

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF SPORT AND SOCIAL CLASSES (A STUDY IN TEHRAN, THE CAPITAL CITY OF IRAN)

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ABSTRACT

In modern societies, social classes are based on the socio economic status. Since there was no research about tendency of sport activities among social classes in Tehran, therefore the purpose of this study was to investigate the relation between social classes and tendency of sport (corporeal health, leisure time, collective identity) activities in Tehran. In this study cross sectional survey method and random sampling were used. The data was collected from 330 citizens of different areas of Tehran through interview and questionnaires. The data were analyzed using SPSS and Spearman's coefficient correlation test. The findings of this research showed that there is a significant relation between sport activities and corporeal health for upper class ($r=0.064$, $P<0.05$). The relation between sport and leisure time was also significant among middle class ($r=0.068$, $P<0.05$). There was also a significant relationship between tendency of sport for collective identity and lower class ($r=0.073$, $P<0.05$).

Keywords: Sport, Social Class, Corporeal Health, Collective Identity, Leisure Time.

INTRODUCTION

Millions of people all over the world enjoy sport activities. Sport is an important part of people's life which is connected to major communities and influence culture. Social class refers to the social and cultural expression of economic relationship. In modern societies, social classes are based on the socio economic status of people (Wilson, 2002). Explaining the relation between socio economic of class position and other sources of status has been focus of sociological theories. Marxism tries to identify which sports are accessible to whom. Marxism focuses on the distribution of power in sport and concluded that sport is shaped by the economic system (Giulianotti, 2004). Weber the expansionist dynamic of capitalism resulted in the rationalization of technich and the rationalization of the labour process (Hobsbawm,1968).Weber position does not significantly differ from Marx. However, also used the idea of expropriation to include the loss of control over the means of administration (the bureaucratic state, the managerialized workplace). Thus, both Marx and Weber attempted a kind of philosophical sociology of modern 'man', but what Marx called the alienation of the workers from the means of production, Weber broadened into the more inclusive category of the rationalization of modern life (Hughes, 1958:317). For Durkheim, the ritual preceded the belief.

Durkhiem's notion of collective effervescence I think we are very aware that rites and rituals are forms of 'moral toning' (Durkheim, 1995:213). According to Bourdieu theory, differences between social classes are related to their life style (Bourdieu, 1978). He believes that the higher class or educated level, the more participation in sport. Sport choices by social classes based on economic position, spare time and culture. Bourdieu found class differences in choosing type of sports. Accordingly, a person of upper class has the choice to select more expensive sports such as skiing, golf and tennis. The middle class prefer walking, basketball and football and ideal sports for low or working class are boxing, weight lifting and wrestling

(Bourdieu, 1978). According to Bourdieu, differences between social classes can be seen in the way people treat their bodies in the care, feeding and maintaining of them (Bourdieu,1984). An early published article (Giddens,1964) was on ‘the concepts of play and leisure, but there was no direct follow-up to this. Instead he turned his attention to general theory and the study of class and power, beginning with an exegesis of classical theory and continuing with his formulation of structuration theory, culminating in the publication of his magnum opus, the constitution of society, in 1984. A second major phase in his work has been his focus on globalization (Giddens, 1990a) and self-identity (Giddens,1991). One explanation may be the dominance of other previously established theoretical perspectives in the sociology of sport and leisure, including Figuration Theory and Marxian and Gramscian theories. A further factor is that apart from ephemeral pieces (e.g.Giddens,1990b) he has himself written little, specifically, on sport and leisure, However, a number of prominent sport and leisure theorists and researchers have made significant use of his work, including Gruneau (1983), Jarvie and Maguire. Since there was no research about tendency of sport activities among social classes in Tehran, so the purpose of this study was to investigate the relation between social classes and tendency of sport activities in Tehran, the capital city of Iran.

KEY CONCEPTS DEFINITION

Social Class

Distinction can be drawn between analytical concepts of social class, such as the Marxist and Weberian traditions, and the more empirical traditions such as socio-economic status approach, which notes the correlation of income, education and wealth with social outcomes without necessarily implying a particular theory of social structure (Scott, 1996).

