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Effects of Olympic Education on the Attitudes of University Students in Iran.

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this study was to determine the role of educating Olympic concepts to university students and observe its effects on their attitudes. As a result, 2000 male and female students were randomly selected from Iranian public and private universities in five zones of the country including north, south, west, east and center. A questionnaire was prepared by asking some questions on Olympic concepts and distributed among the subjects in order to collect the data. The results demonstrated that 60.1% of the subjects admitted that Olympic Education affected their feelings of humanity, alliance and peace. They accepted the moral and educational effects of Olympism too. More than half of the subjects(52.8%) mentioned that Olympic Education had positive effects on their attitudes towards life. Besides, 50.3% of the subjects believed that Olympic Education was effective in the lifestyle of the university students. Moreover, 63.9% of the subjects emphasized the close relationship between Olympic concepts and moral behavior in life.

Keywords: *Olympic Movement, Olympic Concepts, Olympic Games, Olympism.*

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INTRODUCTION

Olympism is a philosophy of life that combines the physical and spiritual aspects of the body. Attaching sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to develop a manner of life based on the joy found in effort and respect for the ethical principles. The goal of Olympic Movement is to build a peaceful world by educating the youth through sport practiced without making discrimination of any kind. It requires understanding the spirit of friendship, alliance and fair play (Binder, 2000).

Through Olympic Games, sport is becoming a global culture (Cartalis, 2000); meanwhile, Olympic Education is trying to improve humanity through balancing the physical and intellectual aspects of the body. Olympic Education is so important that of 21 commissions of IOC 5 commissions are related directly or indirectly to Olympic Education. These commissions are Culture and Education, Ethics, Olympic Programme, Olympic Solidarity, and Sport (Larcoque et al., 2002). Olympic Education is a universal one, which tries to improve the entire aspects of the human spirit (Parry, 2003). It is going to affect a large number of the people by spreading Olympic fundamentals and principles (Nissiotis, 2005).

The programs of Olympic Education emphasize on sport and physical activity as a means of improving the different aspects of human spirit and bringing the nations closer to each other. Besides the basic cultural principles of Olympism haired from ancient Olympic Games, other objectives of Olympic Education include extending peace, mutual understanding, chivalry, magnanimity, humanity, respecting other cultures, preserving the environment and trying to get better records (Binder, 2004). The studies on the status of Olympic Education in different countries demonstrate that they are making all their attempts to teach the concepts of Olympic Education to university students. In China, teaching these concepts to elementary and middle school students is a principle in their educational system; nevertheless, they have not forgotten the university students. Since 1993, different subjects on Olympic Education have been added to the educational program of university students in private institutes. Since the NOC of China was too busy to deal with the fundamental purposes of Olympic Education, it was decided to allocate these activities to schools and universities in the country (Hai, 1999). On the other hand, artistic competitions of painting, poetry and music are held on the subjects of Olympic in order to reach the developmental goals of Olympic Education in Great Britain; moreover, they have devoted a radio channel to Olympics in order to broadcast its objectives (Parry, 2003).

