

A Path Analysis of Socio-Environmental Factors of Korean Medalists in '88 Seoul Olympics

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The present study examined the sport socialization process of Korean elite athletes. The social role - social system model was taken as a theoretical framework. Out of 55 Korean medalists in 88 Seoul Olympic Games, 48 (87. 3%) medalists were interviewed. The analysis of the data showed that the model had a considerable degree of explanation of sport socialization of Korean elite athletes.

INTRODUCTION

Korea marked fourth place in '88 Seoul Olympics, winning 12 gold, 11 silver, and 12 bronze medals. It can be assumed that the medalists have come to possess the excellent sports skills and strong mentality through socialization processes that are different from others. Previous studies have shown that elite athletes exhibit personal attributes that are different from non-elite athletes or non-athletes. The relevant factors identified are : social class background (Berryman and Loy, 1976 ; Gruneau, 1972), birth order (Lim, 1982 ; Yiannakis, 1976), race and ethnicity (Eitzen and Sanford, 1976 ; McPherson, 1974), age (Faulkner, 1975) , sex (Simri, 1976), religion (Petrie, 1973), place of residence (Rooney,

1974), personality (Kroll, 1967), physical characteristics (De Garay et al., 1974), and professionalization of attitude toward sport (Lim, 1988 ; Webb, 1969).

Along with the personal attributes of the players, other factors also influence the socialization process into sport roles. The academic attainment of parents, involvement in sports by parents and siblings, and financial support received are closely related to the degree of socialization into sports (Kenyon and McPherson, 1973 ; Theberge, 1977). Peer group influence is also significant : involvement in sports by peers, financial and moral support by peers, popularity among peers due to sports skills and so forth (Kenyon and McPherson, 1973 ; Snyder and Spreitzer, 1976).

At the level of social context, school environment functions as a primary socializing agency. The factors identified as relevant are : sport facility at school, financial and administrative support, popularity as a scholastic athlete, teachers' attitudes toward student players (Kenyon and McPherson, 1981 ; Theberge, 1977), career and academic attainment of the coach of the school (Sage, 1975), leadership style of the coach (Kim, 1989 ; Walsh and Carron, 1977), the relationship with the coach (Hill, 1975), winning rate under the coach (Hackman and Oldham, 1976), homogeneity of the team members (Vander Velden, 1971), the skill level within the team (Kjeldsen, 1976), team cohesion (Bird, 1977 ; Lee, 1989), frequency of replacing coaches (Theberge and Loy, 1976).

The studies identified the variables involved in the socialization process of elite athletes. However, the findings are fragmentary and not related to one another. Socialization studies must consider a given socio-cultural milieu, which influence sport roles differently among different nations.

The purpose of the present study was to examine interactions and relationships among the variables involved in the process of sport socialization of Korean elite athletes. The theoretical approach taken in the study was a social role-social system model (Sewell, 1963). The present study reports only the results of the socializing process of a large scale study on the sociological characteristics of Korean medalists.

SOCIAL ROLE - SOCIAL SYSTEM MODEL OF SPORT SOCIALIZATION

There are several approaches to explain sport socialization of elite athletes: psychoanalysis, the normative-maturational approach, the developmental-cognitive approach, the genetic and constitutional approach, and the social learning approach (Clausen, 1968 ; Bandura and Walters, 1969 ; Kenyon and McPherson, 1981). Within the social learning approach, a social role-social system model is the most specific and articulated one, and can be readily applied to sport socialization. The model posits a causal and recursive relationships among the main elements of the socialization process. Differential degrees of role aptitude induce differential degrees of influence from social system. The degree of the propensity of role learning thus acquired determines the degree of socialization.

In the model, the role learning is recursive in that the role learning induced by the role aptitude until late childhood (up around 12 years) is strengthened further during adolescence (up around 16 years). The general model proposed by Sewell (1963) was adapted and elaborated to explain sport socialization by Kenyon and McPherson, (1981).

METHOD

Subject

The subject of the present study was Korean medalists in 88 Seoul Olympic Games. Out of 55 medalists, The data of 48 (87.3%) were obtained. There were 28 males and 20 females. The number of athletes was 10 in individual sports, 17 in dual sports, 21 in team sports.

Data collection

(1) The questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 24 questions, the subitems of which can measure 510 elements. the questionnaire was administered individually by trained interviewers.

