Original Article

Designing a model for development of women sports with an emphasis on sports as a social phenomenon: What do we need?

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ABSTRACT

Despite the development of sports in Iran, women's sports have not yet been able to achieve a desirable position. The development components and their necessary contexts and backgrounds must be identified to achieve the development of women sports. The aim of this study was to present a model for development of women's sports in Iran which was conducted through qualitative research method with the fundamental-exploratory nature. The data were collected by snowball sampling method based on deep interviews, which were coded and analysed according to grounded theory with a constructive approach. The results showed that the development of women's sports involves three components: environmental, structural, and behavioural. Furthermore, there was an intimate relationship between all the developmental contexts. Also, Peripheral components were identified as a large-scale context but structural components as facilitating contexts for development. The results also indicated to achieve women Sports development, suitable contexts are needed and the most important one is Cultural-Social context. Based on the results, necessary actions for the development of women's sport should be taken through the establishment of proper policies, determination of appropriate structures, and provision of favourable environments and contexts.
Keywords: Development; Women; Peripheral factors; Structural factors; Qualitative method; Physical education.

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INTRODUCTION

In the development process, healthy work forces as well as a community in which people are healthy and have a good life expectation are important indicators of human and cultural development. Therefore, developed industrialized countries have paid special attention to expansion of sports and physical training in the society to come closer to developmental indicators and plan to fulfil other developmental goals using healthy and efficient human resources through healthcare, social, and economic achievements as well as growth and expansion of sport (Aghajani and Naderinejad, 2011). Sotiriadou (2013) considers sports development as a process through which appropriate and productive chances and opportunities, systems and structures are provided that enable people to participate in all domains or in special sports and recreational activities, improving and promoting sports activities up to their desired and favourable levels. Therefore, sports development should be in line with better design of more effective methods promoting and increasing interest, participation, and performance in sports activities (Ramezaninejad and Hojabri, 2017).

Despite the necessity to consider sport as one of the dimensions of social and cultural development in any society, researches have indicated that more than half of the world's population does not participate in sufficient physical activity to maintain health (Sapkota et al. 2006; Warburton et al. 2006). On the other hand, women are one of the most important social groups (Alizadeh, 2010) that include more than half of the population in each country, which are considered the main cornerstone of the family; therefore, physical and mental health of women is of utmost importance (Razavi and Separkolu, 2013). Although, Suryakusuma (1991) believed that the culture encourages women to adhere to the five duties of women which includes (1) being a loyal companion to the husband, (2) managing the household, (3) educating and providing guidance to children, (4) earning supplementary income as required, and (5) being a useful member of the community (Tajeddini et al. 2017), But international researchers (e.g. Bullough, 2013; Etemad, 2015; Kraus et al. 2016; Ramaswamy, 2013; Tajeddini et al. 2017) today have been interested in the role of women in society mainly because of changing gender stereotypes and more emphasis was placed on gender equity (Ratten And Tajeddini, 2018). Despite the importance and necessity of women's engagement in exercise as a global rule of thumb (Glanz and Bishop, 2010; Fasting, 1999; Dunning et al. 1996), women's participation in sportive activities is limited (Defrance, 2006).

According to Rowe et al. (2016) wide range of individual characteristics and factors in physical-social environment affect participation of women in sports activities. Maleki et al. (2015) also have mentioned the most important barriers to women's participation in sports activities as follows: neglecting women's sports by administration, lack of satisfaction of women's interests and requirements in radio and television programs, fear of injury, wearing hijab, absence of proper facilities in workplace, and no tendency towards entertaining sports activities in the environment for women. In addition, arrangements and environments affect the tendency of women towards sports. For example, Abioye et al. (2013) believe that media play an effective role in reducing immobility of people in the community. Also, the results of Chaudhury et al. (2016) research showed that home and physical environment have a potentially significant relationship with supporting physical activity in the elderly and that social aspects of neighbourhood have a positive effect on activity levels. In their research, Rasekh et al. (2019) identified 9 opportunities and 19 challenges in the field of women's championship sports in Iran. They concluded that "though investigations of women's sports in internal and external fields show progress in Iranian women's sports, they do not show any desirable growth compared to male sports, which is due to social restrictions and other factors". Moreover, Motameni et al. (2014) concluded that lack of attention of authorities to women's sports, male-oriented culture, lack of time, economic situation, and lack of investment in development of women's sports facilities are the most important obstacles in women's sports participation. Generally, researchers have identified several factors that prevent

