

Social Status of Sport: Sport as a Social Event, Phenomenon and Institution

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the social status of sports and discuss sports as a social event, phenomenon and institution. Society is a composition of real relations and values effecting individuals. Social status, on the other hand, is a concept which determines the situation and status of the individual in the society. Sportsmanship is a status that the individual can gain by his education, abilities and efforts. The way individuals acquire their social status can be considered as a development criterion.

Social event is an occurrence which derives from interactions among individuals and happens only once. Separate changes happening are tangible and specific occasions.

Societies consist of institutions. Social institution can be defined as a constitution of relations, values, norms, statues, roles, groups and establishments which organize the social structure and are accepted and adopted by the majority of the society in the scope of their basic needs.

Sport is not only a social event, but also a social phenomenon and a social institution. A sports event in a particular place at a particular time is tangible and specific. It can be seen, heard and perceived. Thus, it is a social event.

Sport, in its general meaning, is intangible, as well. It evolves out of observation and experience, forms basis for thinking and research, expresses continuity and determination; it is a series of events. Thus, it is a social phenomenon, as well.

On the other hand, sport is one of the oldest and basic social institutions. Like all social institutions, it has arisen from social needs. It will exist as a social institution as long as these needs are there and sports can satisfy them.

Sport is a fundamental part of the social integrity. Sociologically, while dealing with sporting procedures, we shall not ignore the mutual relations and connections between events and phenomena.

Key Words: Social Event, Social Phenomenon, Social Institution, Sports.

1. Society

Our knowledge up to now shows that human beings have always lived together. What is the reason for this desire to live together? It is rather a must, not a preference. We need to live together, we need each other... However, similar to the fact that the existence of the human depends on his being in a society, the existence of the society depends on the human, too. Then, what is society?

Society is not a mathematical sum, not only the total number (quantity) of the people living together in a certain place. Society is both quantity and quality. However, it is the quality that significantly constitutes the society. What forms the society in the qualitative sense is the relations and interactions between the individuals that is the values in the widest sense. Society, therefore, is a body of real relations and values which affect people. What is meant by real relations is any kind of economical, cultural, legal, psychological, sportive, etc interaction between individuals. (Kaplan, 2011: 305-306).

2. Social

The use of the word social in sociology is different from its use in daily life. More precisely, the use of the word is value judgement free. Social means about a society and its culture, belonging to the society, the product and result of the society. To say it more sociologically, the concept “has a meaning that is dependent on intrinsic values and norms, depending upon others’ behaviours, involving others’ behaviours.” (Voigt, 1998).

3. Social Status

Individuals are in situations (that are characterized as) good or bad, high or low in the society. Status means the situation, the position of the individual in the society. It defines the identity of the person. While granting the individual some rights and authorities, it also imposes some responsibilities on him/her. The individuals who are the members of numerous groups at once have several statuses in the society: A student may be an athlete of a club, the coach of a school team, a sister or brother, or a supporter at the same time. The most active status of the person is called the key status.

Statuses are gained through two ways:

a) Given statuses: Because of its social situation, the family transfers the child some statuses directly. Personal abilities or efforts don’t play a role in this. The individual’s being a girl or a boy, a slave, the daughter of the minister, the son of the village headman... are all given statuses. Studies show that there are significant connections between the child’s and the parents’ jobs even today.

b) Gained Statuses: They are the statuses that the individual earns by his/her education, abilities, and efforts. Such as a student, doctor, athlete, minister, masseur, etc...

In developed societies, individuals mostly acquire their social statuses in the former way while it is mostly the latter way in developing societies. The way individuals acquire their social statuses can be regarded as a development criterion.

This study aims to determine the social status (the situation, the position) of sport and to discuss sport as a social event, phenomenon and institution.

4. Social Event

They are occurrences which derive from interactions between individuals and happen only once. Separate changes that happen are tangible and specific occasions. Where, when and under what circumstances social events occur is definite. A football match played at the weekend, an athlete's becoming the champion in the Olympics, the wedding of a young couple are examples of social events.

“Anything having happened in the society, having been heard and seen, with definite starting and ending points is a social event. The common feature of many events with different qualities in social life is that they are social.” (Öztürk, 1998: 13)

Social Events;

Occur in a definite society;

Are compelling, they control the individual;

Could change from one society to another, even in the same society in time;

Are handed down to the next generation;

Can be determined (statistically) in numbers;

Occur free from the individual...

5. Social Phenomenon

It is the general expression used for social events of same the quality. It is the general name for the changes of the same kind: It is intangible and general. Sport, marriage, birth, etc... are all social phenomena in the conceptual meaning.

“It is any distinguishable unit of any kind of immaterial and material social value, social relation or social process.” (Ozankaya, 1984: 126).

“Social phenomenon is a development whose starting and ending points and place cannot be certainly identified and which arises in a process.” (Öztürk, 1998: 14).

