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THE ROLE OF SPORT IN SPENDING LEISURE TIME OF ARMY SOLDIERS IN TEHRAN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of sport in spending leisure time of army soldiers in Tehran. The research method of this survey was descriptive. The population of the study included all army soldiers in Tehran which were 10000 people and 373 people of them were selected as sample according to the Morgan table. To gather the necessary data, a researcher made questionnaire was used including 25 questions. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by 12 experts of sport management and also its reliability was obtained 0.78 by Cronbach's Alpha. For data analysis, descriptive statistical indicators (tables, charts and frequencies) were used. The following results were obtained: 30.28% of soldiers have leisure time less than one hour a day and most of them (43.71%) spend their leisure time in the afternoons and sport activities, watching TV and reading newspapers and magazines are three priorities of them in the leisure time programs. The satisfaction rate of leisure time spending of 38.28% of them is moderate and they also announced the moderate level of access to facilities and sport places. The results also showed that lack of exercise time (0.688), lack of sport facilities (0.653) and fatigue (0.585) are the main barriers of soldiers to spending their leisure time. Most soldiers (37.71%) mentioned that their awareness rate of the positive effects of exercise in leisure time is in medium level. The soldiers believe that the fitness (0.748), resistance to diseases (0.675) and decline of psychological pressure (0.637) are the main factors to participate in sports programs. given the research's results we can say that due to the dry atmosphere and laws ruling military centers, excessive restrictions in units' ambient for soldiers even in leisure time and also the fatigue related to programs of service units, soldiers' leisure time is associated with limitations and problems.

Keywords: *Leisure Time, Sport, Soldier*

INTRODUCTION

The leisure time is important in all of human life, but since the basis of physical and psychological upbringing and training takes place in the youth, in this period more importance should be attached to it (Journal of energy and joy, 1992). As regards, nowadays sport, especially in leisure time increases life expectancy through promotion of public health, it is considered as one of the indicators of human development. Also, due to the increased health and vitality in the society reduces health care costs and enhances productivity of society workforce. In addition, sport and exercise in leisure time have desirable functions such as enhancement of empathy, reinforcement of solidarity and social participation, consolidation of relationships and social ties and help the process of people socialization (Shiri, 1997).

Soldiers as a precious asset of the country have leisure time and spending these hours appropriately is one of their basic needs. In addition to paying attention to acquiring knowledge and wisdom, appropriate measures should be taken to enrich soldiers' leisure time and to provide sufficient services to them. Exercise and physical activity, besides it makes good entertainment for soldiers to pass their leisure time, it is also very influential in providing their physical and mental health. If sport activities are implemented and organized based on systematic and sound planning principles, they help to meet the most important needs of soldiers and they play an important role in introducing healthy life to them. Physical activities in leisure time will also prevent a lot of deviant behaviors and social disorders during military service

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(Iraneconomist.ir 2008). Mir (2004) in study to investigate how draftees of North East Nzaja operating camp optimize their leisure time announced that there is a direct relationship between educational, recreational activities and sport with optimizing soldiers' leisure time. Also, there is a direct relationship between conditions of service locations and commanders management style with optimizing soldiers' leisure time. Mahmoudi (2005) in a research titled effective factors in optimizing leisure time of Nzaja's unmarried officials stated that there is a moderate positive correlation between recreational, cultural, professional and technical activities with officials' leisure time and there is a low positive correlation between sport activities and officials' leisure time. Turkman (2006) in a research titled how to optimize the use of leisure time of boys of Nzaja employees residing in institutional dormitories in Tehran stated that there is a direct relationship between parents' income, parents' education and amount of their leisure time with optimal use of boys' leisure time, but there is an inverse relationship between number of parents' children and optimal use of boys' leisure time. Also there is a direct relationship between the way and the quality of support of holder units of institutional dormitories and the quality of activities of cultural centers of institutional dormitories with optimal use of boys' leisure time. Fathi (2007) in a research entitled investigating the performance of optimizing leisure time of Aja soldiers concluded that 74/7 % of soldiers announced that the effectiveness of sport activities in plan of optimizing soldiers' leisure time has been extensive in filling leisure time and 11/8 % of them stated that the effectiveness has been in low level, so Aja's performance in sport activities has been successful in soldiers' section.

