

Sports Culture and its Relationship to the National Affiliation of Students College of Education at the University of Zakho

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ABSTRACT

Sports culture significantly influences identity formation, particularly among the youth. This significance is underexplored within the context of Iraqi Kurdistan, prompting this study to explore the connection between involvement in sports culture and national affiliation among university students. The research involved a sample of 286 students from the Physical Education and Psychology departments at Zakho University. The methodology included collecting data using a sports culture scale and a national affiliation scale, followed by statistical analysis through T-tests to assess levels and Spearman correlation to examine the relationship between sports culture and national affiliation. The results revealed high mean scores in both sports culture and national belonging scales across both departments, with Physical Education students exhibiting slightly higher averages. Importantly, the study found a moderately strong positive correlation between sports culture involvement and levels of national affiliation. The conclusions drawn from the study suggest that participation in and knowledge of sports culture are linked to increased feelings of national pride and connection among Kurdish university students. This underscores the potential of utilizing sports education and programming as tools to strengthen communal identities. The study recommends further research across different Iraqi populations to explore this relationship further.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of culture has undergone extensive discussions and intellectual differences, as it encompasses both thought and behavior. Culture includes a fabric of ideas, beliefs, skills, tools, objects, ways of thinking, habits, and various institutions within which every society member is born (Tahani Abdel Salam, 2001, p. 95). The traditional concept of culture is defined by the classical realms of human thought such as literature, philosophy, art, music, and their relationship to individuals and events that collectively shape the local or global environment.

In reality, sports as a distinctive activity hardly differ in human sophistication from art and literature, such as physical performance and refinement. Viewing it reveals that it is not just a culture but a contemporary creative expression that has evolved with the era, leading to its spotlight through independent satellite channels, festivals, and local, regional, and international tournaments in recent years (Germon Ali, 2015, p. 258). Culture is transmitted and sustained through interaction, socialization, and education within a framework of values, serving to preserve and enhance them. Education is the means through which the new generation learns about the culture of previous generations. It is a social process and comprehensive, with culture having a social formulation, and education being influenced by and influencing society, preserving cultural values and cultural heritage (Mohamed Ali Hafez, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Physical education, with its educational concept and modern philosophy that aligns with the evolution of sciences and arts, has become an effective means in holistically preparing human resources socially, culturally, psychologically, and intellectually, reflecting an objective view of human personality unity. Consequently, sports have gained a prominent status in society and have become a new civilizational standard and an investment concept for the advancement and progress of societies in the contemporary life of the late 20th century, following the reliance on machinery in all fields and a noticeable increase in leisure time (Adel Fawzy Jamal, 2005, p. 58).

Today, the importance of belonging and citizenship emerges to preserve each society's unique identity amidst threats. This does not imply self-isolation or detachment from the global village but rather equipping each individual with immunity through national education focused on providing knowledge, values, principles, and skills for interacting with the modern world without compromising their national identity (Walid Nadi, 2012, p. 4). The Kurdistan region of Iraq, particularly, and the region in general, have faced numerous political crises in the past three years, including the ISIS crisis and disputes with the Iraqi central government, among others, altering power balances and revealing various countries' true stances towards the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This has called for Kurdish citizen solidarity to face these crises and mitigate their dangers. Observing as citizens of the Zakho district in the Dohuk Governorate of the Kurdistan Region – Iraq, the researchers noted a large influx of citizens to hotspots posing threats to the security and safety of Kurdistan, Iraq, indicating a high level of national belonging among the citizens of Zakho district.

In seeking to understand the reason behind this high level of national belonging, the researchers interviewed some citizens who headed to hotspots during confrontations with ISIS. Friendly conversations revealed that most citizens in those areas were either athletes or supporters of the Zakho Sports Club. Hence, the researchers hypothesized a direct relationship between sports culture and national belonging among the citizens of Zakho district, Dohuk Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, prompting them to study this topic. The research problem can be summarized in the following question: What is the level of sports culture and its relationship with national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University?

2. METHOD

The researchers employed a descriptive approach with a survey method to suit the nature, objectives, and procedures of the study.

The research population was purposively selected from the students of the Faculty of Education, departments of Physical Education and Psychology (first, second, third, and fourth years) at Zakho University in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, for the academic year (2017/2018), totaling (397) students.

