

An Investigation into the Relationship between Domestic Abuse Reporting and Professional Football Fixtures

Emma Taylor, Marina Hassan, Jonathan Jackson

Leeds Trinity University, United Kingdom

M.Hasan@leedtrinity.ac.uk

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Abstract

As a nation of football lovers, many enjoy and celebrate football fixtures more than any other sport. As much as football plays a vital role in entertainment for the whole nation, it poses serious challenges for policing when tackling domestic violence incidents, resulting directly from an increased level of disorder caused by drunkenness. This article focuses on the hidden and under-researched area of the relationship between football fixtures and domestic abuse. The article examines and discusses the various contributing factors such as the scoreline, kick-off time, the day of the match and alcohol intoxication levels. A mixed-methods approach has been applied to conduct an in-depth literature review and secondary data analysis, to explore scholarly research conducted which reflects domestic abuse reporting to the police, before, during and after games. Moreover, the article provides a deeper understanding of why football has such a significant effect on domestic abuse in England, exploring large-scale competitions such as the FIFA World Cup, the UEFA European Championship and the English Premier League.

Keywords: *Football, Match Day, Domestic Violence, Police, Alcohol*

Contextual Background

According to the Domestic Violence Act 2021, domestic abuse is defined as “any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone’s behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are aged 16 or over and are, or have been, personally connected (regardless of gender or sexuality)”. Abuse takes many forms, including sexual, physical, psychological, financial, emotional, coercion and threats of

violence or actual violence. A personal connection between the victim and perpetrator is often outlined as: an intimate partner, ex-partner, family members or individuals who share parental responsibility for a child (Home Office, 2022). Acts of abuse or violence triggered particularly during or aftermath of football fixtures, i.e. scoreline matters (win, draw or loss), kick off times, match days and high level alcohol consumption and other factors have been considered to identify patterns, risks and consequences to gain a deeper understanding of the problem that can aid in supporting victims and offer recommendations to tackle domestic violence efficiently with strategic approaches in developing prevention plans for future.

The term 'domestic abuse' is predominantly described as a range of behavioural patterns (Women's Aid, 2022). It is estimated that 6.2% of adults have experienced domestic abuse in England, with women being twice as likely to have reported experiences compared to men (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, but it's estimated that 6.9% of women and 3% of men throughout England and Wales had encountered some form of domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022 (Office for National Statistics, 2022). From 2019 onwards, England and Wales saw a 9% increase in domestic crime, with 758,941 recorded in 2020 (Office for National Statistics, 2020). As a society, it needs to be addressed what can be done to reduce domestic abuse in all its forms.

Football attracts millions of spectators for both domestic and international tournaments, with the 2018 World Cup tournament generating over 3.5 billion viewers worldwide (Parry et al., 2014). Studies have found significant increases in the number of domestic abuse cases reported to the police during football fixtures, with many evaluating the relationship between violence rates and the outcome of matches (Spratt, 2018; Briscoe et al., 2012; Ivandic et al., 2021). Male victims have often been ignored by the mainstream academia and research, especially in sporting environments, with data suggesting that 9.3% of men become victims of such violence compared to 20.8% of women at the hands of their partner in a lifetime (Male Domestic Abuse Network, 2020). Huntley et al. (2019) propose that the main reasons men don't seek help are due to embarrassment, fear of not being believed, and the potential risk of loss of contact with their children.

Evidence suggests that watching sports induces heightened emotions that translate into manifold consequential behaviours (Gotz et al., 2020). Gotz focuses on three main catalysts, exploring the rise in domestic abuse and the influence of the final score on reporting of domestic violence incidents to the police. The study examines whether the time of kick-off or the specific match day influences the increase in domestic abuse cases, alongside the effect of heavy alcohol consumption on perpetrators or victims of domestic abuse. Identifying when cases are more likely to rise helps shape research into how vulnerable victims can be better supported. King (2021) highlighted that following the 2020 European Tournament, reported calls to the police increased after England lost to Italy on penalties in the final. It was suggested that domestic abuse reports increased by 38% following England's loss in the final at Wembley Stadium.

