

BEFORE/AFTER ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN TURKEY: TURKISH WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN VOLLEYBALL AND THEIR SCHOOL LIFE

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Aim of abstract/paper - research question

This study examines the significant issues of the Turkish educational system for young women who participate in sports. In Turkey, we have an undesirable educational system for young athletes. It is extremely troublesome and difficult for a young athlete to participate in a sport and continue his/her university education at the same time. In this presentation, I will examine the advantages that private universities provided for the athletes and specifically for the volleyball players. I will present to you the difficulties volleyball players faced before the establishment of private universities in Turkey and highlight the amendments in their school life after private universities started giving athletic scholarships.

Under normal circumstances, educational programs aim to encourage students to continue their studies in higher education. However, for the young athletes in Turkey it was almost impossible to reach higher levels of education prior to the establishment of private universities in 1984. Before private universities, the only options for student athletes were either public universities or sports academies. Sports academies were much more preferred by the young athletes due to their high quota reserved for national athletes. Nevertheless, even at the sport academies, athletes were not treated with respect and understanding. While some professors completely ignored professional sports players, others insisted on their attendance in their classes, which was impractical since athletes had to attend two trainings per day and away games during the week. After the establishment of private universities, it took universities almost 16 years to start granting athletic scholarships and embracing special programs for student athletes designed to assist their needs. In the beginning of the 21st century, private universities started granting athletic scholarship and thus solving a great deal of problems in the lives of young athletes by guaranteeing them a future. Hereafter, with the application of athletic scholarships, young athletes could continue their studies in university and graduate with a degree. However, there are still some critical views since some private universities are overdoing the task and giving student athletes excessive flexibility resulting in a decrease in the quality of their education compared to regular students. Nevertheless, we can't disregard the fact that athletic scholarship in private universities gave student athletes an opportunity they didn't have before.

Theoretical background or literature review

A number of researches have focused on the social and psychological aspects of participation in sports. These researches and studies have emphasized on the differences between athletes and non-athletes regarding personality traits (Talbot 2000, 2006, 2010; Duncan et al. 2004, Hardman and Stensel 2003, Astrand et al. 2003, Faulkner and Taylor 2005, Biddle and Mutrie 2008, etc.), power and class differentials (Haerle 1974, Brohm 1978,

Gruneau 1983, Hargreaves 1986, Sage 1990, etc.) the role of sport in socialization (Dubois 1986, Fine 1987, Coakley 1987, McPherson et al. 1989, Rees et al. 1990, etc.) and the unifying role of sport (Anthony 1969, Frey 1984, Riordan 1986, Robidoux 2002, Downey 2008, etc.). From a Goffmanian perspective, I will focus on how these improvements in educational systems alter athletes' athletic and personal lives.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

The research was conducted in 2011 and 2012 with young and former women volleyball players (n = 25) in Turkey, all of whom are/were players in the Turkish National Volleyball Team. As a former volleyball player, it was not difficult to reach the athletes for interviews. I met the young players at the hotel where they stayed during the national team's training camp. I met former volleyball players at the canteen of sports halls or at their offices. Young and former women players went through in-depth interviews about their athletic and social lives within the context of their jobs. I also questioned them comprehensively on their educational background and the adversities they have faced while they were students.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

This study focused on a variety of different periods in the Turkish educational system and examined the lives of young athletes before or after the establishment of private universities. As a result, this study concluded that young athletes claim that there are certain difficulties of being a professional sports player and continuing university education regardless of the changes in the educational system with the establishment of private universities. In both cases, athletes complain about the "quality of their life". The study revealed extensive dissatisfaction in both young and former women players' lives concerning their involvement in the educational system and sports at the same time and at the same level of intensity.

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