The researchers used a comprehensive enumeration method to select the research sample for both departments (Physical Education) representing the sports class and those with sports culture, amounting to (234) students, and the Department of (Psychology) representing the non-sports class at (163) students. A number of (26) students from the Physical Education department and (45) students from the Psychology department were excluded due to absence and incorrect responses to the scales, making the primary experimental sample for the Physical Education department (188) students and (98) students for the Psychology department. Additionally, (40) students were chosen for conducting scientific procedures of the scale, pilot studies, and were excluded from the main experimental sample, making the total number for the research sample for both study departments (286) students. Table No. (1) illustrates this:

Table 1. Population, Sample, Departments, and Exclusions

| No. | Sample | Departments and Sample | Total Population | Sample | Percentage (%) |
|-----|----------|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------|----------------|
| 1 | Basic | Physical Education Department | 234 | 188 | 80.34% |
| 2 | | Psychology Department | 163 | 98 | 60.122% |
| | | Total Sample | 397 | 286 | 72.04% |
| 3 | Excluded | Pilot Study Sample | | 40 | 10.07% |
| 4 | | Scientific Basis for Scales | | | |
| 5 | | Absence and Incorrect Scale Responses | | 71 | 17.88% |
| | | Total Research Population | | 397 | 100% |

The researchers utilized the sports culture scale developed by (Osman Mahmoud Shehahata, 2009), consisting of (25) items with three options (strongly agree, somewhat agree, disagree), intended for students of colleges at Diyala University. After modifying some items to suit the research sample and consulting a group of experts and specialists for their opinions and feedback on adding, modifying, or deleting scale items to fit the students of the Faculty of Education "under study," the feedback led to:

- Modifying some items to suit the sample's capabilities "subject of the research."
- Dividing scale items into negative and positive statements.
- Translating the scale into Kurdish to enable the "research subject" sample to freely answer its items.

After consulting experts and specialists, the scale remained composed of (25) items with the same options (strongly agree, somewhat agree, disagree), divided into negative and positive statements, with (21) positive statements as follows: (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25), and (4) negative statements: (13, 17, 19, 20). The scale was also translated from Arabic to Kurdish by a group of experts and specialists in translation.

Scientific Basis of the Scale:

Scale Validity:

Face Validity (Content Validity):

The researchers verified the scale's validity through face and content validity, presenting it to (5) experts, with agreement rates on the scale items ranging from 75% to 100%.

Discriminative Validity:

The discriminative validity of the scale was confirmed by calculating the discriminative power of its items, proving the scale's ability to differentiate between individuals with high and low sports culture. The discriminative power of the items was calculated, and Table No. (2) illustrates this:

Table 2. Discriminative Validity of Sports Culture Scale Items

| Significance | Degrees of Freedom | Error Rate | t-test | Standard Deviation | Mean | Scale |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|--------|--------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Significant | 38 | 0.00 | 8.803 | 4.358 | 63.675 | Sports Culture Scale |

The T-Test value for the sports culture scale was 8.803, with an error rate of 0.00 against 38 degrees of freedom, less than the behavioral, educational, and psychological sciences' error rate (0.05), indicating differences between the sample ends and the scale's ability to discriminate between high and low sports culture levels.

Scale Reliability:

The scale's reliability was calculated using Spearman's correlation coefficient through test-retest on a sample from within and outside the original community, totaling (40) students, and Table No. (3) illustrates this:

Table 3. Spearman's Correlation Coefficient for Sports Culture Scale Reliability

| Significance | Error Rate | Spearman | Scale |
|--------------|------------|----------|----------------|
| Significant | 0.006 | 0.727 | Sports Culture |

The table indicates Spearman's simple correlation coefficient for the sports culture scale is 0.727, with an error rate of 0.006, less than the behavioral, educational error rate (0.05), signifying a correlation between the measures and thus high reliability of the scale.

National Belonging Scale, developed by (Hazem Ahmed Al-Shaarawi, 2008):

a. Initial Form of the National Belonging Scale:

The researchers used the national belonging scale developed by (Hazem Ahmed Al-Shaarawi, 2008), consisting of (20) items with three options (strongly agree, somewhat agree, disagree), designed for the Palestinian environment in Gaza. After modifying some items to suit the research sample, the scale was presented to a group of experts and specialists for their opinions and feedback on adding, modifying, or deleting scale items to fit the students of the Faculty of Education "under study." The feedback led to:

- 1) Modifying some scale items to suit the Kurdish environment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
- 2) Dividing scale items into negative and positive statements.
- 3) Translating the scale into Kurdish to enable the "research subject" sample to freely answer its items.

b. Final Form of the National Belonging Scale:

After consultation, the scale remained composed of (20) items with the same options (strongly agree, somewhat agree, disagree), divided into negative and positive statements, with (11) positive statements as follows: (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15), and (9) negative statements: (7, 8, 9, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20). The scale was also translated from Arabic to Kurdish by a group of experts and specialists in translation.

