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## **A STUDY ON THE LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION OF TABRIZ RED CRESCENT ORGANIZATION'S STAFF IN SPORTS ACTIVITIES**

**\*Siamak Saleh Farajzadeh<sup>1</sup>, Mohammad Rahim Najafzadeh<sup>2</sup> and Karim Salehzadeh<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Physical Education Malekan branch, Islamic Azad University, Malekan, Iran*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Physical Education, Tabriz branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Physical Education, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran*

*\*Author for Correspondence*

### **ABSTRACT**

People's participation in physical activities is affected by several sociocultural factors. Sports are considered by most people to be a valued and beneficial activity. The present study aims to investigate the level of participation of Tabriz Red Crescent Organization's staff in sport activities. In order to do so, all 145 individuals in the statistical population including all staff members of Tabriz Red Crescent Organization were selected as statistical sample and were asked to respond the researcher-made questionnaire of participation in sports activities. The questionnaires were then coded, scored and finally analyzed using SPSS 21 computer application. The hypotheses were analyzed via Pierson correlation coefficient, independent T and variance analysis. Results revealed that there is a significant relationship between knowledge about sports, social factors, personal perception from sports activity aptitudes and the level of participation of staff in Tabriz Red Crescent Organization. Yet, the study failed to find a significant relationship between sports participation obstacles, and the level of participation. On the other hand, the difference in the level of participation among male and female along with single and married staff was also significant i.e. men had more participation compared to women and singles had a higher participation compared to their married counterparts. Finally, the study did not find any significant relationship between level of education and the level of participation in sports activities. The level of participation of staff in sports activities increases through minimizing participation obstacles, increasing awareness and providing the ground for participation of all staff in sports activities and this improves their mental and physical health.

**Keywords:** *Participation; Sports Participation; Staff; the Red Crescent Organization; Tabriz*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sport is of its own specific structure and nature as a social institution and phenomenon in need of active presence of participants. Since it is a sociocultural phenomenon, it represents the sociocultural values, norms, structures and characteristics of the society; and the level of participation of individuals is affected by various sociocultural factors (Ameri, 2012). For most people, sport is an inherently valuable, positive and beneficial activity; therefore, it is expected that individuals not only corroborate it officially and unofficially in theory but also approve of it by their physical activity and active participation. This will bring theory and practice in this issue closer (Fathi, 2009).

On the other hand, human communities are divided into several social classes and individuals belong to different socioeconomic classes based on economic, financial, educational and professional criteria. These classes affect several aspects of life like the sports or the level of participation in sports (Kholi, 2002). Considering this, people's motive for participation in sports activities is closely related to factors like economic condition, socioeconomic status, cultural background, personal needs, education and advertisement. Yet, the level of the impact on participation may differ in these factors (Bell and Cheng, 2002). For instance, Powell *et al.*, (2004) believe that people's access to sports facilities is affected by socioeconomic factors. Moreover, studies have revealed that individuals' motives for participation in sports activities may vary from physical fitness (Gilany *et al.*, 2011), health (Rahmani *et al.*, 2006), gaining joy and spirit (Bistoon *et al.*, 2011), being with friends and social interactions (Lovell *et al.*, 2010), socioeconomic conditions (Kanters *et al.*, 2013), access to sports facilities and social capital in the

## Research Article

neighborhood (Prins *et al.*, 2012), sports centers and their facilities (Ameri, 2012) and gaining good health and physical fitness (Smith *et al.*, 2002). Nevertheless, there are also potential obstacles hindering the beginning or resuming physical activities. Studies show that lack of time (Atghiya, 2008), facilities (Bistoon *et al.*, 2011), busy lifestyle (Rahmani *et al.*, 2006) and laziness (Lopez *et al.*, 2010) could be the most common form of those obstacles.

However, these studies have gone so far that Green *et al.*, (2005) listed almost 100 motivational factors for participation in sports activities. One of the major factors elaborating on people's behavior about sports activities is their personal approaches and presuppositions.

Determining the reasons for participation of people in sports activities and its obstacles will give insight to authorities and help them provide decent plans.

The main questions this study aims to respond are that what is the level of participation of staff in the Red Crescent Organization in sports activities and what factors affect this level?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present descriptive survey type study included all 145 individuals working in the Red Crescent Organization of Tabriz. The researcher selected all statistical population as the statistical sample in order to have a better understanding of the level of participation and the factors affecting it.

