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# Schadenfreude in Football Fans: A Thematic Analysis

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**ABSTRACT**

Schadenfreude has been defined as the enjoyment of others' misery; a kind of happiness from malice, which one acquires when one learns that others are lucky or experiencing a setback. The purpose of this study was to analyze the experiences of Sulaymaniyah football team fans regarding the theory of happiness from the Erbil team's discomfort in Iraq. An interview was conducted with the fans who had lived experiences (N = 18) and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that several factors affect schadenfreude, such as political and governmental problems, managerial weaknesses of responsible people, past problems, and discrimination between teams. The findings extend the theory of social identity theory. According to the results, the managers of the teams and the officials of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq can provide the ground for reducing the happiness of the opponent's team with proper management and non-partisanship of the teams. Research in the field of schadenfreude can reduce the problems of advocacy and the wrong decisions of managers and officials and contribute to equality in this field.

## Introduction

Football is often accompanied by the enthusiasm of the fans and also causes them surprise and prejudice (Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999). Many fans often show a sense of prejudice to their favorite team through socially acceptable behaviors; However, in some cases, prejudice can be severe and lead to inappropriate and / or dangerous behaviors that require further investigation into its "dark side" (Wakefield & Wann, 2006).

Hatred of rival teams, hatred of rival team fans, hatred of rival football team players, are signs in some sports fans who support that team. The competitive nature of sport is due to the bias and negative behaviors that target competitors (Wann & Grieve, 2005). This research focuses on the sense of prejudice by sports team fans; A phenomenon that has been widely documented in the media. But at the same time, it has received less attention from academic researchers in the field of sports.

Schadenfreude is a German word for the pleasure that comes from bringing misfortune to others, (Ouwerkerk & Van Dijk, 2014), especially those consisting of a rival group in which tradition, jealousy, or some other records are predominant. It is used to describe the feelings of pleasure and joy that one rival experiences in the other's misery; this is especially true when there is a hostile and competitive relationship between the two teams. Schadenfreude is a relatively new subject in the research literature that can provide insight into the different responses of customers or fans to a rival team (Tyler, Cobbs, Nichols, & Dalakas, 2021). Given that Schadenfreude represents a feeling rather than a real behavior, it can be seen as a harmless display of the interest and enthusiasm of a team's fans (Hickman & Ward, 2007). Watching the defeat of the opposing team and the occurrence of schadenfreude can lead to an increase in the sense of belonging to the group members (Brambilla & Riva, 2017). However, the causes of schadenfreude in sports fans may need more attention, especially if they are related to serious events.

Most of the research conducted in schadenfreude on sports marketing and sponsorship (Angell, Gorton, Bottomley, & White, 2016; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012; Hickman & Ward, 2007; Sundie, Ward, Beal, Chin, & Geiger-Oneto, 2009; Yucel-Aybat & Kramer, 2017) focuses on the role of schadenfreude in fan response Sports teams (Angell et al., 2016; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012). This phenomenon is also examined in a limited way in the field of sociology and psychology, factors affecting this emotional response, including the role of inferiority, hostility and merit (Ouwerkerk, Van Dijk, Vonkeman, & Spears, 2018; R. H. Smith, Powell, Combs, & Schurtz, 2009; Van Dijk, van Koningsbruggen, Ouwerkerk, & Wesseling, 2011). While very few studies have examined the experiences of fans about the phenomenon of schadenfreude qualitatively (Dalakas, Phillips Melancon, & Sreboth, 2015).

The football teams of Sulaymaniyah and Erbil, as popular and rival teams in Iraq and especially in Kurdistan region, and also their fans have different traits and characteristics due to their geographical conditions, tribal ethnic thoughts and political and governmental problems. This qualitative research uses content analysis to analyze the experiences of the fans in Sulaymaniyah football team regarding the theory of happiness about the rival team (Erbil team), which has not been addressed so far.

## Literature Review

### *Social Identity Theory*
We are not just trying to have a positive evaluation of ourselves. Social identity theory is the perceived dependence on a particular group or individual who may "psychologically" associate themselves with the fate of the group (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). This theory assumes that part of our self-concept stems from the awareness of our belonging to social groups, which is referred to as social identity. In addition, people strive for a positive social identity. Therefore, they want the groups to which they belong to be positively different from other groups. These groups become meaningful when one perceives oneself as a member of the group (Angell et al., 2016). Social identity theory shows that individuals have both personal and social identities. Personal identity consists of distinctive characteristics such as abilities and interests, and social identity includes important categories and groupings that can be based on multiple social groups (e.g. gender, age, and race) or organizational membership (e.g. sports, training and social teams, etc.) (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) This type of classification into multiple social groups allows them to impose a structure on their social environment and define their position in that structure (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

