

PRIORITIZATION OF SPORT BARRIERS AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Using appropriate methods to attract more women to sports and improve their health and wellbeing requires identification of factors which constrain their participation in sports. This study tends to prioritize barriers of sports and recreational activities among female employees of Zabol University. The studied population included all female employees of the university, among whom 214 women were recruited for the study. A standard questionnaire was used to measure sport barriers. For this purpose, hierarchy of three factors was studied in different levels of participation, participants compared with non-participants and participation in terms of individual characteristics. Friedman test showed that structural factors, followed by individual and interpersonal constraints, are the most important effective factors on participation of female employees in sports. This is fixed in all aspects of the study. The results show that hierarchy of three constraints is not confirmed in this study. Therefore, it is essential to consider and eliminate structural and infrastructural constraints in the studied area in order to promote health and sport culture in this class of society.

Key words: recreation, sport barriers, female employees.

Introduction

Developments of the past three decades show that women have gained many positions in companies, institutions, organizations and other private and public institutions and still continue to seek acquisition of the same opportunities as men in social areas. Due to various constraints in using sports facilities, women are faced with a serious problem of mobility. Constraints are limitations or obstacles which are likely to reduce or eliminate participation of people in certain activities. Stability and durability of a healthy and dynamic society undoubtedly depends on health of members and women are an integral part of the society. One way to increase efficiency of the body is physical activity, which should be an integral part of education programs (Soltani-Kalvanagh, 2013). Regular and planned participation improves important traits such as self-esteem, confidence and social relationships and promotes mental state of people for work (Moshkelgosha, 2007). Women constitute half of human resources involved in development of societies; thus, their abilities and talents should be used in socioeconomic and cultural development plans to allow their effective participation in sustainable development in different social contexts. Naghdi et al (2011) evaluated cultural-social sport constraints among women. The results showed a higher social status, cultural capital, individual willingness and social support to female athletes than non-athletic women. Family attitudes of female athletes were more positive and stereotypical belief acceptance was significantly less than non-athletic women. In fact, they found that cultural capital and individual willingness were two effective variables on participation of women in sports. Increasing employment rate of women for optimum use of their skills and expertise requires their mental and physical security provided by

organized and planned recreational, physical activities to promote their health, vitality, and physical strength. Research shows that job determines leisure time and nature of career determines nature of leisure. Identifying and prioritizing sport constraints among women, Motameni et al (2014) showed that lack of attention to women's sports, lack of time, economic situation and lack of enough investment in development of women's sport facilities are the most important sport constraints. However, the need for sport programs and type of physical activity depend on many factors which can be studied (Moshkelgosha, 2007). Scientists identified many constraints and suggested ways to control and eliminate these constraints. Ghahraman-Tabrizi and Razavi-Mahmoudabadi (2015) identified and prioritized sport constraints among employees.

Three main causes of lack of participation in sport activities were lack of favorite sports within the organization, lack of sports facilities within the organization and lack of proper planning for sports activities of employees. In this regard, this study identified following factors as constraints: economic factors, social factors, occupational factors, family and job responsibilities, politics, physical and mental factors, facilities and availability, awareness, opportunities, cultural factors, religion and demographic characteristics such as education, age and marital status. Since these factors should be studied through a certain classification, Crawford hierarchical model of leisure constraints was used. Crawford et al (1991) substituted these constraints in a pyramid with regard to their importance and suggested the hierarchical model of leisure constraints. They classified the constraints as intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural.

Intrapersonal constraints are factors which block preference or interest in sports and physical activities and involve individual moods, attitudes and perceptions. Interpersonal constraints refer to result of interaction between people and their traits. Finally, structural constraints interfere between interest in participation and actual participation and involve factors such as money, time, opportunities, resources, responsibilities, employment and health (Aghai & Fatahian, 2012).

