

A qualitative examination of severe disciplinary incidents in men's soccer

Theo Chu, Colin Deal, Kurtis Pankow, Shannon Pynn, Christine Smyth, and Nicholas Holt* (University of Alberta)

Poster Presentation Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine the number of severe disciplinary incidents involving referees in senior men's soccer, as well as contributing factors. Such incidents include, but are not limited to, abusive remarks, threats, and deliberate violent conduct. Competition in senior men's soccer takes place between teams within a tiered structure where players are at least 18 years old. Data collection entailed documentary analysis of disciplinary reports ($n = 98$) provided by a provincial soccer association. After recording annual frequency, offender's team, level of competition, and length of suspension, descriptive statistics were calculated. Disciplinary reports showed an increase in frequency of incidents from 4 in 2010 to 27 in 2015. These disciplinary incidents occurred across 80 different teams, with 61.1% of them emerging from lower tiers (i.e., tier 3 or lower). Suspensions ranged from 0 to 134 games ($M = 18.5$, $SD = 22.6$). These results highlight the distribution pattern and increase in severe disciplinary incidents in men's soccer. The next phase of the study involves conducting interviews to obtain player perceptions of disciplinary incidents involving referees. Approximately 10 players will be recruited across a range of tiers in a provincial soccer league, and share their experiences based on their direct involvement or as a witness to severe disciplinary incidents. Interviews will explore the antecedents of these disciplinary incidents, which may identify strategies to improve players' and officials' well-being through the influence of contextual factors.

* Indicates faculty mentor