In Iran, the results of some studies on Olympic Education demonstrate that our experts and academic students of Physical Education have a low knowledge of the historical and social aspects of Olympic Movement (Khabiri et al., 2001). The results of other researches demonstrate that Iranian university students – especially those who have not studied Physical Education – have a very little knowledge of this Movement; some of them are suspicious about the different aspects of Olympic Movement and some report uncertainty and pessimism on these aspects. Unfortunately, we should accept that the principles of Olympic Movement are not well-known for our university students who are expected to design social affairs of the country in the future (Rahmani Nia, 2000). Therefore there is a necessity to investigate the effects of Olympic Education on attitudes of the university students around the country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is analytical-descriptive implemented in a field scale. The instruments of the research were a self- developed questionnaire asking about individual information and the subjects' knowledge and views about the Olympic education. At first, the most important points round Olympic education concepts were extracted by a review on the historical background of the subject (book, article, thesis and internet). Then, the points related to each aspect were specified and a questionnaire of 30 questions was provided accordingly. The questionnaire was handed to a scope of university experts (11 experts) who were familiar with the subject in order to specify and eliminate the possible ambiguities. The questions were reduced to 22 questions after considering the opinions of the experts. After making the necessary reformatations, a pilot study was carried out with 35 subjects. The results of the explorative factor analysis with the factor load of higher than 0.3 determined a factor. The results of the Explorative Factor Analysis with promax rotation for the mentioned questionnaire were significant ($KMO=0/90$, $KB= 3/45$, $df= 101$, $P =0/003$). The results of the Coefficient Factor Analysis were calculated too ($967/0 = AGFI$, $89= df$, $002/0 = P$). The reliability of the questionnaire was also calculated by Cronbach's α ($\alpha =0/90$). According to the results

of Cronbach's α , It could claim that the coefficients obtained had an acceptable amount and the measurement instruments had a good inter congruence. The questionnaires were distributed among 2000 male and female students who were randomly selected from public and private universities of five zones in the country including: North (Guilan and Mazandaran), South (Ahwaz and Shiraz), West (Tabriz and Sanandaj), East (Mashad), and Center (Tehran and Arak). Regarding the large number of the subjects, many volunteers collaborated in this research to distribute the questionnaires. The research team members went to each university one by one and asked the students to complete the questionnaires. They introduced the goals of the research to the subjects and helped them to answer the questions. Some blind students were selected from each university to answer the questionnaire in order to make sure about the questionnaire. The data were organized and summarized through descriptive statistics. Explorative and confirmative factor analyses were used as inferential statistics by the software SPSS version 19 and LISREL version 8.52.

RESULTS

The findings demonstrated that 50.3 percent of the respondents were male and 49.7 percent of them were female. 94.5 percent of the respondents were in the range of 18-26 and almost 6 percent of them were in the range of 27-50. 26.1 percent of the respondents studied in public and 73.9 percent of them studied in private universities. The 12.4 percent of the respondents were physical education students while 87.6 of them did not study physical education. 9 percent of the respondents were technicians, 69.1 percent of them had B.A, 17.1 percent of them had M.A and 4.9 percent of them had Ph.D. The results demonstrated that 60.1% of the subjects agreed with the role of Olympic Education as a means of developing the feelings of humanity, solidarity and peace (Table & Figure 1). It was also clear that 52.8% of the subjects accepted the effect of Olympic Education on the attitudes of the academics and the university students towards life, 37.3% of them had no special idea about it and only 9.8% of them disagreed. It means that although more than one third of the subjects had no idea about the effect of Olympic Education on the attitudes of the university students and academics, the fraction of the congruent group with noticeable percentage of 52.8% was interesting in comparison with the contradictory samples (Table & Figure 2). Also, the answers of the university students to the question about the effect of Olympic Education on the academics and university students' lifestyle demonstrated that almost half of them agreed with this statement (Table & Figure 3). On the other hand, the results demonstrated that there was a consensus between most of the subjects regarding the presence of an obvious relationship between Olympic concepts and promoting moralities in life (Table1,2,3,4 & Figure1,2,3, 4).

Table1. Answers of the university students to the question about the role of Olympic Education in universities as a means of developing the feelings of humanity, solidarity and peace									
Strongly Agree		Agree		No Opinion		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
425	21.1	781	39	626	31.3	125	6.3	43	2.2
Table2. Answers of the university students to the question about the effect of Olympic Education on the academics and university students' attitudes towards life									
Strongly Agree		Agree		No Opinion		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
339	16.8	720	36	746	37.3	154	7.7	41	2.1
Table3. Answers of the university students to the question about the effects of Olympic Education on the academics and university students' lifestyle									
Strongly Agree		Agree		No Opinion		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
319	15.7	692	34.6	801	40	144	7.2	45	2.3
Table4. Answers of the university students to the question about the relationship between Olympic concepts and prompting moralities									
Strongly Agree		Agree		No Opinion		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
379	18.8	906	45.1	598	29.8	84	4.1	35	1.8