(2) The Variables

The present study was a part of a large scale study on the socialization process of Korean medalists. For the purpose of the present study, the following composite variables were obtained from the raw scores on the questionnaire. In calculating the composite variables, the raw scores were transformed to z-score.

- 1) Role aptitude : Combination of personal attributes during primary school years. physical characteristics, interests in sport, and participation.
- 2) Family I : Family influence during late childhood.
 - a. Parents : Social class, educational attainment, sports participation and record of parents.
 - b. Parental support : Moral and financial support from parents during primary school years.
- 3) Family II : Family influence during adolescence.
 - a. Parental support : Moral, financial, and emotional (boasting records to others ; watching the game) support from parents during high school years.
 - b. Sibling influence : Sport participation, moral and financial support of siblings during high school years.
- 4) School I : School influence during late childhood.
 - a. Support from school : Support facilities of school, financial and moral support from school, and attitudes of the home class teacher during primary school years.
 - b. Support from coach : Sports skills and educational attainment of the coach, the winning rate under the coach, and the relationship with the coach.
- 5) School II : School influence during adolescence.
 - a. Support from school : Same as 4a, during high school years.
 - b. Support from coach : Same as 4b, during high school years.
- 6) Peers I : Peer influence during late childhood.
 - a. Support from school peers : Watching the games by peers and popularity among peers during primary school years
 - b. Support from club members : Watching the games by peers of a voluntary association and popularity among them during primary school years.
- 7) Peers II : Peer influence during adolescence.
 - a. Support from school peers : Same as 6a, during high school years.
 - b. Support from club members : Same as 6b, during high school years.

- 8) Community I : Community influence during late childhood.
 - a. Support from community : Sport tradition and facilities of the community, financial support, and popularity in the community during primary school years.
 - b. Masscommunication ; Exposure to and influence from masscommunication during primary school years.
- 9) Community II : Community influence during adolescence.
 - a. Support from community : Same as 8a, during high school years.
 - b. Masscommunication : Same as 8b, during high school years.
- 10) Degree of sport role socialization was operationalized as the achievement in the Olympics. Gold medalists were given the score of 90, silver, 30, and bronze, 20.

(3) Analysis

The relationships among the variables of the sport socialization process were examined, using a path analysis technique. New Regression on SPSS was used. The analyses were done for the whole group, by sex, and dy spots types (individual, dual, and team).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sport Socialization of Korean Medalists as a Whole

Figure 1. shows the result of the analysis of the whole group. The influence of social system (family, school, peers, and community) during the adolescence explained 21.4% of the variance of the socialization process. Family and peers had positive relationships with sport role socialization, but school and community had negative relationships. The social system during late childhood had a strong positive relationship with the social system during adolescence, showing that the influence of social system received during the late childhood was strengthened in the adolescence. However, it is interesting to note that family support had a negative relationship between two stages, An athlete's role aptitude did not induce family support at the beginning but eventually obtained the largest support among the social system elements.

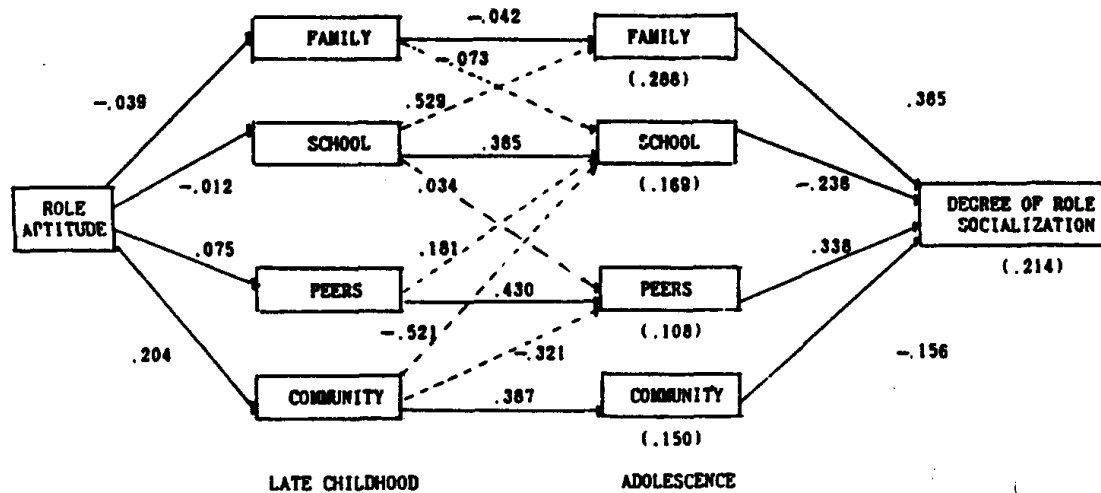


Figure 1. The path analysis of sport socialization of Korean Olympic medalists (Whole group).