Corporeal Health

Includes the (thorax and abdomen), arms and hands, legs and feet. Every part of the body is composed of various types of cells, the fundamental unit of life. The human body is the entire structure of a human being and comprises a head, neck, trunk (Bruce Alberts, 2002).

Collective Identity

Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientation of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place.” Unsatisfied with the gap between theories on how collective actions form and how individuals find motivation, Melucci defines an intermediate process, in which individuals recognize that they share certain orientations in common and on that basis decide to act together. He considers collective identity as a process that is negotiated over time with three parts: cognitive definition, active relationship, and emotional investments (Melucci, 1995).

Leisure Time

Leisure studies and sociology of leisure are the academic disciplines concerned with the study and analysis of leisure. Recreation differs from leisure in that it is purposeful activity that includes the experience of leisure in activity contexts. The distinction between leisure and unavoidable activities is not a rigidly defined one, e.g. people sometimes do work-oriented tasks for pleasure as well as for long-term utility (Goodin,et al,2007).

Teortical Background

Social stratification is a term used in the social sciences to describe the relative social position of persons in a given social group, category, geographical region or other social unit. It derives from the Latin *stratum* (plural *strata*; parallel, horizontal layers) referring to a given society's categorization of its people into rankings of socio-economic tiers based on factors like wealth, income, social status, occupation and power. In modern Western societies, stratification is often broadly classified into three major divisions of social class: upper class, middle class, and lower class. Each of these classes can be further subdivided into smaller classes (e.g. "uppermiddle"). (Saunders,1990). Social strata may also be delineated on the basis of kinship ties or caste relations. The concept of social stratification is often used and interpreted differently within specific theories. In sociology, for example, proponents of action theory have suggested that social stratification is commonly found in developed societies, wherein a dominance hierarchy may be necessary in order to maintain social order and provide a stable social structure. So-called conflict theories, such as Marxism, point to the inaccessibility of resources and lack of social mobility found in stratified societies. Many sociological theorists have criticized the extent to which the working classes are unlikely to advance socioeconomically while the wealthy tend to hold political power which they use to exploit the proletariat (laboring class). Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist, asserted that stability and social order are regulated, in part, by universal values. Such values are not identical with "consensus" but can as well be an impetus for ardent social conflict as it has been multiple times through history. Parsons never claimed that universal values, in and by themselves, "satisfied" the functional prerequisites of a society. Indeed, the constitution of society is a much more complicated codification of emerging historical factors. Theorists such as Ralf Dahrendorf alternately note the tendency toward an enlarged middle-class in modern western societies due to the necessity of an educated workforce in technological economies. Various social and political perspectives concerning globalization, such as dependency theory, suggest that these effects are due to change in the status of workers to the third world

The sportification process

Marx-Capitaliism is an economic system: production is oriented to the realization of surplus-value (profit) that generally accrues to privately held capital. It presupposes a market for buying and selling commodities via monetary exchange (Mandel, 1970:9-10). Capitalists always seek areas of use-value which can be transmuted into exchange values with a view to realizing profit (surplus-value). In sport, valorization depended upon a market of consumers being created. Sport historians and sociologists have argued the 'urba-industrial society theses in this regard, but this falls short of the explanatory mark (Gruneau, 1983:85-88).

Rational Action

For Weber, instrumentally rational action characterizes social action in material structures of advanced capitalist way of life and thought. It subsumes other forms of social action almost bending them to its will. Less legitimacy is granted to action anchored in tradition. Rationalization is not so much an orientation as a process, one of systematization and standardization, increasing the number of cases to which the explicit, abstract, impersonal rules, and procedures are applied (Wrong, 1970:26). In sport, the distinction between voluntary association and compulsory organization is often blurred for athletes. Regardless of

our level in the feeder system of sport, we lose our autonomy in the decision-making process and find ourselves confronted by a heteronomous and abstract power which, either through the market or through its rational- legal authority, can exercise a far-reaching even depotic hegemony (Weber, 1978:945).