The main hypothesis of social identity theory is that members of an internal group (intragroup) seek to find negative aspects in an external group (intergroup) in order to improve their image. According to the theory of intra-group emotions (E. R. Smith, 1993), when a person's social identity is highlighted instead of his / her personal identity, emotions may be determined by assessing whether an event may benefit or harm the group's thoughts and emotions. For example, when a sporting event is found to be beneficial to people striving for a positive social identity, news of misfortune for the outside team (rival team) at the sporting event may provoke schadenfreude. Based on this theory, we argue that individuals' ability to have an intra-group emotional identity is a determining factor for extra-group schadenfreude. Some researchers have supported this concept. For example, (Hoogland

et al., 2015) showed that the level of identity of college basketball team fans when hearing a rival player's injury can predict the extent of schadenfreude. However, (Leach, Spears, Branscombe, & Doosje, 2003) examined intergroup schadenfreude during Dutch-German football competition, but found no significant association between intragroup identity and outgroup schadenfreude.

### Schadenfreude

Throughout history, Schadenfreude has been described as a hidden expression of aggression (Aristotle & Peter, 1941) an evil act and an absolute sign of a completely evil heart and a severely anti-moral act and a cousin even more terrible than jealousy and as a detrimental factor to social relationships (Heider, 2013). Schadenfreude is a German word composed of two words, Schaden meaning "harm" and freude meaning "joy". In the Oxford dictionary it is defined as the pleasure caused by the misery of others. Schadenfreude is an emotional response to the misfortune of others, characterized by feelings of joy and happiness (Ouwerkerk & Van Dijk, 2014). Biologically, this part is stimulated in the abdominal striatum, the reward center of the brain activated exclusively when people are jealous or the opposing team is upset by a failure or bad luck (Cikara & Fiske, 2012).

How can we enjoy the misery of others? The answer to this question may be given by appraisal theories of emotions (Roseman & Smith, 2001). Appraisal theories believe that this mental assessment of individuals is of the personal importance of a situation, not the objective characteristics of that situation that evoke emotions. What makes emotion evaluation theories interesting is that they can explain why different situations can lead to the same emotion. Or why a single situation can evoke different emotions in different people (Van Dijk, Ouwerkerk, Smith, & Cikara, 2017). If we want to explain this, we have to say that because people differ in how they evaluate the misery that happens to others, this misery can cause sadness in some people, while in others it can arouse sympathy. In addition, since schadenfreude arises from the evaluation of misery by others rather than from the characteristics of misery, misery that is apparently different, such as when an athlete who is envied by others gets caught while cheating in sports, or when a sports fan fails badly on a talent show, or when a rival football team fails. If evaluated in a similar way, it can arouse schadenfreude feeling. But what should be the assessment of the misery of others in order to arouse schadenfreude excitement?

### Team Identification and Schadenfreude

Fan identification, which is conceptualized in the context of social identity theory, is in fact the manifestation of this theory in the field of sports (Turner, 2010), which shows the perceived dependence or belonging of a person to a specific team or sporting event. High levels of fan identification usually require careful consideration of competitors' activities and performance (Jones, 2000). Highly identified fans tend to be hostile to the opposing team or commit acts of violence after a team loses (Wann, Haynes, McLean, & Pullen, 2003). Some researchers' findings show that when fans attend sporting events to cheer on their favorite team, they provoke hostile responses(Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999). (Dimmock & Grove, 2005) reported that highly identified fans have little control over violent or aggressive behaviors, which can sometimes have deadly consequences. In Italian football matches since 1963, 18 people have been killed by mob fans. Some reports indicate an increase in cardiac arrest among sensitive fans when a national team loses a major tournament (Winslow, 2009).

Findings of (Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012) showed that fan identification and schadenfreude have a positive relationship with each other, but are structurally different. A person's intra-group identity is not only revealed in support of their own team, but also includes a negative feeling towards the rival team (Hoogland et al., 2015). Accordingly, schadenfreude agrees with the theory of sports spectator orientation (Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989). that happiness is experienced by the victory of the favorite team and the loss of the hated team. (Hoogland et al., 2015) found evidence of these tendencies in cases of more than winning and losing, where fans were happy with the opponent's injury and unhappy with the player's recovery. (Leach et al., 2003) also found that schadenfreude was easily recognizable among fans of team sports. For example, fans of the Dutch football team are

happy with the loss and sadness of the German team, even when they did not play against the Dutch team. Accordingly, fans of sports teams are very prone to schadenfreude.

Schadenfreude exists especially when there is a kind of contradictory relationship. Schadenfreude causes fans to express more intense emotional responses, such as mocking the opposing team, chanting slogans against the opposing team, and trying to seriously injure the opposing player (Hoogland et al., 2015; Leach et al., 2003). When examining the consequences of schadenfreude, most marketing research focused on increasing negative word of Mouth (Hickman & Ward, 2007) and increasing customer hostility (Sundie et al., 2009). (Bee & Dalakas, 2015; Bergkvist, 2012; Dalakas et al., 2015; Grohs, Reisinger, & Woisetschläger, 2015) have considered fan identification (such as engaging in a goal) as a major factor in responding to a competitor's slander. But Schadenfreude was introduced as a key success factor in explaining attitudes and behaviors in intergroup competitors such as competitive sports (Leach et al., 2003; Ouwerkerk & Van Dijk, 2014). All in all, a fan identification (focusing on the intergroup and avoiding bias) and Schadenfreude (focusing on the extra group and avoiding denigration) should complement each other.