Leisure time is various in different countries due to their different cultures, customs and laws and type of vision and planning of governments. Since China has economic vision to different categories, one of its important programs for draftees' leisure time is educational and vocational classes during their military service. In military units based on soldiers' specialization and field of study, vocational courses are held and at the end of course valid licenses will be issued for those who have successfully completed courses, so they can use these specialties at the end of their military service and in their life to find a job (Fathi, 2007). In Egypt, a different plan has been predicted for soldiers' leisure time that this plan changes according to their place of service. In most of military bases in movie theaters, different movies will be shown for the soldiers, they can also use sports facilities available in their place of service. In addition, the bases coordinate to recreational and sport centers and the soldiers in group use the center's facilities. Also, some educational classes are postponed to the afternoons in order to soldiers' time be filled up (Fathi, 2007). In the Spanish army, since 1900 the leisure time has been predicted for soldiers that is runs three parts of cultural, sporting and other. Spanish ministry of defense and Spanish ministry of culture and communication are closely defined and related to each other. In the army, cultural and spiritual needs of soldiers are studied by study and psychologists and research groups according to their age and social condition. Given the age condition of soldiers, books and publications needed are prepared and available in the bases' library. Also, their required and favorite films are predicted and screened in the military bases. In addition, some delegates will be elected in the bases in order to consider and propose sports and cultural needs of soldiers. Other sections include sports programs that necessary sports facilities including gymnasiums and related equipment are placed in the bases according to the age and physical condition of soldiers so that they can use these facilities in their free time (Fathi, 2007).

Given that soldiers, as the element of national defense make up a large segment of the country's young population and their mission is based on security, it is necessary for them to have appropriate physical and mental health. So it is necessary to do scientific researches in order to enrich soldiers' leisure time using sports and physical activities and to give managers and planners of armed forces useful information about the quality of planning and organizing of soldiers' leisure time. Also, since few researches on leisure time of army soldiers in Tehran has been conducted, it is necessary to evaluate soldiers' views toward leisure time with an emphasis on sport and to determine current status of their leisure time, quality and the importance of related programs, the needs and the basic barriers to them. Therefore, the present study has been conducted with the aim of investigating the role of sport in spending leisure time of army soldiers in Tehran.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is a descriptive survey that has been conducted as a field study.

Population and Sample

The population of the research includes all army soldiers in Tehran that their number is about 10000 people and of which 373 people was randomly sampled according to Morgan table.

Methods of Data Collection

Since the military bases of army soldiers in Tehran are located in two regions of north east and south west, statistical population of the study was divided into two classes of north east and south west and one base was randomly selected of each class. 373 questionnaires were randomly distributed among the soldiers of selected bases, of which 350 questionnaires were returned. It is explained that for security and military reasons, as the army staff says, we have refrained from naming the selected bases of the research.

Measuring Tools

A researcher made questionnaire was used to collect data. The basis of this questionnaire was also designed by studying several questionnaires in this area including questionnaires of conducted researches by Tondnevis (1996), Bakhshiniya (2003), Azizi (2008), Khalpour (2009) and also according to determined goals and considering special circumstances and conditions of military service. Finally, after ensuring the reliability and validity of questions, the questionnaires were distributed and the final data were gathered. It is noteworthy that the questionnaire includes one part of demographic characteristics such as soldiers' age, last degree, length of service and marital status and another part includes 25 questions about the quality of soldiers' leisure time. The validity of the questionnaire was approved by 12 expert professors of universities of Tehran in the field of sport management. To assess reliability 30 questionnaires were distributed by the researcher among samples and after studying data by SPSS-16 software, the reliability of the questionnaire by Cronbach's alpha was obtained 0.78. After confirmation of the validity and reliability, 373 questionnaires were distributed among the samples.

Methods of Data Analysis

After the questionnaires were collected by the researcher, 350 questionnaires were perfect and the final analysis was performed. Data from the questionnaires were analyzed using Spss-16 software. Descriptive statistics was used to determine parameters such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, percent frequency, charts and tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

