



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC DISPARITIES' IMPACT ON SPORTS SOCIALIZATION OF ADOLESCENTS IN ZHAOQING

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra19537>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra19537

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the impact of economic disparities on adolescent sports socialization in Zhaoqing City and propose corresponding intervention strategies. Through literature review, empirical research, and data analysis, the research team conducted an in-depth analysis of the current status and challenges of adolescent sports participation across different economic backgrounds. The study reveals that adolescents from better economic conditions enjoy more sports resources and participation opportunities, while those from disadvantaged economic backgrounds face resource scarcity and insufficient social support. Based on these findings, the study designed intervention measures targeting adolescents from different economic backgrounds, including sports facility sharing, community activity days, and free training, to reduce participation gaps. Implementation results indicate these strategies effectively enhanced sports participation and socialization capabilities among adolescents from low economic backgrounds. The study emphasizes that continued cooperation among government, schools, communities, and enterprises is crucial for further reducing the impact of economic disparities. The study's limitation lies in its regional scope, and future research needs to expand to explore the impact of economic disparities on adolescent sports socialization in broader areas.

KEYWORDS: Economic Disparities, Adolescent Sports Socialization, Sports Participation Equity, Intervention Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

As a prefecture-level city in Guangdong Province, Zhaoqing exhibits significant economic development disparities compared to core Pearl River Delta cities like Guangzhou and Shenzhen. These economic differences may lead to unbalanced distribution of sports resources across regions, subsequently affecting the process and quality of adolescent sports socialization. Sports socialization plays a vital role in adolescents' comprehensive development, encompassing not only the learning of sports skills but also the establishment of values, formation of life skills, and development of social behavioral norms. In Zhaoqing, the process of sports socialization may be constrained by economic conditions, particularly in resource-scarce areas where adolescents might face more challenges. Analyzing the current status of adolescent sports participation in Zhaoqing, especially the participation levels of adolescents from different economic backgrounds, and revealing how economic conditions influence their sports socialization process is particularly important for promoting the healthy physical and mental development of adolescents in Zhaoqing.

1.2 Research Methods

1.2.1 Literature Review

In the initial stage of research, extensive collection and analysis of existing literature were conducted, including domestic and international research on the relationship between economic disparities and adolescent sports participation, as well as theoretical developments in sports socialization. This step aimed to establish a theoretical foundation and provide a reference framework for subsequent empirical research.



1.2.2 Empirical Research

The research team conducted field research in different economic zones of Zhaoqing, focusing on comparing samples between economically developed urban areas and economically disadvantaged rural areas. The research was primarily conducted through the following methods:

Questionnaire Survey: Designed and distributed questionnaires to collect data on adolescents' sports participation frequency, time allocation, participation types, socialization performance (such as teamwork, leadership), and family economic background and resource support variables.

Interviews: Conducted semi-structured interviews with adolescents, parents, teachers, and sports coaches to gain in-depth understanding of their views and experiences regarding sports participation.

Focus Group Discussions: Organized focus group discussions with adolescents from different economic backgrounds to explore their attitudes toward sports activities and participation motivations.

1.2.3 Data Analysis

Collected data was analyzed using statistical software (such as SPSS), including descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, etc., to reveal the relationship between economic disparities and adolescent sports participation, and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention measures.

2.1 REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DISPARITIES AND ADOLESCENT SPORTS PARTICIPATION

2.1.1 Global Perspective on Economic Disparities and Adolescent Sports Participation Research:

From a global perspective, economic disparities significantly influence adolescent sports participation, including participation levels, opportunity equity, and activity quality. Research shows that adolescents in economically developed regions enjoy more sports participation opportunities and better facilities, while those in economically underdeveloped regions relatively lack these resources. Therefore, to promote equity and universality in global adolescent sports participation, it is necessary to address and narrow economic disparities between different regions. Economically developed regions can provide more sports facilities and higher quality sports services, directly promoting adolescent sports participation. In regions with slower economic development, sports facilities are scarce and equipment is outdated, hindering adolescent participation in sports activities.

