The Investigation of Institutional Factors on Sport Role Socialization and Sport Fandom Components

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ABSTRACT

Sport participation, whether directly as an athlete or indirectly as a sport fan, is formed by social and psychological factors. Sociologically, the rate of athletic supports received from institutional factors such as family, school, peer group, and mass media, have important role in sport fan identification. The purpose of this paper is to study the effects of social institutions on sport socialization and its components such as sport identity, team identity, and sport behavior related to a sport fan. Theoretical framework of this article is based on Interaction theory. Questionnaire and in-depth interviews have been used for data collection. Relevant statistical tests, such as analysis of variance, regression, and Q-square test have been used for data analysis. The results of survey among 124 respondents in Guilan University demonstrate that peer group, mass media and siblings (sister/brother) respectively are the most important factors in the process of sport socialization between soccer fans. There are positive significant correlation between sport supports received and sport fan components (sport identity, team identity, and sport fandom-related behaviors). Also, there are positive significant correlations between the levels of sport identity and team identity with sport fandom-related behaviors.

Key words: soccer fans, sport socialization, sport identification, team identification, sport fandom-related behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

Sport fans are defined as individuals who have an interest in and follow a sport, player, and/or team [38]. The studies of sport fans around the world depict that this subject is long term process that start in childhood ages and its finish by pass aweing fandom routine staffs affect by communicate to sport team and the important thing is this sport role become a significant part of identity.

According to Jacobson” there is a gap in the current literature on identity formation process with regarding to sports. The current sociology of sport literature does not adequately address the creation of fan identity.”, but a lot of research have focused on the social psychological factors associated with sport fan and also about sport fans violence [27,4] and sociological study of sports role socialization and social aspects surrounding on sport need more investigation. As Jacobson mentioned: “there is little known, however, about the process of becoming a fan. This therefore raises a compelling question, how do individuals form sports fan identities”.

How people carry on their sport socialization process? Which social factors effect on it? What is the relationship between socialization experience and fandom components (sport identity, sport identification and sport related behavior), are the crucial question that current research going to answer it.

According to Coackley "Socialization is a complex and interactive process, which people makes their ideas about who they are and how they relate to the social life. this process occurs in the connection to sports and also by other activity and experiences in people’s lives”, through to socialization people learn all types of social roles such as gender, work and sport roles " [39].

Sport fandom is one of social roles, which engage people to sport events and sport excitation by this career, a fan could develop a positive attitude toward sport activity, and learn about different sports (learn about different team, players, and the rules of different sport). As a result, makes his loyalty basically to a sport activity, sport team, and a sport player and shows behaviors that are a symbol of a loyal fan. Behaviors including wearing sport cloth, reading about a sport, team, and/or player, watching televised events, attending “live” events, discussing sport, etc.” are activities that do a sports fan.

Sports role socialization process in the past, present and future take place by symbolic interactions to others and social institutions as Snyder and Spritzer claimed: there are significant people in any people lives that have important role in their sport socialization.

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Socialization theory suggests that the process of socializing begins with the biological organism, and through a series of interpersonal relationships, continues throughout the person’s life [67]. The socialization process refers to the assimilation and development of the skills, knowledge, values, dispositions, and self-perceptions necessary to perform present or anticipated roles in society or particular groups within society. As such, in the life of every person, there are a number of people directly involved in the socialization process who have great influence because of their frequency of contact, their primacy, and their control over rewards and punishment.

The socialization of individuals into sport focuses on the agents or agencies that have been influential in attracting individuals into sport involvement. This process of socialization into sport includes the social, psychological, and requisite skills for participation in sport.

The most research in socialization in sport has been focused on the way of sport fan leading to directly participation into sport, because of similarities between player role and fan role, for instance sport fans just like sport players obtain abound of advantages by sport or as like participations that experience the tension of winning and pain of losing, fans partake in sense of team’s victory and defeat too. In other words, fan’s like athletes participate alternatively in emotions of membership in certain sport team.

Whereas of resemblance between players and sport fandoms, the explanation of participation’s sport socialization could use for sport fans. The most effective socialization’s institution in childhood’s times is family. At this primary factor, kid learn participation in social group like sport community while the family as the essential agent of socialization in childhood. During adolescence hood and adulthood other social factors such as peer group, school, mass media have more effect on sport activity socialization.

It is also likely that the type of socialization people receive plays a prominent role in their development as a sport fan. McPherson completed one of the earliest studies to examine the influence of socialization on sport fans. This study identified four agents of socialization: family, peers, school, and community. McPherson’s findings supported each of these agents as being influential in the socialization of sport fans in addition, as Crawford said: there are forth essential group which have serious role in familiarity and interesting to sport subject: family, peer group, school and neighborhood. Generally, people always needs to others for becoming a fan and the impact of this people is very crucial and impressive (2004: 45-43) in addition other research have displayed the role of social agent in sport socialization process.