Existing research indicates that there was a pattern of behaviour where more abuse cases were reported during weekend fixtures. Research conducted in the 1980s suggested football hooliganism was highest during weekend fixtures (De 'Castella, 2012). Barlow (2021) suggests that using this model, safeguard mechanisms during weekends could help to raise awareness and precautionary measures for the victims of domestic violence. The impact of heavy alcohol consumption during match fixtures on domestic abuse victims and perpetrators has been examined throughout scholarly literature. Alcohol has been identified as a direct trigger factor, bringing violent temperaments to the surface and causing loss of control, fuelling aggressive behaviour. Alcohol affects the way information is processed, stops perpetrators from seeing consequences and suppresses inhibition (Drink Aware, 2022). This is important as heavy alcohol consumption is associated with football fixture culture, which often provides spectators a chance to bond, but with the potential to turn violent if too much alcohol is consumed.

Methodology

The overarching aim of this article is to examine the correlation between football and domestic abuse. Spratt (2018) argues the need for social and public awareness of domestic abuse and the impact English professional football has on recorded figures, with evidence-based research suggesting football can act as a catalyst to violent attacks (Trendl et al., 2021; Card et al., 2011; Crowley et al., 2014). This article uses secondary data and research findings available in the public domain, including

journal articles, books, blogs, and media sources. To ensure credibility, various specific search terms were used to obtain relevant and accurate information (“domestic abuse in football, does football have an impact on domestic abuse”). The references used in this paper focus particularly on English studies due to the differing laws in Scotland and other jurisdictions.

The quantitative analysis based on published data helped develop a hypothesis, a range of theories that provide an initial understanding for this project (Pickell, 2021). Quantitative studies identified a significant rise in domestic abuse reporting during and after football fixtures. Numeric data established that domestic abuse did increase and decrease depending on match days and the time of kick-off. A mixed method approach has been used to identify correlations between football and domestic violence, along with factors that contribute, such as key football rivalries, kick-off times, days matches are played and alcohol consumption.

Thematic analysis

Football, violence and relationships

Relationships are an important part of life, often offering a sense of partnership, contentment, and fulfilment (Abdullatif, 2017). Football plays a key role in the lives of many as it presents people with a sense of belonging (Stone, 2013). Football enables supporters to watch, play and be involved in a sport. With over 1 million participants (The Football Association, 2015) and an estimated 3.5 billion fans worldwide (White, 2021), there is no doubt that football is the most popular sport played and watched sport throughout England (Barrow, 2014). However, football games have been associated with violence since the early 13th Century (Carnibella et al., 1996). King (2003) suggests that there are three main factors which lead to violence at football games. The first relates to the political context of a game, with the desire for fans to assert themselves over rivals, using intoxicating substances to enable violence (King, 2003). Card and Dahl (2009) propose that component factors also influence domestic violence, due to the unpredictable behaviour displayed when emotions heighten, depending on the outcome of a match.

In 2002, 2006 and 2010, many domestic incidents were reported throughout England during the FIFA World Cup Tournaments. The Pathways Project (2022) found that the average number of reported incidents increased by 13% when England

participated in a fixture, compared to days when they did not play. Briscoombe et al. (2012) analysed domestic data from 33 police forces from June and July 2009 and compared the findings to the 2010 World Cup period from the same months. There was an increase displayed on days when the England team won or lost, but no significant change in domestic violence reports when they drew a match (Briscoombe et al., 2012). Between 2009 and 2010, domestic violence figures reported a rise of 27.7% to 31.5% during the World Cup period in 2010, with Spratt (2018) suggesting there is an increase in domestic abuse when England participate in a fixture, with a slight rise in cases when England draw a game. These figures have a significant effect on victims and stretch an already under-resourced police time and response.

Ivandic et al. (2021) identified that all police forces in England have now recognised a surge in domestic reports on a national level. Oppenheim (2022) found domestic abuse reports soared by almost 50% when England participated in a fixture during the 2022 World Cup.