Therefore, improving the accessibility and quality of sports facilities is crucial, requiring government investment and social support. A family's economic status directly affects adolescents' possibility of participating in sports activities, including paying for sports activities and purchasing sports equipment. Families with good economic conditions can provide more sports participation opportunities for their children, while economically disadvantaged families face relative difficulties. Chen, Pan, & Zhang (2014) suggest that to promote sports participation for all adolescents, more low-cost or free sports activities need to be designed. Economic disparities affect not only participation levels but also participation equity. Globally, efforts should be made to ensure all adolescents can participate equally in sports activities regardless of their economic status. This requires joint efforts from international organizations, governments, and various sectors of society through developing reasonable policies and providing financial support to ensure sports participation equity (Lu, 2002).

2.1.2 Theoretical Progress in Sports Socialization:

Theoretical development in sports socialization has expanded from single sociological or educational perspectives to more comprehensive interdisciplinary perspectives, particularly incorporating economic disparities. Bailey, Cope, & Pearce (2009) suggest that economic disparities provide new dimensions to the theoretical framework of sports socialization, indicating that economic conditions affect not only individual opportunities for sports participation but also the process and effects of sports socialization. Therefore, understanding and addressing economic disparity issues in sports socialization is crucial for promoting sports equity and accessibility. Families or communities with superior economic conditions can provide more sports resources, such as high-quality facilities, diverse sports programs, and experienced coaches, thus promoting adolescent sports socialization. Conversely, families or communities with poorer economic conditions may lead to a lack of sports participation opportunities for adolescents due to limited resources, thereby affecting their sports socialization process. Economic status is not only a key factor in determining material resources for sports activities but also profoundly influences individual cognition and perception of sports. In economically advantaged contexts, people are more likely to experience the positive effects of sports activities and thus develop positive attitudes toward sports. Conversely, in economically challenging situations, individuals may



develop neutral or even negative perceptions of sports due to reduced opportunities for contact and understanding. Economic disparities affect not only the process of sports participation but also have far-reaching impacts on sports socialization outcomes, including but not limited to the development of social skills, teamwork, and leadership abilities. In an economically favorable environment, individuals are more likely to obtain opportunities to develop these skills; conversely, in economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the development of these personal skills may be hindered (Wu, 2010).

2.1.3 International Comparison of Economic Disparity Intervention Strategies:

Although economic disparities exist globally, effective policy interventions can significantly enhance adolescents' sports participation opportunities and promote sports activity universality and equality. Different countries and regions have effectively alleviated the limitations of economic conditions on adolescent sports participation through increasing public funding for sports facility construction and maintenance, and providing financial subsidies for low-income families to participate in sports activities (Coakley, 2017). For example, some European countries provide economic assistance through school sports programs and community sports clubs to ensure all children can participate in sports activities (Jiang, Bai, & Xu, 2004). This strategy not only increases sports participation opportunities but also strengthens community cohesion and adolescent social integration through sports activity popularization.

Cooperation between educational systems and communities is equally crucial for improving adolescent sports participation. Some countries implement programs through cooperation between schools and local sports organizations or clubs to provide after-school sports activities for students, which are usually free or discounted. For example, Australia's "Active After-school Communities" program aims to provide diverse sports and recreational activities for children through school and community cooperation, especially in remote and economically disadvantaged areas. These cooperative programs not only provide sports participation opportunities but also help adolescents establish positive lifestyles and social networks through sports activity organization and implementation (Li, 2010).

2.1.4 Commentary on Previous Related Research:

(1) First, in terms of research content, these three studies all provide important insights into the relationship between economic disparities and sports participation, covering key areas such as theoretical development, empirical analysis, and policy intervention. However, the research content may focus too much on macro-level analysis while lacking in-depth exploration of individual-level experiences and perceptions. Additionally, when discussing economic disparities, the research may not have fully considered other related factors such as cultural, political, or educational system differences, which may also have significant impacts on adolescent sports participation.

