

Survey of the Status of Young Athlete's Law Abidance in Iran: Obstacles and Solutions

Ali Ghanbari Barzain
Department of Sociology, University of Esfahan, Esfahan, Iran

Abstract: As a social action field and a major cultural industry, sports has an important role in cultural and social development of societies and introduces a miniature of human interactions within a society. The present research makes an attempt to investigate the status of law abidance in cultural atmosphere of sports in Iran's society, identify its factors and obstacles and propose required cultural strategies and policies in order to improve it. This research has been done in 12 cities and 10 sports fields with a sample of 2200 athletes. In addition, 50 exploratory interviews were conducted with the experts in this area. The results of the study show that lack of cultural policies and policy programs as well as weakness in developing, supervising and monitoring the structures and system of running a club and neglecting institutionalization lead to young athletes not abiding by professional rules and regulations. The results also demonstrate that inefficiency in academic field and lack of awareness about the professional and ethical regulations and charters are the main reasons of young athlete's law evasion. Another disturbing trend in Iran is the politicization of sports. In other words, rather than socializing sports, our society is proceeding towards politicizing sports.

Key words: Cultural pathology, sports, professional ethics, law abidance, social policy

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem: Sports is a comprehensive and structural social system that as well as other social institutions has an important role in maintaining social order and stability and that is the reason why social system policymakers take full advantage of sports different gender and age groups as one of the important instruments of social and cultural policymaking.

Today, on the other hand, sports serves a significant role in social and cultural development of societies as an important and powerful tool and its continuity and persistence is highly important for the improvement of cultural, material and spiritual levels of a society and guarantees the people's physical and spiritual health. Sports, in different forms is a reflection of the society in general, in other words, it presents a miniature of human interactions within a society (Pierre, 2001; Masoud, 2010).

In the modern world, sports, as a multidimensional tool, has a wide range of positive effects on spending leisure time healthily and happily, people's education especially teenagers and adolescents, social relations between nations, preventing a lot of social damage and cultural planning.

Furthermore, sports is considered as a social action field and an opportunity for more intense individual and group actions. Also, in terms of public and intergenerational attractions, sports is the most popular form of public culture which more than other cultural

events, provides an exciting and completely recognizable tool for receiving and displaying identity and creates an appropriate form in cultural leveling and social integration (Richard, 2012). In social-cultural studies of sports, there are a variety of theoretical frameworks for analyzing its related issues and pathology. Psychological and psychiatric theories emphasize motivation, self-confidence and adopting new identity and structuralist theories consider that as a social context. Also, modern sociological theories focus on social discourse and issues such as law abidance, emotional strength and decluttering and self-control.

The present research tries to investigate the status of young athlete's law abidance, examine its factors and obstacles and explain required cultural policies and strategies for improving it.

Literature review: Review of literature reveals that little research has been done on this field and considering this phenomenon culturally requires more specific research. In this study, then we simply present a summary of comments. Saeid (2012) investigated the causes of tax evasion among professional athletes and coaches. The results showed that lack of transparency in club's financial reports among legal factors, athlete's misunderstanding over taxpaying among cultural factors, lack of performance bond by relevant institutions in the clubs among law factors, most of the active clubs being run by the government among management factors and lack of punctuality in athlete's payments among economic

factors were considered as top priority. Rahmati found that the result of the soccer match and aggressive behavior of the soccer players during the match are the most important factors of verbal attack. In his study, Rahmatollah (2004) has explained the method of athletic behavior distribution or the possibility that sports might be done by different members of the society with economic capital, cultural capital and free time factors. He tries to reject or prove the approach that working class people have an instrumental relationship with their bodies and because of “body for others” pattern they undergo different ordeals. But upper classes of the society treat their bodies as “end in itself” and choose sports in order to accumulate social capital, satisfy their special aesthetic and ethical tastes and enjoy health. He conducted this research using Bourdieu approach. In foreign studies field Ramon Spaij from Amsterdam, Holland found that hooliganism and vandalism of soccer spectators resulted from six main factors including excitement and pleasant emotional arousal, tough and masculine identity formation, regional and local identification, individual and group management of fame, attachment feeling development and power and autonomy. In her research, Alireza (2004) studied the role of sports and its relationship with civilized society in Georgia, Thailand and South Africa. Assuming that sports institutions define and complete many functions of civilized society in themselves she suggested that the sports institutions on those three countries reflected general conditions of their countries’ civilized society. In a research entitled sports and cultural capital in England, Delaney and Keaney (2009) compared the rate of sports cooperation and its relationship with social capital in England with other European countries. Okayasu *et al.* (2010) investigated the difference between the type of sports clubs in Japan and their relationship with different types of social capital in a research entitled the relationship between sports clubs and social capital. Distinguishing between general sports clubs and specialized ones, he showed that each of them generates different social capital.