women from participating in sports activities and introduced approaches to control, moderate, and contain these obstacles (Naderian Jahromi and Hashemi, 2009). The results of these surveys have identified the most common factors causing and exacerbating lack of participation of women in sports activities as follows: lack of time and access to facilities, lack of proper sports facilities, cultural and economic constraints, insecurity and negative experiences, indolence, physical and psychological problems (Mousavi, 2009).

Although the concept of gender is fluid with the recognition that characteristics associated with females such as nurturing (Ratten and Tajeddini, 2018) and it is culturally defined (Apergis and Economou, 2010) and it is influenced by how a country perceives the role of women in the workplace and associated gender relations (Ratten and Tajeddini, 2018), But, Since women make up half of the human resources contributing to the development of societies, socioeconomic and cultural development programs must pave the way for better use of women's abilities and talents, so that their effective presence becomes possible in the process of sustainable development in various social fields to provide for active participation of women in cultural development (Naderian Jahromi and Hashemi, 2009). Therefore, because of the increasing role of women in society and especially in developing countries (Gherardi, 2015; Ramadani et al. 2015) and being given the active role of Iranian women in today's society, it is necessary to provide a basis for further participation of women in sport activities, which would increase their mobility in life and introduce the sports culture in their lives, thereby promoting physical and mental welfare and well-being as well as increasing vitality in their life. Consequently, the creation of a suitable background for women's sports is considered as an important national issue and the presence or absence of women in sports activities is a global indicator of their status in society (Monazami et al. 2011).

Given the Islamic cultural context of Iran and the existence of numerous cultural restrictions for women to practice sports, the issue is more important in Iran. Hence, this research targets the women's community as a group with double endeavour who is responsible for both consolidations of the family and performance of social roles. Also, a majority of studies have addressed the barriers and constraints in participation of various women groups in sports activities and there has been no comprehensive study to identify the factors affecting the development of women's sports from different aspects. Considering insufficient knowledge of components of women's sports development in Iran, the present study has designed and formulated a model for development of women's sports in Iran to identify the components of such development in Iran. So, the question of this research is as follows: What is a favourable model to develop women's sports in Iran?.

METHODS

Measures
This exploratory research was conducted with the aim of expanding knowledge and perception on the development of women's sports. The purpose of an exploratory research is clarifying concepts, collecting definitions, gaining insight, correcting problems, and presenting ideas. Moreover, based on its search of data, this research has a qualitative nature (Andrew et al. 2011).

Procedures
In this investigation, the strategy of constructing approach was used through which the researcher can systematically extract common grounds from a massive amount of data and present theories in its research field accordingly. This strategy uses a type of inductive approach. The main purpose of the strategy is to explain a phenomenon by identifying the key elements (concepts, categories, and theorems) of that phenomenon and then classifying the relations of these elements within the context and process of the phenomenon. The production and creation of concepts, categories, and theorems is also a cyclic-repetitive

