

# The Relationship between Social Capital and Sports Participation among Students

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between social capital and sports participation among students of Ali Abad Katoul Islamic Azad University. The method of this research is descriptive and correlational, which was done in the field. The statistical population of the study consisted of 6442 students of Islamic Azad University. Using Morgan's Table, 364 people were selected as a statistical sample by simple random sampling. The questionnaire of Parsamehr et al (2013) was used to collect social capital data and sports participation. The factual and content validity of it was confirmed by professors and sports experts. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of both questionnaires was 0.934 and 0.857, respectively. In order to analyze the data, descriptive indices, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation coefficient and simultaneous multivariate linear regression were used at inferential statistics. The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between social capital and its dimensions (social networks, social security, social norms and social participation) with sports participation.

**Keywords:** Social Capital, Sports Participation, Social Norms, Social Networks.

## INTRODUCTION

In the present day, sport and physical activity have obtained a prominent place at the local and global levels as a social phenomenon worthy of consideration and reflection. Boards, associations, institutions, unions and committees that deal with sports and work in support of sports activities, whether at the local level or at the official level, are themselves manifestations and manifestations of this status. The effort of the mass media in publicizing the sport and simplifying its concepts and creating a positive trend towards it, the emergence of increasing attention to physical fitness and weight and fitness control, and in addition to these factors, the penetration of physical culture into various social organizations, as well as important elements because of cultural and social changes are affected in this field. Sport and physical activities from the totality of these changes and variations of the time have been affected that the attitude of this age and its tendencies towards sport and physical culture changed completely with what was in the past. Due to the above changes, new goals were set for sport and physical education. One of the most important indicators of this transformation was to rely heavily on advanced production technologies, which made it more time consuming to be filled with various activities (Anwar al-Kholli, 2008).

One of the hidden functions of the sports participation is the creation of friends' networks and the creation of a linkage and solidarity among individuals, which is one of the dimensions of social capital. The central idea of the social capital is summarized in the term of relations. In such a way that community members are able to cooperate with each other by contacting each other and by stabilizing them, thus obtaining things that they alone cannot obtain or with which they are very successful. Human beings connect through a set of networks and tend to have shared values with other members of these networks. With the expansion of networks, they form a kind

of asset that can be considered as a kind of the capital under the social capital. In other words, the social capital can be defined as: the social capital is one of the traits of the social life, networks, norms and trust, which enables participants to pursue their common goals in a more effective way (Fathi, 2009).

Several signs have been reported that show that the social capital as a significant factor affecting social relations is eroded. This issue has been seen globally and nationally. According to the results of an overview of the literature, it has been found that in many countries of the world, the social capital has been decreasing, and this decline has continued for decades. A survey of the general status of the development of social capital indicators in the last three decades suggests that Iran is no exception. Surprisingly, in Iran, the decline of social capital has taken place in spite of the occurrence of such phenomena as revolution, war, the spread of religious influence and the increase in education, all of which are considered as the source of social capital (Khoshfar, 2008).

The social capital has attracted the attention of experts in the social sciences in the past twenty years with a wide range of concepts (voluntary participation, democracy, network, trust, security, and social norms), various aspects of this concept are partly of its focus on the positive outcomes of social communication (Green, 2007). The social capital is not necessarily a static concept, but changes over time and place. Social networks and social norms associated with the social capital are created through various forms of the participation in civic and communicative activities that include personal interactions, and thus increase confidence and interactivity. In general, the beneficial effects of the social capital on the individual level, health promotion, the creation and improvement of entrepreneurial and community opportunities, increased coordination and social cohesion and economic and social development, and the reduction of crime rates and democratic practices are effective (Tonts, 2005).

On the other hand, for those who are interested in the social capital, the study of sport and sports clubs has gradually become an interesting topic; a factor that makes it possible for researchers of the capital to be widely considered among various social elements within a community is that athletic sports activities have the ability to motivate, inspire, and create a social spirit in society. Sport can be used as a tool for building new friendships and social connections, especially between different classes of religion and ethnicity. These people can include athletes and non-athlete contributors (spectators), and can ultimately lead to an increase in trust and interaction norms. In other words, sports activities can create relationships between groups on various social networks (Tonts, 2005).

