

The nonverbal behavior of football players: A sociological and psychological study

Osman Sirj eldeen;Rasha Abdel Rahman

Abstract

The relationship among the body, soul and society is not new, but an old relationship as the humanity itself. There are many studies dealt with the body in relation to various sciences, including psychology, sociology and anthropology.

In the modern era, the interest in the sociology and physiology of the body has become a research trend that includes many fields such as communication sciences, folklore and arts. The body has important, expressive and fundamental connotations in expression and nonverbal communication with others, including various movements and gestures as well as the tattoos drawn on different body parts. These have various psychological, cultural and social implications.

Thus, the body represents the other ego of the individual through which he expresses his individual and societal components, and implications that reflect the social and cultural context.

The football game is one of the most popular in the world, followed by many people from different social classes as well as different ages and nationalities. This game has a large audience not only watching the matches, but also follow the movements and emotions of the player and is affected by them as well as follow the details of their personal lives.

Keyword: psychological study

Published Date: 6/30/2018

Page:132-141

Vol 6 No 06 2018

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31686/ijer.Vol6.Iss6.1077>

The nonverbal behavior of football players: A sociological and psychological study

Osman Sirj eldeen, Rasha Abdel Rahman

College of Mass Communication and Humanities, Department of sociology & social work,
Ajman University, United Arab Emirates

Introduction

The relationship among the body, soul and society is not new, but an old relationship as the humanity itself. There are many studies dealt with the body in relation to various sciences, including psychology, sociology and anthropology.

In the modern era, the interest in the sociology and physiology of the body has become a research trend that includes many fields such as communication sciences, folklore and arts. The body has important, expressive and fundamental connotations in expression and nonverbal communication with others, including various movements and gestures as well as the tattoos drawn on different body parts. These have various psychological, cultural and social implications.

Thus, the body represents the other ego of the individual through which he expresses his individual and societal components, and implications that reflect the social and cultural context.

The football game is one of the most popular in the world, followed by many people from different social classes as well as different ages and nationalities. This game has a large audience not only watching the matches, but also follow the movements and emotions of the player and is affected by them as well as follow the details of their personal lives.

Research problem

As football players have such great influence, the idea of this study is to focus on the nonverbal cues specially movements and gestures of the body. In addition to tattoos drawn on different body parts of football players and hairstyles adopted by them.

This research intends to interpret and analyze this phenomenon from the psychological perspective and its relation to the cultural background and social affiliation of the players.

Objectives

The main goal of this study is to clarify the relationship between the nonverbal behavior of football players, and their social status and cultural background. This goal is subdivided into the following objectives:

- 1- Interpreting the nonverbal behavior, body movement and gestures of the football player from psychological perspective.
- 2- Explaining the relationship between the body movements and the social and cultural background of the football player

3 - Clarifying the psychological and social meaning of tattoos and hairstyle of football players.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the psychological meaning of some movements and gestures of the body of football players?
- 2- Is there a relationship between the movements of the body of the football player and the cultural and social background to which he belongs?
- 3- Is there a relationship between the drawings and tattoos used by football players and their emotional state?

Methodology

Methodological Approach

This study is based on the descriptive method, which is considered one of the most appropriate methodological approach for this type of study. It can clarify the multiple relationships between the body movements of the football player and the outside world, as well as contribute to the interpretation and analysis of it in term of psychological, cultural and social affiliations.

Sample Design

This study is based on the objective sample, by presenting different models of the bodies of football players in European Leagues, and other players in national or regional teams.

Data Collection

Data collection is limited to one tool represented by the content analysis. The study is based on analysis of the body signs of the football player through pictures and videos.

Literature review

Important research in the field of the body and its social and cultural use (Shilling, 2003). The importance of this study for this research is that it presented a fascinating theoretical view of the body in the conception of classical and modern sociologists(Shilling, 2003)

On the other hand, Chris was able to provide her with the body's responses to social and cultural factors for the individual and the community, because such responses are the movement and change of social systems.(sShilling,2003)

In general, Shillinger's study was able to theoretically employ the body in sociological studies.