process. In this method, research questions should be open and general rather than formulated as special hypotheses, and the ensuing theory should explain the phenomenon under investigation (Amiri and Norouzi Seyedhosseini, 2015). To present a systematic and schematic model of the findings of encoded data, it was attempted in this research to use a paradigm model of grounded theory that was proposed by Charmaz (2006). There are overlapping processes in paradigm analysis of grounded theory, including initial coding (basic codes, conceptualization, and categorization), focused coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006). In the implementation of this study, data collection and analysis were conducted consciously and simultaneously, and initial data were gathered to formulate the continuous data collection process. In this way, the researcher was provided with the opportunity to increase the adequacy of appropriate categories. The overall research procedure (simultaneous data collection and analysis) is described in Figure 1.
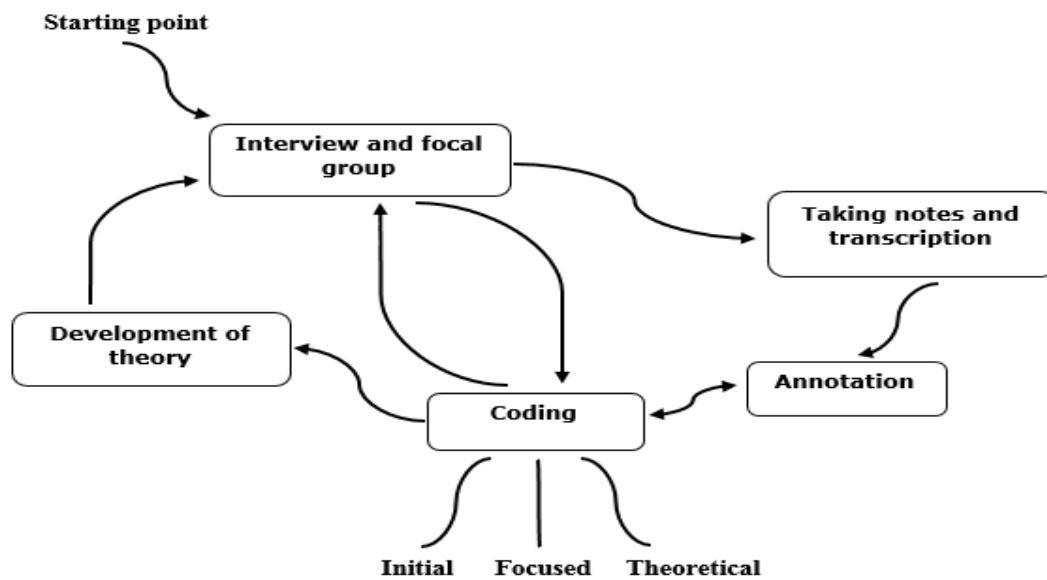

Figure 1. Simultaneous data collection and analysis by a constructive approach (Charmaz, 2006).

Since there are several layers in the procedure of this research, the layers of research process is summarized in Table 1 (Danayifard, 2010):

Table 1. Structure of research process layers.

Component	Type
Nature of research	Exploratory-fundamental
Research procedure	Qualitative approach
Paradigm governing the research	Interpretive-constructive
Research approach	Inductive
Research strategy	Grounded theory
Data collection source	Deep interviews, available theories
Data analysis method	Grounded/constructive

Participants
In selection of statistical sample for deep interviews, it was tried to recruit both individuals with academic education (faculty members) and those with managerial experiences in the field of sports. The statistical population of this research includes the faculty members of sports management, sociology, economics,

and education science majors, heads of sportive federations, all top, middle, and operational mangers in sports as well as those experienced in the field of sports organizations. Purposive sampling and snowballing were used to conduct deep interviews. To perform sampling, based on indicators specified for choice of samples, a list of experts and specialists including university professors, managers, and authorities in sportive organizations was first prepared and then deeply interviewed. Upon completion of each interview, each interviewee was asked to introduce other experts to the researcher, which was continued until all the people introduced by experts were interviewed. It should be noted that in the whole sampling process, the three stages of free, communicative, and theoretical sampling as the basis of paradigm model of grounded theory were observed (Amiri & Norouzi Seyedhosseini, 2015). A total of 14 interviews were held with experts. In fact, the sampling continued up to 14 interviews when theoretical saturation and adequacy were achieved.

Analysis
After studying theoretical foundations, raw data was inductively derived from deep interviews and analysed simultaneous with interviews according to paradigm model of grounded theory. An example of the data analysis method is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. A sample of research coding.

Text of Interview	Our biggest problem in the first place is lack of legal status of female deputies in sportive federations. Our legal context is weak, and thereby several troubles start from lack of legal status in a secure legal environment. So, one of the things that can develop the structure of women's sports is the organizational structure, which should be changed legally.
Initial code	Lack of legal status for female deputies in sportive federations. Poor legal context. Delegation of legal position. Role of organizational structures in development of women's sports. Legal change of structures.
Concepts	Legal status. Legal context. Structure and organizations. Modification of structures.
Categories	Legal context.
Focused coding	Structural components.