Evidence also shows that the perception and sense of security in activities such as exercise is a very important factor for doing so; societies in which there are common norms and informal social networks have higher levels of security; according to Putnam, within the social group are the norms which the most useful of them are to strengthen the trust, reduce the cost of transactions and facilitate the cooperation. The most important of them is the norm of reciprocity, and the groups and societies in which this norm governs and follows effectively overcome opportunism and problems with a collective action. Putnam's argument was that there should be a relationship between civic participation and trust in public institutions, that is, trusting state institutions should be correlated with the active participation of individuals in groups (Sharepour, 2006).

Finally, considering that today sports activities in the life of different age groups of society, especially adolescents and young people have become very important and the processes in the field of sports spaces cooperate with other social processes, including social norms and the perception and feeling of security, etc. The community interacts and these factors affect the physical activity of individuals. Therefore, the present study sought to investigate whether there is a relationship between the amount of the social capital and sports participation?

## METHODOLOGY

The research method was descriptive from a correlational kind. The statistical population of this study was all the students of Islamic Azad University of Ali Abad Katoul Branch, which were 6442 people. According to Morjgan and Krejsi's Table, 364 samples were selected by simple random sampling. In the stage of research implementation, after providing a preliminary description of the measurement tool and the purpose of the test, how to respond to the tests for participants was explained in detail. In the case of ethical considerations, after obtaining consent from the individuals and providing the necessary information, they were assured that the information received would be used only in this research and would be protected from any abuse. The following questionnaires were used to measure the variables of the research.

- Social Capital Scale: According to the research of Arizi et al (2006), social capital questionnaire consists of four components of social networks, sense of security, social norms and social participation. It has 45 items, which are set in Likert spectrum 5 (very high, high, medium, low, and very small).

- Sports Participation Scale: In order to determine the participation of students in sports activities, Fong's questionnaire (2002) was used, this questionnaire was used in the research of Arizi et al (2006) which has 6

questions and its validity and reliability have been confirmed. The validity of the questionnaire was approved by the professors and experts. To determine the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha method was used.

For this purpose, a preliminary sample of 30 pre-test questionnaires was included. Then, using the questionnaire data and using SPSS software, the confidence coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for social capital and sport participation was 0.934 and 0.857. The above numbers indicate that the questionnaire used has the reliability or reliability required.

## RESULTS

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated the normal distribution of data ( $p > 0.05$ ). A correlation study was used to investigate the relationship between research variables. The results are presented in Table 1. Regarding the fact that Pearson correlation coefficient is equal to 719, there is a relation between social capital and sport participation. There is a relationship between social networks and sports participation. There is a relationship between social security and sport participation. There is a relationship between social norms and sports participation. There is a relationship between social participation and sports participation.

**Table 1.** Correlation between research variables.

		Social Capital	Social Network	Social Security	Social Norms	Social Participation
Sports	r	0.719	0.585	0.717	0.656	0.763
Participation	p	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*

Regression analysis was used to assess the predictability of sport participation through social capital dimensions.

**Table 2.** Results of the regression model.

Model	Correlation Coefficient	Coefficient Of Determination	Adjusted Coefficient Of Determination	Standard Error Estimation
1	0.778	0.605	0.601	0.437

### **Predictor: (fixed amount), social networks, social security, social norms, social participation**

Table 2 summarizes the results of the regression model. Since the coefficient of determination between the dimensions of social capital and sport participation is 60.5%, therefore, 60.5% of the changes in sports participation are predictable through the dimensions of social capital.

**Table 3.** ANOVA results.

Model	SS	df	AS	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	104.938	4	26.235	137.623	0.000
	Remaining	68.435	359	0.191		
	Total	173.373	363			

The results of ANOVA analysis are indicated in Table 3. Given that the significance level of the test is less than 0.05, the regression model of the prediction of sports participation is significant through social capital dimensions, in other words, there is a linear relationship between the dimensions of social capital and sports partnership.