In order to address the social connotations and meanings of the body within the context of social and cultural context, the research must be based on the precise identification of concepts such as culture, society and group. The most reliable reference is the book by Maurice Godelier entitled Society, group and Culture. Which makes all groups assert themselves as distinct assemblages, Gödelier's idea of distinct groups and their social relations can be used in body signs in football players, expected to be a reflection of the meaning

of community and cultural committed by football player through social and individual ego. (Godelier, 2015)

Psychology is defined as the scientific study of the mind and behavior (Gray, 1991), the study of nonverbal behavior has a distinguished place in the history of science.

Nonverbal behavior refers to all the messages that is coded in words (Eisenberg & Smith, 1971), which contain facial expressions, body signs, hand gestures, eye contact, voice tone and interpersonal distance, (Meuse, 1987; Besson et al., 2004).

From a social psychology perspective, one of the most interesting aspect of nonverbal behavior is that it is rarely totally unregulated in social interactions. A lot of people more try to control their nonverbal expression behavior. They also always try to interpret the nonverbal behaviors shown by others that they communicate with in order to understand those behaviors (Izard, 1994)

Understanding and interpretation of nonverbal cues in communication has been a very important topic to researchers in different fields for many years.

Some early thoughts about nonverbal communication come from Charles Darwin (1872) who published his famous book about expression of the emotions in man and animals. Consistent with facial expressions are the actions that complete and assert behavioral responses, these expressions are happened in integration with other bodily movements. Darwin pointed that these bodily movements are helpful and used to transfer emotions.

Many scientists studied the evaluation of nonverbal behaviors, they thought that nonverbal behavior have developed with the purpose of facilitate and enable animals to communicate emotional information with one another (Tracy & Robins, 2008; Darwin, 1872; Ekman, 2003).

Moreover, Evolutionists suggest that social animals have the ability to produce and identify certain non-verbal behaviors; they express them in practical way to facilitate communication and transmission of an important information.

Social Schema theory and nonverbal behavior

Social schema theory considered one of the most significant theory in social psychology, which has played an important role in understanding and interpret nonverbal behavior.

The main principle of schema-driven theories is that for reasons of effectiveness, people use cues (e.g., physical appearance, posture, gesture, and clothing) from early instances of social interaction to classify a person into a certain type (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

The main concept of the theory is " person Schema " which is defined as "an individual's knowledge of attributes of a specific type of person and the relationships among these attributes, the person schemes include all the evaluations and judgments of the characteristics of the type of person. In addition, the social schema suggest that when people see or think about someone ,a mental person schema is activated, and try to link between person's characteristics Which in turn leads to adopt behavioral , emotional and cognitive reactions or outcomes according to the conception that developed (Montepare & Dobish, 2003).

Furthermore, the schema theory suggests that the mere exposure to an image of a person can lead to activate the person schema and make some evaluation and judgment that triggering generalization effects that go beyond the information that is actually available. (Harker & Keltner, 2001; Knutson, 1996)

For example, Greenlees et al. (2008) showed in their study that the combination of 90% gaze and red uniform triggered a “good” person (i.e., soccer player) schema, while the 10% gaze and white uniform triggered a “bad” penalty taker schema (Greenlees, et al, 2008)

Previous studies

Many previous researches focused on investigating the non-verbal behavior in sport, and examining the relationship between facial expression and body gestures.

For example, Kerr, Wilson, Nakamura and Sudo (2005) examined the emotional reactions of winning and losing teams at two professional soccer matches. They found that the winning soccer club experienced pleasurable emotions during the match while the losing soccer club experienced increases in unpleasant emotions.

This agrees with the results of Wann, et al (1994) who examined the reactions of winning and losing of a university basketball match, he also states that there are positive or pleasant emotions that associated with winning team and negative or unpleasant emotions associated with losing team.

In the study of Troisi and Moles (1999), they developed a coding scheme (Ethological Coding System for Interviews-ECSI) for measuring nonverbal behavior of soccer players who were interviewed after a soccer match. They found that soccer player may exhibit such nonverbal behaviors as looking away, hand to face, eyebrow movement, smile and shoulder movement (Troisi & Moles, 1999).

Soccer players show different emotions after a match and the range of nonverbal behavior varies among the players due to the difference in social and psychological context. Therefore, the present study tries to investigate nonverbal behaviors of some players and interpret it through its psychological and social context.

