as negative, some researchers argue that aggression can enhance performance when it remains assertive and within the game's rules (Bredemeier, 1994; Widmeyer & Birch, 1984). Aggression is categorized as either hostile, aimed at causing harm, or instrumental, used as a strategy to achieve a goal, such as winning possession in rugby (Silva, 1983). Experienced athletes are more likely to use instrumental aggression effectively, relying on self-control to avoid hostile behaviors (Coulomb & Pfister, 1998).

Gender differences are evident in aggression levels, with male athletes generally displaying higher physical aggression than females (Muhammad, 2019). However, studies have shown that female athletes in certain roles, such as attackers, may exhibit higher aggression than their counterparts in defensive positions (Ahlawat, 2018). An athlete's role and position can

influence their aggression levels, as attackers often engage in more physical and competitive confrontations.

Contact sports, such as football and rugby, are associated with higher levels of physical, emotional, and competitive aggression than non-contact sports (Safraoui, 2014). Athletes in contact sports often view aggression as necessary for success. This normalization of aggression is reinforced by the sports culture, where behaviors like physical dominance and competitiveness are valued, particularly in male-dominated environments (Lemieux et al., 2002).

Aggression in sports is also shaped by socialization. In hockey, for instance, aggression is often normalized and tied to perceptions of masculinity and success (Pappas & McKenry, 2004). Athletes internalize these norms, which can influence their behaviors on and off the field. Such cultural reinforcement may escalate violence beyond competition, emphasizing the need to carefully manage aggressive behaviors.

In summary, aggression in sports can have both functional and harmful effects, influenced by factors such as gender, role, sport type, and cultural norms. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for managing aggression and promoting positive behaviors in sports.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Design*

This study uses a quantitative, non-experimental design to explore sports aggression tendencies among national and international footballers at Selangor FC. Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through email and in person.

### *Population and Sampling*

The sampling method employed in this study was purposive sampling. Selangor FC competes in several leagues, including the Malaysia Super League, Malaysia Reserve League, President Cup, and Belia Cup, with four active teams. However, only three teams, Selangor 2, Selangor President Cup, and Selangor Belia Cup, participated in this research. Each team consists of approximately 25 players, yielding 75 footballers. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, the sample size was 66 players.

### *Instrumentation*

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section collected demographic information, while the second section assessed sports aggression tendencies using the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) (Buss & Perry, 1992). The BPAQ has demonstrated strong reliability, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. The subscales for physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility showed reliability values of 0.83, 0.81, 0.85, and 0.86, respectively (Asma & Waqar, 2020). The questionnaire includes four dimensions: physical aggression (Aggression Factor I), verbal aggression (Aggression Factor II), anger (Aggression Factor III), and hostility (Aggression Factor IV). It contains 29 items, with nine items assessing physical aggression, five measuring verbal aggression, seven evaluating anger, and eight focused on hostility. Participants rated their responses on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (extremely uncharacteristic of me) to 5 (extremely characteristic of me).

*Data Collection Procedure*

The preliminary procedures for this research involved establishing communication with the management and administrative team of Selangor FC to acquire pertinent information regarding the footballers and to obtain formal approval to conduct the study. A detailed briefing on the study's objectives, significance, and methodology was presented to the management, administrative staff, and players to ensure transparency and understanding of their involvement as research participants. Data collection was tailored to the logistical requirements of each team: for the Selangor Belia team, questionnaires were distributed in person following a training session, while for the Selangor 2 and Selangor President teams, questionnaires were disseminated electronically via Google Forms.

*Data Analysis*

Descriptive analysis was employed to examine the demographic variables' means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations. All data were analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . An independent samples t-test was conducted to assess differences in sports aggression tendencies between national and international footballers of Selangor FC. Additionally, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare sports aggression tendencies across different groups based on educational background, years of experience, and team affiliation.