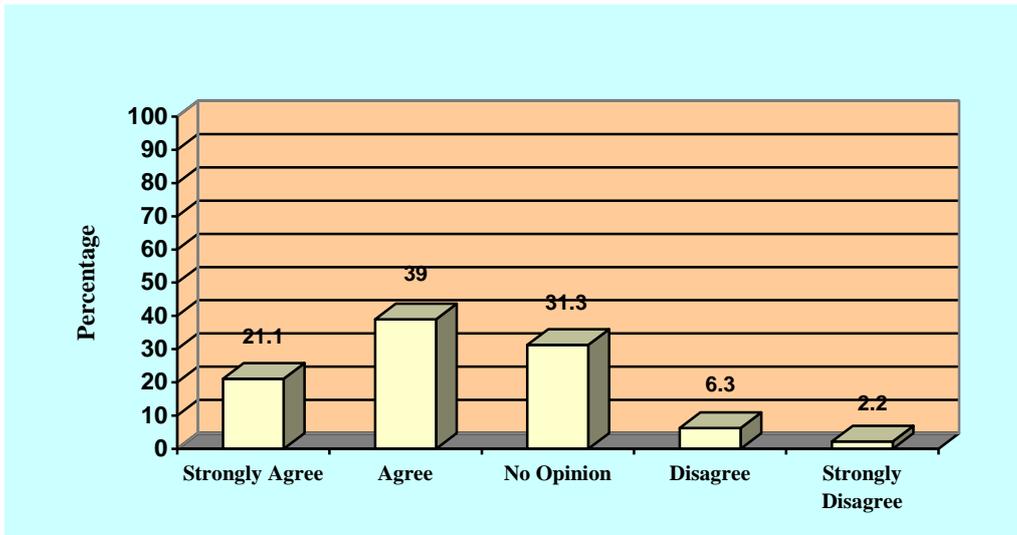


Figure 1. Answers of university students to the question about the role of Olympic Education in universities as a means of developing the feelings of humanity, solidarity and peace;

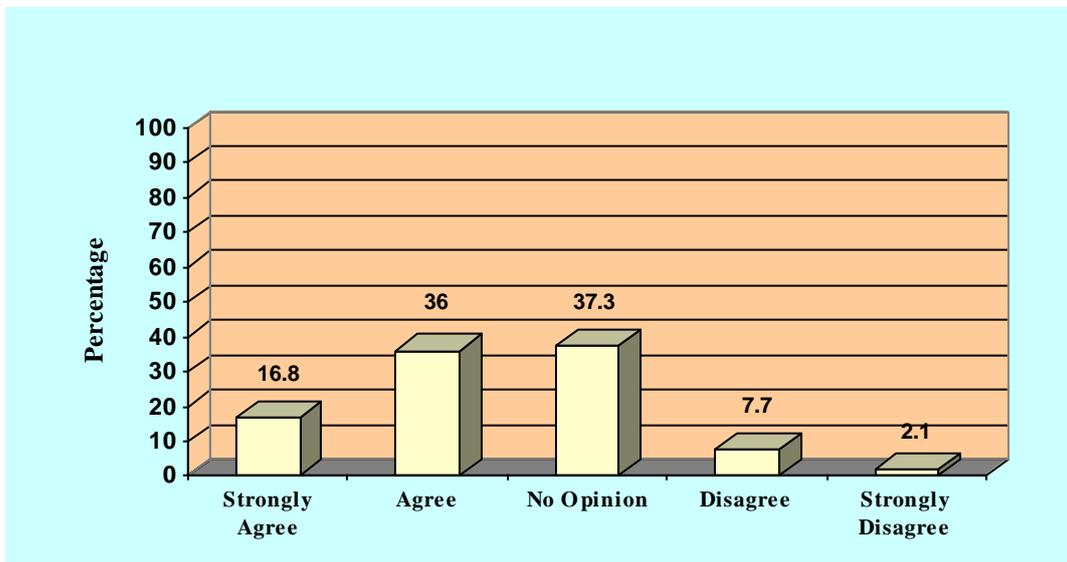


Figure 2. Answers of the university students to the question about the effect of Olympic Education on the academics and university students' attitudes towards life;

