

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SPORT PARTICIPATION IN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TABRIZ CITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between social support and sport participation in high school teachers in Tabriz city. The statistical population consisted of all teachers of five areas in Tabriz city (N=2072). The research sample was 379 participants based on the Morgan's table that selected by random Stratified sampling method. For collecting data, two questionnaires of, social support and demographic were used. After data collection, data were analyzed using Kolmogorov–Smirnov, Independent t test and Pearson's test. The results showed that the level of social support is significantly higher among athletic teachers ($t=7.985$; $\text{sig}=0.000$). Also the level of social support is significantly higher in athletic male and female teachers ($t=12.014$; $\text{sig}=0.000$). The results indicated that there is no significant relationship between age of participants and social support ($r=0.070$; $\text{sig}=0.176$).

Keywords: Social Support, Sport Participation, High School Teachers, Tabriz City

INTRODUCTION

Physical activity has always been a supplementary part of an individual and family life since long time ago. It has a significant role in family relations and various social life activities, bringing satisfaction, pleasure, and joy to family members through creating recreational and leisure time, and holding multifunctional rituals. By providing people and societies with the sense of safety, mental and social comfort, hygiene, well-being, and healthy life, physical activities have produced valuable effects. Undoubtedly, creation of a healthy and vital society depends on spiritual and physical fitness of its members, resulting from the attempts made by its healthy, efficient, and thoughtful forces (Fathi, 2009).

In this regard, the health of educators as the main framework of young society is important for performing individual, scientific, and social roles. Doing physical activities along with gaining knowledge can considerably affect their learning. A less known topic in the field of sport sociology asks why the degree of sport participation, under the same environmental condition, differs between teachers. Empirical and theoretical studies have shown that difference in sport participation of teachers cannot be attributed only to biological-environmental factors; rather, social, cultural, and psychological elements may be in connection with such factors, or even prior to them. Investigations have suggested that people with divergent social-cultural backgrounds do not participate in sport activities equally. Based on the social-cultural conditions of socialization, they demonstrate different amount of sport participation (Parsamehr, 2006). One effective and key factor in the level of people's participation is the rate of social support. According to the definition, social support refers to the rate of affection, companionship, and attention to family, friends and other people (Ahmadi *et al.*, 1999). Consistent with social learning (socialization) perspective, looking at the activities of the significant others drives one to act too. Among the social support variables, the significant others (i.e. siblings, teachers, and mass media) variable is ominously correlated with sport participation. Results suggest that socialization and performing physical activities are related to above factors (Parsamehr, 2006). Lou (1997) believes that social support which moderates the impacts of stressors, and brings positive emotions and social support is directly correlated with happiness and mental health. Investigations have shown a significant relationship between social support and healthiness. Those who enjoy greater social support are healthier (Alipoor, 2006). Godin (1987) concludes that evaluation of feeling, perceptual pleasure, or sport-related enjoyment (as the main

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dimension of tendency towards sport) is connected with intention; therefore, creation of a positive experience is essential for convincing both children and adults to participate in sport activities.

Bourdieu (1999) in a series of studies argue that there is a significant correlation between people's sport participation and their social-economic class.

Kenyon and Mcpherson (2000) in a study entitled "socialization and its relationship with sport participation" put that athletes are mostly affected by the significant others. In that, the participation of parents and other family members, as well as close friend, in sport activities incline them more towards sport. According to these researchers, participation in sport is affected by the way people are socialized.

The more significant others encourage, the more people get involved in physical activities. Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) in a study on socialization into sport determine three sets of important factors influencing the participation in physical activities.

These factors include: A) personality traits (achieving the objective, competition, and experience), B) significant others (parents, neighbors, instructors, and role patterns), and C) socialization status (culture and opportunity).

In general, integrated effect of these factors results in role learning. Their model focuses on the importance of role patterns, gender (boys have more positive inclination towards experiencing physical activities and are more encouraged by others, which increase the chance of sport participation among them), experience (for example, having unfavorable experience of instructor and school may discourage some children from sport participation), participation determinants, and continued participation in physical activities.

Therefore, adoption of a comprehensive theoretical perspective depends on the understanding of the way of participation (Parsamehr, 2006).

Decades after the formation of sport sociology, understanding the factors that affect sport participation has become an important subject of this field. Teachers are a part of our society and paying attention to their individual and social health should be taken into consideration.

The present study investigates whether there is a significant difference in the level of social support between athletic and non-athletic teachers in Tabriz? and if there is a significant difference in the level of social support between athletic and non-athletic male and female teachers in Tabriz?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a causal-comparative survey study. Statistical population includes all teachers living in Tabriz. According to the statistics by General Administration of Education of the province, Tabriz has 2072 teachers at its urban centers, out of which 379 participants were selected as the sample size, based on the Morgan's table. In this study, stratified random sampling method has been employed. As a result, a number of schools were randomly selected from the education regions of the city.

The size of sample teachers was proportional to the total population. For the purpose of data collection, two questionnaires, namely demographic (age, gender, marital status, educational level, employment status, profession of father, profession of mother and profession of wife) and social support questionnaires were used.

