

ASCRPTION RELATIONSHIPS IN STUDENT SPORT CLUBS AT JAPANESE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

In Japan many students traditionally join various sport clubs at university. It is pointed out that vertical relationships predominate in club structures especially, according to year seniority. Why do juniors accept the authority and the direction of seniors?

In this paper, with two kind of materials the following three points are discussed:

- (1) To what extent did members allocate their resources to club activities?
- (2) How did the year as ascription function in the clubs?
- (3) What reasons did junior members give for obeying seniors' directions?

1. Statement of Problem

Sport-clubs (*Undo-Bu*¹⁾ at Japanese universities have played a significant role in both the advancement and the popularization of sport. It seems that the club activities have a huge significance for students. Many freshmen consider which club to join immediately after gaining entrance to university. By doing club activities at university they might recover youthful activities sacrificed by hard learning for the entrance examination. On the other hand, it is criticized that students develop bad study habits, and that it is too easy to graduate from universities in Japan. In modern societies it is held that the achievement principle is dominant, yet in Japan group structure on the basis of ascription is still highly important. Concerning club structure it is often pointed out that it is still under the influence of Japan's feudalistic legacy. Accidents leading to death sometimes, like hard training as a punishment, are reported in the media from time to time. Generally speaking, ascription, that is year at university which substantially determines position in the club, seems predominant.

In this paper, the following three points are discussed:

- (1) To what extent did members allocate their resources to club activities?

(2) How did the year as ascription function in the clubs?

(3) What reasons did junior members give for obeying seniors' directions?

2. Research Methods

In this research two materials were used. One is the information which was surveyed in 1993 by one of two university agents researched ("Survey of Students' Actual State" by K. University). This survey is conducted yearly. The other is the result of the questionnaire by the author. It asked for demographic information, opinions on club activities and reasons for obeying seniors' directions ("Research on Social Relationships in Clubs"). The 63 reasons for obeying were selected through item analysis.

These items were composed mainly on the basis of French & Raven's social power theory. Their theory says that the social power resources of the influential agent are estimated on the basis of the perception of the influenced recipient toward the influential (French & Raven 1959). From point of view of what determines the reactions of the recipient, they listed reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert as the basis of power.

To the 63 items, responses were measured by a 5 point Likert scale, with a high score indicating most agreement.

The questionnaires were answered by the members belonging to clubs as *Bu* at two universities located in Kagoshima-city, Japan. The questionnaires were handed directly to the members and gathered by the researcher in the spring of 1993.

The final number of valid replies was 385. The breakdown was follows; by sex, 79.5% male, 20.5% female; by year, 1st years student 35.6%, 2nd years 29.4%, 3rd years 27.8%, and 4th years 7.3%.

3. Results

3.1. The Meaning of Clubs for Students

It is said that to enter is hard, but to graduate from is very easy at Japanese universities in contrast with foreign country universities. How hard did students study usually?

Table 1. How hard do you study usually?

very hard	hard	normally	don't very hard	don't at all	N.A.
3.1%	3.2%	41.4%	39.6%	12.6%	3.0%

Note: "Survey on Real State of Students' Lives" Student Office of K. University 1993 n=1,020

As shown in Table 1, 52.2% of them did not study very hard or at all. 6.3% studied very hard or hard. There were few students who studied hard at university (see Table 1).

What did students spend their energy on? Besides clubs as *Bu* there are clubs as *Dokokai*.²⁾ Many students belonged to either *Bu*-clubs (9.82%, 17.92%) or *Dokokai*-clubs (7.19%, 3.70%) at two universities in 1993. The kind of clubs varied over various types of sports.

Table 2. shows the member's motive for club participation. The strongest motive was the attraction of activity contents (44.9%) and the second was to make friends (24.6%). Yamamoto (1990) abstracted seven factors as motives for participation in clubs through factor analysis with 251 members. They were "avoidance," "achievement," "health and physical fitness," "affiliation," "free and equality," "adherence," and "social usefulness." Although there is a little difference from this survey in that Yamamoto included the meaning of succession motive in the term participation, these results are interesting as comparative findings.