Sport Socialization Process by Sports Types

Figures 2, 3, and 4 show the results of the analysis of individual, dual, and team sports athletes, respectively.

Overall, the peer group influence in the adolescence was the most consistent and strongest influence irrespective of the sports types involved. School and community held a negative or meager positive relationship.

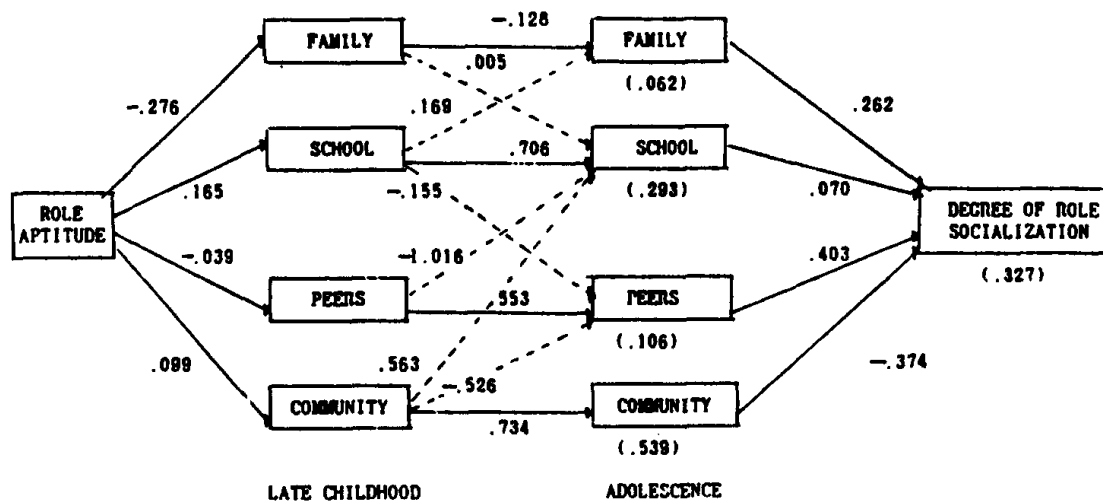


Figure 2. The path analysis of sport socialization of Korean Olympic medalists (Individual sports).

(1) Athletes of Individual Sports

The influence of social system in the adolescence explained 32.7% of the variance. Peers were the strongest source of influence and the community had a negative relationship to the late childhood, but emerged as the strongest in later life of the athletes.

(2) Athletes of Dual Sports

The social system in the adolescence explained 31.3% of the socialization process. The shift from family influence to peers is the most drastic. The influence of the peers was radical in the adolescence which held only a meager relation in the late childhood. On the other hand, the family support, which was rather strong in the late childhood decreased somewhat in the adolescence.

