

The Relationship between Current Sport Participation and Future Sport Participation in the Rural Communities of Japan

Osamu Ebihara¹ and Hitoshi Omichi²

¹ *Yokohama National University, Department of Liberal Arts, 156 Tokiwadai, Hodogaya-ku, Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa 240, Japan;*

² *The International Budo University, 841 Shinkan, Katsuura-shi, Chiba 299-52, Japan*

Key words: sports sociology, sports involvement, community promotion

Preface

National Fitness and Sport Surveys in Japan were conducted five times in the last two decades. From these surveys, six time-series trends in relation to sports participation were presented (Figure 1). After the rapid growth of sport from 1965 to 1976, stagnation was recognized from 1976 to 1985. The figures of sport indicated forty-five percent in 1965, 60% in 1972, 65% in 1976, 68% in 1976, 64% in 1972, and 63% in 1985. In comparing the trends of middle-aged people with people over 60 years of age, the former presented stagnation and a slight decline, while the latter began to increase enormously in the first half of 1970's and has continuously kept a gradual increase after 1976.

Explaining declining sport involvement by age, Loy et al. (4) argued the application of the disengagement theory (2), the activity theory (3), and the continuity theory (1). The continuity theory would seem to account for the need of the older people to remain involved in fitness and sports if it had been the part of their life-styles since early childhood and adolescence. That is, how one uses leisure time before 25 or 30 years of age likely determines how he or she will use it throughout the middle and later years. If this theory is applied to the trends of the middle-aged people and people over 60 years of age, some examinations will be used to analyze the National Fitness and Sport Surveys.

Forty-five percent of people over 60 years of age in 1985 approximates both 50% of people in their fifties in 1976 and 44% of people in their forties in 1965. Also 40% of people in the sixties in 1982 approximates 37% of people in their fifties in 1972, and 39% of people in their sixties in 1976 almost approximates 29% of people in their fifties in 1965. In spite of the different sampling, most of such comparisons could be approximately closed. Consequently, the continuity theory could be determined to be available for the application to the time-series trends of sport participations of the middle aged and older, and will be useful in effectively predicting sport participation in the future. This study was designed to analyze the relationship between current sport participation and future sport participation.

Procedure

The survey was conducted on 668 males and 681 females by using the questionnaire method in Murayama, Yamagata Prefecture, Japan. This community is characterized as a rural area. In order to analyze the relationship between current sports participation and future ones, all of the subjects answered the two following questions ;