Baron (2010) analysed statistics from previous FIFA World Cup tournaments, concluding that a trend exists between a rise in domestic abuse cases when major footballing events take place both at a national and international level. Most studies conducted find a significant increase in reported cases when England loses their football fixture and a smaller increase when they win. West Yorkshire Police identified an increase of 30% more domestic cases reported to them during major tournaments, with 285 more victims and 270 more arrests in the four weeks of the World Cup compared to any other four weeks during 2010 (Baron, 2010).

Similarly, Kirby et al. (2014) also reported a rise in cases by all police forces during the 2010 World Cup. Figures from Lancaster Constabulary display a more significant rise as England progressed further through the 2010 World Cup tournament (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1	-	59	53	67	73	88	81
Week 2	79	65	46	72	62	79	86
Week 3	3	68	61	61	65	87	103
Week 4	83	64	114	82	95	98	140
Week 5	78	78	78	-	-	-	-

Briscombe, et al. (2012) also conducted a study over a four-day period, which correlates with the findings of Kirby et al. (2014). Using Figure 1, the data shows that there is a higher percentage rise when England wins or loses, but no significant difference when they draw.

Wheatstone (2017) obtained statistics from police forces throughout the country. The statistics showed the biggest spike for an individual game was during the Merseyside derby between Everton and Liverpool, which displayed a 61% surge compared to a day when no local football took place (Wheatstone, 2017). Northumbria Police also reported a 26% rise in reported crime rates (not domestic specific) around the game Newcastle played against Sunderland (Wheatstone, 2017). Finally, Greater Manchester Police also saw an increase in domestic reports during the derby fixtures when Manchester United and Manchester City were opponents (Ivandic, 2021). From this, it is evident that when close rivalry teams play each other, the police experience greater demand. Williams et al. (2013) found a significant increase in cases of physical, sexual, and emotional domestic abuse in the 24 hours after a match began, with both the police and support groups reporting the increase.

Domestic abuse remains under-reported (Grierson, 2018). The National Crime Victimization Survey (2020) found that only around half of domestic incidents are reported to the police. During the European 2020 Tournament, data recorded an increase in domestic abuse cases, with 400 extra cases reported to the police throughout the duration of the tournament (Sandhu, 2021). This shows that despite awareness campaigns and support for victims, numbers are still increasing, with football being a highlighted factor. Premier League clubs are running campaigns supporting victims by creating the #YouAreNotAlone campaign against domestic abuse. By advertising and raising awareness, Premier League clubs and their safeguarding leads work with local community organisations to support domestic abuse procedures (Premier League, 2020). In addition, there are current initiatives in place that help and support the reduction of domestic violence, like the Clare's Law Act (2014), a domestic violence disclosure scheme that provides people with the right to know about their current or ex-partner's previous domestic or violence-related history. In the year of 2020, 4479 applicants of Clare's law were granted disclosure (Home Office, 2022). The success of the scheme suggests a clear framework with a recognised, consistent, and accessible process for people to use.

Despite several research studies, there remains a gap in the knowledge regarding the type of domestic abuse offences that have been committed by perpetrators. Domestic abuse takes many forms such as physical, verbal, threatening and controlling behaviour (Plumptre, 2022). Police systems should examine patterns related to domestic abuse statistics. This would aid the reporting of incidents, but also the nature of why the incident has been reported in the first instance. Domestic Abuse Services (2022) indicate that domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling behaviour which can be linked to sport. Using policing systems would allow in-depth research to be conducted and more support to be applied if consecutive patterns are highlighted.

Match day kick-off time and alcohol consumption

Roman et al. (2012) suggest that the time and day a football game is scheduled can greatly influence rates of domestic violence, causing a significant rise in cases. One of the key findings showed a correlation between an increase in domestic violence on weekend game fixtures compared to mid-week games. Home Office (2006) found that cases from the 2006 World Cup had a more significant rise when games were played on a Saturday. On Saturday 10th June 2006, 700 more cases were reported across England and Wales, like Saturday 1st July 2006, 690 cases were recorded, in comparison to midweek fixtures such as Tuesday 20th June 2006, with 394 domestic calls made. Similar patterns have been noted depending on the day of the week in the 2010 World Cup. Kirby (et al., 2014) found the following increase on weekends during the 2010 World Cup.