It seems that club activity contents are more attractive than the study for students.

Table 2. What is your motive for participating in clubs? (*Dokokai* included)

group life	activity	future career	making friends	training body	enjoying university life	could not refuse senior/friend's invitation	other	N.A.
6.8%	44.9%	2.4%	24.6%	9.5%	6.3%	2.7%	2.2%	0.5%

Note: "Survey on Real State of Students' Lives" Student Office of K.University 1993 n=1,024

By the way, many students who belonged to clubs allocated much resources (for example, time, money, and energy) to club activities. The number of members who allocated over 50% of their resources to club activities was 69.0% (see Table 3).

Table 3. How much of your resources do you allocate to club activity?

10%~	20%~	30%~	40%~	50%~	60%~	70%~	80%~	90%~	~100%
3.2%	7.2%	7.4%	13.3%	25.2%	12.5%	15.9%	10.3%	4.8%	0.3%

Note: Research on Social Relationships in Clubs T. Okada 1993 n=385

At Japanese universities, clubs have hardly been commercialized and professionalized. Nevertheless, club members trained from 5:00 p.m. after their last class to sunset

every day except Sunday. Club activities could only be maintained at the cost of other student activities, such as studying.

This allocation of resources varied little by sex, year or club at university.

As shown in Table 4, 22.4% of members recognized that their studies were sacrificed or sacrificed a little by club activities. It might not seem that club activities obstructed members from studying despite their very intense commitment to club activities.

Table 4. Was your study sacrificed by club activities (*Dokokai* included)

sacrificed	sacrificed a little	neutral	not sacrificed	N.A.
4.8%	17.6%	23.2%	53.9%	0.5%

Note: "Survey on Real State of Students' Lives" Student Office of K. University 1993 n=397

As well known, the study of athletic participation and academic achievement has been one of the research traditions in sociology of sport in the United States. Although Japanese club members were highly committed to the athletic role, it did not seem that they perceived themselves detracting from their academic role. Snyder (1985) referred to social support, intrinsic and extrinsic gratification, as factors that might contribute to the commitment of the academic or athletic role. In Japan these three factors, I think, might not contribute to the commitment of the academic role.

Consequently, the student-athlete role conflict has not appeared as a serious problem in Japan.

Nixon (1984) pointed out that when student-athlete was also a serious student his/her athletic participation contributed to his/her occupational success after college. In Japan it has been said that the career as a club member is evaluated during recruitment by enterprise.

3.2. Vertical Relationships between Senior University Students and Junior University Students

Table 5. Juniors must obey senior's unreasonable directions

agree strongly	agree	neutral	do not agree very much	do not agree at all
10.9%	45.1%	27.5%	13.2%	3.4%

Note: Research on Social Relationships in Clubs T. Okada 1993 n=385

Table 5. shows the distribution of respondents to the opinion, juniors must obey seniors' unreasonable directions (see Table 5). 16.6% of respondents did not agree very much or at all to the opinion, but 56.0% of respondents agreed strongly or agreed.

Over 50% of respondents obeyed senior student's directions even if they included unreasonable elements. This showed how strong the seniors' influence was.

For a long time, vertical relationships in university clubs were emphasized as follows: the 4th year is God, the 3rd Emperor, the 2nd commoner and the 1st slave. It seems that vertical relationships have survived in university clubs although the intensity might be less.

It is said that Japanese society has been composed with familistic principle even after war. Under the influence of such social composition, the seniority ranking has characterized Japanese company alongside the permanent employment and the enterprise union. Seniority ranking is the customary practice of having salary and status rise in accordance with the length of service.

Nakane (1967) concluded that "social structure" of Japan is characterized by not the horizontal relationship but the vertical relationship from point of view of social anthropology and stated:

It is observed that the ranking-consciousness such as 1st years, 2nd years and 3rd years is emphasized more strongly than achievement or ability among students. It is really a good illustration of the strong ranking-consciousness in Japanese society (p. 90).