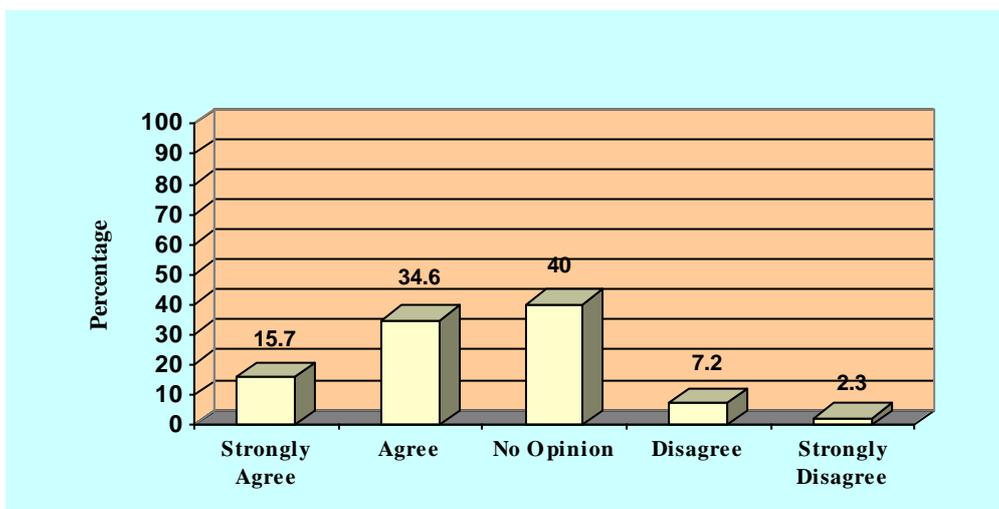


Figure 3. Answers of the university students to the question about the effect of Olympic Education on the academics and university students' lifestyle;

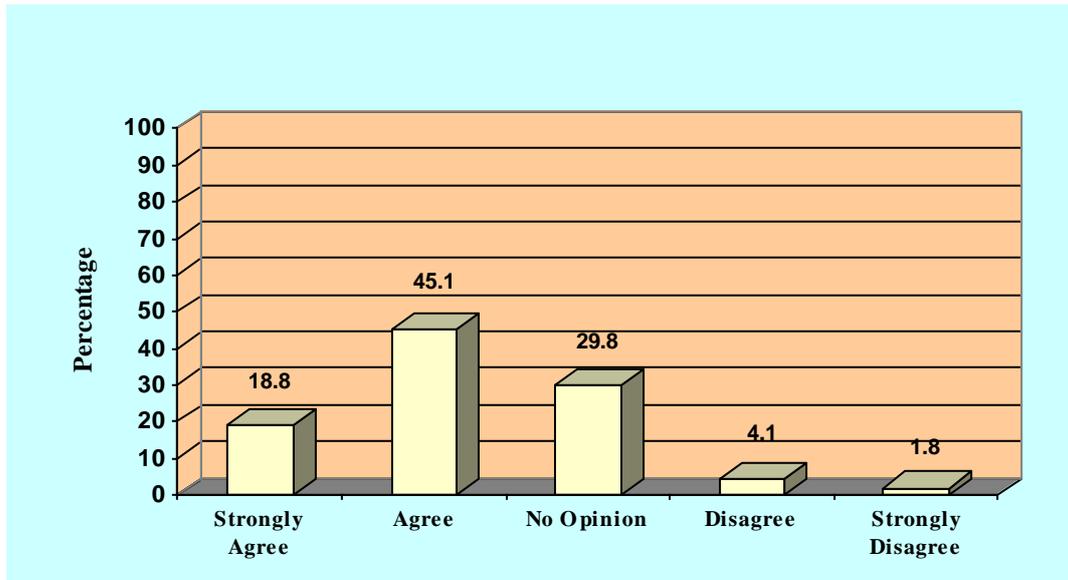


Figure 4. Answers of university students to the question about the relationship between Olympic concepts and prompting moralities