Scientific Basis of the Scale:

Scale Validity:

Face Validity (Content Validity):

The scale's validity was verified through face and content validity, presenting it to a group of experts and specialists, with the agreement rates on the scale items ranging from 75% to 100%.

Discriminative Validity:

The researchers also confirmed the discriminative validity of the national belonging scale by calculating the discriminative power of its items. The ability of the items to distinguish between individuals with and without national belonging serves as evidence of the scale's validity. The discriminative power of the items was calculated after arranging the scores from highest to lowest, as shown in Table No. (4):

Table 4. Discriminative Validity of National Belonging Scale Items

| Significance | Degrees of Freedom | Error Rate | t-test | Standard Deviation | Mean | Scale |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|--------|--------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| Significant | 38 | 0.00 | 6.969 | 63.819 | 49.775 | National Belonging Scale |

Table No. (4) reveals that the T-Test value for the national belonging scale for the departments of Psychology and Physical Education is 6.969, with an error rate of 0.00, which is less than the error rate for behavioral, educational, and psychological sciences (0.05) against 38 degrees of freedom, indicating the presence of differences between the sample ends. This demonstrates that the national belonging scale can discriminate between high and low levels of national belonging.

Scale Reliability:

The scale's reliability was calculated using Spearman's simple correlation coefficient through test-retest on a sample from within and outside the original community, totaling (40) students, as illustrated in Table No. (5):

Table 5. Spearman's Simple Correlation Coefficient for National Belonging Scale Reliability

| Significance | Error Rate | Spearman | Scale |
|--------------|------------|----------|--------------------|
| Significant | 0.044 | 0.606 | National Belonging |

Table No. (5) indicates that Spearman's simple correlation coefficient between the first and second tests for the national belonging scale is 0.606, with an error rate of 0.044, which is less than the error rate for behavioral, educational sciences (0.05). This suggests a correlation between the measures and thus high reliability of the scale.

Fifth: Research Experiment:

Pilot Studies:

First Pilot Study:

The researchers distributed the questionnaire on national belonging and sports culture on 7/2/2018 to a sample of (10) second-year students from both departments (Physical Education and Psychology) at Zakho University. The aim was to:

- 1) Determine the suitability of the scales for the research sample.
- 2) Verify the clarity of the questionnaire instructions.
- 3) Identify potential difficulties during the application of research tools to mitigate them in the main experiment.
- 4) Ensure the sample's understanding of the test items.
- 5) Determine the time required to fill out the questionnaires.

Second Pilot Study:

The researchers distributed the research tools, the sports culture and national belonging scales, to a sample of (30) second-year students from both departments (Physical Education and Psychology) at Zakho University on 19/2/2018 to establish the scientific basis for the scales.

Main Experiment:

After completing the questionnaire trials and verifying the scientific basis, the scales were ready for application. The main research experiment was conducted on a sample of (286) students from all levels of the Physical Education and Psychology departments - after excluding the pilot study sample and the scales' scientific basis - on 1/4/2018. Subsequently, the scales were collected for statistical analysis.

Sixth: Statistical Methods Used in the Research:

The researchers employed the following statistical methods:

- 1) Arithmetic mean.
- 2) Standard deviation.
- 3) Percentage.
- 4) Hypothetical mean.
- 5) T-Test for independent samples.
- 6) T-Test for a single sample.
- 7) Spearman correlation coefficient. (Mustafa Bahi, Ahmed Salem, and Mohamed Said, 2014)

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After completing the field research procedures on the students of the Faculty of Education in both the Physical Education and Psychology departments, and after collecting and statistically processing the data to verify the achievement of the research objectives and test its hypotheses, the results were presented, analyzed, and discussed for the variables "under study".

First: Presentation of the Results:

Regarding the first hypothesis, which states:

"There is a high level of sports culture among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University 'subject of the research'."

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, a T-Test for a single sample was used to determine the level of sports culture among the students of the Faculty of Education "subject of the research". Table No. (6) illustrates this:

Table 6. Shows the Level of Sports Culture Among Students of the Departments of Physical Education and Psychology

| Departments | Mean | Standard Deviation | Hypothetical Mean for the Scale | T-Test Value for One Sample | Error Rate (Sig) | Significance |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Physical Education | 57.028 | 11.014 | 50 | 34.653 | 0.00 | Significant |
| Psychology | 55.418 | 9.111 | 50 | 33.055 | 0.00 | Significant |

Table No. (6) indicates that the T-Test value for a single sample for the Physical Education department was (34.653), and for the Psychology department, it was (33.055), both statistically significant at a level (0.00) with an advantage of (1.598) for the Physical Education department. This result allows for the acceptance of the first hypothesis.