Figure 2

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Average	75.7	66.8	59.5	70.5	76.7	91.0	90.0

Figure 2 suggests the time range when domestic incidents take place and enables criminologists to identify ‘hot spots’ where criminal activities are likely to be concentrated (Nickerson, 2022). The data shows that most domestic incidents are reported between 3:00 pm and 9:59 pm, Monday to Thursday, throughout the United Kingdom (Roman et al., 2012). However, these statistics show a slight change during the weekend, varying from 10 pm on a Friday to 4:59 am on a Sunday (Roman et al., 2012). With bars and pubs relying on weekend custom, Roman (et al., 2012) suggests

that the increase is the result of off-football premises outlets such as bars and pubs opening for longer durations when people are not working.

A survey conducted by CareerBuilder (2016) found that 61-77% of people in the United Kingdom have work commitments between Monday and Friday. For most of the population, the default time off falls on a weekend. This applies to people on full-time jobs and full-time education, signifying that people often choose to work between Monday and Friday, daytime hours, as this way of working offers stability and predictability, especially for people with children (Arcoleo, 2020). This shift pattern allows parents to be off work at the same time as their children are off school, reducing the cost of childcare. According to the research conducted by CareerBuilder (2016), due to people's work commitments during the weekdays in mind, football fixtures are often scheduled on a weekend or on a weekday night. This helps to allow more spectators to attend and to obtain more broadcasting viewers because they are not working at the time. Matches played on a weekday see attendance and viewing figures decrease in comparison to those played on a weekend (Garcia et al., 2002). Johnsen et al. (2008) found that demand for televised games is 31.6% higher on Saturdays and Sundays in comparison to other weekdays. With the sheer number of competitions played by English clubs, many must play mid-week fixtures to allow the competition to be completed by a set end date. Crowley (et al., 2014) found that domestic violence can also occur during weekday matches, suggesting that football itself is the main driver and that it does not relate to the day games are played. Crowley (et al., 2014) also identified factors that contribute to emotional arousal, which could lead to acts of violence: pre-match expectations, the importance of the game and the opposition.

Moreover, Ivandic et al. (2021) discovered that the time of day of a game can have a significant impact on domestic rates. The research identified that matches with earlier kick-off times (before 7 pm) have an increased rate of recorded violence in comparison to late kick-offs (after 7 pm) (Ivandic et al., 2021). Having an earlier kick-off allows fans to consume more alcohol for longer periods, before and after the match. Savage (2021) agrees that alcohol consumption following a football game fuels domestic violence and suggests changing the kick-off time would help to reduce alcohol consumption, resulting in less abuse.

A high volume of games continues to be played on a Friday evening and the weekends, which accounts for a 36% rise in cases (Ivandic et al., 2021). On average, most games are likely to kick off at 3 pm, with an increased reporting of DV to occur at around 7 pm. Whereas,

a 7 pm kick-off would see a peak of reporting between 1 am and 2 am, but a noon kick-off shows a drop in domestic abuse calls by 5.3% (Ivandić et al., 2021).

Wagstaff (2022) argues that moving the kick-off times forward only encourages fans to consume more alcohol before the match, which could then increase the risk of public order events, football hooliganism and violence. Boutilier et al. (2017) suggested that domestic calls are not only associated with national and international games but rivalry games, along with the importance of the game (top of the table clash and local fixtures). Dickson et al. (2016) studied data gathered from the Scottish derby between Celtic & Rangers, which takes place at least twice a year, every year. When the 'Old Firm' play, there was an increase in domestic violence of 27% compared to a normal weekend day (Dickinson et al., 2016).

When dealing with other anti-social behaviour at football games, local police forces work alongside the Football Association (FA) to establish what actions can be changed to ensure a successful outcome. For many years, football hooliganism has taken place throughout England. Football hooliganism is described as unruly behaviour associated with football fans (Persaud, 2004). The term football hooliganism was created by the media to identify individuals carrying out criminal acts at football stadiums (1986). One of the main factors that contributes to hooliganism also contributes to domestic violence. Football fans tend to form a bond over a long period with the other team's supporters. Similarly, to constitute domestic abuse, there must be an element of a personal connection, whether that be intimate or nonintimate (Brown, 2022). Parkinson (2016) proposed that moving matches to midday on a Saturday helps reduce the time spectators can drink and congregate during the build-up. Savage (2021) agrees that changing kick-off times could help reduce violence. Findings not only have big implications for victims but also police forces. Barlow (2021) believes that pushing for early kick-offs to be brought forward around noon is easier to police and manage, as people are less likely to become violent.