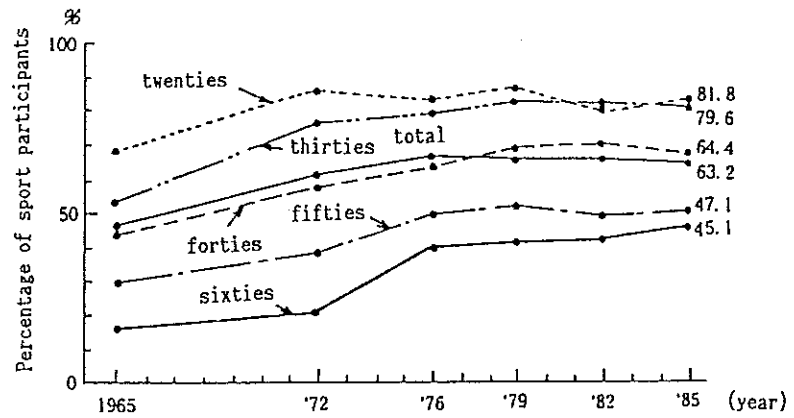


Figure 1. Time-series trends in National Fitness and Sports Surveys

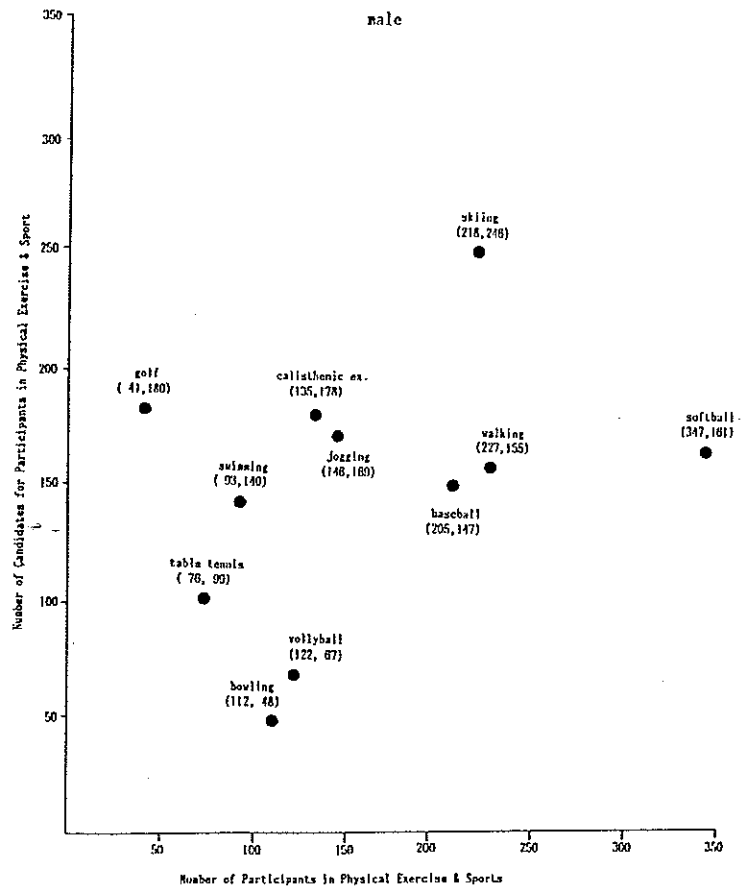


Figure 2. Relationships between present sports participation and future sports participation in male

The Relationship between Current Sport Participation

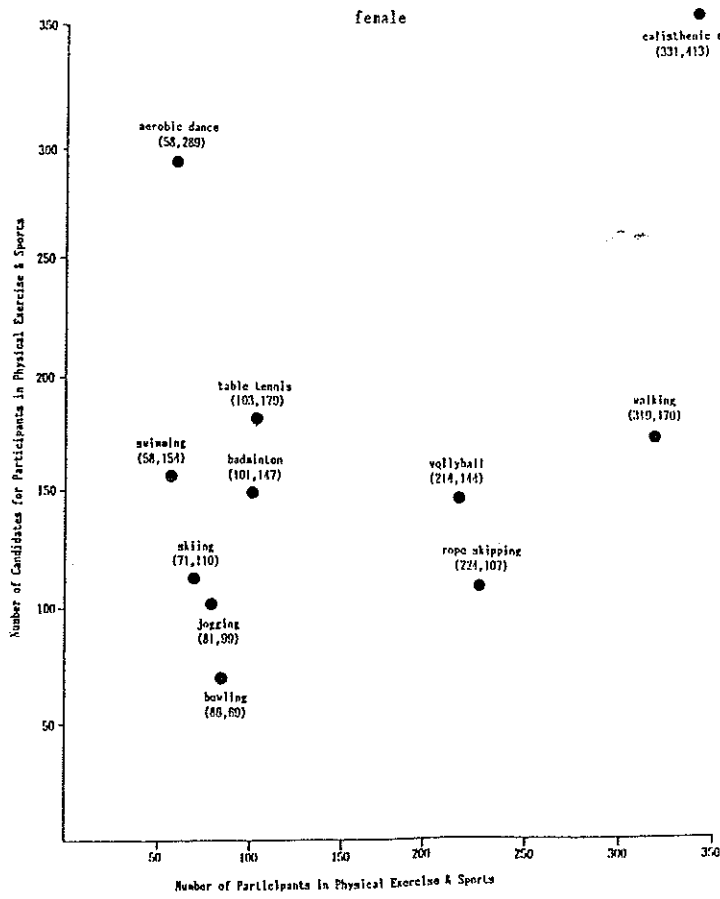


Figure 3. Relationships between present sports participation and future sports participation in female

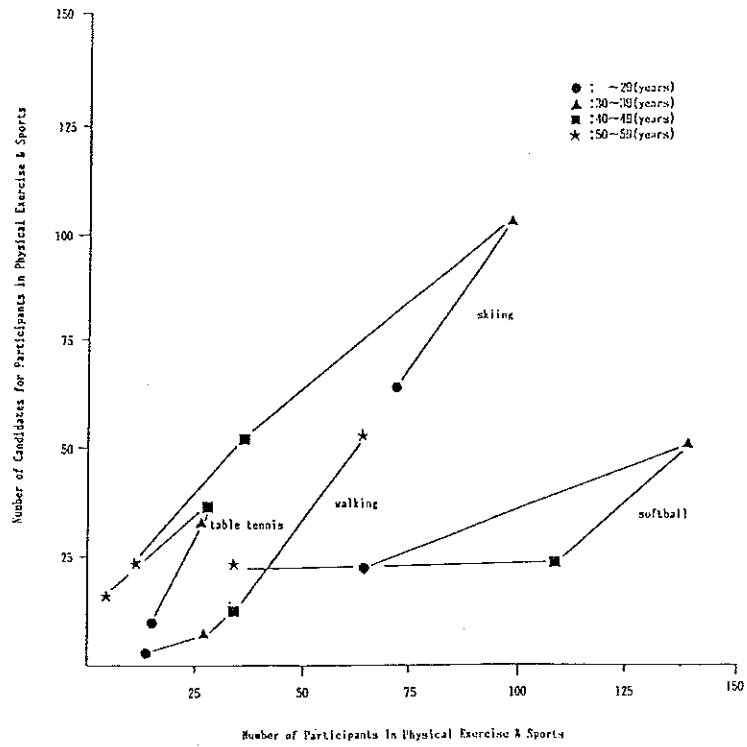


Figure 4. Relationships between present sports participation and future sports participation by age in male