Research purposes: The present research pursues the following aims:

- Investigation and explanation of the basics of law abundance in sports centers in athlete’s point of view
- Proposing suggestions and strategies to improve law abundance in sports centers in Iran

Theoretical framework: Although, it has been told that the clearest social functions of sports are recreation, entertainment and excitement, structural functionalists have added other functions such as increasing mental and

social consistency of people, sociability with social functions, correlation between the people in society through sports activities and interest in common, national and social identity formation and providing a favorable opportunity to enhance social mobility. Representing sports as a social event encourages the spectators, audiences and athletes in every age and social class to accept common cultural values. Emphasizing team sports done by the youth, some of these functionalists came to the conclusion that participation in such sports provides the youth with valuable experiences and lessons about life. In addition, sports activities link the people in one society through collective representations. Sports activities in industrial societies are mechanisms that make people aware of “togetherness” and stimulate social communication. In advanced industrial societies, sports is a limited opportunity for people to improve their physical skills and enhance their health (Tomlinson, 2004).

Considering different dimensions of sports and its various functions in the modern era, Becker and Becker (1992) stressed four factors, i.e., physical conditions, physical skills, symbolic and competitive aspects and encouraging people’s participation in defining sports.

In today’s sports, money and capital are the infrastructure and morality is the surface and only professional ethics, which is a standard for determining individual’s and group’s behavior is what matters. The main focus of liberalism, i.e., “let him do whatever he wants” in professional sports finally ends in athlete’s committing all illegal acts in order to take championship titles (Ottmar, 2010).

According to Bourdieu theory, sports is a social action field affected by the factors that occur in it. Actions and reactions of the agents is a function of what occurs in social action field (Mehr, 2009). In this field, following the official values and norms is a function of the rate and strengths of official and unofficial tools of social control. Sutherland has presented differential association theory to explain how deviant behavior is learnt. In his theory, Sutherland states that people probably deviate from norms when they are more in touch with people who have misguided beliefs rather than those who have deviant behavior. Using this theory to explain vandalism, we can say that people start sabotaging public properties when their friends and acquaintances do such things (Ottmar, 2010).

According Norbert Elias in 1879-1990 to sports allows people to experience struggle without taking risk. Thus, sports turns out to be a window through which some feelings could be decluttered (Scambler, 2011).

In social control theory, any kind of social control is emphasized because external pressures (e.g.,

unemployment, poverty, etc.) are not necessary for criminal behavior to be displayed, in fact, it is lack of social control that leads to such behavior. Supervisory bodies such as police force, parents, school and neighbors can directly observe individual's deeds and behavior. On the other hand, consistency with others, internalizing social control and the rate of social attachment indirectly function as social control (Mehdi, 2009).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Due to the design of the study, qualitative and quantitative methods have been simultaneously used in this research in which data collection has been done not only through directly referring to statistical population but also through group interviews, in-depth interviews and content analysis. Hence, according to the design purposes, qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to answer the main research questions. Considering the observations and consultation and coordination with the user as well as the athletic taste of the society, sports like soccer, body building, basketball, volleyball, handball, karate, wrestling, futsal, weight lifting and taekwondo are more popular with the youth and young athletes. Young male athletes between the ages of 17 and 29 in ten athletic major cities (i.e., Tehran, Ahwaz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Sari, Rasht, Tabriz, Kermanshah, Mashhad, Uremia) constituted statistical sample of this research. In the present research, quota sampling and simple random sampling were adopted and 2200 athletes in the abovementioned sports were selected through systematic random sampling. It should be noted that the samples have been selected considering the rate of popularity and audience and effectiveness of the quotas in each sports; no surprisingly thus the proportion of soccer, volleyball and wrestling is more.