(2) Second, in terms of research methods, although these studies may have adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, there might be limitations in data acquisition, especially when conducting international comparisons, where data standards and availability may be inconsistent across different countries and regions, affecting the accuracy and comparability of research results. Furthermore, research methods may rely too heavily on existing data and literature while lacking innovative research designs or original data collection.

(3) Finally, in terms of research subjects, these studies successfully cover different countries and regions, reflecting a global perspective. However, the research subjects may be biased toward specific economic groups or regions, failing to comprehensively cover adolescent groups from various economic backgrounds. In particular, adolescent sports participation in low-income countries or marginalized communities may not have received sufficient attention.

3. CURRENT STATUS ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC DISPARITIES' IMPACT ON ZHAOQING ADOLESCENT SPORTS SOCIALIZATION

3.1 Differences in Sports Participation Opportunities Due to Economic Conditions

Research shows that adolescents from advantaged economic backgrounds more easily participate in high-quality sports activities, thus gaining better development opportunities in the sports socialization process. They have more opportunities to participate in professional sports training, receive personalized guidance, and develop strong social skills. Meanwhile, adolescents from relatively disadvantaged economic backgrounds, due to resource scarcity and insufficient social support, often can only participate in informal, non-systematic sports activities, which limits their development of social and teamwork abilities through sports. Therefore, this study will focus on examining the



performance differences in sports socialization among adolescents from different economic levels in Zhaoqing and explore how to narrow this gap through reasonable intervention strategies. Through the design and practical application of intervention measures, this study expects to provide fairer sports participation opportunities for adolescents from low economic backgrounds, thereby promoting their socialization process and comprehensive development.

Do adolescents from different economic backgrounds face significant differences in resources, venues, equipment, and other factors when participating in sports activities? How do these differences affect adolescents' sports socialization process? Do adolescents from better economic conditions demonstrate stronger social abilities, teamwork, and leadership in sports activities? Are adolescents from poorer economic conditions hindered in their sports socialization ability development due to resource limitations? How can effective sports intervention strategies be designed for adolescents from different economic backgrounds to ensure their fair participation in sports activities? How should these strategies adapt to economic constraints and achieve effectiveness in practice? Through specific sports intervention measures, how can the comprehensive development of economically disadvantaged adolescents be promoted, especially in enhancing their social skills, teamwork abilities, and self-confidence? The ultimate purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of economic disparities on adolescent sports socialization in Zhaoqing City, propose effective intervention strategies to help adolescents from different economic backgrounds gain more development opportunities in sports activities, and promote their comprehensive development.

3.2 Initiation and Government Promotion of Zhaoqing Adolescent Sports Socialization Research Under Economic Disparities

At the initial stage of research, the Zhaoqing municipal government and local education departments highly valued the research topic of adolescent sports socialization and economic disparities. The establishment of this topic originated from national policy orientations regarding adolescent health and comprehensive development, such as requirements in the *National Fitness Plan and Implementation Measures for National Physical Exercise Standards*, emphasizing the promotion of adolescent physical development and social skills cultivation through sports. However, with the emergence of urban-rural economic gaps in Zhaoqing, the government recognized the unequal opportunities in sports participation among adolescents, particularly children from economically disadvantaged families facing numerous limitations in terms of sports facilities, guidance, and time.

Based on this, the Zhaoqing municipal government and education departments quickly mobilized a series of relevant research institutions and schools to participate in the topic research, actively promoting its implementation. During the mobilization process, the Zhaoqing Education Bureau clearly stated that it would use sports as an important platform for adolescent development, encouraging schools and communities to create more sports participation opportunities for adolescents from different economic backgrounds. The education department also invited local universities, sports research institutions, community sports organizations, and other forces to collaborate, forming a cross-disciplinary, cross-departmental research team to ensure comprehensive research from multiple angles including sociology, education, and sports science.