Psychological Interpretation of Nonverbal behavior of some famous players:

The ability to work out what is really happening with a person is not easy, but simple. It is about matching what you see and hear in the environment in which it all happens and drawing credible conclusions. Most people, however, only see the things they think they are seeing.

In this paper, we have chosen two of famous football players and analyzed their nonverbal behavior in critical situations as shown below:

Lionel Messi

The famous Barcelona football player Lionel Andrés Messi in an often misunderstood nonverbal display - that of the "Lateral Lip Purse". A lateral lip purse is a sign of an open decision making process. In difference to the forward lip purse when the lips are pursed to one side, it sends an honest, open and non-secretive

emotional attitude. A lateral lip purse is very commonly seen in shops when a person is deciding between two brands.

Furthermore, Messi's expression here is seen in the configuration of his eyebrows - as they are drawn together and lowered. Lionel is a few seconds into his negative judgment of what he sees is transpiring - and what he believes should have occurred. He is still open about this judgement however - that is a very important distinction (Appendix A).

Cristiano Ronaldo

The famous Real Madrid football player Cristiano Ronaldo

1- Words beyond body language

This photo (Appendix B) was taken after he scored the winning goal against Ghana. It shows the body language of Ronaldo in very critical moment, because he is displaying inconsistent nonverbal behavior.

In spite of higher clapping his hand in a very conscious of symbol agreement, it could be seen that his mouth and mid-face are conveying two negative emotions - primarily that of regret and to a somewhat lesser degree disgust. These facial components occur according to subconscious driven.

Whenever there is a difference between conscious and subconscious directed nonverbal signal - it is the subconscious one - which represent the person's real emotions.

2- Real laughing real emotion

This photo (Appendix C) was taken for Ronaldo after his double scoring and becoming the first player ever to reach 100 European goals in 2015.

It shows moments of truthful laughter, in addition to smiling during excitement and deep pleasure; there is a facial expression component that is not often noted.

The sincere smile of Cristiano Ronaldo can be noticed. It begins with eyes (e.g. with partial eyelid closure) follow by retracting (pulling it back) of his jaw. It was surprising to find how performing these two nonverbal configurations (in this specific order) will jump-start happiness.

Expression of cultural affiliation through dance

From the anthropological perspective, dance can be defined as a cultural practice and as a social ritual (Radcliffe-Brown 1994), whereby dance is seen as a means of aesthetic pleasure and a means for creating ties and specific structure in the community.

Dance researches gives a better understanding of how social characteristics are signaled and formed through bodily movement. Dance transfer complex cultural codes, and the studies of dance history interpret and analysis the practice and the reception of body movements in the context of ethnic and national identities, problems, events and ideologies beyond the field of dance as art..

Franz Boas (1858-1942), the 'Father of American Anthropology' was the first the anthropologists who suggested that a study and understanding of movement and dance might actually lead to critical analysis of the structure of a society along with providing new insights into understanding other parts of culture. In the

1920s started to examine dance and responses to it in terms of one's own culture instead of understanding it as a universal language.

Dance as a specific language is a socially historical phenomenon, dependent on the space and time in which it exists, which is mean that Dance is a learned cultural practice.

Many researchers see that societies produce dances and that dance is actually a ‘metaphysics of culture’, because a culture of specific society is embodied in the forms of material and physical culture (Polhemus, 1993)

African football players show most of these expressions. They often express the joy of winning or aiming in group or individual dances inspired by the local culture, from collective dances, for example the palm wine dance at the Sierra Leonean players, The rapid movement in wars, also the Situfo dance performed by Ivory Coast players inspired by the movement of animals and is the favorite of the tribes.

Mali Country player also dance on Griot music, which is a profession of cultural importance because those who perform it were walking around. They transmit news and events, and they are the custodians of the oral history of the tribe.

One of the movements of the dancing body is also the dance of the harvest by the Democratic Congo players; it gives cultural meanings, as the harvest is considered an important celebration an in society. It is the movements of the body when the football player, which returns to pride in the local culture, played by Real Madrid player “Sergio Ramos” in the celebrations of victory related to the movements of bullfights. One of the most popular dances of football players with a cultural dimension and an expression of adherence to history, the reggae music performed by Jamaican players, was associated with anti-slavery and belonging to African.