**Results and Findings***Demographic Analysis*

Table 4.1

*Demographic Analysis*

| <b>Demographic Profile</b>     | <b>Frequency (n)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Educational Background</b>  |                      |                       |
| Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) | 52                   | 77.6                  |
| Diploma                        | 13                   | 19.4                  |
| Bachelor's degree              | 2                    | 3.0                   |
| <b>Years of Experience</b>     |                      |                       |
| 1 to 3 years                   | 7                    | 10.4                  |
| 4 to 6 years                   | 28                   | 41.8                  |
| More than 6 years              | 32                   | 47.8                  |
| <b>Team</b>                    |                      |                       |
| Selangor 2                     | 20                   | 29.9                  |
| Selangor President team        | 24                   | 35.8                  |
| Selangor Belia team            | 23                   | 34.3                  |
| <b>Level of Participation</b>  |                      |                       |
| National                       | 43                   | 64.2                  |
| International                  | 24                   | 35.8                  |

As presented in Table 4.1, the majority of respondents, 77.6% ( $n = 52$ ), held the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) qualification, followed by 19.4% ( $n = 13$ ) with a diploma and 3.0% ( $n = 2$ )

holding a bachelor's degree. In terms of football experience, 47.8% (n = 32) of respondents had more than six years of experience, 41.8% (n = 28) had between four to six years, and 10.4% (n = 7) had one to three years of experience. Regarding team affiliation, 35.8% (n = 24) represented the Selangor President team, 34.3% (n = 23) were from the Selangor Belia team, and 29.9% (n = 20) played for Selangor 2. Finally, 64.2% (n = 43) of the respondents participated nationally, while 35.8% (n = 24) competed internationally. These results highlight the diverse educational backgrounds, varying levels of experience, and a balanced representation across teams and participation levels within the sample.

### *Inferential Analysis*

Table 4.2

#### *One-way ANOVA for aggression among respondents based on educational background*

|                       | df | Mean Square | F    | Sig. |
|-----------------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Aggression Factor I   | 2  | 54.045      | .515 | .600 |
| Aggression Factor II  | 2  | 1.335       | .048 | .953 |
| Aggression Factor III | 2  | .230        | .005 | .995 |
| Aggression Factor IV  | 2  | 11.309      | .146 | .864 |

Table 4.2 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA test examining the differences in sports aggression tendencies among respondents with varying educational backgrounds: SPM leavers, diploma holders, and bachelor's degree holders. The p-values for the four aggression factors were as follows: Aggression Factor I (p = 0.600), Aggression Factor II (p = 0.953), Aggression Factor III (p = 0.995), and Aggression Factor IV (p = 0.864). As all p-values exceed the significance threshold of 0.05, the analysis indicates no statistically significant differences in sports aggression tendencies across the three educational groups.

Table 4.3

#### *One-way ANOVA for aggression among respondents based on years of experience*

|                       | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|-----------------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Aggression Factor I   | 2  | 61.532      | .588  | .559 |
| Aggression Factor II  | 2  | 36.135      | 1.348 | .267 |
| Aggression Factor III | 2  | 17.349      | .367  | .694 |
| Aggression Factor IV  | 2  | 29.545      | .385  | .682 |

Table 4.3 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA test examining the differences in sports aggression tendencies based on the respondents' years of experience playing football. The groups tested include respondents with one to three years of experience, four to six years of experience, and more than six years of experience. The p-values for Aggression Factor I (p = 0.559), Aggression Factor II (p = 0.267), Aggression Factor III (p = 0.694), and Aggression Factor IV (p = 0.682) all exceed the significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the analysis indicates no significant differences in sports aggression tendencies among the three experience groups.

Table 4.4

*One-way ANOVA for aggression among respondents based on teams played by respondents.*

|                       | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|-----------------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Aggression Factor I   | 2  | 61.532      | .588  | .208 |
| Aggression Factor II  | 2  | 36.135      | 1.348 | .954 |
| Aggression Factor III | 2  | 17.349      | .367  | .345 |
| Aggression Factor IV  | 2  | 29.545      | .385  | .359 |

Table 4.4 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA test examining sports aggression tendencies among respondents from different teams, specifically the Selangor 2 team, the Selangor President Team, and the Selangor Belia team. The p-values for Aggression Factor I ( $p = 0.208$ ), Aggression Factor II ( $p = 0.954$ ), Aggression Factor III ( $p = 0.345$ ), and Aggression Factor IV ( $p = 0.359$ ) all exceed the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the results indicate no significant differences in sports aggression tendencies among the three teams.