## Methodology

To address the research questions, a thematic analysis approach was adopted. The qualitative research design was chosen for several reasons. First, (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) described qualitative research as the first step in creating knowledge about phenomena. Second, a qualitative research project facilitated the ability to obtain deeper data (Tracy, 2019) from football fans. Semi-structured interviews allow for more in-depth information about the participant's perspectives and experiences (Horton, Macve, & Struyven, 2004).

### *Participants*

The sample included fans of the Sulaymaniyah and Erbil football teams in Iraqi Kurdistan (N = 18) who agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview. All participants in the study were highly experienced fans who had a history of supporting their teams for at least 8 years. These fans ranged in age from 18 to 55 years. Access to highly experienced fans created a pragmatic constraint for current research (Suri, 2011). These fans were selected based on their experience in the stadiums. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographics of the participants. Confidentiality was guaranteed using a pseudonym.

### *Materials*

Prior to the interview, an interview guide containing a list of open-ended questions was prepared. The use of open-ended questions was consistent with the philosophical approach and qualitative methodology (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). These questions allowed fans to answer freely, while a semi-structured approach ensured that relevant information was obtained about the football fans' experiences with the rival team's schadenfreude (Horton et al., 2004). First, demographic information was obtained from participants including age, gender, and support history. Since few studies of football fans have examined the happiness of a rival team's grief, several more general and open-ended questions have been designed to gain a basic understanding of how football fans feel about the rival team's schadenfreude. For example, one of the first questions asked by fans was: "Do you think the results of a team are a factor in how happy you feel about the rival team's unhappiness?" Athletes were asked to answer questions such as "Why do you think this?". The remaining interview questions were based on social identity theory in the literature. The first important issue in this theory is that members of an internal group seek to find the negative aspects in an external group in order to improve their image (E. R. Smith, 1993). After this stage, the fans were asked about finding the negative aspects in another fan group and how the negative aspects of one fan group can make the other fan group happy? Several questions were included in the interview guide to see if the fans had experienced schadenfreude themselves. In particular, participants were asked to provide an example of whether they had experienced schadenfreude in front of their team and what effect did this have on their fan identification? The semi-structured interview approach allows for flexibility during the

interviews so that the researcher can further follow the specific opinions presented by the participants (Horton et al., 2004).

**Table 1.** Describing the demographic characteristics of the interviewees

| Interview | Gender | Age | Fan experiences |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Male | 32 | 10 years |
| 2 | Male | 27 | 9 years |
| 3 | Male | 28 | 11 years |
| 4 | Male | 27 | 9 years |
| 5 | Male | 24 | 8 years |
| 6 | Male | 29 | 11 years |
| 7 | Male | 22 | 7 years |
| 8 | Male | 27 | 10 years |
| 9 | Male | 36 | 13 years |
| 10 | Male | 30 | 11 years |
| 11 | Male | 29 | 9 years |
| 12 | Male | 39 | 16 years |
| 13 | Male | 33 | 21 years |
| 14 | Male | 28 | 8 years |
| 15 | Male | 35 | 21 years |
| 16 | Male | 27 | 7 years |
| 17 | Male | 37 | 12 years |
| 18 | Male | 29 | 9 years |

*Procedures*
After the researchers' ethical validation, the fans were employed through a purposeful and convenience sampling approach consistent with qualitative methods (Attican et al., 2016).(Guba & Lincoln, 1994) Fans were selected through a purposeful approach to develop understanding of the research problem and answer research questions (Creswell, 2014). The purposeful sampling approach was facilitated by the geographical location of the authors, because access to fans created a pragmatic constraint for current research (Suri, 2011). Fans were identified by announcing club leaders and used through personal email addresses provided on their websites and social media pages. After sending an email to participate in the research to motivate them, reward cards were considered for them. Interviews were conducted between 2020 - 2021. The interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes, with 13 people doing face-to-face, 5 people doing Skype. Interviews were conducted until data saturation. After 14 interviews, it was found that it had reached saturation point because no new content or topic was revealed. Researchers have suggested that data saturation in qualitative studies usually occurs in the first 12 interviews, because 97% of the important codes are obtained at this time (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). After 14 interviews, the similarities between the topics became apparent and no new information was obtained. Four other pre-scheduled interviews were conducted to ensure saturation was reached. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. The recordings were uploaded to an electronic folder and sent to a professional service for transcription. Upon completion, a member review was conducted in which participants submitted a copy of their transcript and were asked to comment carefully (Creswell & Miller, 2000; B. Smith & McGannon, 2018).