As noted above, there is a clear relationship between the days/times of football fixtures and domestic abuse incidents. However, the nature and the characteristics of the domestic offences are still not known. Additionally, the sources of statistics, the gender of the victims or suspects and whether they are known to police are also not clear. Some clarity in these factors would help police forces and charities to establish a more suitable working strategy moving forward.

Football, alcohol consumption and domestic violence

Brooks-Hay et al. (2018) reviewed research spanning 25 years, suggesting a potential link between domestic violence and football due to a high level of alcohol consumption, before, during and after the match, a factor that will be explored further

in this section. Other research in this area also suggests that alcohol consumption is linked to domestic abuse, with partners often suffering severe consequences from alcohol-related crimes. Women are twice as likely to experience physical or sexual domestic abuse when alcohol is a component factor for either the perpetrator or the victim (Alcohol Change UK, 2023).

Data shows that alcohol plays a role in 40% of all crimes in England as it reduces a person's inhibition and impairs a person's judgement (Alcohol Addiction Centre, 2021). Drinking often happens with or around intimate friendships or relationships, which can lead to direct physical attacks and abuse. A survey conducted by Gilchrist et al. (2014) found that police officers in the Northeast of England were unable to remember the last time they attended a domestic incident where alcohol was not involved. Alcohol misuse is consistently found in a high proportion of those who perpetrate domestic abuse and sexual assault. It has been found that within relationships where one partner is dependent on a substance, domestic abuse is more likely to occur (Foster, 2014).

Calvo-Porrall (2019) proposes that consumers of alcoholic beverages drink for social reasons and are influenced by situational factors in consumption. Drinking behaviour is affected by environment-based contextual variables. When people drink outside of home, they can become more easily influenced by the people around them. In England, televised coverage of national football tournaments frequently partners with alcohol brands for sponsorships (Trendl et al., 2021). Alcohol companies use the tournaments broadcast around the world as an opportunity to advertise their brands. One of the main sponsors for the recent FIFA World Cup 2022 was Budweiser (Grish, 2022). An analysis of the 2016 European Tournament broadcasts in the United Kingdom found that viewers encountered 122 references to alcohol per broadcast on average, 0.65 per minute (Purves et al., 2017). This meant a large proportion of spectators were drinking a large amount of alcohol. Alcohol brands began to associate themselves with sport in the hope of reaching out to a core target audience and becoming a topic of conversation (News and Gossip, 2022). Christou (2018) found that Dutch lager Heineken has the most active deals across the sporting industry, accounting for 11% of all sponsorships. Alcohol may not be the only factor affecting domestic violence, but abuse incidents occur when one or both parties involved have been drinking and are intoxicated (Alcohol Change UK, 2023). Excessive consumption of alcohol features in both sponsorship and spectatorship. It has therefore been identified as one of the main contributory factors in domestic abuse cases (Robb-Dover, 2020). Research conducted by Foster (2014) suggests that between 25% and 50% of domestic perpetrators are under the influence of alcohol at the time of committing a physical assault.

Alcohol consumption also accounted for increased hospital admissions during the period of the football World Cup. Carroll (et al., 2002) found that during the 1998 World Cup, there was an upsurge in members of the public attending hospitals increased by 25% compared to days when England were not participating in a fixture (Carroll et al., 2002). Similarly, recent rises have also been displayed in a survey carried out during the 2010 World Cup. Approximately 50% of people attending the hospital throughout the competition had obtained an assault type injury (Quigg, 2012). Alcohol was found to be a contributing factor in all the cases (Quigg, 2012). National Health Service (2022) found that 1 in 10 day-to-day visits to accident and emergency departments are generally because of alcohol or substance-related issues/incidents. Trendl et al. (2021) interestingly found that on the day of England's quarter-final victory against Sweden in the 2018 World Cup, hospitals across England reported a record number of reported alcohol poisoning cases.