Table 4.5

*Independent sample T-test on respondents' participation level and the Aggression Factor*

|                       | Level of Participation | n  | Mean   | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----|--------|----|-----------------|
| Aggression Factor I   | National               | 43 | 21.852 | 65 | .002            |
|                       | International          | 24 | 29.527 |    |                 |
| Aggression Factor II  | National               | 43 | 11.302 | 65 | .001            |
|                       | International          | 24 | 15.375 |    |                 |
| Aggression Factor III | National               | 43 | 17.628 | 65 | .225            |
|                       | International          | 24 | 19.744 |    |                 |
| Aggression Factor IV  | National               | 43 | 19.337 | 65 | .005            |
|                       | International          | 24 | 25.369 |    |                 |

Table 4.5 presents the results of an independent samples t-test analyzing the differences in aggression factors between respondents competing at the national and international levels. The findings are discussed below:

#### *Aggression Factor I (Physical Aggression)*

Respondents at the national level had a mean score of 21.852, while those at the international level reported a higher mean of 29.527. The p-value for this comparison was 0.002, below the significance threshold of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference in physical aggression tendencies between national and international players, with international players demonstrating higher levels of physical aggression.

#### *Aggression Factor II (Verbal Aggression)*

For verbal aggression, respondents at the national level had a mean score of 11.302, compared to 15.375 for respondents at the international level. The p-value for this factor was 0.001, also below the 0.05 significance level, indicating a significant difference in verbal

aggression. International players exhibited higher verbal aggression compared to their national counterparts.

#### *Aggression Factor III (Anger)*

The mean score for anger was 17.628 for national players and 19.744 for international players. However, the p-value for this comparison was 0.225, which exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold. This suggests that despite the slight difference in mean scores, there is no statistically significant difference in anger levels between players at the national and international levels.

#### *Aggression Factor IV (Hostility)*

Hostility scores showed a mean of 19.337 for national players and a higher mean of 25.369 for international players. The p-value for this comparison was 0.05, equal to the significance threshold. This result indicates a marginally significant difference in hostility, with international players exhibiting higher hostility levels than national players.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### *Conclusion*

The findings of this study indicate that educational background does not significantly influence sports aggression tendencies among respondents, as shown by the p-values for physical aggression ( $p = 0.600$ ), verbal aggression ( $p = 0.953$ ), anger ( $p = 0.995$ ), and hostility ( $p = 0.864$ ). All p-values exceed the significance threshold 0.05, suggesting no notable differences in aggression tendencies based on educational attainment.

Similarly, years of experience playing football also had no significant effect on sports aggression tendencies. The p-values for the four aggression factors were 0.559 (physical aggression), 0.267 (verbal aggression), 0.694 (anger), and 0.682 (hostility), all of which were greater than 0.05. These results indicate that differences in football experience, ranging from one to three years to more than six years, do not significantly impact aggression tendencies.

When comparing teams represented by respondents, the results were consistent, with p-values of 0.208 (physical aggression), 0.954 (verbal aggression), 0.345 (anger), and 0.359 (hostility). Since all p-values are above 0.05, the analysis reveals no significant differences in aggression tendencies across the teams represented, including Selangor 2, Selangor President, and Selangor Belia teams.

However, significant differences were observed when comparing sports aggression tendencies based on the level of participation (national vs. international). For Aggression Factor I (physical aggression), the p-value was 0.002, significantly below 0.05, indicating that international players exhibit higher physical aggression than national players. Similarly, for Aggression Factor II (verbal aggression), the p-value was 0.001, demonstrating a significant difference, with international players scoring higher in verbal aggression.

For Aggression Factor III (anger), the p-value was 0.225, greater than 0.05, indicating no significant difference between national and international players. In contrast, for Aggression Factor IV (hostility), the p-value was 0.05, equal to the significance threshold. This result

suggests a marginally significant difference, with international players displaying higher hostility levels than their national counterparts.

The findings indicate that educational background, years of experience, and team affiliation do not significantly influence sports aggression tendencies among respondents. However, the level of participation (national vs. international) does have a significant impact. International players of Selangor FC exhibit higher tendencies for physical aggression (Aggression Factor I), verbal aggression (Aggression Factor II), and hostility (Aggression Factor IV). Conversely, no significant difference was observed for anger (Aggression Factor III). These results suggest that international play's competitive demands and pressures may contribute to heightened aggression levels in certain dimensions.

### **Recommendations**

To enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings, future research should consider increasing the sample size and expanding the scope beyond a single football club. This study was limited to players from Selangor FC, restricting its applicability to broader contexts. Including multiple football clubs across Malaysia in future investigations would provide a more representative dataset and a comprehensive understanding of sports aggression tendencies in Malaysian football.

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