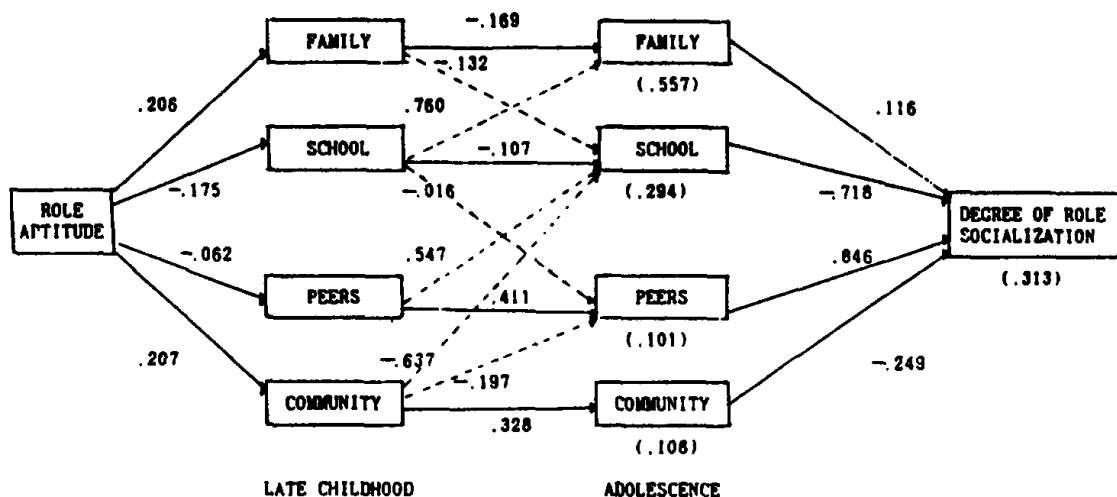


Figure 3. The path analysis of sport socialization of Korean Olympic medalists (Dual Sports).

(3) Athletes of Team Sports

As can be seen in Figure 4, the social influence received during the adolescence explained the 43.4% of the socialization process, being higher than the other types of sports. The general pattern of the influence of social system is similar to other types of sports, however, unlike others, the influence of school and community was negligible in the team sports.

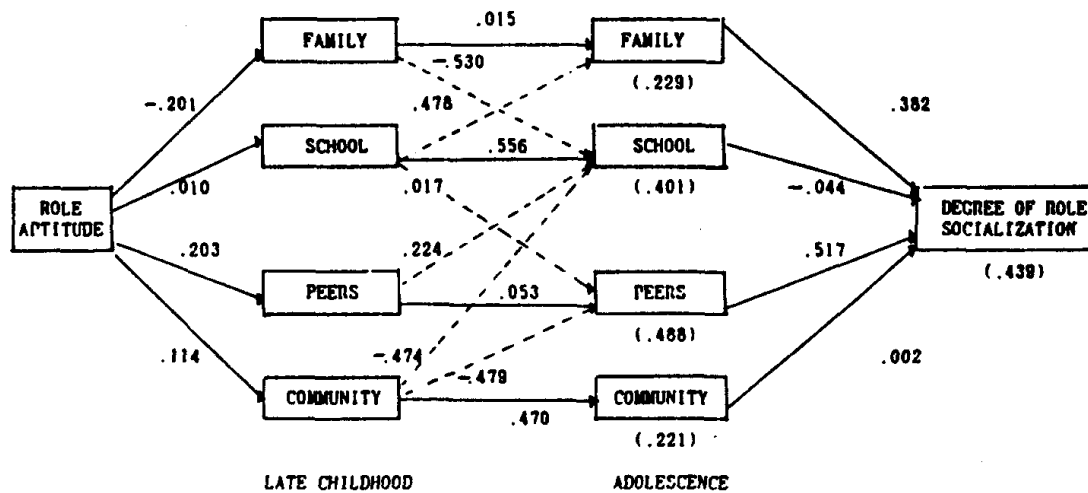


Figure 4. The path analysis of sport socialization of Korean Olympic medalists (Team Sports).

Sex Differences in the Sport Socialization Process

There was an apparent sex differences in the sport socialization process of Korean medalists. The results of the analysis of the male athletes is reported in Figure 5, and those of the female athletes, in Figure 6.

(1) Male Athletes

The model explained 25.7% of the sport socialization process of the male athletes. The socialization process of the male athletes reflects the characteristics found in that of the whole group. Family and peer group had strong positive relationship, while school and community held strong negative relations.