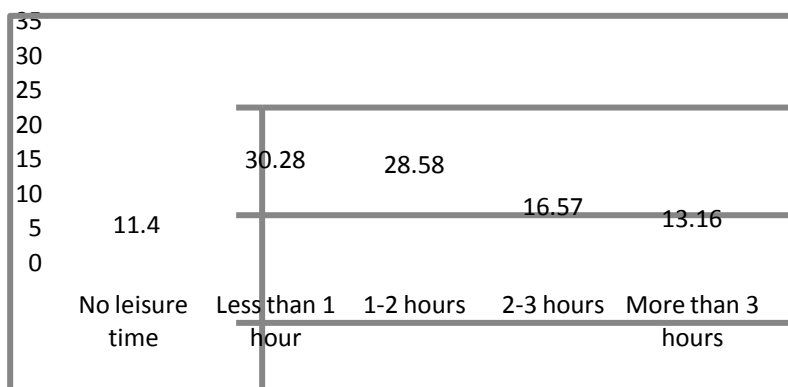


Figure 1: The amount of soldiers' leisure time per day (in percent)

Results

A: The results of the demographic data of respondents

Age: 33.71% between 18-21 years, 56.85% between 22-25 years, 9.44% between 26-30 years.

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Marital status: 90.28% single and 9.72% were married.

Service experience (in months): 20% between 0-4 months of service, 22.57% between 5-8 months of service, 29.14% between 9-12 months of service, 18% between 13-16 months of service and 10.29% of soldiers had more than 16 months of service experience.

Education: 66.57% diploma and under diploma, 15.14% under graduated and 18.06% were bachelor or higher.

B: The results of the research objectives

In figure 1, the amount of soldiers' leisure time is shown.

In figure 2, soldiers' leisure time is shown.

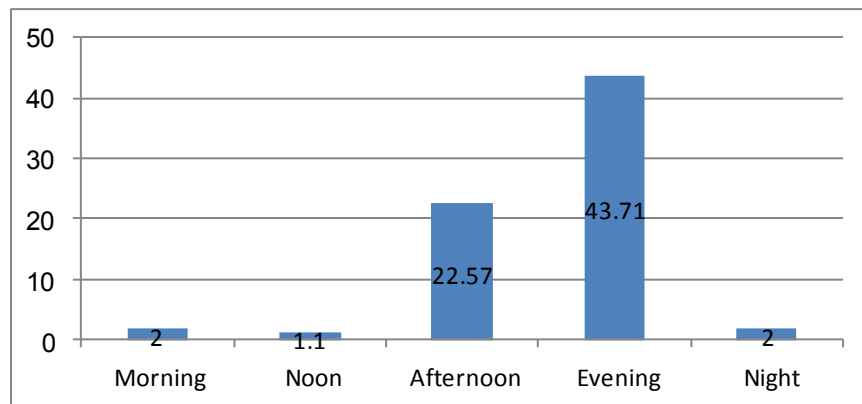


Figure 2: The soldiers' leisure time per day

In figure 3, extracurricular activities of military bases are shown which the maximum proportion is related to sports activities, watching TV and videos and reading newspapers and magazines.

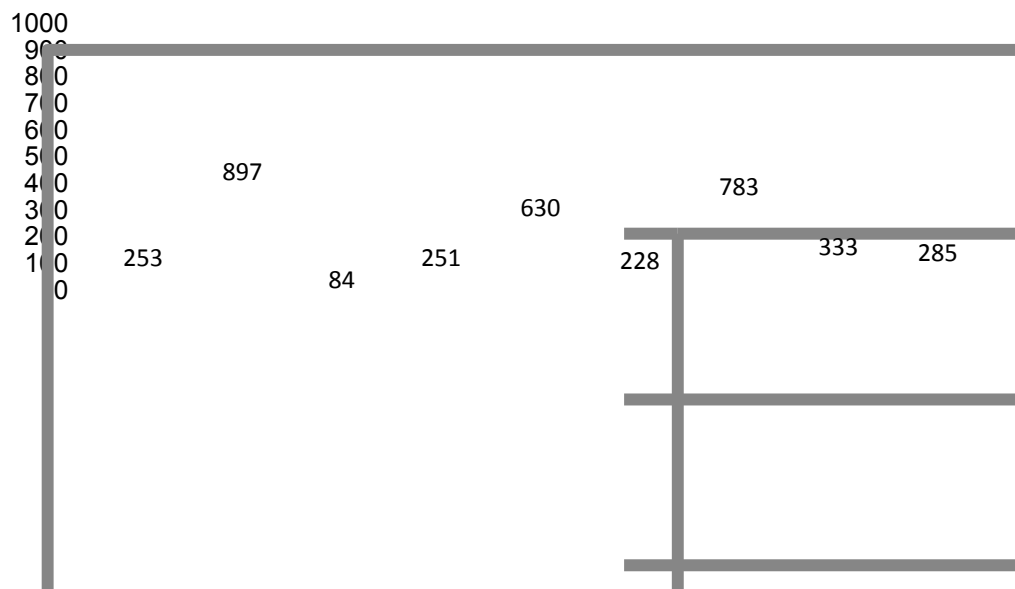


Figure 3: The extracurricular activities of soldiers' military bases

In figure 4, the rate of soldiers' participation in sports activities is shown.