Zhaoqing's schools and related institutions were encouraged to actively participate, with particular focus on sports facilities and resource investment issues in economically disadvantaged areas. The education department provided financial and policy support for this topic, ensuring the research team could obtain sufficient data and field resources. During this process, the municipal government also mobilized various forces through organizing symposiums and seminars to unify research directions and objectives, ensuring the smooth initiation of research work.

3.3 Research Survey and Theoretical Foundation of Adolescent Sports Socialization Under Economic Disparities

To ensure the scientific nature and operability of the research, the research team built a solid theoretical foundation based on sociology, sports science, and other related theories. This section mainly includes: Sports socialization theory from sociology provided the core framework for this research. Sports socialization refers to how adolescents learn to interact with others, develop social skills, and gain collective honor through participation in sports activities. Sports is considered an important pathway for cultivating individual socialization abilities, especially during adolescence. This theoretical framework helps researchers understand how economic background influences adolescent socialization development through its impact on sports participation. Related theories from sports science further



support the importance of sports activities for adolescents' physical and social development. The research team relied on theories of physical development, adolescent psychological development from sports science to explore differences in the impact of economic background on sports participation intensity and quality. Sports science theories also helped researchers distinguish differences in adolescent performance in sports activities under different economic conditions, such as motor skills, participation frequency, and team cooperation awareness.

Based on establishing the theoretical framework, the research team conducted an extensive review of existing literature. First, researchers reviewed studies on the impact of economic disparities on adolescent sports participation, which mainly focused on large cities or international contexts, revealing that families with better economic conditions can provide their children with more sports participation opportunities, including better venues and facilities, professional coaching guidance, and more spare time, while families with low economic backgrounds often face limitations due to economic pressure, lacking these conditions. To address the gaps in existing research, the research team decided to conduct field research in different economic regions of Zhaoqing, focusing on comparing samples between economically developed urban areas and economically disadvantaged rural areas. The research was primarily conducted through questionnaire surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, collecting data on variables such as adolescents' sports participation frequency, time allocation, participation types, socialization performance (such as teamwork, leadership), and family economic background and resource support.

4. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND PRACTICE OF ADOLESCENT SPORTS SOCIALIZATION UNDER ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN ZHAOQING

4.1 Multi-level Mobilization and Multi-party Cooperation

In designing intervention strategies, the Zhaoqing municipal government, education departments, and research team adopted a "layer-by-layer mobilization, broad participation" approach to ensure research and intervention strategies could comprehensively cover adolescent groups from different economic conditions. First, the research team established close cooperation with various levels of schools and communities in Zhaoqing, mobilizing these institutions to participate in research and intervention activities. Through symposiums with school principals, physical education teachers, and community sports leaders, the team conveyed the core objective of this research, namely promoting adolescents' comprehensive development through sports socialization, and emphasized eliminating participation inequalities caused by economic background differences.

During the mobilization process, the research team conducted focused communication with economically disadvantaged families. Through cooperation with community leaders and school homeroom teachers, they promoted the benefits of sports socialization to these families and raised participation awareness among parents and students through various channels (such as parent meetings, community lectures, sports activity days). The team specifically designed promotional materials introducing the positive impact of sports on adolescent socialization, encouraging parents to support their children's participation.

Meanwhile, the team discovered obvious differences in sports facilities and resource distribution across different regions of Zhaoqing. For example, urban schools and communities often possess more complete sports venues, facilities, and professional sports guidance, while adolescents in rural and economically backward areas lack these resources. Therefore, mobilization work was not limited to policy-level promotion but also compensated for this gap through actual mobilization at school and community levels. The research team called on the Zhaoqing municipal government and education departments to prioritize resource allocation to underdeveloped areas, providing sports facilities and activity support for these regions first to ensure all adolescents could participate equally in sports activities.