In addition of questionnaires, group and extensive interviews and in-depth interviews with the experts of various executive, technical and scientific fields of sports as well as sports staff were used for data collection. In order to evaluate validity and reliability of the variables, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and face validity were employed. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient in this questionnaire is 0.81. According to statistical logic, >0.7 Chronbach's alpha has the required qualification for evaluation of variables under study.

In this study, a variety of methods including descriptive analysis and inferential analysis approaches have been used for data collection and analysis based on the purposes. Moreover, path analysis and multivariate

regression approaches were used to explain data and predict their changes and F-test was adopted for the relations in which several variables are evaluated.

The most important variable of this research is law abidance in sports. For evaluation of this variable being reprimanded by legal authorities in one of the following indicators was emphasized: doing tattoo, doping, fighting with the spectators, arguing with the coach, arguing with the referee, escaping military service, formal contract, drug abuse, collusion, bribing the referee and tax evasion.

Brief introduction to the research sample: This research has been done on 2200 male athletes between the ages of 17 and 29 in ten sports like soccer, body building, basketball, volleyball, handball, karate, wrestling, futsal, weight lifting and taekwondo in ten athletic major cities (i.e., Tehran, Ahwaz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Sari, Rasht, Tabriz, Kermanshah, Mashhad, Uremia). The average age of the respondents is 23.5 and $>45\%$ of this sample has university degrees of BA/BS or higher. Also, 35% of the sample has diploma or is student. Only 16% of the sample is employed and 24% of it is married.

Descriptive results of the study: On average, 3.6% of the research sample has been reprimanded because of illegal behavior. It has been mostly due to argument with the referee or with the opponents. In fact, 5% of them have been reprimanded because of argument with the referee and the opponents, 4% as a result of argument with the coaches, 3% because of doping and clashing with the spectators, 207 % due to formal contracts, 2.9% as a result of collusion, mendacity and tattooing, 2.5% because of participation in socially unacceptable parties, 4.5% due to tax evasion and 1.5% were reprimanded by the managers

Lack of information about the code of sports ethics: According to data, 30.5% of the respondents are not aware of the code of sports ethics which requires more education. The highest rate of lack of knowledge about the code of sports ethics belongs to mountain climbing, karate and wrestling. 96% of the sample under study lack knowledge about the code of sports ethics in weight lifting, 46% in volleyball, 34% in basketball and 32.4% in soccer.

Current status of cultural planning in Iran's sports from the athlete's viewpoint: According to the results of the research, 49.4% of the respondents completely agreed that cultural officials of the clubs do not consider cultural issues as important, 65.3% of them relatively believe that cultural officials of the clubs do not make any attempts to

Table 1: Regression coefficients of effective variables on tendency towards Law Abidance in sports

Variables	B	SE	Standard β	t-values	Sig. level
Constant value	8.4000	0.265	-	27.320	0.000
Rate of observing code of sports ethics by clubs	0.2290	0.076	0.020	-	0.000
Rate of athlete's knowledge about codes of behavior	0.3120	0.009	0.021	18.300	0.000
Rate Of manager's knowledge about codes of behavior	0.2110	0.045	0.024	5.400	0.001
Existence of legal advice	0.1160	0.087	0.025	5.230	0.000
Existence of psychological advice	0.2430	0.065	0.116	5.113	0.000
Rate of religious conformity	0.1420	0.043	0.162	3.650	0.000
Club's attention to cultural planning	0.2310	0.051	0.025	2.330	0.006

Table 2: Variance analysis for determining the significance of regression equation

Change sources	Sum of squares	Mean squares	Values	df	Sig. level
Regression	13624.852	1322.4333	116	10	0.000a
Remainder	164237.280	11.5400		14232	
Total	177661.800			14242	

Table 3: Summary of regression model of effective variables on professional anomalies

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE
0.297	0.087	0.087	2.211

introduce cultural patterns and 90% of the sample under study believe that cultural officials of the clubs have not made any attempts to introduce cultural patterns.