It is important to say that the dance body movements in football emphasize the rights of indigenous peoples: (see arts. 8 and 11 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007)

- 1 - Not to be subjected to forced assimilation and destruction of their culture.
- 2- Emphasis on ethnic identity.
- 3- To exercise the right to revive the traditions and customs of their peoples.

On the other hand, each of dances done by football players do not have any cultural meanings, but are done for simulations, for example, dab dance.

Sometimes one may find the simulation of some dances when the football player rejected from the community, for example the penguin dance done by the players of the Union team in Saudi Arabia when celebrating the goal.

Tattoo in Football

Most tattoos are an expression of the social and personal actions and behavior of a football player, especially celebrities, or the tattoos may express cultural dimensions and community concerns that the player wants to express or that Tattoos are no more than a match for the fashion. Tattooing is a state of communication between the player and the community. In many cases, tattooing may be a socially symbolic position. However, the data and information collected for the research showed that most of the

football players are dancing is an expression of emotional states either towards other societies or towards the other cultures.

Some Illustrative examples

Tattoo as an indicator of emotional behavior

Some of the players' drawings are an expression of emotional states indicating their feelings towards others that are: family, wife and children.

For Example, On Zlatan Ibrahimović's right wrist, there are numbers called as the "Zlatan Ibrahimović code". Actually, they refer to the birthdates of the male members in his family. He is also writing names of some children in charity organization to send a message of sympathy to disadvantaged children around the world. Tattoo of Real Madrid player Sergio Ramos refers to his sympathy for the victims of terrorist crimes and others pointed to the fruits of the Real Madrid Championships.

Icardi the Inter Milan player is drawing on his body image of his sons as a message of love to them. Also Dany ALevas Paris Saint-Germain player drawing image of his wife to express his love for her. Gabriel Jesus Manchester City player, drew a tattoo of his mother's image as an expression of his love to her. Chilean Vidal also drew a picture of his son in solidarity with his diabetes.

Tattoo as an inductor to cultural affiliation

Many football players drawing on body shows their cultural affiliation, for example, the Colombian player Falcao, who design a picture of a Red Indian holding a stock to indicate his belonging to the culture of red Indians. Zlatan Ibrahimović draw on his right side, a red dragon. This dragon stands to brag out his warrior personality. In addition, it is believed to have emerged from Japanese culture. Dragons otherwise are a good omen too, as they stand for endurance, stability, and determination.

In addition, a number of African players put on their body's drawings of predatory animals to indicate their belonging to the forest that represents the continent of Africa.

Hairstyles of football player

Cutting and decorating the hair of football players are four physical states reflecting the use of the body. The first is commercial, advertising and marketing example of the English player David Beckham and later it was noted at Messi and Neymar.

Second: the state of expression community, cultural and historical example of the hairstyle of Napoli player Merle Hamsik. Some players decorate their body through hair haircut to admire certain historical situations such as the player Rome team Maicon characterizes hair haircut in a helmet fashion Roman soldiers.

The third is a steady emotional and emotional state of mind. An example of this is the hairstyle of the Italian players Estefan Sharaoui, Guyan Asimawa and Abumayang.

The fourth is a physical and emotional state that can be modified and changed. For example, the hairstyle of Giovanni Simone, the French player of Nice, Mario Politely, as well as the most famous soccer players such as Cristiano Ronaldo.

Conclusion:

In general, the research concluded that the football player was able to use the body in many cultural and societal situations and the structure of the different social relations. It also represents a transmitter and receiver of the social and cultural space in which the footballer lives.

These results can be summarized as follows:

- 1- Nonverbal cues and behaviors are due to a lot of psychological and social factors.
- 2- Individuals nonverbal behaviors and especially football player Is an expression of real emotional state
- 3- Nonverbal behavior could be understand especially if it not agree with what he says
- 4- Tattoo is an expression of psychological feeling
- 5- The use of dance as one of the body in football is a confirmation of the collective cultural and societal ego, especially when African football players and Latin America.
- 6- The body dance in football often have meanings related to the environment, geography and history.
- 7- Football players are used body to clarify the right to practice the traditions and customs of the people.
- 8- One of meanings for body in football is preserving the cultural heritage.
- 9- One of the body functions of in the football, (dance or tattoo or hairstyle) emphasis on ethnic.