*Data Analysis*

(Braun & Clarke, 2006) noted that thematic analysis involves a number of choices that must be explicit to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. Themes were identified in the data. Themes in the data were identified inductively. An interpretive constructivist approach requires researchers to look for holistic patterns, themes, and features in data (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Therefore, the transcript of the interview was analyzed by the first author using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis allows sports researchers to examine individuals' behaviors and their views on a particular topic or phenomenon (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). Therefore, thematic analysis is an effective method in sports research. Thematic analysis can be used in a variety of ways, but is commonly used in qualitative studies involving interview data. This process includes: (a) familiarity with the data, (b) generating raw code, (c) searching for themes, (d) examining themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) generating reports (Brown and Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative interviews because it allows researchers to examine the behaviors and perspectives of the selected sample on a particular topic or phenomenon. Data were analyzed manually using WORD documents. The lead researcher read each transcript several times to become familiar with the data. While being familiar with the data, the researcher used social identity theory as a guiding framework for identifying interesting features of the data and helping to generate basic code related to the research questions. Once the relevant data and code were entered into the WORD software, sorting was used to group the code together. After identifying the initial codes and possible themes, they were sorted by quoting relevant data. Once the themes were finalized, they were defined before examining for any overlap. As the data were coded by the first author, the researcher approached the process of thematic analysis in a reciprocal way to minimize bias and subjectivity (Morrow, 2005). Reflection was done to minimize bias through peer consultation with other members of the research team who are experienced in qualitative methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Morrow, 2005) During the peer review process, several questions were asked by the rest of the research team about their topics and content. A number of changes were made to the themes of the peer review discussions, including minor corrections to the names of the two themes. Member surveys were conducted to increase the accuracy of current research (B. Smith & McGannon, 2018). Participants were given the opportunity to evaluate the reliability of the research in two stages. A summary of the researcher's initial interpretation was sent to participants and they were asked to comment on whether this interpretation was accurate and / or a true representation of their experiences (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The research team did not receive any requests for changes to the code. The topics are presented with a subtheme and a quotation in Table 2.

To assess coding reliability, we performed three steps. First, the coding process was repeated with five interview texts 30 days after the initial coding. We twice calculated test-retest reliability using this formula: Reliability Percent = (2 x number of agreements / total number of codes) x 100. Reliability data are summarized in Table 2. As shown in Table 3 below, interrater reliability was 80%, easily exceeding the required thresholds (Gwet, 2014). Second, we provided another researcher with operational codes used by the primary coder and asked them to code categories, subcategories, and indicators according (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The agreement between the two coders was 80%, exceeding the high-reliability threshold of 70%.

**Table 3**. Coding Reliability Report

| Interviews | Codes | Matching codes | Opposite codes | Reliability percentage |
|:----------:|:-----:|:--------------:|:--------------:|:----------------------:|
| P2 | 33 | 14 | 5 | **84%** |
| P9 | 35 | 15 | 4 | **85%** |
| P13 | 31 | 12 | 4 | **77%** |
| Total | 99 | 41 | 13 | **82%** |

## Results

### *Extractive Components of Schadenfreude*

Four themes were extracted from the research question related football fans' experiences of happiness from the rivalry's unhappiness: political and governmental problems, managerial weaknesses of those in charge, previous problems and existing inequalities. (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Themes, Subtheme and Quotation

| Main Theme | Subtheme | Quotation |
|---|---|---|
| **Political and governmental problems** | Politicizing sports | When we look at the list of high-ranking officials in sports in Kurdistan, all these positions are in the hands of the yellow regional faction and have political power, which has made it necessary for sports champions to be selected from Erbil region whenever they want to compete in other countries. This can also be seen in the selection of professional athletes for competitions. |
| | The insignificance of sports for the government | The government in the Iraqi Kurdistan region seeks the power of political parties and pursues models in which sport has no place and is a low priority for the parties. |
| **Management weaknesses of responsible people** | Managers' abuse of power | The importance given to Erbil in terms of wealth and the marginalization of Sulaymaniyah have also made it possible for Erbil, with its great wealth, to gain important supporters against Sulaymaniyah. This is due to the fact that the residents of Sulaymaniyah want the upper hand in the government of Kurdistan to be in the hands of the Democratic Party forces and can spend more money on Erbil, and this is why the residents of Sulaymaniyah want to get their rights from Erbil. |
| | Existence of yellow and green areas in Kurdistan | The war that took place during the rule of the Ba'athist regime is rooted in the cause of resentment and hatred in our hearts one by one. But it affected the post-Civil War era in a different way. It is by creating a green and yellow zone, where each zone strives for itself and its survival and success. But the way the Yellow Zone proceeded was due to the large budget belonging to Kurdistan, which was allocated to the Yellow Zone, which was due to the power and important positions held by the powerful and political officials of the Yellow Zone. |
| **Previous problems** | Old differences between fans | A large amount of money and budget was spent on sports in the Yellow Zone in the Erbil region, in contrast to Sulaymaniyah, which did not have a clear vision, at a time when the people of Sulaymaniyah are calling for a major struggle against Erbil sports, which should lay the groundwork for disputes. It is unhealthy. Undoubtedly, misconceptions call for these differences. |
| | Bitter memories of the past | In the past, the Ba'athist government created this rift to create hatred and resentment among the region, even in the field of sports competitions, because there is competition and progress in it, and the people by defeating each other in this fields call for harassment for each other. |
| **Existing inequalities** | Media agents | It is natural that the media have a big role in today's sports community and can work in any direction they want, and this orientation is directly related to the financial situation. Media financing can be very risky for a team that does not have a lot of financial capital. |
| | Moving players between two teams | Players are free to make any decision for themselves and continue their sporting activities according to their personal tastes, but in some cases, this transfer causes deep differences that can be mentioned in this important matter between the two teams. |
| | Inequality between two teams | Equipment and facilities play a leading role in the world of competitive sports today, and in this regard, we can have many examples of European teams that have advanced due to many resources. |