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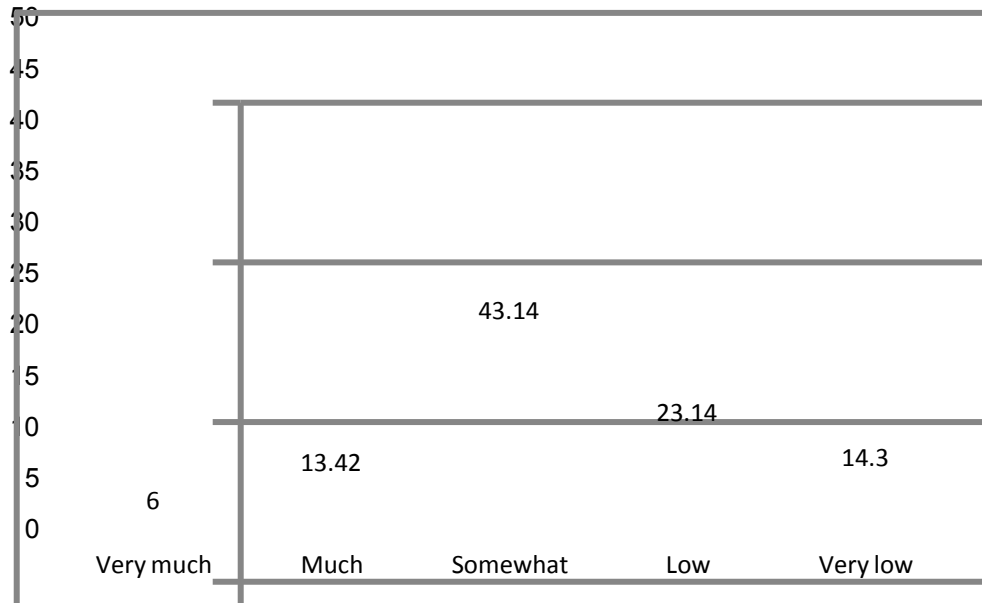


Figure 4: The rate of soldiers' participation in sports activities in leisure time (in percent)

In figure 5, the rate of soldiers' access to sports facilities and spaces in service place is shown.

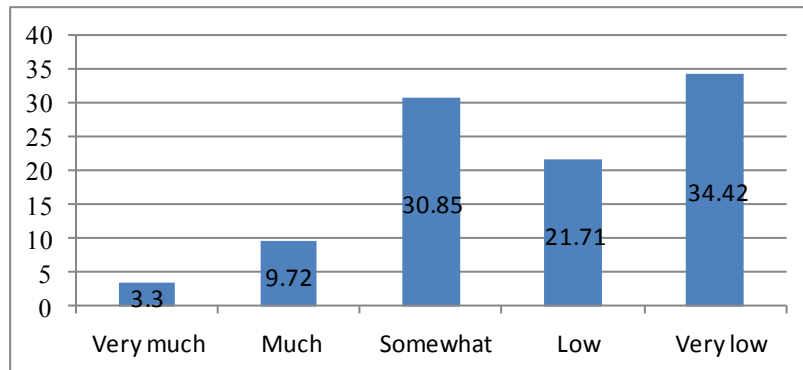


Figure 5: The rate of soldiers' access to sports facilities and spaces in service place (in percent)

In figure 6, the rate of soldiers' satisfaction of sports programs in service place is shown.

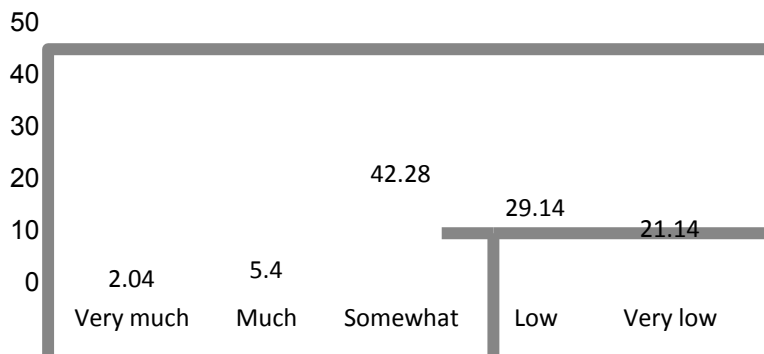


Figure 6: The rate of soldiers' satisfaction of sports programs in service place (in percent)

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In figure 7, the barriers to soldiers' leisure time are shown that the maximum rates are related to lack of time, lack of facilities and fatigue.