The questionnaire designed for evaluating the level of participation had two parts. The first part asked for personal information with 15 questions. The second part with its five subdivisions evaluated various aspects of participation in sports activities:

- a) Personal perception about aptitude in sports activities
- b) Social factors
- c) Regular participation in sports activities
- d) Tangible obstacles of participation
- e) Knowledge about sports

Reliability of the questionnaire was corroborated by experts and its ditty was estimated through Cronbach Alpha formula to be 0.86.

The questionnaire was distributed among all staff of the Red Crescent Organization of Tabriz and was collected after being filled up. After coding and scoring the questionnaires, their data were analyzed through SPSS<sub>21</sub> computer application. This study evaluated the relationship between knowledge on sports, personal perception of aptitude in sports activities, social factors and obstacles of participation in sports activities with the level of participation in sports activities using Pierson correlation coefficient.

Besides, the difference in the level of participation of men and women along with single and married staff was tested through independent T test. Finally, the effect of level of education on the level of participation was evaluated via variance analysis.

## RESULTS

In order to obtain further information on the rate of sports activities of staff of the Organization of Red Crescent in Tabriz, and the tangible obstacles hindering their participation, the following tables were prepared. The range of questions was from one to five.

**Table 1: The rate of sports activities of staff**

	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
The rate of sports activities in the past	145	3.21	1.117
The rate of sports activities at the present	145	2.32	1.046
the rate of special sports exercises during the week	145	1.94	0.864
the number of hours spent on exercising daily	145	1.39	0.544

### Research Article

The rate of sports activities of the staff in the past was more than the range of the mean scores (3.21) but it reduced at the present (2.32).

The mean of exercising rate and participation in sports activities weekly (1.94) and daily (1.39) for the staff of the Red Crescent Organization were very low.

**Table 2: The mean of staff's opinion about tangible obstacles of participation in sports**

Values (questions)	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
lack of personal interest	145	3.41	1.256
lack of free time	145	3.51	1.185
not having a friend or a companion	145	3.39	1.248
lack of money	145	3.27	1.411
lack of sports facilities	145	3.41	1.222
lack of personal sports skills	145	3.09	1.178
physical condition and health condition	145	3.41	1.256
pressure of university studies	145	3.10	1.300
not using sports counselor	145	2.91	1.236
not having access to sports and exercising information	145	2.91	1.201

Staff of the Red Crescent Organization mentioned lack of interest in sports activities (3.41), Lack of free time (3.51) and lack of decent sports facilities as the main obstacles of participation in sports activities.

**Table 3: Correlation coefficient matrix of participation in sports activities and other variables**

variables	number	level of correlation significance	
sports information of staff	145	0.05	0.209
personal perception from aptitude in sports	145	0.01	0.520
social factors	145	0.01	0.396
obstacles of sports participation	145	0.278	0.091

The relationship between level of participation of staff in sports activities, personal perception from sports aptitudes and social factors is positive and significant. However, there is no significant relationship between participation and obstacles of participation in sports activities.

**Table 4: Comparing the rate of participation in male and female staff**

Mean standard Error	Standard Deviation	Mean	Number
0.309	2.800	9.71	82 men
0.301	2.388	7.76	63 women
level of significance	degree of freedom	calculated t	
0.000	143	4.463	

Table 4 demonstrates that there is a significant relationship between level of participation of male and female staff ( $t = 4.463$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). The mean of participation in men is also more than women.

## Research Article

**Table 5: Comparing the rate of participation in single and married staff**

Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Mean	Number
0.265		2.645	8.46	100 men
0.437		2.932	9.76	45 women
level of significance		degree of freedom	calculated t	
0.05		143	-2.586	

There is also a significant relationship between single and married staff and their participation in sports activities ( $p=0.01$ ,  $t=-2.586$ ). Single staff had a higher level of participation compared to married ones.

**Table 6: Comparing the level of participation of male and female staff**

	sum of squares	of degree of freedom	of mean squares	calculated F	level of significance
intergroup	19.431	5	3.886	0.489	
intragroup	1103.811	139	7.941		0.784
total	1123.241	144			

Results from table 6 reveal that there is no significant relationship between level of participation and the level of education of the staff ( $p=0.784$ ,  $F=0.489$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Discussions

Findings of the present study demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between sports information of staff and their level of participation in sports activities. In other words, the higher their level of information about sports goes, the higher their level of participation in sports activities will be ( $r=0.209$ ,  $p=0.05$ ).