Regarding the second hypothesis, which states:

"There is a high level of national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University 'subject of the research'."

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, a T-Test for a single sample was used to determine the level of national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education "subject of the research".

Table No. (7) illustrates this:

Table 7. Shows the Level of National Belonging Among Students of the Departments of Physical Education and Psychology

| Departments | Mean | Standard Deviation | Hypothetical Mean for the Scale | T-Test Value for One Sample | Error Rate (Sig) | Significance |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Physical Education | 51.37 | 9.345 | 40 | 40.006 | 0.00 | Significant |
| Psychology | 51.092 | 8.151 | 40 | 37.763 | 0.00 | Significant |

Table No. (7) shows that the T-Test value for a single sample for the Physical Education department was (40.006), and for the Psychology department, it was (37.763), both statistically significant at a level (0.00) with an advantage of (2.243) for the Physical Education department. This result allows for the acceptance of the second hypothesis.

Regarding the third hypothesis, which states:

"There is a statistically significant relationship between sports culture and national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University 'subject of the research'."

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, Spearman's simple correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between sports culture and national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education for both departments (Physical Education and Psychology). Table No. (8) illustrates this:

Table 8. Shows the Relationship Between Sports Culture and National Belonging Among Students of the Departments of Physical Education and Psychology

| Scale | Spearman's Correlation Coefficient | Error Rate (Sig) | Significance |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Sports Culture Physical Education National Belonging Physical Education | 0.635 | 0.00 | Significant |
| Sports Culture Psychology National Belonging Psychology | 0.622 | 0.00 | Significant |

Table No. (8) indicates that Spearman's correlation coefficient between sports culture and national belonging for the Physical Education department is (0.635), statistically significant at an error rate (0.00), while for the Psychology department, it is (0.622), also statistically significant at an error rate (0.00).

This means that the correlation coefficient for the Physical Education department is higher than that for the Psychology department by (0.013), implying that as the level of sports culture increases, so does the level of national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University. This result allows for the acceptance of the third hypothesis.

Second: Discussion of the Results:

a. Discussion of the Results on the Level of Sports Culture Among Students of the Departments of Physical Education and Psychology:

Table No. (6) reveals a high level of sports culture among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University "subject of the research", with statistically significant T-Test values for a single sample for both departments, and a slight advantage for the Physical Education department.

The researchers attribute the high level of sports culture among Physical Education department students to their specialization, indicating that their educational focus has enhanced their knowledge in this area. The high results for the Psychology department are attributed to the emphasis on physical education in Zakho's schools and the general interest in sports among the community, reflecting on the students' sports cultural knowledge.

These findings are consistent with studies by Ahmed & Mahdi (2012), Cherif (2014), and Al- Zyoud (2013), which showed that students specializing in Physical Education have a higher level of sports culture compared to students in other university colleges.

b. Discussion of the Results on the Level of National Belonging Among Students of the Departments of Physical Education and Psychology:

Table No. (7) indicates a high level of national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University "subject of the research", with statistically significant T-Test values for a single sample for both departments, and a slight advantage for the Physical Education department.

The researchers attribute the high level of national belonging among students to Zakho's geographical location, which has faced various challenges due to its border position. This has likely fostered a strong sense of national belonging among its residents.

c. Discussion of the Results on the Relationship Between Sports Culture and National Belonging Among Students of the Departments of Physical Education and Psychology:

Table No. (8) confirms a statistically significant relationship between sports culture and national belonging for students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University "subject of the research", with Physical Education department students showing a slightly higher correlation coefficient.

This outcome is attributed to the emphasis on positive principles, including patriotism, within the sports education curriculum, reinforcing the connection between sports culture and national belonging.

Studies by Nazhan Al-Assi and Mazen Hadith (1987), and Zainab Omar and Ghada Abdel Hakim (2008), support the educational goals of physical education in fostering a sense of belonging to both school and community, ultimately leading to a heightened sense of national belonging.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research objectives, hypotheses, and methodology, the researchers concluded the following:

- 1) There is a high level of sports culture among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University "subject of the research".
- 2) There is a high level of national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University "subject of the research".
- 3) There is a statistically significant relationship between sports culture and national belonging among the students of the Faculty of Education at Zakho University "subject of the research".

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