Reference

- 1- Besson, C., Graf, D., Hartung, I., Kropfhäusser, B., & Voisard, S. (2004). The importance of non-verbal communication in professional Interpretation. Retrieved from <https://aiic.net/page/1662/theimportance-Of-non-verbal-communication-inprofessional-interpretation/lang/1>. Accessed on March 1, 2017
- 2- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. Language and Symbolic Power. Cambridge: Polity Press. Cresswell, Tim. 2006. You Cannot Shake That Shimmie Here: Producing Mobility on the Dance Floor. *Cultural Geographies* 13 (1): 55–77.
- 3- Chaiken & Y. Trope (Eds.), *Dual process theories in social psychology* New York: Guilford
- 4- Darwin, C. (2009). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*. New York, NY: Oxford. (Original work published 1872).
- 5- De Waal, F. (1998). *Chimpanzee politics: Power and sex among apes*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 6- Eisenberg, A. M., & Smith, R. R. (1971). *Nonverbal communication* (Vol. 9). MacMillan Publishing.

- 7- Ekman, P. (2003). *Emotions revealed*. New York: Times Books
- 8- Fernández-Dols, J. M., & Ruiz-Belda, M. A. (1995). Are smiles a sign of happiness? Gold medal winners at the Olympic Games. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(6), 1113.
- 9- Fiske, S.T., & Taylor, S.E. (1991). *Social cognition*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- 10- Fiske, S.T., Lin, M., & Neuberg, S.L. (1999). The continuum model: Ten years later. In S.
- 11- Greenlees, I.A. (2007). Person perception in sport. In S. Jowett & D. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social psychology of sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- 12- Greenlees, I.A., Leyland, A., Thelwell, R.C., & Filby, W. (2008). Soccer penalty takers' uniform colour and pre-penalty kick gaze affect the impressions formed of them by opposing goalkeepers. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 26, 569–576.
- 13- Godelier, Maurice, *Communauté, société, culture: trois clefs pour comprendre les identités en conflits*, (Arabic translate publishing) 2015, Dar Alfarabi press, Biuret.
- 14- Harker, L., & Keltner, D. (2001). Expressions of positive emotion in women's college year Book pictures and their relationship to personality and life outcomes across adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 112–124.
- 15- Izard, C. E. (1994). Innate and universal facial expressions: Evidence from developmental and cross-cultural research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 288-299.
- 16- Le Breton, David, *Anthropologie Du Crobs Et Modernite*, (Arabic translate publishing), 1997, university institution press, Biuret.
- 17- Kerr, J. H., Wilson, G. V., Nakamura, I., & Sudo, Y. (2005). Emotional dynamics of soccer fans at winning and losing games. *Personality and individual Differences*, 38(8), 1855-1866.
- 18- Meuse, K. P. (1987). A review of the effects of non-verbal cues on the performance appraisal process. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 60(3), 207-226.
- 19- Polhemus, Ted. 1993. *Dance, Gender and Culture*. In: Helen Thomas (ed.), *Dance, Gender and Culture*. London: Macmillan, pp. 3–15
- 20- Qualtrics Labs, Inc. [Computer software] (2009). Retrieved from <https://tilburghumanities.eu.qualtrics.com/control Panel/> Tottenham, N., Tanaka, J. W., Leon, A. C., McCarry, T., Nurse, M., Hare, T. A., ... & Nelson, C. (2009). The NimStim set of facial expressions: judgments from untrained research participants. *Psychiatry research*, 168(3), 242-249.
- 21- Shilling, chris, 2003, *The body and social theory*, SAGE Publication LD, London
- 22- Tracy, J.L., & Robins, R.W. (2008). The automaticity of emotion recognition. *Emotion* (Washington, D.C.), 8, 81–95.
- 23- Troisi, A., & Moles, A. (1999). Gender differences in depression:: an ethological study of nonverbal behavior during interviews. *Journal of psychiatric research*, 33(3), 243-250.
- 24- Wann, D. L., Dolan, T. J., McGeorge, K. K., & Allison, J. A. (1994). Relationships between spectator identification and spectator's perception of influence, spectator's emotions and competition outcome. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 14, 347–364.

Appendix

Appendix A



Appendix B