Government and school cooperation was crucial for creating a good intervention atmosphere. The Zhaoqing Education Bureau designated some key schools as pilots to conduct diverse sports activities, experimenting with how to achieve effective sports socialization under different economic backgrounds. Meanwhile, the Municipal Sports Bureau provided sports equipment through funding allocation, improving sports venue conditions in rural schools. In urban areas, the research team cooperated with local sports associations and clubs to provide professional sports training resources, enabling adolescents from high economic backgrounds to get more training opportunities and strengthen their sports socialization through events and competitions.



4.2 Intervention Measures for Different Economic Backgrounds

Based on the economic disparities among Zhaoqing's adolescent groups, the research team designed two different intervention strategies targeting adolescents from high and low economic backgrounds, ensuring fairness and effectiveness in the sports socialization process.

4.2.1 Intervention Strategies for High Economic Background Adolescents

Adolescents from high economic backgrounds often have more opportunities to access professional sports training and facilities. Therefore, the research team's intervention measures focused on providing more personalized, professional sports training opportunities, helping these adolescents further enhance their sports skills and gain deeper socialization experiences through sports. Specific measures included: (1) Cooperating with local sports clubs and school sports specialty classes to provide high-level sports training programs for adolescents from high economic backgrounds. (2) Creating more social interaction and team cooperation opportunities through organizing intramural and extramural sports competitions and leagues. (3) Specifically cultivating adolescent leadership abilities through designing programs such as sports summer camps and training camps.

4.2.2 Intervention Strategies for Low Economic Background Adolescents

Adolescents from low economic backgrounds often lack sports participation opportunities due to resource limitations. Therefore, the research team's intervention focus was on providing economical or free sports activities to ensure these adolescents could participate fairly and gain positive socialization influences through sports activities. Specific measures included: (1) The research team cooperated with schools and community sports centers in Zhaoqing to provide free sports courses for adolescents from low economic background families. These courses included basic sports skills and team cooperation training, ensuring these adolescents could participate in sports activities despite limited economic conditions. (2) To compensate for uneven resource distribution, the research team implemented a "Sports Resource Sharing Plan" in rural areas of Zhaoqing. Through cooperation with schools and communities in urban areas, they donated sports equipment to rural and low-income communities and organized joint sports activities for urban and rural adolescents, allowing adolescents from low economic backgrounds to enjoy the same resources as urban children. (3) To increase adolescent sports participation, the research team regularly organized "Sports Activity Days" in various communities. These activities provided adolescents from low economic backgrounds with opportunities to participate in sports activities freely without resource limitations.

4.3 Implementation Effects and Feedback Mechanism

Through these stratified intervention measures, the research team could effectively narrow the gap in sports participation and socialization processes among adolescents from different economic backgrounds in Zhaoqing. To ensure the effectiveness of intervention strategies, the team also designed a continuous feedback mechanism, collecting opinions from adolescents and parents through regular questionnaire surveys and interviews, and adjusting strategies in a timely manner.

The team also established monitoring points in different schools and communities to track the impact of sports participation on adolescents and feed results back to relevant departments, helping them further optimize sports facility investment and activity organization methods. In the sports socialization intervention strategies implemented in Zhaoqing, the research team designed personalized intervention plans for adolescents from different economic backgrounds through layer-by-layer mobilization and resource integration. Adolescents from high economic backgrounds received more professional training opportunities, enhancing their leadership and social abilities; adolescents from low economic backgrounds gained equal opportunities to participate in sports socialization through free sports courses and community activities, thus promoting their comprehensive development. Through research on adolescents from different economic backgrounds in Zhaoqing, the research team collected a large amount of first-hand data about sports participation, analysis showing significant differences in adolescent sports participation under the influence of economic background.