Lack of knowledge about benefits of physical activities along with lack of knowledge about the basic human need for fitness for his daily activities are among the major reasons proposed by Aghayi and Fathian (2012) in accordance with findings of the present study. They emphasized that lack of knowledge is an interpersonal reason for not participating in sports activities. In case individuals know how beneficial it could be to have physical activities in our daily life, they will unconsciously enter our daily routine. Accordingly, Fathi (2009) showed that there is a significant relationship between knowing about the benefits of sports and participation in sports activities. Yet this feeling arises only when the health is in danger. At this time, interest in sports increases and motivation for sports is the health benefits (Nama *et al.*, 2011).

Acquiring knowledge about sports as a prognosticating factor may increase staff's motivation for doing sports activities. Benar and Loghmani (2014) and Huang and Humphreys (2012) believe that health is the most important motivation for doing sports activities. Considering the findings from this study and findings of other ones, giving extra time for sports and exercising in mass media and educational programs could increase the knowledge about physical activities and this will eventually increase participation in sports activities (Sayid *et al.*, 2012). This is also corroborated by Ebrahim *et al.*, (2013). They studied obstacles of physical activities and found that the individuals, who knew more about the benefits of sports, will have a higher motivation for participation in sports activities.

Finding of this study also revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between personal perception from aptitude in sports activities and the level of participation in sports activities in staff of the Red Crescent Organization in Tabriz. In other words, the higher an individual's perception from his inherent aptitudes for sports activities, the higher the level of participation will be ( $r=0.520$ ,  $p=0.01$ ).

Ghodsi *et al.*, (2013) approved of this finding in their study and observed a significant relationship between perceived benefits and strengths of sports and participation in sports activities. Personal

### **Research Article**

perception is an interpersonal factor. Nevertheless, Aghayi and Fathian believe interpersonal factors to be an important barrier for participation in sports activities.

Yet, the motivation and interest in doing physical activities increases as individuals feel the ability to learn and perform a sports skill. Knowing about the acquisition of physical and sports skills may be a strong motivation for physical activities as shown by Jahromi and Hashemi (2009) and Fathi (2009). Accordingly, and approving the findings from this study, Barzegar Torghabeh (2007) investigated the relationship between participation in sports and perception of sports success and concluded that the relationship is significant. Colman *et al.*, (2008) studied the factors affecting participation in sports activities and found self-awareness factors to be among major factors affecting participation in sports activities. One aspect of self-awareness is being aware of abilities and aptitudes and preparing the ground for their growth and development. If these abilities are perceived, interest in participation in sports activities will increase as well (Mannel and Hubbard, 2001).

This study demonstrated that there is a significant and positive relationship between social factors and level of participation of staff in the Red Crescent Organization of Tabriz in sports activities ( $p = 0.01$ ,  $r = 0.396$ ).

Corroborating the findings of this study, Ghodsi *et al.*, (2013) demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between social support and participation in sports activities. Social support depends on the level of the presence of members of the family, friends and teachers in sports centers. This was also approved of by Shiekh *et al.*, (2011) as "social health".

They investigated mental, social and biological factors affecting participation in sports activities and stated that social support, active social participation, and socialization are among the most determining factors affecting participation in sports activities. Fathi (2009) and Share'Poor and Hosseini Rad (2008) investigated the relationship between social capital indices and participation in sports and found that cordial relationships, trust in friends, trust in neighbors, and neighborhood relationships significantly affect the level of participation in sports.

However, Mahdizadeh and Andam (2014) had a different view and believed that factors like lack of social support with a factor load of 0.83 are among the most influential factors on participation in sports activities. Vandendrijsche *et al.*, (2012) approved of the significant and positive relationship between social status and participation in sports. Dolman and Lewis believe that family as a social factor affects mental attitude of the individual toward sports and physical skills. Collman *et al.*, (2008) consider friendships and family relationships among significant factors affecting participation in physical activities.

Furthermore, the present study failed to find any significant relationship between obstacles of participation and participation in sports activities i.e. obstacles like lack of free time, lack of money, lack of facilities, not having access to sports councilor etc. have no significant relationship with participation in sports activities ( $r = 0.091$ ,  $p = 0.278$ ). Several studies conducted in this field have reached various contradictory results. Some corroborate finding of the present study and others contradict. As Ghahremani *et al.*, (2013) showed the relationship between personal, economic and financial subscales and participation in sports activities is not significant. On the other hand, Islami *et al.*, (2013) revealed that there is a significant relationship between socioeconomic condition and level of income and participation in sports activities. Aghayi and Fatahian (2012) consider structural barriers like lack of money, time and decent facilities are the most influential obstacles of participation in sports and this concord with findings of Roozbehani *et al.*, (2014). Prins *et al.*, Do not have the same idea and rejects the significant relationship between participation in sports and access to sports facilities and parks. Yet *et al.*, (2012) believe that people living in cities with higher access to sports facilities have a higher participation in physical activities. Gilani *et al.*, (2011), corroborate this and connect participation in sports to the level of economic development of a country.