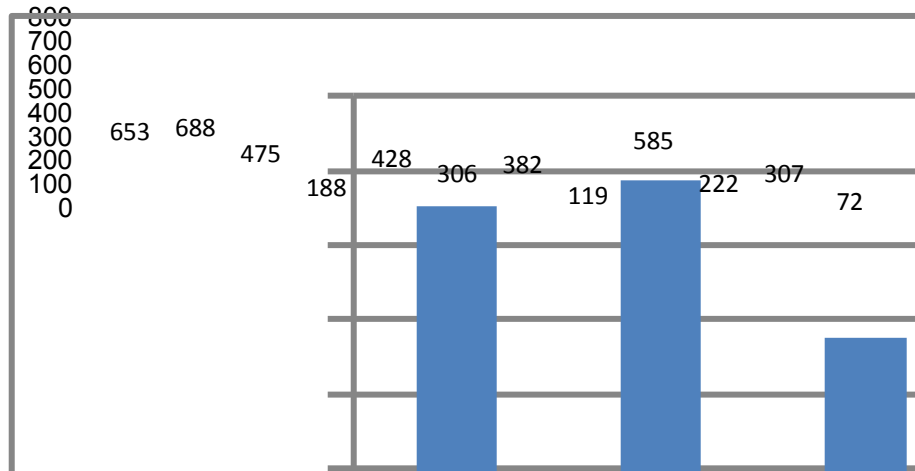


Figure 7: The barriers to soldiers' leisure time in sport area

In figure 8, soldiers' deficiencies in service place are shown which the maximum rates are related to lack of planning, lack of equipment and sports spaces.

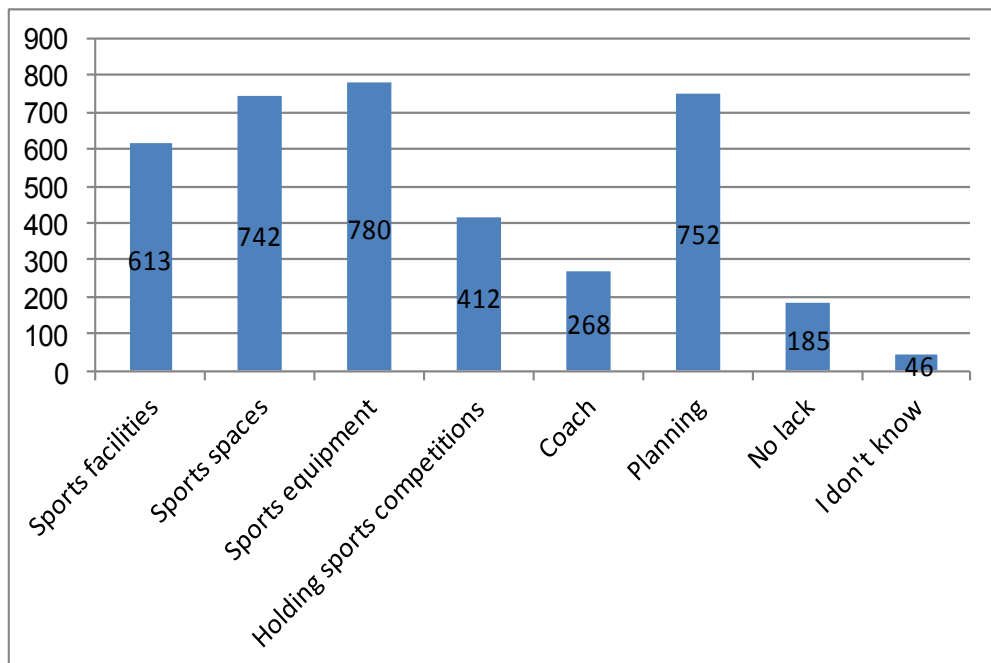


Figure 8: The soldiers' deficiencies in service place in sport area

In figure 9, the rate of soldiers' awareness of positive effects of sport and exercise in leisure time is shown.