High Economic Background Adolescents: Sports participation frequency was high, usually participating in professional sports training or club activities 2-3 times per week. These adolescents had better venue conditions, equipment support, and parents who placed more emphasis on sports education and were willing to pay for sports training. They participated in high-intensity, professional programs such as swimming, tennis, and basketball, which not only helped adolescents improve physical fitness but also strengthened their leadership and team cooperation



abilities in sports. In the socialization process, adolescents from high economic backgrounds demonstrated strong social abilities, communication skills, and team collaboration capabilities, benefiting from their long-term participation in high-quality sports activities and more opportunities to take leadership roles in competitions and team activities.

Low Economic Background Adolescents: Sports participation frequency was lower, mainly concentrated in school physical education classes or occasional community activities, with a high proportion participating in sports activities once per week. These adolescents faced venue and resource shortages, with limited community and school sports facilities, and they participated mainly in activities requiring minimal equipment such as football and badminton. Despite lower participation frequency, their participation sense notably improved through free or low-cost sports intervention activities in communities and schools. These activities not only helped them experience the joy of sports but also promoted the development of their social skills.

After implementing intervention strategies targeting adolescents from different economic backgrounds, the research team tracked changes in sports participation and socialization effects among adolescents. Results showed that intervention strategies achieved significant effects in narrowing sports participation gaps caused by economic background. Through strengthening community activities and school physical education courses, sports participation sense among low economic background adolescents significantly improved. Under the support of community "Sports Activity Days" and free courses, these adolescents not only had more opportunities to participate in sports but also developed positive exercise habits.

With the implementation of intervention strategies, adolescents' social abilities and team cooperation awareness also improved. Community activities provided platforms for interacting with others and establishing social connections, making these adolescents more willing to participate in team activities, gradually enhancing their self-confidence and communication abilities. Particularly in team cooperation projects, low economic background adolescents transformed from passive participation to active cooperation, showing notable progress. The intervention measures helped them overcome limitations brought by resource deficiency, completing tasks through cooperation with other peers. Building on participation in professional sports training, high economic background adolescents further consolidated their sports skills and social abilities. The sports competitions and leadership training programs in intervention strategies helped them enhance their role awareness in teams and provided opportunities to take on more leadership responsibilities. Although they originally showed stronger performance in sports socialization, the intervention measures provided them with more opportunities to demonstrate and enhance their social skills and leadership abilities in more complex team environments.

This study not only revealed the impact of different economic backgrounds on adolescent sports socialization in Zhaoqing but also narrowed unfairness brought by economic disparities through practical intervention measures. Research results have been widely applied in local school and community sports activities, providing new ideas and practical pathways for sports education in Zhaoqing. Through cooperation and resource integration, adolescents in Zhaoqing, regardless of their economic background, gained more sports participation opportunities, further promoting their socialization development.

5. CONCLUSION

Through in-depth analysis of sports socialization phenomena among adolescents from different economic backgrounds in Zhaoqing, this study revealed the profound impact of economic disparities on sports participation and socialization processes. The research found that adolescents from high economic backgrounds typically receive more resources and support, enhancing their socialization abilities through participation in professional sports activities; while adolescents from low economic backgrounds often face insufficient participation opportunities and slow socialization progress due to resource scarcity. This phenomenon not only affects adolescents' physical development but also constrains their social ability cultivation.

Through intervention strategies designed and implemented in this study, such as sports facility sharing, community activity days, and free training, sports participation levels and socialization abilities of adolescents from low economic backgrounds have improved. However, these achievements still require long-term maintenance and continuous improvement. To further narrow the impact of economic disparities, continued cooperation among government,



schools, communities, and enterprises is crucial. The limitation of this study lies in its regional nature, being confined to Zhaoqing City. Future research could expand the scope to analyze the impact of economic disparities on adolescent sports socialization in other regions, especially in areas with greater urban-rural disparities.

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