Certain theories of domestic violence suggest that perpetrators use their actions to intimidate and control someone else. The substance they ingest is often a way that people try to justify their behaviours, as many abusers use drinking as an excuse for their unacceptable behaviours (Mosel, 2022). For example, when perpetrators are sober, with a clear mind, they try to justify their actions due to alcohol intoxication. Abusers do not become violent because of alcohol, but alcohol can exacerbate their preconditioned heightened capabilities for violence, making the situation more intense.

To explore the link between football and alcohol related domestic abuse, Trendl et al. (2021) analysed ten years' worth of crime data from the West Midlands Police. The results showed an increase of 47% in the number of reported alcohol-related domestic abuse cases on days England were victorious on match days and an 18% increase on days after an England football match (Trendl et al., 2021). An interesting finding made during analysis showed that the number of alcohol related cases starts in the three hours of the match, peaks in the next three hours and declines back to its original level in the 24 hours after the match (Trendl et al., 2021).

Part of the abuse comes to the surface due to the emotional change during a game, which can often be intensified by intoxicants. When a team performs poorly or loses, the brain produces cortisol, which is a hormone your body releases in stressful situations (Muska, 2017). The feeling of anxiety is also added to the stress felt by spectators when watching their football team. Cognitive and somatic anxieties have been linked to spectators, which increases as the alcohol intake also rises (Steptoe et al., 1990). Mixing these emotions may result in aggression as a form of release, which may lead to domestic violence. Alcohol can act as a catalyst for an attack; however, it should never be used as an excuse for violence of any form.

Some evidence suggests that some female victims of domestic abuse develop substance abuse problems in response to their victimisation (Collins et al., 2002). Alcohol can be used as a coping method for people who use drinking as a way of seeking a sense of escape, relief, to help relax and unwind (Spotorno, 2021). Women who are abused often turn to alcohol to hide away from the pain and to help forget about the ongoing abusive situation they find themselves in (Mosel, 2022).

Further research needs to be carried out to help protect vulnerable victims from alcohol induced suspects. Governments around the world also need to work with outside agencies, charities, and the Football Associations. This will help develop solutions to help reduce alcohol intake for football spectators and ways domestic victims can be protected better.

Trust, Confidence and Supporting Victims

The investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of domestic abuse is a national priority, with territorial forces being required to account for any shortcomings in successful prosecutions. Forces that are unable to demonstrate improved achievement rates in response to violence against women and girls (VAWG) are being increasingly challenged by a range of stakeholders, evidencing the fundamental subjectivity when defining police priorities (Ferraro, 1995; Warr, 1985). Brain (2010) argues that policing in England and Wales recognises that some crimes will go unreported, which may be necessary to ensure that local and national resources are not overwhelmed. However, by accepting this, policing will never achieve universal trust and confidence, as a proportion of the population will have to experience higher crime levels or reduced victim support to ensure that others receive a better-quality response (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007).

Newburn (2007) argues that the prevention of criminal activity and conducting investigations is a central function of the police, with institutional trust influenced by an organisation's ability to successfully deliver them. Jackson & Sunshine (2007) identified that the fear of high crime rates at a national or local level has a direct impact on the confidence ratings awarded to the police, with a community's perceived failure to protect eroding legitimacy. The most investigated aspect amongst practitioners and scholars has been the intersectionality between the fear of crime and confidence, with some studies suggesting that those with the highest levels of fear of victimisation have the least confidence in law enforcement (Hawdon and Ryan 2003). The increasing reporting of domestic abuse cases demonstrates a high level of risk to members of the public, suggesting the importance of developing significant measures to identify solutions which can help prevent the risk to victims. By focusing on a preventive model, policing can begin to rebuild legitimacy amongst victims to ensure greater levels of information and intelligence sharing.