It is thought that the intense vertical relationships at university clubs reflected and were supported by the seniority ranking in outside-society, in addition to the tradition within the clubs themselves.

Thus, the senior or junior position at universities exerted an enormous influence over the social relationships at the clubs of universities.

3.3. What Reasons did Junior Members give for obeying Seniors' Directions?

The varimax factor loadings are displayed in Table 6.

The items on which Factor 1 loaded heavily are seemingly divided into three sub categories; one consisted of the items, such as "convincing" "seniors knew what they

Table 6. Factor Analysis (Varimax Rotation) of Junior's Obedience to Senior (factor loadings over.30 included)

statements	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	ECE*
order was convincing	.70							.44
advancement of my skill	.66							.40
my seniors knew what they do	.65							.59
respect my seniors	.64							.50
it would do me good	.62							.63
for being my mistakes	.60							.52
to get my senior's skill	.59					.31		.38
my senior was experienced	.59							.47
method of instruction is good	.56							.51
for being my faults	.55							.45
increasing of my knowledge	.55							.67
listening to others is good	.51							.56
my senior was senior in life	.49				.32			.46
my senior was fair to every one	.47							.49
my senior was serious	.46		.41					.56
did not how to do	.43						-.31	.44
I was afraid of my senior		.73						.52
others were on my senior's side		.72						.63
might be disliked		.68						.62
to continue to be member become hard		.68		.34		-.30		.57
wanted to give a good impression		.59						.50
following the example of other team mates		.59						.46
senior might get angry		.58						.42
might be punished		.55						.30
had to save my senior's face		.53			.42			.47
senior was stern		.51			.39			.40
disciplined "unconditional obedience"		.51			.49			.57
my senior was like God to me		.50					.35	.36
I thought of my senior as "absolute"		.46			.37		.36	.44
my senior was handsome/beautiful		.42	.38					.56
obeying is part of Japanese culture		.42			.40			.43
happy just to be with my seniors			.72					.42
felt close to my senior			.72					.55
liked my senior as a human being			.71					.53
gentle			.70					.56
talked to me			.67					.59
funny			.63					.49
often consulted me	.34		.59					.61
my senior was like my ideal person			.55				.33	.57
praised me			.55					.59
encouraged me	.33		.43					.54
might disturb team work				.74				.41
might destroy the feeling of team togetherness				.74				.48
becoming an obstacle for membership		.35		.67				.40
team harmony				.60				.60
order of group				.59				.58
team atmosphere		.42		.55				.49
afraid of destroying out relationships		.35		.55				.59
valuing senior-junior relationship				.52				.50
advancement of team performance				.32				.58
it was a matter of course on our team				.31	.71			.53
it was the custom of our team					.63			.50
senior's power		.46			.60			.33
senior-junior relationship anywhere					.60			.46
could not ignore my seniors					.39			.42
obeying one's elders is naturai		.35		.31	.38		.36	.53
not to be inferior to senior						.64		.67
wanted to be regular player						.56		.48
to be superior to others	.46					.52		.43
improvement of mental discipline	.32					.49		.51
to be superior to my seniors	.39					.45		.58
to get rid of my bad habits						.44		.45
obeying one's senior is natural					.32		.52	.48
Eigenvalues	7.04	6.52	5.51	4.33	3.79	2.84	1.71	31.75
% of variance accounted for	22.2	20.5	17.3	13.7	12.0	8.9	5.4	
Cumulative % of variance	22.2	42.7	60.0	73.7	85.6	94.6	100.0	

Note: Research on Social Relationships in Clubs T. Okada 1993 n=385 *Final Communalities Estimates

did," which reflected "senior's expertness." The second is of the items, such as "advancement of my skill" "would do me good" which reflected "self advancement." The third is of the items, such as "for being my mistakes" "for being my faults" which reflect "self shortcomings." The third is the counterpart of and the second is the concomitant result of the first, and so this factor is named "expertness" focussing on the first. Factor 1 accounted for 22.2% of the common variance.

The items on which Factor 2 loaded heavily were almost always the ones which suggested junior obeyed senior's direction because the former recognized the force of the latter. The words such as "afraid" "disliked" "angry" "punished" symbolized the underlying construct of this factor. Factor 2 may be named "coerciveness." This factor explained 20.5% of the variance.

Factor 3 accounted for 17.3% of the common variance and contained 12 items that loaded .30 or higher on this factor. The common theme expressed by such items as "happy" "close" "human" "gentle" "talked to" "funny" "consulted" "like my ideal person" "praised" "encouraged" in order of loading heaviness is that of "personality." This means that senior's personality could become the reason why the former obeyed the latter's directions.

Consequently, Factor 3 is named "personality", which is similar to French, J.R.P & Raven, K's "reference."

Twelve items were included in Factor 4, which accounted for 13.7% of the variance. These items were "disturb team work" "destroy the feeling of club togetherness" "obstacle for membership" "club harmony" "order of group" "club atmosphere" "destroying relationship" "valuing senior-junior relationship" in that order. The common theme expressed by these items was "group maintenance" or "group cohesiveness." The junior members obeyed senior members' directions, taking "group maintenance" into consideration. Factor 4 is named "group maintenance."

Factor 5 accounted for 12.0% of the variance and included 13 items. The underlying construct common among the items, such as "a matter of course for our club" "the custom of our club" "seniors' force" "senior-junior relationships everywhere" "couldn't ignore" "obeying one's elder is natural" in order of loading heaviness, is seemingly "legitimate" as in French, J. R. P & Raven. K. The items which were loaded heavily in other factors seemingly reflected the same theme. Here, any other senior's achievements were not needed for junior members to obey seniors' directions. Accordingly Factor 5 is tentatively labeled "legitimate."

The items on which Factor 6 loaded heavily were the ones which contained the words such as "not inferior" "regular" "superior." Factor 6 may be named "rivalry" according to the common theme prominent in those words. This factor accounted for 8.9% of the variance.

Factor 7 accounted for 5.4% of the variance and included six items which were loaded .30 or higher. Judging from these items, Factor 7 was tentatively labeled "absolutely legitimate."

In the above analysis, it becomes clear that on the basis of what recognition junior members obeyed their seniors' directions. These were expertness, coerciveness, personality, group maintenance, legitimate, rivalry and absolutely legitimate in order of accountabilities. In other words seniors who had these latent power resources could exert a vertical influence upon juniors.

4. Concluding Remarks

To what extent did club members allocate their resources to club activities? How did the year as ascription function in the club? What reasons did junior give for obeying their senior's directions? These questions were answered with the analysis of university agent's survey and the 385 replies of club members to the questionnaire.

69.0% of club members allocated over 50% of their resources to club activities. They seemed to center their university life more on club activities than on other university activities.

The relations between senior and junior students were characterized by control-obedience relationships. The seniors seemed to have the power resources to make their juniors obey. In Japan the ascription is still dominant as shown in the seniority ranking such as a salary system at the enterprise level, and such situation might influence senior-junior relationships in the university clubs.

Through factor analysis, the reasons why juniors obeyed seniors' directions were abstracted as factors. These were expertness, coerciveness, personality, group maintenance, legitimate, rivalry, and absolutely legitimate in order of accountabilities.

Notes

1) The "Undo-Bu" is a unique Japanese term which means a kind of sport organization organized as extra-curricular activities in each-level education system and enterprises. Each college or university had about 20 *Undo-Bus*. Although *Undo-Bu* has

not been necessarily a formal educational institution, it seems that it has been authorized as a autonomous organization of students by the agency of the university (Saeki 1990). There were 595 colleges and 534 universities in 1993 in Japan.

2) *Dokokai* is organized at each university and college. It tends to emphasize more the intercourse than the competition. Its structure is not so rigid as *Undo-Bu* on training and management. *Dokokai* has begun to invade the territory of *Undo-Bu* with the change of young consciousness since 1960s.

Appealing to a more loose atmosphere *Undo-Bu* has been obliged to change its original orientation to recover its loss.

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