Cultural and policy needs in Iran's sports from the athlete's viewpoint: Cultural needs assessment is another common tool for cultural policymaking. Hence, it is necessary that the most important cultural needs of the clubs and athletes be reidentified in this study. From the athlete's point of view, taking cultural measures is the most important cultural need of the clubs and athletes. They are often executive and hardware measures (budget planning, pleasant atmosphere of the stadiums, investigation of club's violations, performing congregational prayer, making use of missionaries, advertisements, libraries and legal advisors).

Results and inferential analysis: The regression Table 1-3 indicates that managers and athlete's knowledge about the code of sports ethics, club's attention to the enforcement of it, club's attention to cultural plans and making use of legal and psychological advice had the most effect and highest coefficient in creating professional anomaly construct. According to regression logic, i.e., prediction and explanation, more changes are explained through the abovementioned factors that is club's attention to the enforcement of the code of sports ethics, cultural plans and gaining position as well as immigration to foreign countries. The coefficients of regression table suggest the effectiveness of these factors. The more the knowledge about the code of sports ethics, the better the attention to enforcement of them and cultural plans in Iran and to the same extent, the fewer the professional anomaly. Regression data and coefficients demonstrate that the variables and sources

only explain 34% of the effective changes on professional anomalies. In other words, professional anomalies are affected by a variety of variables and factors and these factors explain 34% of the abovementioned factors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the concerns of athletes and sports managers is the clubs and structure's not believing in performing cultural affairs. Other countries' experience shows that cultural clubs are the most effective forces in social education and basic elements of identification. Based on data analysis, today, the cultural status of sports in our society is associated with the following features: lack of planning, law evasion, lack of meritocracy, conflict between sports and values, government involvement, incorrect orientation of sports science, team-managing approach in schools, lack of attention to women's sports, violence, aggression and vandalism among spectators, doping, exploitation of the body, weak management and inexperienced and unskilled managers, aggression-supporting approach of the media, not using modern science and so on.

Modern sports figures have challenged many basic concepts of Iran's sports cultural system such as patriarchy, friendship, morality, ethics, veterans and heroes respect and craftiness. Therefore, cultural changes (multiculturalism and subcultures appearance) can have several results. Cultural changes, on the one hand, can end in cultural development by maintaining consensus and integration and on the other hand, can lead to cultural conflict. For example, doing tattoo socially used to belong to riff-raffs and people with high social classes would not do that. Athletes know this fact very well yet imitating western societies like other imitations has disarmed us.

These data and interviews demonstrate that in many expert's point of view, infrastructural problems and lack of policymaking in all levels of Iran's sports including fundamental sports, public sports, women's sports and

professional and championship sports. Although, the country's development in political, cultural, educational and media fields has a great effect on sports development because sports is the reflection of society and social system, creating a qualified, responsible and professional management atmosphere is of utmost importance (Coalter, 2005).

Socialization of sports, which is going towards politicization as a result of the country's hidden condition of sports management and lack of meritocracy in expert's viewpoint is one of the important issues and concerns of athletes and managers in Iran's athletic atmosphere. One of the consequences of this process is that sports has become commodified and lost its natural tendency. This commodification can lead to other phenomena such as luxurism (Moosa, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Sports has cultural, social and identification functions. Sports is an interesting and popular social action field for the youth and families and it is a channel through which negative false patterns enter the society and has affected the youth who like sports with its immediate excitements and attractions. In many cases, rather than having human aspects, sports has been affected by anomalous patterns like luxurism, leisure commodification and sports commodification in Iran's society.

Several structural, legal and management problems in different executive, control and legislative sections are the important findings of this study. Lack of appropriate planning and comprehensive practical plans, the country's sports authorities not accounting for the problems and consequently lack of observation, control and revising management and its functions, inefficient and irresponsible management, lack of attention to national and international standards and patterns and advanced countries, lack of certain comprehensive plans for talent spotting, lack of permanent organized sports schools are the examples of law evasion, which have caused several problems for the country's sports. Today's sports is not simply a set of athletic movements merely limited to the sports field but as one of the achievements of modernity, it has influenced economy, culture and politics both nationally and internationally and has persuaded millions of people to watch sports events. This influence is not simply limited to watching a game and involves feelings in a way that it helps people to form their nostalgia, celebrate victories and crying over failures. Regardless of nationalistic sentiments which

have occasionally changed sports to an opportunity for nation's demonstration of power, everyone tries to have a share in this global event. Hence, sports and its cultural effect are the most important cultural action fields, especially for the youth.