**Table 4.** Table of regression model coefficients.

Model	Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta Coefficient	Standard Error	Beta Coefficient		
1 Fixed	0.879	0.095		9.276	0.000
2 Social Networks	0.011	0.042	0.014	0.262	0.793
3 Social Security	0.262	0.060	0.326	4.354	0.000
4 Social Norms	0.073	0.044	0.119	1.650	0.100
5 Social Participation	0.478	0.055	0.6	8.635	0.000

Considering the beta coefficients and the significance level of the regression test, the significance level for social capital (social security and social participation) is less than 0.05. Therefore, they are included in the regression model, but since the level of significance for other dimensions of social capital is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the regression model is not included in the regression model. Therefore, the regression model predicts the participation of sports through social capital dimensions as follows:

$$\text{Sports participation} = 0.879 + 0.262 (\text{social security}) + 0.478 (\text{social participation})$$

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between social capital and sports participation among students of Ali Abad Katoul Islamic Azad University. The findings of this study showed that there is a significant statistical relationship between the social capital and participation in sports activities which confirms that more social capital results in more participation in sports activities. In the study of Arizi et al (2006), Sharepour and Hosseinirad (2008), Tonts (2005) and also Delaney and Keaney (2005), there was a significant correlation between social capital and its components with participation in sport. Another result was the statistically significant relationship between social networks and participation in sports activities. The results of this study are consistent with the results of the research of Arizi et al (2006). Also, in the study of Sharepour and Hosseinirad (2008), the high level of communication in the group of friends has an increasing effect on sports participation.

In addition, the findings of this study are based on the findings of Booth et al (2000) that state that the presence of informal social networks such as friends and family has a supporting role for individuals or that they themselves participate directly in physical activity, more participation in sports activities leads to coordination. This conclusion confirms Putnam (2000)'s view of social networks as one of the main components of social capital that people belong to more informal networks, more willing to do voluntary work.

According to the exchange theory, the theory of symmetrical interaction of the social recognition theory of Bandura, environmental factors and situations is continuously interacting to determine what we think and what we do. In this theory, it is stated that external determinants and individual determinants of behavior, such as attitudes, norms and beliefs are effective on behavior of people. On the other hand, Bandura expresses his social learning that attitudes and behavior of people affected by others are important. Important others can have positive effects (boosters) or negative effects (inhibitors) on the behavior and actions of individuals (Fathi, 2009).

Another part of other findings of the research showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between social security and sport participation in students. The findings of Arizi et al (2006) are consistent with the results of this study. Feeling of security as one of the components of social trust and, in general, social capital, increases the tendency to participate in physical activities, along with the values and norms associated with increasing physical activity. In this way, the penetration and participation rates of physical activity increase in sectors of society that are more trusted (Lindstrom, 2011). Also, the results of study by Sharepour and Hosseinirad (2008) showed that the trust variable in governmental organizations is an intermediate variable and most independent variables influence this participation.

The research findings showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between social norms and sport participation of students. Arizi et al (2006) also stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between social interaction and sport participation. The results of this research also confirm the present study.

Based on Fisch Bain's and Eisen's logical action theory, one's awareness of the social pressures and norms that exist for behavior or non-behavior in society affects the person's tendency to that behavior (Fathi, 2009).

In another part of the research findings, it was found that there is a positive and significant relationship between social participation and sports participation. This finding is in line with the results of the research by Arizi et al (2006). This result is consistent with Putnam and Ackles and Barber (1999), who argue that

membership and participation in horizontal order groups (such as sports clubs, voluntary unions) and civic participation networks are one of the essential forms of social capital (Sharepour, 2006), and thus better communication and social activities (formal and informal) can increase the likelihood of participation in other types of social activities (sports activities) in society. Young people who participate actively in the community have more opportunities to acquire social, physical and interpersonal skills in order to create valuable social networks and develop a sense of belonging within the community (Perks, 2007). According to the results, it can be admitted that in order to increase the participation rate of students in sports activities, one can use the variable of social capital as one of the variables besides other social and individual variables.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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