The social support questionnaire involves 20 questions and eight components: father support, mother support, brother support, sister support, friends support, sport coaches support, teachers support, professors' support in a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of the questionnaire in this study using Cronbach's alpha was calculated at 0.88. In this study, descriptive statistics were used in order to summarize and classify the data and to calculate the mean, frequency, standard deviation and to draw diagrams and tables, and Kolmogorov–Smirnov, t test and Pearson test were used for testing the hypotheses. To analyze data SPSS (version 16) with 95 percent confidence level was used.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Gender		Group		Marital Status		Educational Level		
	Male	Female	Athletic	Non Athletic	Single	Married	Diploma	Foundation degree	B.A &PhD
Frequency	159	220	159	220	40	339	51	111	196
Frequency percentage	42.0	58.0	42.0	58.0	10.6	89.4	13.5	29.3	51.7

For examining the research hypothesis "there is not any significant difference in social support between the athletic and non-athletic teachers", independent t-test was used. The mean of social support was 3.04 and 2.49 in athletic and non-athletic teachers, respectively. According to Table 2, *t* value is equal to 7.985 and the significance level is 0.000, resulting in the rejection of null hypothesis. In conclusion, the level of social support is significantly higher among athletic teachers.

Table 2: Independent T test for compare thesocial support in athletic male and female teachers

		N	Mean	Standard deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	Test for t-test of			
					F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social Support	Athletic	159	3.0399	0.669	0.019	0.892	7.985	377	0.000
	Non-athletic	220	2.4850	0.666					

For examining the research hypothesis "there is not any significant difference in social support between the athletic male and non-athletic male teachers", independent t-test was used. The mean of social support was 2.78 and 2.56 in athletic male and non-athletic male teachers, respectively. According to Table 3, *t* value is equal to 2.320 and the significance level is 0.022, resulting in the rejection of null hypothesis. In conclusion, the level of social support is significantly higher among athletic male teachers.

Table 3: Independent T test for compare thesocial support in athletic male and non-athletic male teachers

		N	Mean	Standard deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	Test for t-test of			
					F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social Support	Athletic male	89	2.78	0.727	13.573	0.000	2.320	144.312	0.022
	Non-athletic male	70	2.56	0.414					

For examining the research hypothesis "there is not any significant difference in social support between the athletic female and non-athletic female teachers", independent t-test was used. The mean of social

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support was 3.37 and 2.45 in athletic female and non-athletic female teachers, respectively. According to Table 4, *t* value is equal to 12.014 and the significance level is 0.000, resulting in the rejection of null hypothesis. In conclusion, the level of social support is significantly higher among athletic female teachers.

Table 4: Independent T test for compare the social support in athletic female and non-athletic female teachers

		N	Mean	Standard deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test of		Sig. (2-tailed)
					F	Sig.	t	df	
Social Support	Athletic female	70	3.37	0.388	20.713	0.000	12.014	215.972	0.000
	Non-athletic female	150	2.45	0.745					

Results obtained by this research indicated that there is no significant relationship between age of participants and social support. Research hypothesis was rejected regarding Pearson correlation coefficient ($r=0.070$, $\text{Sig}=0.176$) (Table 5).

Table 5: The relationship between age of participants and social support

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Pearson Correlation
Age	39.97	7.062	24	56	$r=0.070$
Social Support	2.72	0.721	1.10	4.25	$\text{Sig}=0.176$ $n=379$

Discussion and Conclusion

The result showed that the level of social support is significantly higher among athletic teachers. Also, the level of social support is significantly higher among athletic male and female teachers. Results from this study are in agreement with those of some other studies as follows: Fathi's (2005) in which the effect of social support on sport participation of Islamic Azad University students in Tehran is acknowledged; Thorlindson's in which the way people pattern themselves on family members in physical activities is addressed; Salis *et al.*, (1999), Bouchelo (1983), and Salis *et al.*, (1989) in which the effect of peoples' socialization inside of the family and among peers is acknowledged; Spritz and Snyder (1976), Greendorfer and Lewko (1978), and Anderson and Vood's (1992) in which the influence of parents and friends' encouragement on people's interest to physical activities is highlighted; Kenyon and Mcpherson (1973) where socialization processes through sport by peers and friend are emphasized; and Leslie and Salmon's (2002) in which the effect of social determinants such as family, peers, and educational environment on the level of sport participation is reinforced. This study investigates the effect of factors that influence teachers' participation in physical activities, and seeks to introduce the salient factors that affect such participation using different theoretical perspectives, findings of previous experimental research, and the provided models. The first one is social support model that explains the reason of participation in physical activities. In this model, emphasis is on the role of learning a behavior through direct experience or looking at others (patterning) in taking sport roles, which happens first because of encouragements and rewards from the significant others, and second due to the appropriate opportunities provided to those who are under certain social conditions. In result, adopting sport roles is positively

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correlated with the total level of social support received from the significant others. In the Sport Commitment Model for studying sport socialization by using sociological perspectives, three sets of factors that affect participation are highlighted. These factors include: Individual characteristics (personality, success focused objectives, competency, and experience), significant others (parents, friends, physical education teachers, and role patterns), and constructive sociable opportunities (culture and opportunity). Role learning occurs through the combination of these three factors. The self-efficacy model in which competency and social support have been highlighted as the determinants of self-efficacy, results in taking enjoyment of physical activity. According to this model, determination of physical capability in physical activities by a person refers to how an individual's characteristics and the performance in a certain area are evaluated. On the other hand, it refers to the feedback and rewards received from parents and instructors, and the way one is compared and assessed with peers, which establishes the required context for performing physical activities. These studies have suggested that there are different stimulants for participation in physical activities. Regarding the provided models in sport participation and that every model is a representation of reality, which is used for explaining different parts of a phenomenon for organizing and simplifying the attitude towards reality, this study showed that social support resulted in tendency toward sport participation. Among the social support variables, the significant others is very important. As mentioned in the theoretical bases part, research have shown that athletic people are most often affected by others. In that, participation of parents and other family members, as well as close friends in sport activities drive them towards getting involved in sports. According to the researchers, participation in sport activities is affected by people's sociability. The more encouragement is received from the significant others, the more people participate in physical activities. Therefore, athletic male and female teachers have higher level of social support than non-athletic ones.

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