

A Behavioral Study of Chinese Youth Participation in Basketball Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior

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Abstract: The study seeks to examine the role of media attention in individuals' intention to perform basketball sports and further investigate its' underlying psychological mechanism among youth participants. An online survey was administered in China by recruiting 413 youth participants. The results demonstrated that traditional media attention and social media attention were positively associated with attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, injunctive norms, and descriptive norms. Next, attitude, subjective norms, and descriptive norms positively affect individuals' behavioral intention to perform basketball sports. Building on the theory of planned behavior, our research examines the role of the media as a precursor to attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, with an in-depth examination of how normative pressures shape individuals' intentions to act. It also examines the practical implications.

1. Introduction

In the realm of global sports, basketball has emerged as a cultural phenomenon, captivating audiences, and participants worldwide [1]. This trend is particularly evident in China, where basketball has transcended mere popularity to become a significant cultural force among the youth [2]. In professional sports, the Chinese men's basketball team has achieved remarkable results, notably qualifying for the top eight in major tournaments such as the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, 2004 Athens Olympics, and 2008 Beijing Olympics [3]. Similarly, the Chinese women's basketball team has secured notable accomplishments, including a silver medal at the 2022 FIBA Basketball World Cup. Additionally, several renowned retired Chinese athletes, such as Wang Zhizhi, Yao Ming, and Sun Yue, have significantly contributed to the development of Chinese basketball and play pivotal roles in promoting its growth.

Such developments have not only influenced Chinese youths' attitudes towards basketball but have also changed the subjective norms surrounding sports participation in the country. The media plays an important role in promoting the progress of basketball [4]. Television, in particular, has significantly promoted basketball in China [5]. Since 1986, CCTV, the largest TV network in China, has been broadcasting NBA games live. Consequently, the NBA has become one of the most-watched sports events in China [6]. Furthermore, the internet and social media have played a critical role in the growth of basketball. Online communities, such as Hupu, have become premier platforms for Chinese basketball fans [7]. In the context of integrating sports and education, the behavior of Chinese college students participating in sports has increasingly

attracted scholarly attention [8-9]. Many scholars have studied Chinese professional basketball. However, there is still a gap in research on Chinese campus basketball, especially when compared to American campus basketball. This prompted my research. I hope this essay will be beneficial to the development of Chinese campus basketball.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Youth physical exercise

College sports in China have always been an area of significant public concern [9]. Especially following the COVID-19 outbreak in China, college students exhibited substantial anxiety symptoms, and their physical exercise behavior was closely associated with negative emotions [10]. Additionally, some scholars have investigated the relationship between body mass index (BMI) and physical fitness index (PFI) in Chinese college students [11]. Moreover, the continuous decline in the physical fitness of college students has also been a hotly debated issue in China. Compared to those students who engage in regular physical activity, the risk of obesity in college students who lack exercise was found to be 1.25 times higher. Similarly, the likelihood of failing the grip strength test and the standing long jump was also greater. Therefore, some scholars recommend that college students should partake in regular exercise to improve their physical fitness [12]. My study focuses on exploring and concluding the motivations and behaviors of Chinese college students in basketball, as well as the influence of media on the extent and manner of their active participation in the sport.

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2.2. Media impact on young people

The significant influence of media on the development of young people is not an isolated phenomenon [13]. Scholars from various research fields have studied how young people utilize media for learning, recreation, and communication, aiming to demonstrate its impact on the behaviors of adolescents [14-18]. Among these studies, a particular interest lies in the intersection of media and sports. For instance, Gill Lines focuses on young people's interpretations of sports and media as competing leisure activities and lifestyle choices, as well as the ways they perceive that viewing sports provides them with new motivations and opportunities for physical activity [19]. Additionally, Galen Clavio and Walsh explore why college sports enthusiasts use sports social media platforms. In addition, media can indirectly influence people's intentions to behave in a certain way through several psychological mechanisms, an effect explained by the theory of planned behavior and various normative forces such as prohibitory and descriptive norms. [14]. Therefore, the current study seeks to explore the role of media in influencing individuals' psychological states and, consequently, their intention to play basketball.