Collective Effervescence

Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence and notion of spontaneous 'communitas' Victor Turner's (1969, 1974). After the ceremony, people go home to the lived experiences of their immediate environments. They realize the properties of illusion and delusion. They also realize that a version of the sacred is only that a version. we are very aware that rites and rituals are forms of 'moral toning' (Durkheim,1995:213). Given these ideas, modern prolympic sport serve as rites and representations that reproduce liberal democratic society in hegemonic terms. They also provide serilized civic rituals (Ingham et al.,1987) that mask the differences between dominant and subordinate groups in both class and community terms. They are part of the renewal, recreational, defensive, and modificational processes through which the hegemony fend off its challengers.

Field

Bourdieu (1978) examined both the demand for diffefent sports and the differences between groups of people in acquiring a taste for sport. Sport choices resulted from a system of class-based tastes and preferences were determind by capitals such as economic capital and spare time, which can be seen as a transformation of economic capital, and cultural capital. The term field completes the conceptual trilogy around which much of Bourdieu's work is based: In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the strcture of the distribution of specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.).(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97).

Sports and Leisure Forms

For Giddens, whilst there has been a loss of trust in conventional forms of democracy, therein lies the possibility for an extension of democracy via the new politics that flows from the significance of lifestyle. He distinguishes between a tradition of 'emancipatory politics' (in which activists seek to improve the organization of collective life to enhance individual autonomy) and life politics. While emancipatory politics is a politics of life chances, life politics is a politics of lifestyle (Giddens, 1991:214).

Problem Statement

Basd on the above discussion, the study aims to identify the relation between social classes and tendency of sport.

Objective of the Study

Determine the relation between socioeconomic status and tendency of sport.
Determine the relation between educational status and tendency of sport.

Determine the relation between occupational status and tendency of sport.

Research Model

Fig 1 shows a conceptual model of social classes and tendency of sport. In this research, the independent variables are social classes and the dependent variables are corporeal health, leisure time and collective identity.

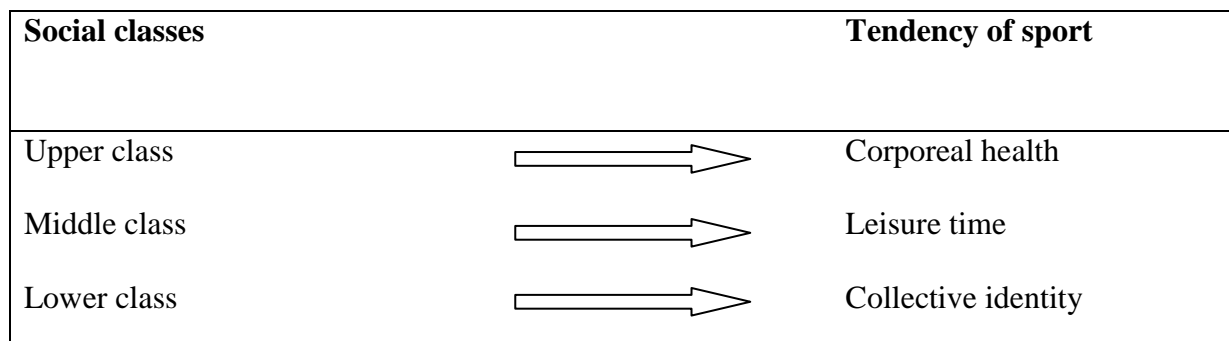


Fig 1: A conceptual model of social classes and tendency of sport

METHODOLOGY

Method and Sample

In this study a cross sectional survey was used (Ruan, 2005). In cross-sectional studies, a sample (or samples) is drawn from the relevant population and studied. A cross-sectional study describes characteristics of that population at one time, but cannot give any insight as to the causes of population characteristics because it is a predictive, correlational design. 330 citizens of different areas of Tehran were selected by multistage and cluster sampling method.

