

The Influence of Social Status on Chinese Women's Participation in Physical Exercises

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Abstract: With the development of economy and improvement of Chinese women's social status, their demand for sports is increasing over these years. However, restricted by personal and social historical factors and objective conditions, their enthusiasm for participating in Physical exercise is affected. In response to the situation, this paper suggests that we should change the traditional ideas and enhance the awareness of Physical exercise and the government should invest more funds, perfect the organization and management system, intensify publicity for female sports and cultivate the good sports atmosphere with a view to promoting women's development.

1. Introduction

The body mirrors the relationship between social powers (Xiong H., 2009.). In other words, the body is the key and the best carrier to reflect social activities (Turner, B. S., 1996.) and practice. The body here does not refer to the physical body which, to the modern male aesthetics, is slim and graceful, but the social body which relates to the society through practice. Feminists during the third wave of the feminist movement are fed up with feminist views and confrontational approaches. They oppose the opinion that women see themselves as the passive image of the oppressed, and are still angry about unfair attitude towards women. With a global perspective, they embrace pluralism and acknowledge the oppression of the situation. Besides, they insist that to possess strong self-consciousness, initiative and social and political status, physical practice is of great necessity for women. As a kind of practice, sports break down the established boundaries between male and female image, strengthen the women's body, allow them to enjoy equal social status as men and even enable both men and women to participate in the masculine and feminine activities (Heywood L., 2003.).

People's desire to enjoy sports right (one of the most fundamental rights) will gradually increase along with the social progress. In the process of social development, there must were the social stratification and then social distance for various reasons. With the rapid development of China's economy and the constant improvement of people's living standard and health consciousness, great

changes have taken place in women's social status and their ideas. They pay more and more attention to their health and quality of life, and get higher demand for sports.

2. Investigations on the Current Status of Chinese Women's Physical Exercise

First of all, most of the women surveyed participate in sports activities mainly organized by enterprises, sports associations or out of various work needs, while they seldom take an active part in Physical exercise all alone or in a group. Of particular note are young women who are hardly engaged in sports activities, indicating that women lack energy and are less interested in sports participation. The lack of energy is the most important factor because the majority of women in the workplace bear heavy work load and they still need to spend a lot of time on housework after work (Sun Zhongxin, 2008.). For example, many women surveyed admit that besides household chores, they have to take care of children. From six o'clock p.m. after work, home is in fact another workplace. Women have to prepare for food and look after their children. However, when the work has been finished every day, it is time to go to bed. Hence, they are too busy to devote themselves to doing other things. In spare time, they have to improve their professional level, so attending training programs and reading professional books are of vital importance. As a result, to participate in sports is a luxury for them. For women at the age of forty-five or so, they usually have more available time and are full of vitality due to less housework. Thus, they usually participate in Physical exercise in the evening or in the morning before going to work. As the main force and the backbone of enterprises, they need to dedicate themselves to work so that they can spare more time for exercise after work. As for women at the age of fifty or so, they have more time and energy to engage in their own life since their children are old enough to go to college, work or even get married. Women of this age take part in sports regularly. That is to say, they can finish fixed things within a fixed period of time, the content entirely depending on their own interests. At the same time, they will retire when they are fifty or fifty-five years old, so quite a few women have resigned from a leading post or are semi-retired, which can provide a favorable guarantee of time for them.

Second, the majority of Chinese traditional women reject vigorous Physical exercise because the emphasis on muscle and strength makes more and more female athletes resemble men (Blinde E., Taub D., 1992.). Therefore, most women are engaged in Chinese traditional sports, especially a variety of dances. Among the women surveyed, those who regularly participate in square dance account for about two-thirds. They hold that the square dance can maximize the mobilization of the body functions and help them make friends with similar hobbies, so the square dance becomes the most popular sporting event. What's more, many square dances are self-directed, so they are definitely rewarding for women. Some women love playing badminton, table tennis, running, swimming and so on and they admit that they do some of the sports three to four times while other sports once a week. This demonstrates that the choice of sports is closely connected with women's hobbies and interests as well as the feasibility of the sporting events (Sun Zhongxin, 2008.). The sports that are relatively easy to carry out and have lower requirements of site and equipment can attract more women. In addition, the bodybuilding sports are also popular with women. Certainly, the expenditure must be taken into account when choosing sporting events for women, particularly true for the wage-earning class.

Third, women are different from men in terms of the venues for sports activities. In general, men will choose different places according to their own needs, while women tend to go to the places close to their home. It can be seen that family is the primary consideration for women, followed by economic level and personal preferences (Cho Taejun, Ryu Kiung, 2016.). The order implies that women develop their interests in sports based on family background. In other words, they may not like sports events that they choose at the very start, but might come to love one of them with more

input of time and energy.

Fourth, from the perspective of the purpose that women choose sports, about 90% women do sports for fitness and bodybuilding, while only about 4% women mean to kill time. Generally speaking, those who take exercise to kill time are at the age of fifty-five or so, while the age range of those who aim at fitness is broad and women who exercise for bodybuilding are usually under forty. During the survey, we find that the bodybuilding theory they know have no obvious relation with the athletic activities they chose, but these activities are beneficial to improve their athletic ability.

Fifth, from the angle of women's involvement in sports, the majority of them aim at improving physical quality, while only a small proportion of them do sports for fitness and communication. Besides, there is a roughly equal split of women who participate in sports activities alone and those who do so with companies. This is in part because of their hobbies and interests, but the role of the sports that women choose is the key part. Some group-oriented sports events require women to go with others while some can be completed alone so that women are free to manage their time. Except the sporting event factors, most women are still willing to go with others, which may have certain connection with their habits.