2.3. Theory of planned behavior

In addition, a person's attitudes reflect their thoughts and beliefs and are linked to behavioral expectations. Subjective norms are linked to whether an individual is supported or opposed by his or her social circle, including family and friends, which deeply influences his or her behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's self-assessed ability to perform a particular behavior. The theory of planned behavior suggests that an individual is more likely to form a stable intention to engage in an activity when he or she finds it enjoyable and useful, receives support and positive reinforcement from his or her social group, and believes in his or her ability to complete the activity successfully. This intention, in turn, leads to the actual performance of the behavior. Based on the above-mentioned considerations, I advance the following hypotheses:

H1: Traditional media attention is positively associated with (a) attitudes, (b) subjective norms, (c) perceived behavioral control, (d) descriptive norms, and (e)injunctive norms.

H2: Social media attention is positively associated with (a) attitudes, (b) subjective norms, (c) perceived behavioral control, (d) descriptive norms, and (e)injunctive norms.

H3: (a) Attitudes, (b) subjective norms, (c) perceived behavioral control, (d) descriptive norms, and (e)injunctive norms are positively associated with intention to perform basketball sports.

3. Method

3.1.Data

A survey was administered in China using the Sojump platform, one of the most professional online survey platforms in China [20]. A total of 413 respondents participated in our study. Before they participate in our study, they should indicate their agreement to participate in our study. Of the respondents, 54.2% (n =224) were female and their ages ranged from 18 to 25 (M =21.13; SD =2.35)

3.2.Measures

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological framework widely used to predict and understand human actions in different contexts. Originally proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985, TPB evolved from the Theory of Reasoned Action, to which the component of perceived behavioral control was added. [21]. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), individuals' behavioral intentions are the most direct indicator of their actual behavior. These intentions consist of three main influences: the individual's attitude towards the behavior, the subjective norm surrounding the behavior, and the individual's perceived ability to perform the behavior. [22].

3.2.1 Traditional Media Attention

Traditional media attention was measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using three items from Ho (2012). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements about their attention to traditional media about to what extent they follow the following traditional media channels for basketball-related information. A higher score indicates a higher traditional media attention (M =4.42, SD =1.48, Cronbach's α = 0.86).

3.2.2 Social Media Attention

Social media attention was measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using three items from Ho (2012). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements about their attention to social media about to what extent they follow the following social media outlets related to basketball. A higher score indicates a higher social media attention (M =4.45, SD =1.49, Cronbach's α = 0.85).

3.2.3 Attitude

The attitude was measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using four dimensions adopted from Heriman and Walrave (2012). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on the following statements about their attention to attitude about basketball as a sport that deserves to be played. A higher score indicates a higher attitude (M =4.46, SD =1.38,

Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$).

3.2.4 Subjective Norms

Subjective norms were measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using six items from Ajzen (1988). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceive that their significant others expect them to perform basketball sports. An example item includes "My parents expect me to perform basketball sports." A higher score indicates a higher subjective norm (M = 4.38, SD = 1.51, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$).

3.2.5 Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control was measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using three items from Zhao et al (2016). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on the following statements about their attention to attitude about the extent to which they perceive that they can perform basketball sports. A higher score indicates a higher perceived behavioral control (M = 4.46, SD = 1.44, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$).

3.2.6 Descriptive Norms

Descriptive norms were measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using six items from Ajzen and Fishbein (2005). Respondents were asked to indicate whether their significant others performed basketball sports. A higher score indicates a higher descriptive norm (M = 4.45, SD = 1.47, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$).

3.2.7 Injunctive Norms

Injunctive norms were measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using six items from Ajzen and Fishbein (2005). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceive that their significant others agree to perform basketball sports. A higher score indicates a higher injunctive norm (M = 4.52, SD = 1.49, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$).

3.2.8 Intention to Perform Basketball Sports

Intention was measured by a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) using five items from Lim (2017). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on the following statements about their attention to intention about I'll stick to basketball in the future. A higher score indicates a higher intention (M = 4.48, SD = 1.38, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$).

3.2.9 Control Variable

Age, gender, and education serve as the control variables in the data analysis.

4. Results

To address the hypotheses, we conducted a Process Macro of Model 6 (Hayes, 2013, 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped CIs based on 5,000 resamples). Traditional media served as the independent variable, while social media attention, gender, age, and education were covariates. Attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, descriptive norms, and injunctive norms served as mediators, to perform basketball sports as the outcome.

Traditional media attention was positively associated with attitude (B = .27, SE = .04, $p < .001$), subjective norms (B = .23, SE = .05, $p < .001$), perceived behavior control (B = .15, SE = .05, $p < .01$), descriptive norms (B = .20, SE = .05, $p < .001$), and injunctive norms (B = .18, SE = .05, $p < .001$), which were consistent with H1.