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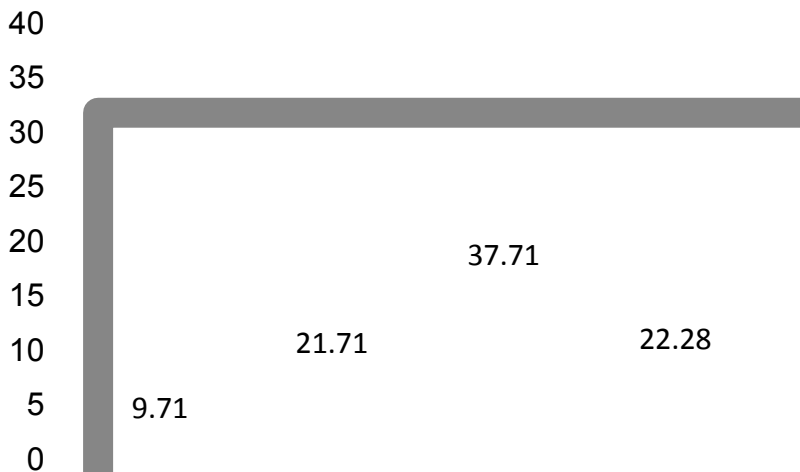


Figure 9: The rate of soldiers' awareness of positive effects of sport and exercise (in percent)

In figure 10, the factors of soldiers' participation in sports programs in leisure time are shown.

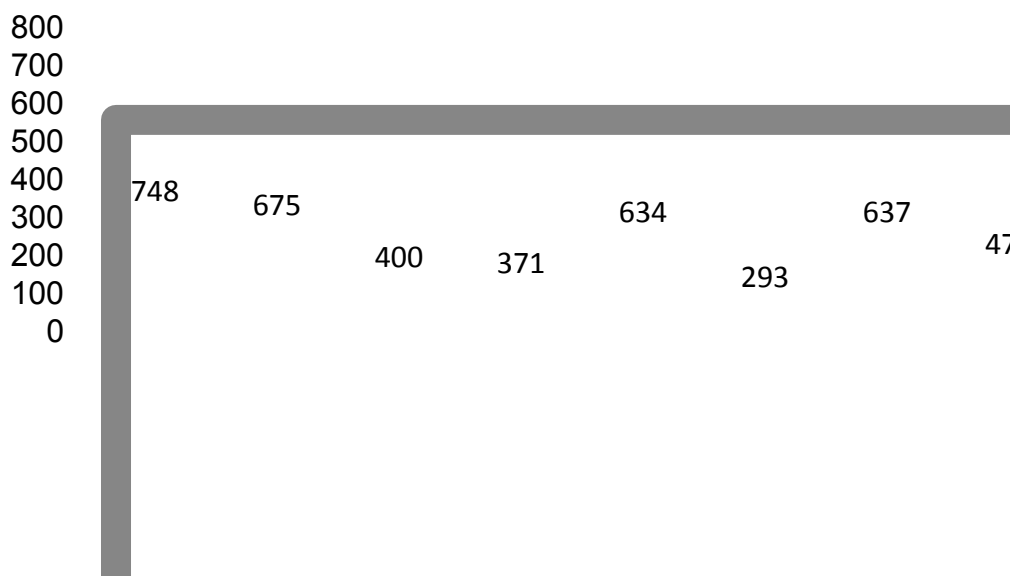


Figure 10: The factors of soldiers participation in sports programs in leisure time in service place

Discussion

The purpose of this study was investigating the role of sport in spending leisure time of army soldiers in Tehran. The results showed that most of soldiers (30.28) % has leisure time less than one hour during the day and also, 28.85% of soldiers have leisure time between 1-2 hours during a day. Since the service time of soldiers in the army is from early morning until about 4 pm and this time they are engaged in the affairs of their service place, it seems that this is a reasonable amount of leisure time. Also, off hours in service place is at about 10 pm, so work pressure and low resting which are often associated with fatigue, reduce the amount of leisure time. Due to the limitations in the military centers and also the tasks of service posts which are continuously rotating, the amount and the time of leisure time is different among

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the soldiers and this distribution of leisure time causes that most of soldiers' leisure time spends doing personal chores. The findings of this part of the study are not consistent with the results of Azizi (2008), Khalpour (2009), Farajollahi (1994) and Sabagh (1998) that it is because of the different conditions of student life and military service.