McPherson found that sport fans high in identification, as compared to those low in identification, possess more knowledge pertaining to particular players, sports statistics, sports history, and sports strategies. In addition, Wann and Branscombe found that people high in identification with a specific sport team displayed more knowledge pertaining to that team and that particular sport. Highly-identified sport fans also exhibit more intense emotional reactions towards the performance of their favorite teams. For example, they are likely to become more anxious, compared to fans low in team identification, when watching their teams compete.

This research by accompany to investigations in Iran and foreign country, follows this main goal: fan’s sport socialization, social factors influence on it, the relationship between sport role socialization, sport fandom, sport team identification and sport fandom-related behaviors in result, The present study specifically examined the influence of social factors of socialization with regards to one becoming a sport fan, taking into consideration degree of sport fandom, level of identification with a specific sport team, player or sport activity and the range of sport fandom-related behaviors. It was hypothesized that participants with having higher levels of socialization experiences into sports would report higher levels of sport fandom in general than participants with lower levels of sport socialization experiences. Likewise, it was assumed that participants with having higher levels of socialization experiences pertaining to that team would report higher levels of identification with a specific team than participants with lower level of sport socialization experiences. In addition, it was supposed that participants with having higher levels of socialization experiences relating to that team would report higher levels of sport fandom-related behavior than participants with lower levels of sport socialization experiences.

**Research hypothesis:**

- there is significant relationship between role socialization experiences in the childhood and the level of sport fan identity.
- there is significant relationship between role socialization experiences in the childhood and the level of sport team identification.
- there is significant relationship between role socialization experiences in the childhood and the level of sport fandom-related behaviors.

**Theoretical framework:**

When we study sport scientifically, best theories are those which help us to make question and gain information that capable us to seen sport in new ways, understanding of communicate between sport
and social life and make reasonable decision about sport and precede it in our life, family and society. Ascoakley declare: One of important theories in sport area that has most chance to study in socialization into sport, is symbolic interaction framework.

The principal suppose of this approach is that the meaning obtain is result of interaction process not of subjective procedure, human-beings in duration of social interaction, learn symbols and necessity meaning for social participation [2]. According to Blumer, symbolic interaction term imply to privilege and unique feature that keep in touch people together, this superior trait is capability to interpretation of reciprocal (mutual) action which handle their actions on this definition and commentary (explanation) [9] with regarding of substantial role of interaction and commentary process at this approach, this theoretical view prepare suitable framework (prosper) for investigation in socialization into sport and sport components.

Methodology:

The participants in this study were 224 students, 94 (42%) women and 130 (58%) men, from PEA Guillan University. Questionnaire method has been used for collecting data. Whereof socialization process occurs before sport identity formation, main goal of this research is the study of relationship between sport socialization experiences and the current level of sport fandom, sport team identification and sport fandom-related behaviors. Therefore, the range of sport identity, sport team identification and sport fandom-related behaviors regarded as dependent variable and sport role socialization which made by sport socialization and sport team socialization in past time considered as independent factor.

Sports fan: "People with physical conflict and feel a strong affinity with sports activities, sports teams or athletes are known" [66].

Team identification: defined as a fan's psychological connection to a team; that is, the extent to which the fan views the team as an extension of his or herself ".

Sports role socialization: "refers to the social process which people affected by various social factors such as family, peer group, coaches and teachers, mass media and school "[3].

Sport fandom-related behaviors: "frequency of engaging in the sport fandom-related behaviors, namely, attending events in person, watching sports on television, listening to sport on the radio, consumption of Internet sports, and discussing sport with others"[56].

The Sport Fandom Questionnaire was given to participants. The SFQ consists of five Likert-type items designed to measure an individual's identification with his or her role as a sport fan. This measure contains statements such as "I consider myself to be a fan of sports in general" and "Being a sport fan is very important to me." Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); thus, higher numbers reflect greater levels of sport fandom. Total scores on the SFQ were obtained by summing the responses to all five items. It was found that the SFQ possessed strong internal consistency, Thus, Cronbach's alpha for the SFQ in the present study was .83. Participants completed a 16-item Likert-scale designed to measure level of socialization into sports in general. Sample items included "Growing up, my father followed sports" and "Growing up, I played at least one organized sport." Response options on this measure ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher numbers reflecting greater levels of socialization into sports received. Total scores on this measure were obtained by summing the responses to all 16 items. In Frederiksen's study the, this measure yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .90, and at the current investigation the cronbach's alpha obtained .88. The Sport Spectator Identification Scale was given to participants. The SSIS contains seven Likert-scale questions designed to measure level of identification with a specific sport team. "How important to you is it that your favorite team wins" and "How often do you display your favorite teams' name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on the clothing" are sample items from the scale. Response options range from 1 to 5, with larger numbers reflecting greater levels of identification with a specific sport team. Total scores on the SSIS were obtained by summing the responses to all seven items on the measure. Wann and Branscombe demonstrated that the SSIS possesses internal consistency. In the present study, the SSIS had a Cronbach's alpha of .84. Team Socialization. Participants completed a 16-item Likert-scale designed to measure level of socialization for a specific sports team. Sample items included "Growing up, my father followed my favorite team" and "Growing up, I played the same sport as my favorite team." Response options on this measure ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher numbers reflecting greater levels of socialization for a specific sports team. Total scores on this measure were obtained by summing the responses to all 16 items in Frederiksen study gained crobach's alpha .91 and In the present study, this measure yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .91.