Social media attention was positively associated with attitude (B = .36, SE = .04, $p < .001$), subjective norms (B = .21, SE = .05, $p < .001$), perceived behavior control (B = .09, SE = .05, $p = .0893$), descriptive norms (B = .17, SE = .05, $p < .001$), and injunctive norms (B = .17, SE = .05, $p < .001$), which were consistent with H2.

Attention (B = .12, SE = .05, $p < .05$), subjective norms (B = .14, SE = .04, $p < .01$), and descriptive norms (B = .11, SE = .05, $p < .05$) were positively associated to perform basketball sport, which was consistent with H3a, H3b, and H3d. However, perceived behavior control (B = .08, SE = .05, $p = .09$), and injunctive norms (B = .07, SE = .05, $p = .11$) were not significantly associated with performing basketball sports, which was not consistent with H3c and H3e.

5. Discussion

Our current study examined the influence of traditional media attention and social media attention on attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, injunctive norms, and descriptive norms, and their consequent effects on individuals' intentions to engage in basketball sports. We found that both traditional media attention and social media attention positively predicted attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, injunctive norms, and descriptive norms. Furthermore, attitudes, subjective norms, and descriptive norms were found to positively affect individuals' intentions to engage in basketball sports.

As expected, interest in traditional and social media was found to positively affect attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, prohibitory norms, and descriptive norms. Several key factors explain how attention to traditional media affects attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, prohibitory norms, and descriptive norms. Traditional media's broad audience and established trustworthiness contribute significantly to shaping attitudes toward basketball. Subjective norms relate to an individual's perception of social expectations about whether to engage in a particular activity. Thus, the way basketball is reported in the media can shape perceptions of what is considered socially appropriate, influencing the decision to engage in the sport. Perceived behavioral control is how a person perceives their ability

to perform a certain action; increasing the amount of information about basketball in the media can increase a person's confidence in their ability to play the sport. Public images of basketball contribute to both the perceived social approval of the sport (injunctive norms) and the perception that participating in basketball is common (descriptive norms).

In the same vein, we found consistent results showing that attitudes, subjective norms, and descriptive norms positively affect individuals' intentions to engage in basketball sports. These findings can be explained through a multifaceted examination of psychological, social, and environmental factors. In the context of basketball, a positive attitude may be fostered by various elements, such as enjoyment of the sport, perceived health benefits, and the social recognition one receives from participating.

Media representations that highlight the excitement, community, and health benefits associated with basketball can significantly enhance positive attitudes toward the sport. When friends, family, and influential community members value and participate in basketball, individuals are more likely to feel socially compelled to join in. This effect is amplified by media depictions of basketball as a widely accepted and supported activity. Moreover, when individuals perceive that many others are playing basketball, they are more inclined to view it as a standard or typical activity—a perception often reinforced by media portrayals of basketball as a popular and widely practiced sport. These factors interact in a dynamic socio-cognitive process, where media influence, social interactions, and personal beliefs converge to shape an individual's intention to engage in basketball sports.

However, we encountered unexpected results where perceived behavioral control and injunctive norms did not significantly influence individuals' intentions to participate in basketball sports. This is not surprising since playing basketball relies not only on internal factors such as individuals' skills and social agreements but also hinges on external factors, such as the availability of facilities and public spaces. Thus, even if individuals have a higher level of perceived behavioral control and conform to injunctive norms, it may not directly influence their intention to participate in basketball sports.

6. Contributions and Limitations

Our study extended the theory of planned behavior by examining the antecedents of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Specifically, the study investigated how traditional media attention and social media attention influenced attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. More importantly, our study investigated other normative influences (i.e., injunctive norms and descriptive norms) in the TPB and examined how injunctive norms and descriptive norms influenced individuals' behavioral intentions. All of which have made theoretical contributions to the theory of planned behavior.

Practically speaking, our study offered practical suggestions for professionals to design health campaigns by arousing more youth participants to perform basketball sports. Specifically, professionals should make use of

traditional media and social media and encourage youth participants to be exposed to more content about basketball on different traditional media and social media platforms. After exposure to traditional media and social media, individuals will activate their positive attitude, enhance their subjective norms and descriptive norms, and consequently increase their intention to perform basketball sports.

However, our study has limitations as well. Specifically, our study performed cross-sectional data instead of longitudinal data, which fails to draw a causal relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Future studies should examine this model using longitudinal data. Second, our study only tested the proposed extended theory of planned behavior in the context of basketball sport, however, it should be cautioned when using this model in a wider context. Future studies should examine the proposed extended theory of planned behavior in other contexts.

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