Results showed that most of soldiers (43.71%) spend their leisure time in evenings. Since business hours of military centers start in early morning and time service will be over at about 3 pm, naturally most of soldiers' leisure time is in the evenings. Therefore it is necessary for sport officials of military bases to plan to fill up soldiers' leisure time in the evenings. The results of this part of the research are consistent with the findings of Azizi (2008), Khalpour (2009), Bakhshiniya (2003), Tondnevis (1996) and Safaniya (2001).

The results showed that sports activities (89.7%), watching TV (78.3%), reading newspapers and magazines (63%) are soldiers' three priorities in programs of leisure time and recreation. Since the soldiers are in the military zone and the access to Internet, camping, art activities and other activities is nearly impossible, it is logical to choose these three cases and we can conclude that almost the only leisure activity programs for soldiers in military services are just these three cases. The results of this part of the research, in terms of sports activities, are consistent with the findings of Azizi (2008), Khalpour (2009), Bakhshiniya (2003), Tondnevis (1996) and Safaniya (2001), but in terms of watching TV and reading newspapers and magazines are not consistent with their results.

The results showed that 37.71% of soldiers have announced their rate of participation in physical and sport activities in leisure time as a moderate level. Also, findings showed that the rate of participation of all soldiers in sports programs of leisure time is moderate to low and also the rate of giving importance to sports programs while soldiers' leisure time by the relevant authorities is moderate to low. Also, soldiers announced their access to sports spaces and facilities as a very low level. Farajollahi (1994) in investigating the role of physical education and sport in spending the leisure time of female students in University of Tehran concluded that 74% of students announced sport activities as their favorite activities in their leisure time. To determine the role of sport activities in soldiers' leisure time, the scale of Bazargan (2007) which introduces Likert's scale of five values in three levels of favorable (1- 2.33), relatively favorable (2.33 -3.66) and unfavorable (3.66 -5). So, to determine the level of soldiers' participation the number of 2.36 (relatively favorable), to giving importance to sports programs in soldiers' leisure time by officials 2.36 (relatively favorable), to determine the rate of feedback from soldiers 2.23 (favorable) and finally, to determine the role of sports activities in soldiers' leisure time the average of these three numbers as 2.40 was obtained. Therefore, the role of sports activities in soldiers' leisure time is at level of favorable, but it should be noted that this rate is close to the level of unfavorable. So, a comprehensive and compiled program should be planned for the promotion of this level and reach the favorable level in order to develop the current status of leisure time, especially the level and rate of sport and exercise in soldiers' leisure time. The results of this part of the study are not consistent with the results of Azizi (2008), Tondnevis (1996), Mehdipour (1993) and Zarei (2001). The reasons for this difference are lack of sports facilities listed by soldiers, the fatigue of soldiers and the existence of more facilities in university campuses than military centers.

The results showed that 38.28% of soldiers consider their satisfaction with the quality of spending leisure time in a moderate level and about 50% of them consider it as a low and very low level. Since all the results listed are related to leisure time and in preliminary results was reported that soldiers' leisure time is less than one hour a day, so these results are parallel to it and the most important factor in the above results can be attributed to lack of time. The soldiers also expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of sports facilities and spaces. The results of Azizi's research (2008) showed that the rate of students' satisfaction for 53.2% of them was in a moderate level and for 32.7% of them in a high level. Safavizadeh (2002) in a study about students' attitudes of AUT University toward how to implement the general physical education Units 1 and 2 concluded that both groups of male and female students are dissatisfied with the university sports facilities and spaces. So, the results of this part of the study are consistent with

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the findings of Goudarzi and Assadi (2000), Khalpour (2009), Safavizadeh (2002), but inconsistent with the results of Azizi (2008) and Fathi (2007).

The results showed that lack of exercise time (68.8%), lack of facilities (65.3%), fatigue (58.5%), lack of sports instruments (47.5%) are the four main obstacles in spending soldiers' leisure time. Khosravi (2002) in the study of students' leisure time in University of Arak stated that the students don't participate in sports activities due to lack of university facilities. Since lack of time and lack of facilities were mentioned in previous similar cases, soldiers' fatigue can also be caused by their overwork which starts in the early morning and continues until the afternoon. Therefore, it seems that the revising of soldiers' service time should be considered by relevant authorities. Wilders (2004) in his research entitled factors affecting leisure time's physical activity of foreign students in University of Windsor in Canada stated that the main barriers to spending soldiers' leisure time appropriately are few priorities to select sports, unavailability of favorite sports, lack of time, lack of financial resources and lack of experience or skills. Coleman (2006) in his study entitled investigating the role of sports activities in immigrants' leisure time also refers to the lack of sports club or organization as factors inhibiting immigrants' participation in sports activities. So we can conclude that sports facilities are very influential in filling up leisure time. The results of this part of the research are consistent with the findings of Wilders (2004), Coleman (2006) and Khosravi (2002).