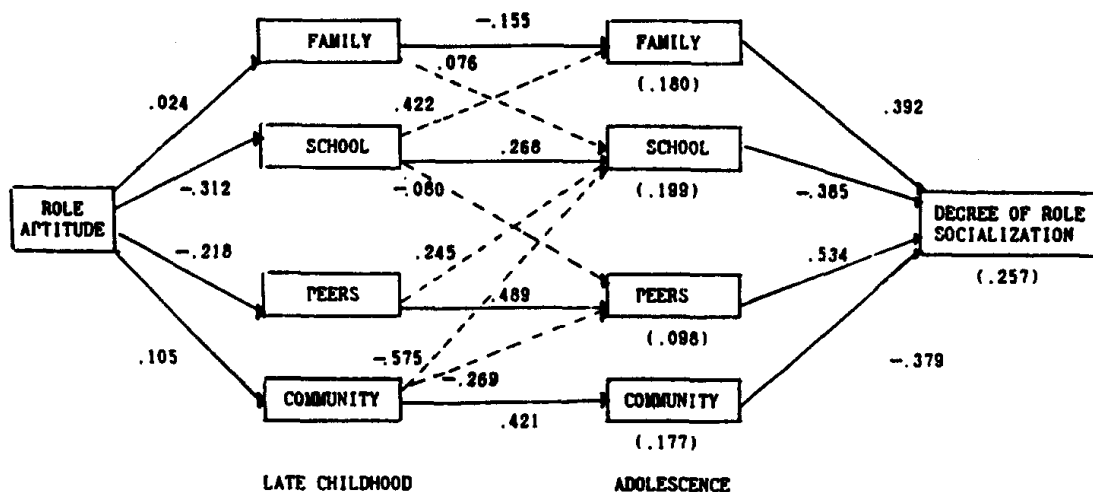


Figure 5. The path analysis of sport socialization of Korean Olympic medalists (Males).

(2) Female Athletes

The model explained 41.4% of the females' sport socialization process. Among the social system influence of the adolescence, the parental support was the single most influential factor, while the other three elements had meager relations. On the other hand, the sport role aptitude seemed to have induced the strong support from school, peers, and community during the late childhood, the influence of which was overshadowed by the family influence in later years. It is interesting to note that the family support, the major source of support in the adolescence had a negative relation, although a weak one, in the late childhood.

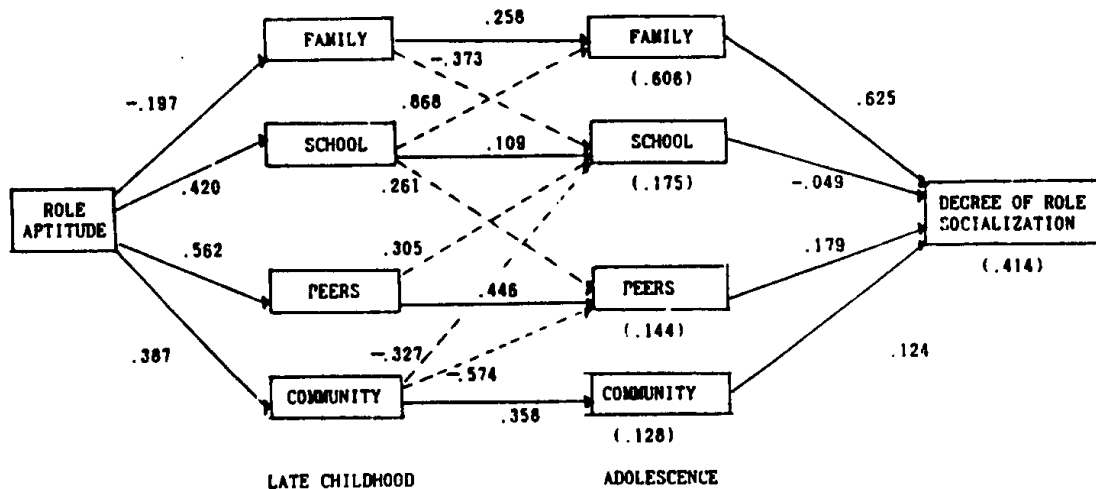


Figure 6. The path analysis of sport socialization of Korean Olympic medalists (Females).

CONCLUSIONS

The present study examined the sport socialization process of Korean elite athletes. The social role - social system model was taken as a theoretical framework. The findings of the study are summarized below.

- (1) The model had a considerable degree of explanation of sport socialization of Korean elite athletes. The influence of the social system in the adolescence explained 24% of the socialization process.

(2) The sport role aptitude of the athletes did not induce strong influence from the social system in the late childhood. However, the social system in the early stage induced a favorable influence for sport socialization from the social system in the later stage.

(3) There was no difference in the socialization patterns among different sports types, whether the sports involved was individual, dual or team sports.

(4) There was a sex difference in the socialization patterns. The social role aptitude of female athletes induced the influence from the social system that was different from the influence for the male athletes.

(5) The male athletes received the strongest support from peer groups, followed by family, but negative support from school or community. The females, on the other hand, received the strongest support from the family, and negligible support from other sources.

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