Results:

Table 1 presents responses for the single person having the greatest influence on the participant becoming a sport fan (such as Parents, siblings, peer groups, relatives, quarter, school, mass
media). Participants reported peer group at the most influential agent. The second most common response was mass media and then was siblings.

**Table 1:** Social factors distribution in central and dispersion indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>father</th>
<th>mother</th>
<th>siblings</th>
<th>peer group</th>
<th>singly</th>
<th>mass media</th>
<th>school</th>
<th>community</th>
<th>relatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1.657</td>
<td>1.492</td>
<td>1.431</td>
<td>1.114</td>
<td>1.261</td>
<td>1.271</td>
<td>1.517</td>
<td>1.632</td>
<td>1.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>2.745</td>
<td>2.227</td>
<td>2.047</td>
<td>1.240</td>
<td>2.706</td>
<td>1.614</td>
<td>2.302</td>
<td>2.664</td>
<td>1.911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table 1 depicts, peer groups (M: 3.71, STD: 1.24), mass media (M: 2.87, STD: 1.61) and siblings (M: 2.71, STD: 2.47) are the significant factors in socialization into sport.

**The important factors in sport fans socialization into sport:**

**Table 2:** Frequency distributions (percentages) of responses to the items assessing important social factors impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>very high</th>
<th>high</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>low</th>
<th>very low</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>std. deviation</th>
<th>variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peer group</td>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mass media</td>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siblings</td>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlations analysis (see Table 3) revealed that the four measures completed by participants, the sport socialization, the team identification, sport identity and the sport behavior measures, all correlated significantly with one another.

**Table 3:** Correlations between sport socialization and fans components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sport socialization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.354*</td>
<td>.617*</td>
<td>.539*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team identification</td>
<td>.354*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.617*</td>
<td>.539*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sport identity</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>.617*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sport behavior</td>
<td>.528</td>
<td>.463</td>
<td>.339*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<.05, *p<.01

**Discussion:**

Why is it that some people play sports and love to watch sports, while others have little or nothing to do with sports? Socialization and past experience provide the two most fundamental explanations [17].

This research focuses on socialization into sport and sport fans components. The study of social factors effect on fan identification is one of important goals in current research. In symbolic interaction approach, socialization is process that, people learn various of social roles by formal and informal agents [67]. Socialization into sport does not happen in isolation from the rest of society. ‘Sport is a social representation of historical, social and cultural forces, and at the same time it affirms, legitimates and reproduces those very same conditions. In other words, sport reproduces social reality and transmits those aspects of culture that convey meanings about the social, political and the economic order of society; about gender, race, and class relations; about the body and physical activity’ [28]. When examining socialization and sport, there are two related aspects of the socialization process: socialization into sport, which studies the factors that influence the ways children become involved in sport, and (b) socialization via sport, which examines how involvement in sport has influenced others, including sport participants [75]. Sport is a social representation of historical, social and cultural forces, and at the same time it affirms, legitimates and reproduces those very same conditions. In other words, sport reproduces social reality and transmits those aspects of culture that convey meanings about the social, political and the economic order of society; about gender, race, and class relations; about the body and physical activity’ [28] as Kolbe and James said: people by this process internalize and learn behaviors, values and approaches which related to fandom sport subjects.

The direct and indirect messages we receive from others are a part of the socialization process. Socialization is the life-long process of social development and learning that transpires as individuals intermingle with one another and learn about society’s expectations of appropriate behavior. When we are young, we are taught the values and norms of the family. As we age, we are expected to learn how to behave properly in public (including school). When we tried out for a sports team we
were expected to learn the rules of the game and the rules of the coach. By the time we reach adulthood, we are expected to abide by the rules and laws of the greater society. We are taught all these social expectations through the socialization process by significant others [17].