### *The First Theme - Political and Governmental Problems*

The first theme was political and governmental problems. Governments believe that sport, like other fields, should be under their control. As governments' and politicians' financial support for sports increases, so does their involvement. Due to its national and international dimensions, sport has and still has a special place in governments. The more sport moves from being an amateur to becoming a

professional, the more politicians get involved in sports. The involvement of politics in sports is very wide, from the selection of players at the national level to resolving conflicts between players and officials. People hate politicians interfering in sports. Athletes hope that one day sports and politics will be separated and that sports will continue to work without the intervention of politicians. The events of the present world show that sport today is inevitably linked to politics. Sport is one of the basic necessities of today's social life and one of the most important areas that governments, individuals and international organizations, with full awareness of its socio-political dimensions, have always tended to use it to achieve their goals. Governments can create a lot of problems in sports by making the wrong rules and regulations and setting the wrong policies. For the government to be effective, it is better to support these sports programs among the team's fans. Football sports should be solved as a long-term plan, and the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government should solve these problems effectively.

### The Second Theme - Managerial Weaknesses of Responsible People

The relationship between sport and politics is a two-way relationship, each of which in turn has a special effect on the other. Managers who have to be able to manage things well have acted as discrimination between clubs, and this discrimination has increased day by day. There is a special focus on some teams, and this is the most important obstacle to the development of football in this country. The importance given to Erbil fans and sports venues by the ruling party has also led to the Erbil team being seen as the winning team in terms of fans. The rest of the teams want Erbil to lose to other teams because they receive less funding than Erbil. These obstacles have made the issue of support for the fans' favorite team more unfair. The Erbil team, for example, has less of these obstacles due to financial support from the party. When we look at the list of high-ranking officials in sports in Kurdistan, all these positions are in the hands of the yellow regional faction and have political power. Most of them are from Erbil region. This can also be seen in the selection of professional athletes for competitions.

### The Third Theme - Past Problems

The nature of sports is such that competition is about winning, and that is why we always want to defeat the rival team. The rivalry and enmity between the cities among the people who have just been liberated from oppression and dictatorial rule, when the Ba'ath party created this feeling of resentment and hatred among the people of different cities, the effects of which are still alive. The governing body in the Iraqi Kurdistan region often creates problems as a result of intra-party and family political rivalries, and with the wrong policies that have existed in the past, tensions have arisen between the fans of the two football teams in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. But there are other reasons that these roots go back to the past. It remains in the hearts of the people, and the Ba'athist regime had begun a relentless effort to wage war among the cities, so that there would be no love and friendship among the Kurdish people. The lives of Kurdish people are especially visible in the field of sports. The war that took place during the rule of the Ba'athist regime is rooted in the cause of resentment and hatred in our hearts one by one. In the past, the Ba'athist government created this rift to create hatred and resentment among the region, even in the field of sports competitions, because there is competition and progress in it, and the people by defeating each other in this fields call for harassment for each other. The civil war killed the family members of the people of the Sulaymaniyah region, as well as the disappearance of many other people.

### The Fourth Theme - Existing Inequalities

The government's inequity in allocating funds and providing more services to some teams, especially the Erbil team, is a significant issue. In football, due to the wide fan base, it is easy for fans to understand the difference between the teams and the discrimination that exists. With the emergence of the green and yellow zone, each zone strives for itself and its survival and success. But the way the yellow zone went was due to the large budget belonging to Kurdistan allocated to the yellow zone. In contrast to Sulaymaniyah, the money and budget in the yellow zone has been spent on sports in the Erbil region. When the people of Sulaymaniyah want a big fight against the sport of Erbil, it means that it must lay the foundation for an unhealthy war. Undoubtedly, misconceptions call for this