Member checking was used to determine the trustworthiness and reliability of data (Andrew et al. 2012). The coding and the final model were submitted to four interviewees who stated their viewpoints and eventually confirmed the overall research model.

RESULTS

As the qualitative research process has a non-linear nature, the process of coding was repeated several times, resulting in comprehensive classes and categories. Based on the procedures outlined in methodology section as well as coding sample presented above, the main components and categories of the model are described in Table 3.

Table 3. Main components and categories of the model.

Main categories	Components
Peripheral components	Cultural context, social context, political context, economic context, security context, environmental context.
Structural components	Management structure, legal structure, media-communication structure, technological structure, Peripheral context.
Behavioral components	Self-esteem, Achievement motivation, The growth of internal capacities, Imitation, Responsiveness.

The final research model was presented as follows. For the development of women's sports, three main Peripheral, structural, and behavioural components are required as shown in the below model (Figure 2).
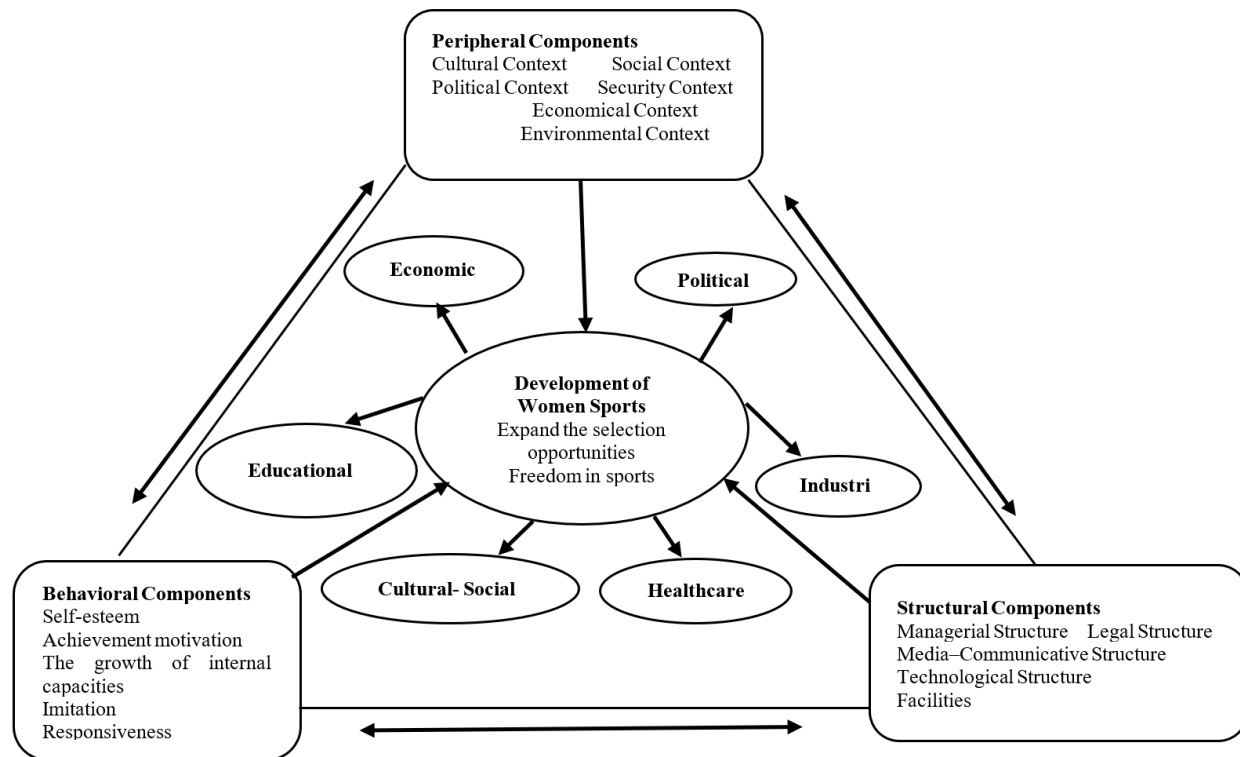