3. The Main Factors that Influence the Contemporary Women's Participation in Physical Exercise

3.1 Subjective Factors

3.1.1 Strong Traditional Values

In China, a country with a long history of thousands of years, the traditional culture and ideas have already penetrated into every corner of the society, exerting a subtle influence on the modern people. Affected by such old Chinese sayings as “the man goes out to work while the woman looks after the house”, “men are superior to women”, “ignorance is the virtue for women” and so forth, most women in China believe that women should put family first, taking good care of her husband, parents, and children. Hence on it can be seen that the traditional culture is the main factor that hinders the female participation in Physical exercise in China.

3.1.2 Excessive Pressure in Life

With the rapid development of economy, more and more women work outside the home. As a result, they always suffer the dual pressure from the work and family. The dual roles that women play both in work and family mean a huge drain on their energy and time as well as too much pressure. Women are too busy to participate in Physical exercise, affecting the formation and cultivation of their bodybuilding consciousness.

3.1.3 Lack of Sports Techniques and Skills

Sports techniques and skills are not only fundamental to Physical exercise, but also necessary to protect their physical and mental health. However, due to the lack of systematic physical education acquisition, most women do not know which sports are suitable for them, which greatly reduces their motivation to participate in Physical exercise.

3.2 Unfavorable Objective Conditions

3.2.1 Lack of Sports Fitness Centers

The fitness centers are the important material basis to carry out physical fitness activities. Some women say that their activities are restricted by the lack of fitness centers or the remote location of the bodybuilding grounds. Although the government has built many public fitness centers in recent years, the current number and location of sports facilities cannot meet people's requirements for physical fitness because of the improvement of people's lifestyle.

3.2.2 Short of Fitness Instructors

Fitness instructors, as the important human resource, play a vital role in the physical fitness. However, there are hardly any fitness instructors in sports venues where more women would like to participate in activities, so that they give up the sports that they are interested in due to the lack of guidance and instruction. In addition, the fitness instructors are at varying levels of expertise in the business sports fitness centers. Therefore, lacking professional fitness instructors is an important factor affecting women's participation in Physical exercise.

3.2.3 Limit of Economic Level

Economic level has a direct impact on modern women's choice and participation in sports activities, part of the sports equipment selection, venue rental and so on. Women from well-off families may choose yoga, golf and other leisure sports, while Physical exercise is almost a luxury for those who just make ends meet.

3.3 Social Factors

3.3.1 Environment for Interpersonal Communication

Although more and more women in the contemporary era take part in social and cultural life, female dependency is still shown in all aspects, and there is no exception in carrying out sports activities. In southern Shaanxi, those who are influenced by their family members, friends and colleagues and actively participate in Physical exercise account for 85%. It can be seen that women are less enthusiastic to participate in Physical exercise without a company, thus affecting their initiative in Physical exercise.

3.3.2 Social Sports Atmosphere

Social sports atmosphere refers to the surrounding environment when participating in Physical exercise, which is a kind of soft environment compared with the material environment. Favorable social sports environment can drive people to take part in Physical exercise. Under such conditions, women are more interested and enthusiastic about carrying out sports activities. Therefore, creating a benign social sports atmosphere will play a positive role in promoting the development of female sports.

3.3.3 Mass Media Orientation

Mass media plays a significant role in the contemporary information transmission, and to a certain degree, it plays a guiding role in people's understanding of things. In the sports reports, television, newspapers and other common media tools pay much less attention to women in terms of

page position, content depth, and the amount of reports, resulting in the public's neglect of the female sports' development. For instance, such sports as football, basketball, boxing that men prefer often appear in TV, while women's sports are a rare occurrence, or just give way to men's sports.

3.3.4 The Economic and Cultural Development Gap between Urban and Rural Areas

The difference between urban and rural adult female exercise behaviors is already a commonplace, but the effect demonstrates the complex mechanism behind the differences. The fact that villages still lag far behind the cities is caused by the long-term accumulation of disadvantages and restricted by the economic disparities, cultural differences, concepts and customs, structural systems and other factors. Therefore, it is difficult to improve the situation in the short term. Although the gap between urban and rural areas is narrowing in some respects, during the process of China's urbanization, it is expected that the gap between urban and rural female exercise behaviors in sports rights will still exist for a relatively long time due to comparatively slow changes at least at the present stage. In addition, education has greater influence on exercise behavior, while the role of occupation level is gradually weakened. Nowadays, women both in urban and rural areas receive more education, allowing them to adopt similar exercise ideas and gain access to equal sports right as men do.

4. Countermeasures to Promote the Contemporary Women's Participation in Physical Exercise

4.1 To Change the Traditional Ideas and Enhance the Awareness of Physical Exercise

Today's society calls for "gender equality". Under such circumstances, women should get rid of the impact of traditional values, weaken the role played in the family, cultivate an interest in sports activities, and enhance the awareness of Physical exercise in order to further improve physical health.

4.2 To Invest More Funds and Perfect the Organization and Management System

The government should invest more funds into the sports infrastructure, build more free fitness areas, and form a team of sports instructors with certain organization ability and guidance efficiency for the purpose of organizing and guiding people to carry out scientific fitness activities.

4.3 To Intensify Publicity for Female Sports and Create a Favorable Environment for Physical Exercise

The government and the mass media should intensify publicity for female sports so as to improve their understanding of health and Physical exercise, and create a good social atmosphere for sports in order to encourage modern women to actively participate in Physical activities.

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