war, because civil war is the basic condition for this unhealthy competition. Giving importance to Erbil in terms of wealth and marginalizing Sulaymaniyah has also made it possible for Erbil to gain important supporters against Sulaymaniyah. This is because the residents of Sulaymaniyah want the upper hand in the government of Kurdistan to be in the hands of the Democratic Party and can spend more money on Erbil. This is why the residents of Sulaymaniyah want to get their rights from Erbil.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Another factor influencing the Schadenfreude sense among Sulaymaniyah fans towards the Erbil team is political and governmental problems, including the politicization of sport and the insignificance of sport for the government. The results of this part of the research show the existence of old differences between the fans of the two teams, Sulaymaniyah and Erbil. According to the interviewees, this difference is rooted in the long-standing differences in sports since the existence of the two teams, which is also rooted in the Ba'ath party creating a sense of resentment and hatred among the people of different cities in the country. In fact, the governmental and managerial roots of football in these two parties have caused political and partisan problems in recent years, which has intensified the sense of happiness among the supporters of Sulaymaniyah. On the other hand, the participation of two political factions in the region in the civil war is an important factor in creating this feeling. As mentioned earlier, the involvement of politics in sports makes winning and losing in sports a kind of political win-lose in such teams where there is partisanship and war between parties. In addition, Sulaymaniyah supporters believe that the Erbil team is abusing the power of Iraqi political officials to help their team, and that even the ruling parties in the Kurdistan Region support the Erbil team. In fact, it should be said that the abuse of power and the influence of Iraqi parties in sports decisions is in complete contradiction with the principles of sports and healthy competition. The excitement of sports is the unpredictability of the results and the efforts of competitors to compete with each other. But the interventions and the use of force that change the results of the rival team make the fans very angry. Such anger cannot be stopped because the exercise of power and politics is an integral part of the sport, which unfortunately affects the fans very much. In this study, the political power and unjustly supporting the Erbil team have created and strengthened a sense of happiness in the fans of Sulaymaniyah team, which shows the abuse of power. The managers are in favor of the Erbil team.

The existence of party and political biases between the two cities in sports is the transfer of sports posts to party and political officials. The involvement of politics in sports means the prevalence of injustice in the results of competitions, and this is not pleasant at all for sports fans and spectators. On the other hand, fierce inter-party struggles between the cities of Sulaymaniyah and Erbil and the rule of different parties in the two cities have strengthened the political atmosphere prevailing between the two teams. However, policymakers are trying to prove their power in every way. Sport has always been considered as a tool of political power and the victory of sports teams has been considered as a kind of political victory. But it is not at all attractive that the policy itself actually changes the competitive results and it makes the fans very angry. Meanwhile, foreign enemies are taking advantage of this opportunity to create divisions and create fights and riots, and the result will be to create and strengthen a sense of Schadenfreude on the fans. On the other hand, the lack of a clear vision and philosophy on the part of the ruling power of sports in Iraq, the inadequacy of the educational roots of sports in educational centers, and the lack of efforts to dilute the differences between cities through collective intellectuals are obvious weaknesses that can be considered as the insignificance of sport for the government. The lack of cooperation from the government causes the fire of division to increase without anyone being accountable, and this division destroys the sports spirit and sports ideals between the fans and the athletes of these two teams. To the extent that instead of being a forum for strengthening good moral character, sport becomes a battleground for party warfare.

One of the most important things that has always affected sports teams and fan issues is the issue of management that greatly affect the destiny of sports teams and even fans. Managers' bias in holding matches causes anger and dissatisfaction among the fans of the teams that have been biased by the

management such as bias in selecting the athletes of the teams sent to the competitions, bias in judging and refereeing sports competitions in favor of the Erbil team, which can strongly arouse a sense of revenge and happiness in the fans of the rival team. On the other hand, exerting political and partisan influence to determine the results, which has often caused injustice to the Sulaymaniyah team, has also had an effect on creating this feeling in the fans of this team. Meanwhile, the fans consider another omnipotence that strengthens the sense of happiness towards the Erbil team as the lack of attention to sports violations by the Iraqi Football Federation and the Erbil team. This situation, which weakens the rights of the Sulaymaniyah team and does not actually do anything for its fans, inevitably strengthens their sense of happiness due to their revenge.