Vafai-Moghadam et al (2012) related personal characteristics, environmental driving factors and structural constraints to reluctance of women to sports activities and stated that structural constraints are at the top of the importance pyramid. Arabmoghadam and Handerson (2007) showed that the most important constraint of physical activities among Iranian women is the lack of a structure to provide leisure opportunities in the society. In this regard, Aghai and Fatahian (2012) analyzed adaptability of constraints of sport participation among female athletic and non-athletic teachers by using Crawford hierarchical model. They showed that structural constraints are the most important and most effective factors for both female athletic and non-athletic teachers. Alborzi and Mozafari (2015) considered economic-facility constraints, cultural-family constraints, personal-belief constraints as the most important constraints of female participation in sport activities. Prioritizing leisure activities, Jenkins (2010) found that majority of constraints were related to family responsibilities, financial constraints, time constraints, job responsibilities and physical constraints. According to Wicker et al (2012), availability of swimming pools, parks and sport facilities are important factor of participation in sports in addition to micro-level factors. In addition, proper planning of private sport clubs is a very good source for upper class people and proper planning of municipalities is a suitable source for lower class people, which finally leads to higher participation of residents in sports. Thus, it is essential to determine and evaluate factors which prevent participation of women in sport activities and determine factors which have more deterministic effects in order to provide proper solutions for sport managers and attract more women to sport activities. Since it is priority to focus on effects of recreational and sport activities on life of women, particularly female employees, identification of factors which can reduce or prevent participation of women in recreational activities can lead to development of effective plans and activities to reduce negative effects of these factors and develop sport activities of female employees.

Material and methods

This was a descriptive, field study. The studied population included all female employees of the Zabol University, among whom 214 women were recruited for the study. A standard questionnaire was used to measure constraints of physical activity.

Sport constraints were classified as personal constraints, interpersonal constraints and structural constraints. Data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate central tendency indices including mean, standard deviation and the related tables. Friedman and Chi-square tests were used for inferential statistics. The evaluated variables included marital status, age, education and number of children. Table 1 lists frequency and percentage of variables.

Table 1. Distribution of demographic variables.

Variable	N	%
Marital status		
Single	30	14
Married	184	86
Age		
<30	38	17.8
31-40	111	51.9
41>	65	30.4
Education		
High school diploma	31	14.5
Associate Degree	47	22
Bachelor's degree	88	41.1
Master's degree	43	20.1
PhD	5	2.3
Number of children		
0-1	57	26.6
2	53	24.8
3>	104	48.6

Table 2. Descriptive indices and frequency of subscales of personal constraints.

Subscale	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Individual states				
Individual	3.13	0.72	1.6	4.6
attitudes and perceptions	3.24	1.05	1.2	4.8

Table 3. Central indices and distribution of subscales of interpersonal constraints.

Subscale	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Lack of peer companionship	3.46	0.64	2	4.6
Lack of social relations	2.49	0.67	1	4.25

Respondents gained higher score, on average, in individual attitudes and perceptions. In this regard, Friedman test showed no significant difference in score of personal constraints; on average, individual attitudes and perceptions have a higher score than individual states. Respondents gained higher score, on average, in lack of peer companionship. In this regard, Friedman test showed a significant difference in score of interpersonal constraints ($p < 0.001$); that is, lack of peer companionships the first and lack of social relations is the second priority. Respondents gained higher score in responsibilities.

In this regard, Friedman test showed a significant difference in score of structural constraints ($p < 0.001$); that is, responsibility is the first, money and resource is the second, and employment, time and opportunity and health, respectively, are the next priorities.

Table 4. Central indices and distribution of structural constraints.

Subscale	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Money and resources	3.22	0.92	1.33	4.67
Time and opportunities	3.06	0.43	2	3.8
Responsibilities	3.76	0.50	2.63	4.75
Employment	3.08	0.80	1.5	4.5
Health	3.02	0.49	2.25	5

Table 5. Priority of sport constraints among female employees of Zabol University.

Constraints	Mean	X ²	Df	Sig.
Personal	2.08	23.98	2	<0.001
Interpersonal	1.69			
Structural	2.23			

Friedman test showed a significant difference in rank of constraints. According to Table 5, structural constraints are the first, personal constraints are the second and interpersonal constraints are the third priorities. Based on this table, the hierarchical model of sport constraints is not adaptive to Crawford hierarchical model. By integrating three constraints in terms of age, education, marital status and number of children, Friedman test showed that structural constraints are the first priority.

Moreover, integration of three constraints considering sport participation (participation in sport activities, lack of participation in sport activities and different levels of sport participation) was not similar to hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Table 6 and 7).

Table 6. Comparison of hierarchy of three constraints among non-participants.

Constraints	Mean	X ²	Df	Sig.
Personal	2.13	27.61	2	<0.001
Interpersonal	1.63			
Structural	2.23			

Friedman test showed that interpersonal constraints are the most important factors for people who never exercise, exercise once a week or once a month and structural constraints are the most important factors for people who exercise every day or athletics.

Table 7. Comparison of hierarchy of three constraints among participants.