Baker et al. (1983) conducted one of the earliest studies, noting that if individuals perceive high levels of crime in their local area, they have less confidence in police response, tactics and strategy. This was reinforced later by Spratt and Dobb (2009), who identified that a person's perception of crime is subjective; they are likely to base their response on experience rather than data or knowledge of operational procedure. However, Skogan (2009) argues that, regardless of causality, most studies identify a link between fear of crime and impact on trust in both the concept and overall satisfaction with police capabilities. Attempts have been made to separate fear into an alternative variable, recognising the impact it has in shaping outcomes, but as with other aspects of the cognitive process, this would be difficult to remove completely (Jones, 2005). Skogan (2009) tried to overcome this issue using structural equation modelling, which examined the impact of the fear of crime on trust/confidence in policing whilst attempting to minimise its role in shaping confidence ratings. The study collected data from the Police Department of Chicago in 1983 and concluded that when variables were controlled, particularly perceptions of policing visibility and risk of victimisation, confidence in policing did receive improved ratings. The data produced showed that fear of crime did reduce, but that little to no impact was had on confidence in police response or increased levels of institutional trust. Ren et al. (2005) suggested that the failure to achieve high levels of convictions relating to domestic abuse is multifactorial, with many factors outside the control of the forces themselves. However, few victims will make this distinction, focusing instead on receiving an appropriate and effective response from those who are managing the investigation, demonstrating the importance of a micro-level response. Improving victim satisfaction remains central to developing trust and confidence in police practice, but high levels of demand require regional and national forces to work 'plurally'. Working closely with organisations to identify factors which influence crime rates creates opportunities for collaborative preventive measures. With evidence suggesting a connection between football fixture times and levels of domestic abuse, policing must link in with partners to support prompt and effective investigations.

Conclusion

Football as a sport cannot be solely blamed for the rise in domestic abuse incidents, but it is evident that it acts as an aggravating factor. The thematic analysis conducted demonstrates that the football score-line influences whether the figures rise or stay the same, depending on the days on which professional football was played. Domestic abuse figures do rise no matter what the outcome of the match is. The rise remains a continuous concern, and victims are at great risk of experiencing violence.

It is also observed that when a team is expected to lose, there is a less significant impact on domestic violence cases.

Evidence suggests that more domestic incidents are reported on a weekend, specifically Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, compared to weekdays. Domestic abuse occurs more often when fixtures take place on a weekend rather than during the week. Games starting early at noon showed a decline in domestic abuse calls because perpetrators consume less alcohol during the week compared to weekend games.

The role of alcohol remains an important factor in understanding the causes of domestic abuse, and this was the focus of the final theme. Alcohol affects people in different ways, but often stops people from making rational and responsible decisions (Drink Aware, 2022). Corporate alcohol brand sponsorships and heavy advertisements of their beverages on players' shirts and in stadiums encourage and directly influence the increased level of alcohol consumption among viewers. People tend to drink more on weekends and consider alcohol as a treat following a hard week (Galbicsek, 2016). The consistent pattern of alcohol related domestic abuse cases suggests football matches can create a hostile environment, which, coupled with the consumption of high levels of alcohol, can be a risk factor for violent behaviours, as illustrated in statistical increases of domestic abuse. Although domestic abuse can happen at any time, it has been shown throughout the themes that there are certain catalysts which enhance the chance of becoming a domestic victim, relating incidents to football. These effects are dependent on the kick-off time and day, and if the perpetrator is intoxicated through the means of alcohol.

Future studies focusing on different types and natures of domestic abuse will help develop an in-depth insight into the problem, creating tailored support for victims. Moreover, there remains a lack of research throughout England and Wales comparing domestic abuse on heightened game days compared to a day when no professional football is played. A broader insight and discussion are needed to highlight the extent of the impact football has on domestic abuse. Qualitative studies and discourse analysis should be conducted to obtain opinions and views from survivors who have dealt with a domestic abuse ordeal. This would allow them to share their experiences but also see if they believe anything could be put in place to help current victims or prevent it from reoccurring in the future. Research that examines how domestic abuse victims report crimes to the police should also be explored further. It is important that the crime figures are recorded accurately to allow for the statistics

to be analysed properly. This would assist in measuring the impact of policing policies and practices on the reporting of domestic abuse.

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