Social factors such as family, relatives, school, quarter, peer group and mass media are the significant element of socialization into sport fan [3] so socialization into sport and past experiences has proper key for answering to sport fandom career. For example, persons who grow up in sporty family in comparison to others who become mature in non-sport family, has more chance to become sport fan in future.” If parents being sporty, had having sport experiences in past times or following sport events seriously, presumably encourage their children to pursue sport field [3]. In current study, 58% of respondents declare getting upper than medium persuasion from their fathers, by this fact fathers has important role in sport socialization that confirm Kenyon and McPherson, [39], Greendorfer and Lewko, [28] Sage, [63] Coackley and white, Yamagachi, Crawford, Jacobson, [35] Wann and others, Melnick and wann, researches in spite of this fact that fathers has crucial role in socialization into sport, the result depict that mothers hasn’t significant role, this research shows only 9.8 % of respondents claim their mom has important role in tend to sport field. As Stroot said: siblings also seem to play a role in socialization into sport. Consistent with social learning theory, Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg found that younger siblings look to older siblings as role models. We also know that birth order makes a difference, in that second-born siblings are over-represented in sport. Though logically it seems that siblings would have an important influence over the process of socialization in young children, further research is needed to provide evidence of this perspective in accompany by Stroot this research find sibling has important role in socialization into sport, because 52% of respondents point out their siblings support theme to participation into sport. Such finding confirm Melnick and wann; Theodorakis and wann, [77] Melnick and wann, [94] Kolbe and james, [43] investigations. As Horton Cooly mentioned: others reaction is principle source for self-understanding. Your identity is based on others interpretation of you [1]. Peer groups and close friends plays important role in sport fan socialization. In fact, by regarding the rate of interaction among friends, absolutely, friends attitudes plays crucial role in sport decision. Current study proved the premier factors in socialization into sport is peer group. Because 56% of respondents believed that their friends has greatest influence in participation into sport. This claim support by Giuliano and others, [26] Crawford, [14] Dimock and grove, Donovan and others, Melnick and wann, studies.

The role of the mass media in sport is still growing. Once upon a time (longbefore cable television), sports fans had to settle for the “Game of the Week,” whether this was baseball on Saturdays in the summer, or football on Sundays. Today, with the advent of cable, satellite television, and streamlined Internet broadcasts, nearly all major professional and college ball games are available on television. Alternative sports have become mainstreamed through such entities as ESPN’s “X Games.” Sports video games are very popular. Sports highlight shows are regularly aired on television. The sports section of newspapers remains a staple for older sports fans, and sports magazines appeal to multiple generations. Later in this chapter we will see how sport films play a major role in socializing the masses into sports. In short, the mass media provides us with access to sports games and information 24 hours a day this investigation point out that, mass media has principal role in introducing of sport to people and sport socialization. Upper than 2 pre 3 of respondents said mass media is important factor in inclination to sport fields which support findings of Mahoney, others, Melnick and wann, Sotten and others; Wann and others.

The first hypothesis under study stated that participants who scored high on the sport socialization measure would also score high on the sport fandom measure. People are more likely to be sport fans, meaning they score high on the SFQ, if they were exposed to sports as a child growing up, meaning they score high on the sport socialization measure. Overall, it seems more likely, for example, that people with family and friends who follow sports would become sport fans more often than people without such exposure to sports.

In support of the first hypothesis, results indicated that people who scored high on the SFQ tended to score higher on the sport socialization measure, as compared to those participants who scored low on the SFQ. This finding suggests that participants with higher levels of sport fandom typically reported having more socialization experiences related to sports than participants with lower levels of sport fandom. Current study supposed that positive experienced related to sport activity plays important role in the rate of sport identity, team identification and sport behaviors. Fred Erickson [23] found there is significant relationship between high rate of sport socialization and high rate of sport identity. This investigation proved that there is significant relationship between sport experience in the past and current sport identity, in other words, children and young people which getting high sport supporting from social factors shows highest rate of sport identity in future. This claim submits by Frederickson [23] study. Another hypothesis was there is relationship between highest rates of sport socialization in past times and current team identification. Many of research
suggested that team identification could be a result of interaction between fan and various socialization factors like peer group, parents, family and mass media.

This investigation proved there is significant relationship between high level of past sport socialization and team identification. Therefore, one of significant factor in sport team identification is positive experiences in sport socialization. In other words, children who have successful experience in sport field including sport support received from others and social institutions in comparison to people, who have not such experiences, have more chance to become a sport fan. Melnick and Wann point out: fans that have strong team identification and sport identity shows high level of sport behaviors. This study depict that there is significant relationship between team identification, sport identity and sport fandom-related behaviors. Last hypothesis claimed that, sport socialization plays important role in engaging in the sport fandom-related behaviors, namely, attending events in person, watching sports on television, listening to sport on the radio, consumption of Internet sports, and discussing sport with others. The data of this investigation shows that there is a relationship between levels of sport socialization and sport behaviors, this data correspondent by Melnick and Wann, 2010 study.

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