Findings from this study demonstrated that there is a significant difference in the level of participation of men and women in sports activities ( $p = 0.01$ ,  $t = 4.463$ ) with men having a higher participation in comparison to women.



## Research Article

To approve of this finding, Parsa Mehr *et al.*, (2013) found that male teenagers have a higher tendency toward sports activities compared to female teenagers. Nama *et al.*, (2011) believe that the biggest motivation for teenage boys and girls is physical health but calculated 52.46 minutes of weekly physical activity for girls and 12.68 minutes for boys. Nonetheless, findings of the study conducted by Nama *et al.*, (2011) show huge differences with findings from this study. Ahmadi and Kargar (2013) demonstrated that the mean of women's approach toward participation in sports activities is in a lower level. Yet, the effect of socioeconomic factors on both men and women's participation in sports exercises seems to be similar (Vandeldrissche *et al.*, 2012). Different attitudes may determine the level of participation as well. Walset (2010) demonstrated that Muslim women consider sports to be of masculine nature and do not participate in it. Lichti and Zabersky (2009) believed that women's mental image of themselves is a hindering factor for women from participation in sports. Anyhow, there are barriers causing women to have less physical activities compared to men. Bocarro and Casper (2006) believe that bus schedules, loads of homework, weather conditions, lack of facilities and gaining knowledge about the body hinder women's participation in sports activities.

In order to test the mean difference of single and married staff, independent T test was conducted. Results ( $t = -2.586$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ) showed that the difference in the level of participation of single and married staff was significant.

This finding was corroborated by findings of Lahsayi Zadeh *et al.*, (2012). They demonstrated that the relationship between marital status and participation in sports activities was significant. However, their study does not mention which group had more participation in sports activities. Yet, this study found the participation of single staff to be higher than married ones. The reason for this may be the higher level of independence single people has and this lets them spend more time on physical activities. As Sheikh *et al.*, (2011) stated, independence is one of the factors affecting physical activities. This was approved of by Ahmadi and Kargar (2013). But for them, this factor cannot be considered as a strong predicting factor. In another study, Boateng *et al.*, (2003) showed that married people were more interested in sports and leisure activities compared to single people. This can reveal the fact that single people change the style of their activities after they get married and become interested in leisure and sports activities so that they could do them together with their families.

Besides, findings from this study demonstrated that there is no significant difference between level of education and the level of participation in sports activities ( $p = 0.784$ ,  $F = 0.489$ ).

Ghahremani *et al.*, (2013) corroborated findings from this study and revealed that there is no significant relationship between participation in sports and university degree or university major. Similarly, Fathi (2009) showed that there is no significant relationship between participation in sports and university degree.

On the other hand, Ahmadi and Kargar (2013) demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between education and women's attitude toward participation in sports. The reason for this was cleared up by Ebrahim *et al.*, (2013). They reported that people with higher university degrees compared to those with lower levels, have a better understanding of participation in sports and this may be caused by their level of education.

There are contradictory views on the impact of education on the level of participation in sports, yet, it is clear that this study failed to find any relationship between these variables. In case the report by Ebrahim *et al.*, (2013) is taken as correct, the higher the level of education goes, the more understanding individuals will be. However, this higher level of education may be in a specific field not related to daily life issues like fitness and health. If so, there is no difference between educated people and common people. This may be the reason for lack of a significant relationship between education and participation in sports.

## Conclusion

Results revealed that there is a significant relationship between knowledge about sports, social factors, personal perception from sports activity aptitudes and the level of participation of staff in Tabriz Red Crescent Organization. Yet, the study failed to find a significant relationship between sports participation

## Research Article

obstacles, and the level of participation. On the other hand, the difference in the level of participation among male and female along with single and married staff was also significant i.e. men had more participation compared to women and singles had a higher participation compared to their married counterparts. Finally, the study did not find any significant relationship between level of education and the level of participation in sports activities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Hereby the researchers would like to express their gratitude from the department of Research at the Islamic Azad University of Malekan, The Head and staff members of the Red Crescent Organization of East Azerbaijan Province who helped this study be conducted.

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