

'It's a magical weed': Analysis of drug themed chants in Greek football fandom

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Background Despite a large body of work addressing football chants, there is one category of chants that has not been sufficiently explored: the football chants that include references to alcohol and drugs. To the best of our knowledge, the continued presence of drug themed chanting in Greek football has received little academic attention. The aim of this article is to review evidence for the existence of references to alcohol and drugs in Greek football chants and explore the role of drugs themed chants in Greek football fandom. What is the specific function of these references within the chant? What is the purpose of the drug themed chants?

Methods We conducted a textual and a thematic analysis in 440 chants from eleven Greek football clubs (40 from each club): Olympiacos, Panathinaikos, AEK, PAOK, Aris, Iraklis, Panionios, Atromitos, AEL, OFI, and Giannina. Our main source was the YouTube. We included clubs from Athens Metropolitan Area, Thessaloniki, and three large provincial cities (Heraklion, Larisa, and Giannina). We excluded shouts, anthems, chants against players and staff, clapping chants, and the so called 'anti-chants'.

Results In total sample, we found 52 references to 'state of mind', 112 references to use of substances, and 69 analogies that include metaphors and similes. Also, we found 196 references to legal and illegal substances. References to cannabis were the most (n=77), followed by 'other drugs' (n=52), the word 'drugs' (n=44), and alcohol (n=25).

Conclusions References to substances were widely encountered in chants, showing that it is a common phenomenon. References are used either as expression of 'state of mind', or refer literally to 'use', or lastly, are used in analogies. The references to substances, may be used to create a sense of belonging, and to form and maintain a collective identity among the Greek ultras. Greek ultras associate the collective performance of chanting to the 'demonized' drug use, creating a performance of deviance, enhancing the broader subcultural archetype that already characterizes the Greek ultras. Furthermore, the criminalization of drugs, the punitive drug policy, and the overall low degree of drugs normalization in Greece, may lead the ultras to seek spaces and time that they can freely 'talk' about drugs and drug use in an unhindered and undisturbed way. Therefore, the stadium is used by Greek ultras as a refuge to accommodate behaviour and language that is condemned in the wider Greek society.

Conference presentation abstract, 33rd ESSD conference, 6-8 October 2022, Vienna (Austria)

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