Management misconduct is rooted in managerial weakness, which also has a variety of causes. Managing sporting events and competitions is different from managing other non-sporting events. The root of this difference is in the art of sports managers to control and coordinate competitions away from fringes and conflicts. The feeling of happiness, although temporary, momentary and transient, but in its severe form, will lead to retaliatory activities that can be to the detriment of a team, fans or even a nation. For this reason, it is important to address management as a basis that can prevent such behavior, and for this reason, in this study, supporters have considered the election of the head of the Kurdistan Sports Organization from the party unfair because it causes bias in decisions in favor of The Erbil team returns. The marginalization of sports in Sulaymaniyah by the sports directors of the Kurdistan Regional Government was another factor that made the fans of the Sulaymaniyah team happy. These biases even led the Kurdistan Football Federation to support the Erbil team. On the other hand, the existence of the sports mafia in the Kurdistan region and the support of the Erbil team has added to the happiness in Sulaymaniyah fans. In fact, managerial weaknesses cause neglect not only from within but also from outside the organization to sports and that sports move in a fair way. As stated in this study, the lack of importance of sports by the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Region is another problem for the fans of the Sulaymaniyah team. Such managerial weaknesses and inducing inequality between the two teams of Sulaymaniyah and Erbil, Iraq, are to cover the weaknesses of the manager himself, so that he can justify his lack of proper management, and place the burden of this irresponsibility on the fans and create anger and rage in them. When a manager openly supports a team and unjustly causes that team to win, he naturally seeks to attribute such mismanagement to external factors. For this reason, the selection of qualified managers, those who are familiar with the principles of professional ethics in sports and apply it scientifically can be very effective in reducing the sense of happiness in the fans. The factor that is rooted in the management issue is the weakness of the executive agents of the competition. The results of the interviews showed that the party and factional slogans chanted by the executive agents have caused bias towards the Erbil team among the fans, and in return they want the team to lose all its competitions, and they feel happy about the defeat of this team and rejoice greatly. On the other hand, creating problems for the fans of Sulaymaniyah team by the executive agents of the matches is another partisan act that shows the weakness of the executive agents of the matches, which cannot provide balance and equality for the fans of both teams during the competition, and vice versa. It creates problems for Sulaymaniyah team and his fans. Such party problems between the two teams reduce the level of security in the stadium space, as if this study shows that during the competition between the two teams, military force is not used to prevent party clashes, and in fact these party problems in the stadium also continues to affect the sports atmosphere and the feelings of the athletes, and no deterrent punishment has been developed for it, during which the parties go to war with each other with verbal destruction, which is one of the principles of sports and the unity that sport should create between individuals. Even the results of this study show the inefficiency of the security forces in ending the riots. The weakness of the executive agents of the matches is a factor that can greatly affect the creation of insecurity and foster a sense of happiness in the fans of Sulaymaniyah. In such cases, the existence of a fan club can help a lot in resolving fan issues and prevent violence and partisanship among fans. According to the results of this study, the lack of a fan club to prevent conflicts causes a sense of happiness. It has become popular among the supporters of Sulaymaniyah to empty their sense of inequality in this way.

Previous problems, including old differences between fans and bitter memories of the past, are other factors that affect the feeling of happiness in the fans of Sulaymaniyah team compared to Erbil

team. Bitter memories of the past are another factor that has influenced the happy mood of Sulaymaniyah fans. The persecution during the Party's attack on Sulaymaniyah, the killing and wounding of family members in the war with the pro-Erbil party, and the clashes in previous matches all affect the fans' sense of hatred and revenge. In such war-torn countries, it is not only the sense of joy at losing in the stadium that evokes happiness, but a history of such memories can greatly enhance that sense. Factors related to the fans, including incitement of the fans, characteristics of the fans and revenge of the fans, have also influenced the feeling of happiness in the fans of the Sulaymaniyah team. In fact, the incitement of the fans was another factor that affected the fans of the Sulaymaniyah team and strengthened their sense of happiness. Factors such as humiliation of Sulaymaniyah team by Erbil fans, harassment of other team fans by Erbil fans, incitement of fans by players and coaches of the opposing team when defeated, immoral behavior of the opposing team in games and behavior of players and coaches in the stadium are the things that create a sense of hatred in the fans of a team in such a way that the rival team loses in any competition and makes the disrespected fans angry.

Aside from individual happiness over the failure of a rival team, which is related to personality traits, collective ideologies also have no effect on creating a sense of happiness. The fan club can create a culture in this field to a great extent and direct the energy of the fans from happiness to other constructive worlds. The revenge of the other fans has caused a sense of happiness among the fans of the Sulaymaniyah team. Issues such as trying to persecute the people of Erbil through sports, the right of the people of Sulaymaniyah to discrimination, the formation of a negative mentality among the fans, the existence of the nature of hatred of the rival among all media agents and the existence of inequality between the two teams and the transfer of players between the two teams have affected their sense of revenge.

The root of this revenge is the inequalities that the government, the parties and the management of the stadiums and even the media have had against the Sulaymaniyah team. Coverage of more Erbil team matches and news in the media, support for the Erbil team in the state media, and the publication of news that provokes controversy in the mass media are among the media mischiefs that lead to more controversy. Issues such as the allocation of large budgets to the Erbil team by the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, the provision of better facilities for the Erbil team, the purchase of prominent players for the Erbil team due to government support, the lack of facilities for the Sulaymaniyah team and the unfair distribution of sports resources between Sulaymaniyah and Erbil. It has created inequalities between the two teams, which has ultimately increased the anger of the Sulaymaniyah fans, and these are beyond the will and control of a fan, so the result is anger towards the Erbil team and happiness over the defeat of this team, because the defeat of this team is seen as a form of defeat for injustice, inequality, and enemy political parties. Meanwhile, the transfer of players between the two teams fuels this hatred and anger, and the transfer of big players from Sulaymaniyah team to Erbil team, attracting quality players of Sulaymaniyah team due to higher salaries by Erbil team and putting pressure on the players of Sulaymaniyah team by the government to join the Erbil team is one of the cases that has ended the injustice against Sulaymaniyah team. The feeling of happiness is the least thing that can calm the anger of this team fans against these injustices.