Figure 2. Women's sports development model.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this research was to design a women's sports development model. Through qualitative research method and interviews, data were obtained that were analysed by initial (conceptualization, categorization), focused, and theoretical coding. According to the model derived from research data, three main contexts are needed for the development of women's sports, which are named according to the three-branch model of Mirzae Ahranjani (structure, content, and context) as Peripheral, structural, and behavioural components, each of which has sub contexts. In the three-branch model, the relationship between structural, behavioural, and context factors is such that no phenomenon can occur outside the interaction of the three branches. In fact, the relationship between these three branches is a close inseparable relationship that is indivisible in practice. In other words, the three branches are not three separate entities but are of three types. The

distinction between these three aspects is purely theoretical and aimed at analysing and understanding the concepts of phenomena. The three-branch model is a systematic one explaining all the factors affecting the formation of a phenomenon (Dehghan et al. 2012). The findings of the research indicate a close relationship between all the components of women's sports development, and if the three contexts (Peripheral, structural and behavioural) are present, women's sports development is likely to occur. The purpose of women's sports development is "to extend the opportunities for free choice of sport participation through structural modification and providing grounds to improve and change attitudes and show positive behaviours in sports". Furthermore, during the research, it became clear that there was an intimate relationship between all the developmental contexts, and Peripheral components were identified as a large-scale context but structural components as facilitating contexts for development.

Peripheral components include cultural, social, economic, political, security, and environmental contexts. According to experts participating in the research, these components form the basis for the development of women's sports. In fact, the presence of these components, which indirectly affect the development of women's sports, is indispensable for such development. Among the Peripheral components, the socio-cultural context is the most crucial and basic context for development of women's sports, and various players are implicated in creation of a cultural context, including mass media as the most influential factor.

Based on expert opinion, the socio-cultural context includes values and norms, cultural considerations, social value system, perspectives and attitudes, standpoint and support of religious authorities, social support and acceptance, community viewpoint, intellectual structure of society, family support and attitude as well as social roles of women. Based on research results, among the contexts for developing women's sports, the socio-cultural context is a crucial category that has been identified as an underlying, initiating, and facilitating context for the development of women's sports. According to findings, it seems that there is a close relationship between lack of sports participation of women and socio-cultural factors. As long as the context of women's participation in the society is improved, the network of women's relationships is expanded, leading to higher participation of women in various fields, including sports activities. In this regard, Glanz and Bishop (2010) have investigated the developmental programs and reported the influence of cultural priorities on these programs. Adoption capacity, understanding the importance of exercise, values and norms of society, social value system, cultural considerations, attitudes and viewpoints of families towards women, attitudes towards women by society and religious authorities and by themselves, acceptance as well as social and family support of women are among the most essential cultural components affecting women's participation in sports activities. In this way, if the culture of society and families embraces women's sports, women's participation in sports activities will increase. Moreover, the views and attitudes of family and society are effective upon participation of women and increasing knowledge of families and communities about the effects of exercise can improve the participation of women in sports. The results highlight the impact of support and encouragement by community and family on women's participation in exercise. As stated by Norouzi Seyedhoseini (2013), the motivations of individuals to participate in sport activities are related to important factors such as economic conditions, socio-economic status, cultural origins and family attitudes, personal needs, education and advertising.

The next category of women's sports development contexts is structural components that have been identified as facilitating and moderating contexts for the development of women's sports, including components such as management, legal, media-communication, and technological structures as well as facilities. Along with Peripheral factors, these components can lead to the development of women's sports and directly affect such development.