It is the yellow press topics including the consequences of athlete's law evasion behavior that requires more accurate policymaking and management. A great deal of brokerage and unacceptable behavior in sports field results from the yellow press. Thus, regarding the effect of sports media on legal and illegal behavior in sports field, sports media require particular supervisory and supportive structures.

The major problems in sports culture domain in Iranian society should be referred to the increasing and compensatory effect of leisure and consumption in quantitative and expansion in Iranian life policy. This alarming increase in body consumption culture which is very observable in professional and championship sports stems from value changes such as individualism, instrumental attitudes in social relations, privatization of culture, etc. This is the cultural lag from which cultural invasion is generated.

Leisure and consumption culture, especially body consumption, contains interwoven components. In fact, balance in circuits of cultural goods (consumption/leisure) guarantees their survival. It is argued that leisure culture and cultural damage resulting from that have a historical background in Iran and in the process of social growth and social separation, especially in the recent century, not only haven't they continued their historical tradition, but also they have not been able to make a strong relationship with modern cultural elements. Therefore, foreignness, not being local and being consumptional are the features of leisure-consumption culture of Iranian youth, especially in public atmosphere of sports.

The results showed that the average of athlete's illegal and immoral behavior in team sports and individual sports does not have significant difference. In other words, team sport's athletes do not have more behavioral and ethical anomalies than individual sport's athletes. Knowledge about the code of sports ethics, club's attention to the enforcement of it, club's attention to cultural plans and lack of efficiency of legal structures related to sports have the most effect and highest coefficient in building the young athlete's law evasion construct. Politicization of sports is another trend incompatible with sports nature in Iran. In other words, rather than socialization, sports in our society is going towards politicization.

REFERENCES

- Alireza, M.T., 2004. Vandalism. Aan Publication, Tehran, Iran.
- Becker, L.C. and C.B. Becker, 1992. Encyclopedia of Ethics. Garland Publishing, London, England, ISBN: 9780815304036, Pages: 1462.
- Coalter, F., 2005. The social benefits of sport: An overview to inform the community planning process. Master Thesis, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland.
- Delaney, L. and E. Keane, 2009. Sport and social capital in the United Kingdom: Statistical evidence from national and international survey data. The Institute for Public Policy Research, London, England.
- Masoud, N., 2010. Basics of Sociology in Sports. 2ndEdn., Bamdad-e-Ketab Publications, Tehran, Iran.
- Mehdi, R.M., 2009. Sociology of Sports Violence. Elmi va Farhangi Publications, Tehran, Iran.
- Mehr, M.P., 2009. Sociology of Sports. Yazd University, Yazd, Iran.
- Moosa, A., 2002. Investigation of violence reasons among soccer spectators: Research proposal. Academic Center for Education Culture and Research, Tehran, Iran.
- Okayasu, I., Y. Kawahara and H. Nogawa, 2010. The relationship between community sport clubs and social capital in Japan: A comparative study between the comprehensive community sport clubs and the traditional community sports clubs. *Intl. Rev. Sociology Sport*, 45: 163-186.
- Ottmar, W., 2010. Basics of Sociology in Sports. Ney Publications, Tehran, Iran.
- Pierre, B., 2001. Theory of Action: Practical Reasons and Rational Choice. Naqshonegar Publications, Tehran, Iran.
- Rahmatollah, S., 2004. Culture and Inequality of Sports Behavior. Spring Publisher, Iran.
- Richard, G., 2012. Theories of Critical Sociology in Sports. Elm Publications, Tehran, Iran.
- Saeid, Z.M., 2012. Leisure, Consumption and Society. Tisa Publications, Tehran, Iran.
- Scambler, G., 2011. Sport and Society: History, Power and Culture. Open University Press, London, England, UK.
- Tomlinson, A., 2004. Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociological Study of Sport: Habitus, Capital and Field. In: Sport and Modern Social Theorists, Guilanotti, R. (Ed.). Palgrave Macmillan, London, England, pp: 161-172.