“Phenomena are series of events which arise from observation and experience and are base for ideas and researches and show continuity and stability. Events, on the other hand, are anything that is heard and perceived, they are unique and ordinary things. For example, Ayşe and Ali's wedding is an event. However, weddings (marriages) happening across Türkiye are a phenomenon.” (Kızılcelik and Erjem, 1996: 403).

“The reason of a social event is also another social event and a social event can only be explained by another one. Series of events happening constantly, completing and also differing from each other form a process. For example, industrialization of Turkey and urbanization which concordantly came out reveal developments that take place at different times from each other but still connected to and in close relation with each other. And this situation brings the phenomenon of urbanization.” (Erkal, 1986: 40).

6. Social Institution

Societies consist of institutions. Institutions are basic social bodies having emerged from social needs and regulating social functioning and they can exist as long as they can perform these functions. Social institution can be defined as a set of relations, values, norms, statuses, roles, groups and establishments that are widely accepted and adopted by the society within the scope of their basic needs and that regulate the social structure.

Vildan Akan (Sezal, 2003: 96), cites that Martindale (1960: 260) refers to institutions as “standard solutions for collective problems”. Not any society puts its existence or continuity at stake, neither can it do so. Therefore, societies create their own institutions; and they develop them within the process.

Institutions Can Be Said To Have Four Basic Functions In All Societies:

1. Regulating individuals' behaviours and relations;
2. Preparing individuals for the society;
3. Determining the relations between individuals and institutions;
4. Thus, maintaining the social continuity...

7. Sport as a Social Institution, Phenomenon and Institution

As is seen, sport is not only a social event, but also a social phenomenon and a social institution. A sport activity at a particular place and time is tangible and specific. It can be seen, heard and perceived. Thus, it is a social event. Sport, when used in its general meaning (free from time and place), is also intangible. It arises from observation and experience, it is a base for ideas and research, it is continuous and stable; it is a series of events. Therefore, it is a social phenomenon, too.

“That sport is becoming more and more popular and turning into a hobby in which people from different jobs are interested shows that sport is really an important social phenomenon.” (Armağan, 1981: 29).

“A great variety of different activities take place as sport in newspapers and on TV. We can order these activities from the core form of sport to the peripheral forms. Firstly, the ones accepted worldwide, based on competitions (basketball, tennis, skiing, etc.); secondly, the ones not accepted as a sport by everyone but by the majority (parachuting, surfing, etc.); finally, wide-ranging, fun-type activities which are sports to some while so-called sports to others (world wrestling entertainment, body building, etc)...” (Mcpherson B.D., Curtis J.E., Loy S.W., *The Social Significance of Sport*, Human Kinetics Boks, Champaign Illinois, 1981) (Cited by Öztürk, 1998: 13-14).

“Each and every of them are social events as they all have definite beginnings, endings and places and as they all interest more than one person. However, sport itself is a social phenomenon.” (Öztürk, 1998: 14).

On the other hand, sport is one of the oldest and most essential social institutions. Sport is a sophisticated, complicated and dynamic institution. Like all social institutions, it has arisen from social needs. Sport will exist as a social institution as long as these needs exist and it can meet them.

As a social institution with the ability to gather people even from the far ends of the earth around the same ideas, sport deserves to be studied at least as much as other fundamental institutions (family, economics, politics, religion, education, communication, law, healthcare). Moreover, it is a necessity (to approach sport as a social institution) in this day and age.

Sport is an important piece of the social integrity. Sociologically, we shall not ignore the mutual relation and connection of events and phenomena while discussing sportive processes. In this sense, it is not a coincidence that England, the most powerful country of the 19th century, is behind the worldwide spreading of most of the sports today by establishing rules and institutions for them.

Sport, as a social phenomenon, gains its meaning in the social integrity; it not only affects the societies but also gets affected by the experiences and changes in the societies throughout centuries. Therefore, we can observe the connections between sport units and other institutions, and a series of changes on a scale from individuals' everyday sport activities to group activities and social activities when we study sport as an institution. Through the institution of sport, we have the opportunity to view a miniature form of the social structure we live in. We can observe the power relations, contradictions-differences between social classes, the functioning of political structure, sexism, socialization, group identity conflicts-relations, the ways how in-group-belongings happen, how the existing economic logic functions and many more things here (Talimciler, 2005: 468).

Social institutions are in a close and intense interaction with each other. A change, an innovation in one of the institutions affects the others in a chain reaction. In this sense, sport as a social institution has close and intense relations with other social institutions (primarily with family, economics, mass media, politics, healthcare, law, religion). The importance of the institution of sport "derives from the fact that the bond it has established with other fundamental institutions has grown stronger and the fact that the outcomes of this will mutually affect our entire social life." (Talimciler, 2005: 529). We can produce a small model of our society by studying the institution of sport. Considerably, what is happening in the world is significantly happening in Turkey, for example; and what is happening in Turkey is happening in sport (Kaplan, 2007).

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