### *Limitations and Future Research*
This study was an exploratory study to portray Schadenfreude in the highly controversial field of sports fans because it shows the real feelings of fans in a real environment (the racetrack) and therefore offers very valuable insights into the psychology of sports fan and sports identity. However, the researcher had no ability to measure the level of identity of the respondents or other measurement criteria. This is especially useful for comparing high-identity fans with low-identity fans. For example, fans with low identities are more likely to be evaluated with forgiveness, while fans with high identities are evaluated with a reluctance to forgive. Fans with high identities may see their hatred and unwillingness to forgive as a coping mechanism to fight the team (Wann, 2006). Fans with low identities are less likely to experience these threats and need hatred as a way to deal with it in the first place. Therefore, they are more likely to forgive sooner (Dalakas et al., 2015). Accordingly, future research should examine this interesting topic of fan psychology through quantitative study.

Another interesting point is that when it comes to less sports events or matches, do you think how strongly schadenfreude appears, for example, in the area of injury to an opposing player, disqualification of a rival player, blocking an opposing player or severe physical contact? The stronger the opponent team loses, the stronger it appears. The issue that needs to be addressed qualitatively in the future is to find out how much schadenfreude fans and non-fans find schadenfreude excited about the sport.

It is also useful to extend the results of this research to other areas, including marketing and advocacy research. For example, schadenfreude is a stimulus for undesirable human behavior in a variety of contexts (Ouwerkerk & Van Dijk, 2014). It's interesting to know whether popular endorsers influence sports sponsors, or whether marketing-related activities cause unpleasant responses when a particular group hates partnering with other companies or organizations. So more research is needed into situations where sponsors need to overcome barriers to defamation.

One of the consequences of gender and age is increased brand hatred and defamation (Herrmann, Walliser, & Kacha, 2011). A worrying part of the research is that young respondents may be less aware of the potential consequences of their negative behavior, so they are more likely to engage in such behaviors than other examples of sports fans. While this issue has not been addressed here, future research should address the issue of age in different categories of advocacy.

Future research should focus on the validity and reliability of the new scale of negative fan behavior. This becomes important when future research focuses on actual fan behaviors rather than attitudinal criteria. Some examples of negative behaviors that may need further investigation in the future include: direct and face-to-face verbal insults and destruction of coaches or players, arguing with rival team fans, verbal insults, opposing the fans, players and coaches of rival teams by sending content anonymously in cyberspace and social networks. In addition, the reality is that, unlike face-to-face communication, they allow participants in cyberspace not to reveal their identities. This potentially encourages more fans to show this type of behavior. Given the potential consequences of negative fan behavior, further research into the factors influencing the occurrence of such behaviors will help us to understand these types of behaviors.

Another solution is to use social networks such as Facebook, Instagram or Telegram, which designed pages for sports teams or fans as members and asked for their opinion. When using social media, the issue of sports fan abuse needs to be addressed with caution. However, social media pages can be helpful in providing examples that are not student-based or otherwise.

Happiness from hurting others or falling down is a phenomenon that is often seen among sports team fans. The German philosopher (Schopenhauer, 2007) called schadenfreude the worst emotion humans can experience. There are several theories about the cause of this phenomenon. Some question this state and consider it immoral, while others consider several reasons that inevitably affect this feeling. We do not want to claim that this excitement is a definite response to the misery of others. But people may feel happy about another person's misery or misfortune, but they are sadistically reluctant to engineer that kind of misery. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the experiences of Sulaymaniyah football team fans towards the theory of happiness from the Erbil team. The managerial and executive weaknesses that affect the feeling of happiness in the Sulaymaniyah team compared to the Erbil team in this study are: bias in the decisions of managers, managerial weaknesses of managers, managers' abuse of power, past problems and discrimination between teams. Also, in relation to the basic concepts related to the happiness of the Sulaymaniyah team from the Erbil team's unhappiness from the fans' point of view, we obtained several concepts that can be categorized and discussed in the form of sub-main and main categories. In fact, the reason for this feeling can be created in the fans of Sulaymaniyah team due to bias in managers 'decisions, managerial weaknesses, managers' abuse of power, weak executive agents of competitions, politicization of sports, insignificance of sports for the government, old differences between fans. He considered the bitter memories of the past, the incitement of the fans, the characteristics of the fans, the revenge of the fans, the media factors, the existence of inequality between the two teams and the transfer of players between the two teams.

## Acknowledgments

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