The results showed that the soldiers announced that the main deficiencies in their service place in priority order are sports instruments (78%), lack of planning (75.2%) and sports spaces and facilities (74.2%). Planning in any field is very effective as Brian (2008) in his study entitled the effects of planning for sports activities in leisure time for high school students in Ohio villages of USA concluded that the planning for students enhances the levels of physical activity outside the classroom. Therefore, proper planning can prevent wasting soldiers' time and they can easily do their leisure activities. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Brian (2008).

The results showed that soldiers announced their awareness of the positive effects of sports activities in leisure time in a moderate level (36.85%), low level (22.28%) and very low level (11.59%). Thus the need for soldiers' increased awareness of the importance of leisure time with sports and physical activities could enhance their awareness. In this regard, training classes and valuing recreation programs can be useful and effective. Sayedzadeh (1999) stated that 96% of female students in Fatemyeh dormitory of University of Tehran are aware of the positive effects of sport and exercises. Azizi (2008) in his study which conducted on students in the dormitories of University of Tehran concluded that 82% of students in a high level were aware of the positive effects of public sport in leisure time on body and mind that is inconsistent with the results of this study.

The findings showed that the factors for soldiers' participation in sports programs in priority order are fitness (74.8%), resistance against diseases (67.5%), reducing stress (63.7%) and maintaining health (63.4%). Wilders (2004) in his study on foreign students' leisure time in University of Winsor (Canada) concluded that factors which cause students' participation in recreation and leisure programs include meeting new people and a desire to experience a new culture. Therefore, the results of this study are not consistent with the research of Wilders (2004). Bakhshiniya (2003) stated the reasons for female students' participation in sports programs in universities of Zanzan as fitness (24.4%), obtaining happiness and pleasure (19.2%), maintaining health (11.2%) and reducing stress (8.8%). Tondnevis (1996) stated the causes of Iranian students' participation in sports activities asobtaining happiness and pleasure (21.3%), maintaining health (17.5%) and fitness (13.6%). Ramezani (1994) in a study of the motivation of participants in public sport programs in Tehran announced that people's first motivation to participate in public sport was obtaining happiness and pleasure, then touch the benefits and positive effects of public sport and the quality of being pleasurable and safety, low cost and filling up leisure time were other people's motivations. Keshkar (2007) in a study entitled the factors hindering women's participation in recreational sports activities in Tehran stated that among women structural factors (payment, time, opportunities, facilities, sports instruments, employment, responsibilities, age and health) are the most

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important factors influencing their participation in sports activities. Shiri (1997) in investigating the motivations of participants in Tehran municipality's public sport announced that intrinsic motivation is more effective than extrinsic motivation in people's tendency to public sport and 85% of participants stated obtaining joy and happiness as one of the reasons for participating in these programs. Azizi (2008) in study of the reasons for dormitory students' participation in sports activities in University of Tehran stated in priority order fitness, obtaining happiness and pleasure and maintaining health as the main factors. The results of this part of the study are consistent with the results of previous researchers.

Conclusion

In general, given the research's results we can say that due to the dry atmosphere and laws ruling military centers, excessive restrictions in units' ambient for soldiers even in leisure time and also the fatigue related to programs of service units, soldiers' leisure time is associated with limitations and problems. In addition, lack of sports facilities and instruments in military bases' ambient, special mental conditions as a result of being away from the family and sometimes the base ambient leads to soldiers' isolation and they spend a large part of their leisure time having fun outside the base and inside the city. So, it is necessary for sports officials in military centers to take actions to fill up soldiers' leisure time by providing sports programs which ensure soldiers' physical and mental health, allocating sports places and instruments, organizing sports events, festivals and conferences of public sport, installing sports posters and banners, preparing lecture notes, sports facilities and equipment, launching health stations and also organizing sports committees and forum in soldiers' service place in the base in order to encourage soldiers to sports and exercises.

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