Based on research results, it seems necessary to develop and promote culture in the field of women's sports, and several factors contribute to this development. It appears that media and advertising have the most important roles in increasing social and cultural awareness, culture development, changing attitude of society, informing, addressing women, attracting sponsors and ultimately developing women's sports in society. Media are an important tool for development of sports, which influence several goals of physical training and sports. Evidently, media are among the most powerful tools to address and expand ideas and are effective means for encouraging cultures and attitudes in societies, playing essential roles in shaping audience attitudes. In this regard, Cianfrone and Zhang (2006) and Tavakoli et al. (2013) state that media plays an indispensable and undeniable role in developing awareness and transferring information to listeners and changing their thoughts. In particular, the main responsibility of media is their leadership and guidance role. Mass media can play a crucial role in raising public awareness and expanding new ideas .Since women make up half of the audience in each community and because the main task of education, training, family formation, and continuing family life is highly dependent upon them, the presence of women in sports activities is an indispensable necessity and an essential and vital requirement for maintaining physical and mental health, reducing several types of social deviations and medical costs as well as increasing production and productivity. However, unlike men's sports, women's share of the total sports news in Iranian media is negligible, women are barely present in media and advertising, and their sportive events are faced with broadcast limitations on domestic media; consequently, there is a vacuum in sense of support for women's sports in media. On the other hand, it seems that media support for women's sports and women's presence in mass media are the most important factors in developing culture, changing attitudes of families and society towards women's sports, and advancing women in society to be encouraged and motivated to participate in sports activities.

Moreover, according to our findings, the female deputies of sportive federations do not have a legal position in sports organizations. Lack of a legal status means having neither the right to vote and decide nor power nor discretion to support women's decisions, ideas, and plans. Accordingly, women's sports undergo changes caused by differences in attitudes of bosses towards women's sports, as well as the governance of men's attitudes and gender-related perspective in organizations because such perspective affects the development of women's sports. In addition, unlike men, women have a small share of managerial posts in sports organizations and structures, which seems to reduce motivation and cause frustration and disappointment of female managers in sports organizations, which could diminish the management performance of women and at times alienate women from the present system. In this respect, the results of Sadeghipour's research (2015) showed that organizational and managerial factors were the most important barriers to women's sports (Sadeqipour et al. 2015). Based on the above statements, it seems that the current structures and rules are one of the constraints to development of women's sports. Accordingly, to enhance the effectiveness of women's roles in sports organizations, it seems necessary to amend the statute of sports federations with the approach of consolidating the legal position of women in sports organizations, establishing rules protecting women's sports, eliminating gender-based perspective in the present system, adopting the same policy for sports of men and women, and providing management participation opportunities for women. Having a legal position means the right to vote, decision-making power, autonomy in action and thought. Furthermore, giving management opportunities to women will probably increase women's experience and prove their abilities because gaining experience affects their sporting success.

Finally, the behavioural components are the last context needed for the development of women's sports, which are related to individual factors affecting the motivation of individuals to participate in sports activities and include components such as self-esteem, Achievement motivation, and the growth of internal capacities, imitation, and responsiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

From the viewpoint of experts participating in this research, the attitude of women towards themselves and the level of self-confidence in their abilities affect the participation of women and family members in sports activities because women have a central role at home and influence self-esteem and self-confidence of children; nevertheless, experts have argued that many women have poor self-esteem about themselves and their abilities. In their view, self-esteem enhancement, understanding the real position, effort and perseverance to gain potential status and eventual growth of internal capacities increase self-esteem and self-confidence in women, which itself leads to increased motivation for participation as well as improved efficiency and sportive performance. In a report from Australian Department of Sport and Recreation (2012), various factors were identified as barriers to physical activity such as lack of time, insufficient self-confidence, and lack of recognition of physical abilities and needs, which could affect the motivation of women to take part in physical activity. Based on research results, if the developmental components lead to promotion of women's sports, such development can be associated with consequences. Based on the presented categorization, in case of women's sport development in Iran, we will witness political, economic, industrial, educational, cultural-social, and healthcare development. This model does not claim to be comprehensive, but it can serve as a platform for future research and be appraised by researchers to promote the concept of women's sports development.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Mahla Hekmati: Investigation, Writing. Maryam Mokhtari Dinani: Conceptualization, Methodology, Visualization, Supervision, Investigation, Resources, Conceptualization, Writing - review & editing. Rasool Norouzi Seyed Hosseini: Investigation, review & editing, Supervision, Formal analysis.

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