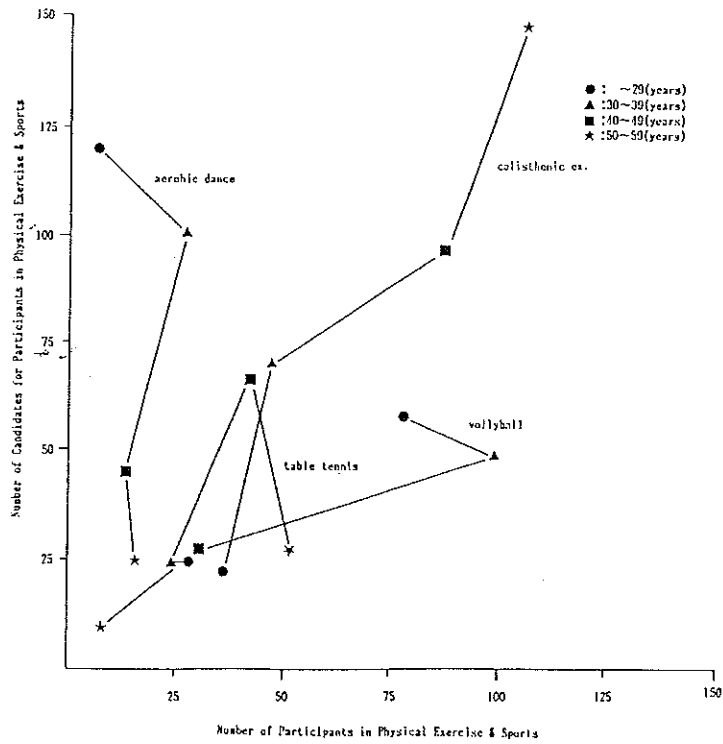


Figure 5. Relationships between present sports participation and future sports participation by age in female

The Relationship between Current Sport Participation

Question A concerning present sports participation : - In the previous year, what exercises and/or sports did you engage in ? Question B concerning future sports participation : - If you have a chance to participate in, what exercises and/or sports will you engage in?

Findings

Figure 2 shows the relationship between present sports participation and future ones in male. A certain number of subjects in current sports participants are in the X axis, while another number of future sports participants are in the Y axis.

Focusing on current trends, softball (n=347), walking (n=227), skiing (n=218), and baseball (n=205) were popular sports. On the future end, skiing (n=246), golf (n=180), calisthenic exercise (n=178), and jogging (n=169) are also popular sports. In order to consider a strategy for the promotion of fitness and sports, the ratio of present participants to future ones will be conveniently computed (e.g. skiing $218/246=0.89$, jogging $146/169=0.86$). The ratio closed to 1.0 indicated a popular trend. According to the ratios, it can be predicted that skiing, calisthenic exercises, jogging, and swimming will probably be popular sports in the future.

Figure 3 represents the relationship in female. Calisthenic exercise is the most popular sport at present and will probably be popular in the future. Table tennis, badminton, and volleyball were also popular.

Figure 4 shows the age-population relationships in skiing, softball, walking, and table tennis. Computing the ratio of each age-group in every sport, there are interesting differences in the same sports. Therefore the ratio closed to 1.0 indicated a popular sport, it can be concluded that the promising sports are skiing for middle-aged people (20 to 49 years) and walking for those so and over. Table tennis and softball seemed to be unpopular sports compared to skiing and walking.

Figure 5 shows the results of female subjects. Comparing aerobic dance to calisthenic exercise, younger female are more interested in aerobic dance, while calisthenic exercise is more popular with older females. Table tennis is one of popular sports in the 40 year old age group. For females in the forties year-old age, calisthenic exercise and table tennis appear to be easy to participate in. Though volleyball is a popular sport at present, it could be predicted that it will become unpopular in the future as well as softball with males.

The results of this study focusing on the trends of table tennis indicated that table tennis is more popular with females than with males, and middle-age people will participate in this sport. However, comparing this sport to skiing, jogging, swimming, calisthenic exercise, and aerobic dance, it could be predicted that table tennis will be an unpopular sport in the future as well as softball for males and volleyball for females.

References

- 1) Atchley, R. (1977). *The Social Forces in Later Life*, 2nd Ed. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth.
- 2) Cumming, E. and W.E. Henry (1961). *Growing Old: The Process of Disengagement*. New York: Basic Books.
- 3) Friedman, E. and R. Havighurst (1954). *The Meaning of Work and Retirement*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- 4) Loy, J.W., B.D. McPherson and G. Kenyon (1978). *Sport and social systems*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing.