Korean Sports Violence from a Philosophical Perspective: Exploration and Critique

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Abstract
This study utilizes critical theory to understand the phenomenon of sports violence in South Korea, specifically examining the tragic case of Choi Sook-hyun. The incident is not viewed as an isolated act, but rather a reflection of power dynamics, societal expectations, and cultural norms. The analysis reveals that such violence results from the abuse of power within sports organizations and a cultural environment that places competition and obedience above athletes' well-being. It proposes that interventions should focus on restructuring power relations in sports and driving sociocultural shifts through public education and legislations. This comprehensive approach can aid in the prevention of sports violence and promote a culture of respect and fairness. Further research is suggested to examine sports violence in various social and cultural contexts and to evaluate the effectiveness of different intervention strategies.

Keywords
Sports Violence, South Korea, Cultural Norms, Intervention Strategies, Prevention, Athletes' Rights.

1.Introduction

With the flourishing of social sports in Korea, the phenomenon of sports violence has gradually emerged, posing a serious threat to social harmony and a level playing field. The theme of this dissertation focuses on the philosophical implications of the phenomenon of sports violence in Korea and aims to explore in depth the philosophical concepts behind the phenomenon of sports violence and its manifestation in social phenomena. Most of the violence in Korean sports occurs in the field of competitive sports, including violence between players, violence by spectators against players, and even violence by coaches against athletes. The existence of such phenomena is not only a serious violation of the sportsman's spirit, but also undermines the values of societal fairness and harmony. The importance of this dissertation is that it not only reveals the root causes of the phenomenon of sports violence in Korea, but also provides a new perspective of interpretation. The authors attempt to reflect on the influence of the social environment on sports violence and the flaws in the social, cultural and sports systems through an in-depth analysis of sports violence. Consequently, it will help us understand and respond to this social problem. Through the use of the critical philosophical theory, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ideologies behind the phenomenon of sports violence and how these ideologies are maintained in Korean society. This perspective can also help us construct strategies to prevent and respond to sports violence.

This paper will first introduce the phenomenon and background of sports violence in Korea, then analyze the meaning of sports violence from a philosophical perspective, followed by introducing a critical perspective

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and analyzing specific cases, and finally, it will discuss how to prevent and intervene in the phenomenon of sports violence in Korea. It is hoped that this paper will provide a new path of thought to address the issue of sports violence in Korea and globally.

2.The Phenomenon and Background of Sports Violence in Korea

In Korea, the phenomenon of sports violence is diverse and occurs in a wide range of settings. In professional soccer and baseball games, we often see malicious fouls between players, and even insults and attacks on players and referees by spectators. Worse still, some coaches commit physical and psychological abuse against athletes. These acts of violence not only undermined the fairness and justice of sports events, but also brought serious mental pressure and physical injury to participants and spectators. The manifestation of sports violence in Korea is closely related to its unique socio-cultural background. First, there is a highly competitive pressure in Korean society, and this pressure manifests itself in the field of sports. Secondly, although Korea has achieved numerous accomplishments in terms of sports system and education, its traditional education methods, such as "authoritarianism" and "culture of obedience," have to some extent provided the ground for sports violence. Finally, society's lenient attitude toward violence is also an important cause of the phenomenon of sports violence.

The causes of sports violence in Korea are multifaceted, but can be attributed to three main areas: social factors, cultural factors, and factors within sports organizations. On a societal level, competitive pressures and socially tolerant attitudes toward violence can lead to the phenomenon of sports violence. On a cultural level, factors such as authoritarianism and a culture of obedience may have provided the ground for sports violence. From within sports organizations, inadequate mechanisms for protecting athletes' rights and interests, as well as insufficiently strict penalties for violent behavior, may lead to the occurrence of violence.

3.A Philosophical Perspective on Sports Violence in Korea

From a philosophical point of view, sports violence is not only a matter of individual behavior, but also a reflection of a social phenomenon. However, with this comes a number of systemic issues, including the social clustering that results from group events: clustering is defined as a unified action of group members aiming to improve the standing of the group; The behavior of social clusters is characterized by "the appearance of collective behavior; the goal of the behavior is to promote the interests of the group to which they belong", which is a product of social interaction. It reveals the interweaving of multiple elements of social structure, power relations, and morality and ethics. Group violence in sports can be a kind of "mass indignation" that breaks the boundaries, or it can be a manifestation of a kind of group "wisdom" that is essentially a macro-decision-making behavior brought about by combining countless individual wills. Behind the violence in Korean sports, we can see philosophical issues such as the alienation of the individual, the overemphasis on competition, and the influence of the culture of authoritative power.

In "The Clash of Civilizations and the Reconstruction of World Order", political scientist Samuel P. Huntington proposed the theory of the clash of civilizations, in which he argued that the root cause of the current conflict in international society lies in the fact that all countries in the world have their different civilizations, and studied social conflicts from a cultural perspective. He points out that in today's society relations between the

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cultured nations or collectives are often antagonistic rather than close. He cites a micro-scale example, namely the fault line most evident between Islamic countries and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Africa and western Christian countries. At the macro level, it is the conflict between the West and the non-West and between the Asian Eastern world and the Western world such as Europe and America. All scholarly disciplines are involved in contemporary scholarly research on social conflict. However, these scholars all focus on Western European society with developed capitalism. The reason for the emergence of this lineage of studies on social conflict may be due to the fact that in the current society led by capitalism, the capitalism and numerous incidents of social violence are not unrelated, coupled with the need for civilization, humanism calls for scholars to do so, because once the negativity of life violence is not effectively dissipated, the damage to society is self-evident. This is also one of the starting points of this study.

Philosophical theories provide us with a fresh perspective to help us understand the phenomenon of sports violence in Korea. Although main Marxist scholars, such as Marx and Engels did not conduct targeted empirical studies on social conflicts, their writings contain implicit ideological views on social conflicts, embodied in the Marx/Engels Collected Works. The root causes of social conflicts are, first, the fundamental causes of conflicts. At a later stage, Marx believed that the creation and elimination of alienation were subject to the development of the productive forces and the division of labor caused by them, and that when the productive forces developed to a certain level, they would inevitably lead to contradictions with the relations of production, which would then impede the further development of the productive forces and eventually lead to social revolution. This can help us understand the phenomenon of alienation of athletes in the area of sports, how they lose themselves in a culture of excessive competition and authority. To this end, they clearly state that:

"This contradiction between the productive forces and forms of interaction (...) every time revolution inevitably erupts, and at the same time it takes various incidental forms—expressed as a sum of conflicts, as conflicts between classes, as conflicts of consciousness, ideological struggles, political struggles, etc."

As they say: "According to our view, all historical conflicts are rooted in the contradiction between productive forces and forms of interaction." Secondly, conflict is rooted in society's interests. He believes that people's struggle is motivated by interests, but at the same time, interests are also the root cause of social conflicts, and many conflicts in real society are inextricably linked to interests. Marx points out: "The world is not a world of one type of interest, but a world of a multitude of types of interests". The diversity of interests explains the disparity of interests between people, and the development of this disparity will, to a certain extent, form a conflict of interests, which will subsequently lead to social conflicts. This can help us understand the phenomenon of alienation of athletes in sports, how they lose themselves in a culture of excessive competition and authority.

4.Case analysis

Considered a rising star in Korean triathlon, Choi Sook-hyun was selected to the Korean Triathlon National Team as a high school student in 2015 under the age of 17 and has won a bronze medal in the junior women's division of the Asian Triathlon Cup. At the age of 22, she was found dead in her dormitory, her death has once again exposed the dark side of the Korean sports world. The bullying and suicide of Choi Suk-hyun was

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exposed by the media on June 30, 2020, and then some of the recordings of Choi Suk-hyun being bullied by team doctors and coaches were released. In one of the recordings, as the team doctor Ahn Joo-hyeon slaps Choi Sook-hyun on the face, the coach, Kim Kyu-bong, lets Ahn have a drink as if nothing was wrong. Choi Suk-hyun ended up being slapped more than 20 times just because she ate a peach in the morning without reporting it to coach Kim. Not only that, but the coach and team doctor forced Choi Suk-hyun to eat 200,000 won (about 1,178 yuan) worth of bread on the grounds of weight gain inevitably causing Choi to vomit while eating. In addition to physical injuries, Choi Suk-hyun was also verbally insulted by her teammates, some of whom teased her for looking like a transgender person. In fact, it is not that Choi Suk-hyun did not fight against it. On March 5 this year, Choi Suk-hyun called the police, on March 11 the police started an investigation, on April 8, Choi Suk-hyun complained to the Center for Human Rights in Sports of the Korean Sports Association, which oversees all sports teams in Korea, and on June 25, to the National Human Rights Commission of Korea. However, on June 26, after repeated reports went unanswered, Choi Suk-hyun could not stand the bullying and insults from the coach and others and committed suicide at the age of just 22 years old.

We will analyze this case using critical theory tools. First, we need to reveal the power structures behind this incident, such as the power relations of coaches over players, and how such power relations lead to the occurrence of sports violence. Second, we need to look at the socio-cultural factors behind this incident, such as how the culture of competition and obedience in Korea contributes to the occurrence of sports violence. 10
In this case, the violent behavior of the coach and team doctor towards Choi Sook-hyun reflects their position of power in the sporting environment. Their power enabled them to inflict unreasonable physical punishment and psychological humiliation on Choi Sook-hyun, her being in a vulnerable position where she is powerless to resist. This unequal power relation leads to violence. The Korean culture of competition and obedience is reflected in this case. In a competitive culture, the coach and team doctor may have believed that a harsh training style would give the athlete an advantage in competition and therefore subjected Choi Sook-hyun to excessive physical punishment. In a culture of obedience, Choi may have felt compelled to follow the instructions of the coach and the team doctor and therefore did not manage to resist or seek help in a timely manner in the event of violence.

In the case of Choi Suk-hyun, the behavior of the coach and team doctor demonstrates the power structure in the field of sports. They physically punished and mentally abused Choi Suk-hyun, their power control over the athlete provided the grounds for this kind of behaviour. They use their position and power to train and punish athletes unreasonably, even violating their basic human rights. Therefore, we need to deeply analyze this power relationship and work to adjust and balance this power structure in order to prevent the occurrence of sports violence.

Critical theory provides us with deconstruction and reconstruction methods to help us rethink and understand Korean sports violence. We can use critical theory to deconstruct the phenomenon of sports violence and reveal the power structures and socio-cultural roots behind it. The psychologist Roy F. Baumeister divided violence into five categories based on the quartering approach: Instrumental violence - used for predation, practicality is the principle; Dominant violence - to achieve absolute control over the other; Revenge - to pursue the same way to counterattack to hurt the opponent; Abuse – the process of enjoying inflicting violence to others and even oneself; The last type is, already mentioned, systemic violence, i.e., ideological violence,

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root violence, being also the most serious violence. Certain sports involve a degree of legitimate violence constricted by the rules of the sport - for example boxing, taekwondo, wrestling and other events are characterized by using limbs to hit the opponent's body to win, therefore these disciplines involve a certain degree of danger. This legitimate violence is also defined as constructive sports violence, also known as "symbolic violence":

"it is a specific form of conflict, a ritual war, a safety valve for the social system (...) conducive to the development of society. Constructive sports violence emerged with the emergence of sports and constitutes an attribute inherent within sports."

Therefore, the affirmation of the value function determines the double attribute of sports violence. Man-made sports activities cause the legalized violence to extend deeper and wider. The artificially created sporting activity allows a deeper and broader extension of legal violence, the principle and purpose of these activities are uniformly acts for the benefit of the people, and which have gained value affirmation by the subject (human) and are scientifically recognized.

Through the critical philosophical analysis of the case of Choi Sook-hyun, we can see that sports violence is not only a problem of individual behavior, but also a reflection of power structures and social and cultural problems. In order to prevent and address the problem of sports violence in Korea, we need to restructure the power relations in the sports environment to ensure that athletes' rights are protected. On the other hand, we also need to pay attention to the socio-cultural factors behind sports violence. The culture of competition and obedience in Korea may be an important factor in the occurrence of sports violence. In a competitive culture, coaches and team doctors may overly pursue performance and neglect the physical and mental health of their athletes. In a culture of obedience, athletes may not be able to challenge or resist unreasonable demands from coaches and team doctors, making them easy victims of sports violence. Therefore, we need to criticize this social culture and lead the public to re-examine the value of competition and obedience and build a sports culture that respects athletes.

5.Prevention and Intervention into Sports Violence in Korea

From a philosophical perspective, the key to preventing and intervening in Korean sports violence lies in restructuring power relations and changing a harmful social culture. Firstly, we need to establish a fair and just sports environment to protect the rights of athletes and prevent the abuse of power. For example, we can define the power relationship between coaches and athletes through legislation and set up mechanisms to protect the rights and interests of athletes. Secondly, we need to lead a change in social culture, for example, we can promote a culture of respect and fairness in sports by educating and guiding the public to understand the true meaning of sports.

We need to critically analyze different prevention and intervention strategies to examine their feasibility and effectiveness. For example, for the strategy of power relationship adjustment, we need to examine whether this strategy can really protect the rights and interests of athletes and effectively prevent the abuse of power. For the strategy of sociocultural shift, we need to examine whether this strategy can effectively change the

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lenient social attitude toward sports violence and establish a fair and respectful sports culture. This critical analysis will help us to choose more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

6.Conclusion

Through in-depth research and discussion, this article reveals the philosophical meaning behind Korean sports violence, arguing that sports violence is both a reflection of power structures and social culture. Critical philosophical tools play a key role in analyzing the phenomenon of sports violence in Korea, allowing us to understand the issue at a deeper level. For future research, we need to look more deeply into the specific forms and effects of sports violence in Korea, as well as examine the phenomenon of sports violence in other social and cultural contexts in order to gain a broader understanding. In addition, long-term follow-up studies are needed to verify the effectiveness of strategies to prevent and intervene in sports violence. For Korean society and sport circles, we propose to prevent and intervene in sports violence by both adjusting power relations and changing social culture. Specifically, we can establish a fair and just sports environment by setting up a mechanism to protect athletes' rights and interests; at the same time, we can also guide the public to understand the true meaning of sports and establish a sports culture of respect and fairness through education and other means.

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