Data Analysis

The data was collected through interview and questionnaires. Questionnaires are the most commonly used tool in survey research. However, the results of a particular survey are worthless if the questionnaire is written inadequately. Questionnaires should produce valid and reliable demographic variable measures and should yield valid and reliable individual disparities that self-report scales generate (Shaughnessy et al, 2011). The relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variables is examined using SPSS and Spearman's coefficient correlation test. The independent variables in analysis were occupational status, educational level, and the level of income. Tendency of sport in social classes measured through five items taken from the Likert scaling method. The format of a typical five-level Likert item, for example, could be:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Likert scaling is a bipolar scaling method, measuring either positive or negative response to a statement. Sometimes an even-point scale was used, where the middle option of "Neither agree nor disagree" was not available. This is sometimes called a "forced choice" method, since the neutral option is removed. (Allen, Elaine and Seaman, Christopher, 2007).

RESULTS

The findings of this research showed that there is a significant relation between sport activities and corporeal health for upper class ($r=0.064$, $P<0.05$). The relation between sport and leisure time was also significant among middle class ($r=0.068$, $P<0.05$). On the other hand there was a significant relationship between tendency of sport for collective identity and lower class ($r=0.073$, $P<0.05$).

Table 1: Relation between sport and social classes

T \ SC	Upper class n (%)	Middle class n (%)	Lower class n (%)	r (P-value)
Corporeal health	170 (52) *	65 (19)	95(29)	0.64 (0<05)
Collective identity	95 (29)	90 (27)	145(44) ***	0.73 (0<05)
Leisure time	119 (36)	155(47) **	56 (17)	0.68 (0<05)

n= 330

SC = Social class

T = Tendency of sport

r = Spearman's coefficient correlation

Significant* for upper class, Significant** for middle class, Significant*** for lower class

DISCUSSION And CONCLUSION

This research deals with Tehran's social classes and their interaction with sport activities. The results of this study showed that the upper classes are involved in sport for their health. As Mc Donald (2005), Humbert (2006) and Marshall (2007), reported that the associated relating to physical health are class based. Healthy life style is always a representation of life style of a specific group in society (Korp, 2008). According to Duncan (2002), Mac Donald (2005) higher socio economic status groups tend to participate more physically active than the lower class. The concept of social class consists of economic opportunity and cultural background (Gruneau, 1975). Social class is associated with particular life style or physiological opportunity (Bottomore, 1956). As shown in the table 1, the relation between sport activities of lower class and collective identity was significant. Social classes are the result of the different values of each class in sport participation. For example, the poor in contrast to the rich don't value fitness (Kraus, 1965). As the results of this research showed that the lower class expresses their collective identity and power through special sports such as wrestling, boxing and weight lifting. Some researches show that those with greater culture capital are less involved in racing sports compared to those whose cultural capital is limited (Wilson, 2002) and this in agreement with the finding of this research that showed significant relation

between tendency for sport activities and leisure time among the middle class, so they don't tend to racing sports. But on the basis of Iqbal (2015) findings, the sport participations belonging to working or lower class families are strong and determined as compared to middle class sport participations. Hargreaves (1994) lined up Bourdieu, alongside Althusser, as the major theorist within what she labels the structuralist Marxism tradition of reproduction theory. Robson (2000) has developed Bourdieu's notion of embodiment in his work on football. Salute the seminal contribution of Bourdieu in their study of social stratification, lifestyle and leisure. Sport relates to occupational measures as other cultural areas in recent research higher status groups being more engaged than those in working class occupations (Bennet et al, 2009). The recent research on sport in other countries seems to suggest that there is strong positive connection between household income and education, cultural capital being positively connected to participation in sport participation but also sports spectatorship. Given the lack of empirical research into explanations of the sport-class relationship, further investigation is warranted. Since past research findings about the degree of relationship, if any, between sport and social class have been somewhat equivocal, investigators should continue to search for such a relationship. The key implication here is that sport cannot be understood in isolation, as if it has no connection with other cultural practices and social influences. Therefore sport policies should consider the nature of consequences expected of sports. Some sport activities may bring about better results than others. Also the place of sport in the field of culture is an important question, and it seems that if we want to see sport as a part of culture, we should treat it as one and address the question of differences in sport aside with other realms of culture.

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