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is accepted that each individual is capable of developing the spirit of freedom, loyalty and commitment and also discovering the absolute meaning of life by participating in physical activities (Lawrence, 2005). Physical activity corroborates the independence of thinking as well (Arnold, 1997). It is clear that Olympic Education can improve the level of teamwork and multilateral collaboration, sport spirit, cultural exchange and international understanding among human beings (Binder, 2004).

According to this study, more than half of the subjects believed that teaching Olympic Education in universities affected the university students in terms of the feelings of humanity, solidarity and peace. The results also demonstrated that although students were not completely aware of the fundamental concepts of Olympism, they accepted the moral and educational effects of Olympic Education. It seems that the average knowledge of the university students about the concepts of Olympism in this study is consistent with the previous studies (Rahmani Nia, 1999; Khabiri et al., 2001, Mohammadi, 2011, 2012) and the only obvious difference in this study is the attitudinal changes considered in it. The main reason for these changes can be found in the undeniable role of Media and globalization (Ghafouri et al., 2004; Houlihan, 1994). Nowadays, the young people and university students have an easy access to the international information and due to the extensive effect of Olympic Movement (for example Olympic Rings is the second well known symbol in the world, after the Red Cross (Oswald, 1999)), it is obvious that the youth can learn and hear more about Olympics. Maybe, that is the main reason why many countries such as USA (Wamsley, 2004), Great Britain (Parry, 2003), China (Hai, 1999), Greece (Politis, 2003) and Malaysia (Horton, 1998) have added Olympic Education to their educational curriculum.

Although, more than one third of the subjects in this study (37.3 %) had no idea about the effects of Olympic Education on the attitudes of the university students and academics towards their lives, the fraction of congruent group with the noticeable percentage of 52.8% was interesting in comparison with the contradictory one(9.8 %). The results also demonstrated that most of the subjects (63.9 %) had consensus regarding the presence of an obvious relationship between Olympic Education and promoting moralities. The results in this research are consistent with the studies of different researchers in the fields such as: moral studies (Arnold, 1997), philosophy (Muller, 2004; parry, 2003), statements from the originator of modern Olympics (Coubertin, 1908), and even people who bring different challenges to the fundamentals of Olympic concept (Chatziefstathiou, 2005). It is necessary to mention that the ideas of our university students emanated from their personal understandings because they had no previous experience with Olympics and no educational material was prepared for them in this field. On the other hand, it is clear that our new generation

needs to learn the concepts of Olympics as a moral school to come over the intricate aspects of life (Arnold, 1997). Maybe these studies can encourage some authors such as George Orwell to adjust their pessimistic discretions about sport (Lawrence, 2005). And now, It can claim that we have enough background in our schools to start the Olympic Educations!

But how can our start this process? It seems that publishing books, CDs, producing educational films and organizing short term courses can be non-official measures for reaching these objectives and taking these steps may encourage students of both university and school levels learn more about Olympic Education. Fortunately, the results of this study have proved that universities are getting prepared in order to have Olympic education as an academic unit.

Eventually, our would like to implore the officials in the NOCs to reinforce their close relationship with the educational system in the country and take the necessary actions in order to attract the attention of the specialists and experts in this field, organize scientific congresses, pursue the researches done by university students about Olympics and educate solicitous students in master degrees to provoke their enthusiasm for learning more about Olympic Education.

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