Constraints	Mean	X ²	Df	Sig.
Personal	1.83	18.79	2	<0.001
Interpersonal	1.78			
Structural	2.39			

In evaluating different levels of sport participation (never, once a day, once a week, once a month and athletes), only age and number of children showed a significant relationship.

Table 8. Comparison of hierarchy of three constraints considering different levels of participation.

Constraints	Never	Once a week	Once a month	Athlete	Once a day
Personal	2.18	2.17	2.05	1.76	1.9
Interpersonal	1.57	1.63	1.7	1.78	1.78
Structural	2.25	2.21	2.25	2.46	2.33
Chi-square	9.44	12.76	6.2	12.92	6.65
Sig.	0.009	0.002	0.04	0.002	0.04

Table 9. Relationship between age and level of participation.

Age	Never	Once a week	Once a month	Athletes	Once a day	X ²	Sig.
<30	5 (14.7)	6 (10)	3 (7.5)	14 (35)	10 (25)	20.99	0.007
31-40	20 (58.8)	30 (50)	20 (50)	18 (45)	23 (57.7)		
41>	9 (26.5)	24 (40)	17 (42.5)	8 (20)	7 (17.5)		

Chi-square test (Table 9) showed a significant relationship between age and level of participation; participation is reduced in older people. Chi-square test (Table 10) showed a significant relationship between number of children and level of participation. Participation was lower in women who had fewer number of children.

Table 10. Relationship between number of children and level of participation.

	Never	Once a week	Once a month	Athletes	Once a day	X ²	Sig.
0-1	7 (14.6)	7 (10.6)	19 (32.2)	12 (63.2)	12 (54.5)	37.79	<0.001
2	12 (25)	19 (28.8)	13 (22)	5 (26.3)	4 (18.2)		
3>	29 (60.4)	40 (60.6)	27 (45.8)	2 (10.5)	6 (27.3)		

Discussion and conclusion

Organizational life is associated with psychological pressure, stress and work-related fatigue. Under these circumstances, behavioral science experts in organizations and departments consider recreational sports as an effective means to provide a fun, healthy recreation, freshness and vitality which can increase work capacity, growth and development of moral, mental and social aspects. In many countries, governments plan to optimize leisure for women in order to develop their mobility and physical activity; however, women are faced with many constraints in organizations to participate in many contexts, particularly in sport programs and activities. In this study, the most important personal constraint was individual attitudes and perceptions. One of personal constraints is attitude of women and lack of self-esteem. In Taylor and Fox (2005), women who did fitness exercises for 10 weeks had higher self-worth, self-concept and self-esteem than the control group and they observed these positive effects even 9 months after the study.

Lewis et al (2007) showed that women's self-image and their body image constrains participation in sports. This is consistent with Alborzi and Mozafari (2015) and Jahanbakhsh (2014). The most important interpersonal constraint was lack of peer participation; in this regard, lack of social relations was also effective. According to Nishida et al (2003), lack of social support such as lack of athletic spouse or lack of family support is a perceived constraint of physical activity. In fact, social support in sports refers to any behaviour which encourages physical activity (He et al, 2013). Peer encouragement and support is the only positive variable related to intense physical activity (Springer et al, 2006); conversely, low family support leads to reduced tendency to sports activities (Dowda et al, 2007). Aghakhanbabai et al (2016) showed a positive relationship between social support and sports participation. Moreover, lack of social recognition to women's activities can be an important factor in constraining participation in these activities; this lack of recognition can be from friends, family members or people who disapprove these activities. The results suggest that women's participation in sports is still a social problem. Although lower participation in team sports can be partially attributed to lack of available sport facilities for women and lower participation in individual sports can be partially attributed to weak economic status of women, low participation of women in free activities, such as exercise, walking, running, jumping rope, skip and jump, and sit-ups indicates weak participation of women resulting from some important constraints. To identify the most important structural constraints of women's participation in physical activities, it was shown that the most important factors are responsibilities, followed by time and opportunity, resources, employment and health, respectively. Although some studies on leisure of women provided new approach to structural constraints, most studies are considerably focused on lack of time. Lack of time is the main reason for not doing exercise and chronic disease prevention activities. Thus, effect of lack of time can lead to avoidance of activities and behaviours which are essential for good health (Strazdins et al, 2016). Meanwhile, the clearest evidence is related to the relationship between mental health and lack of time. Results of a study conducted in USA showed that pressure of time predicts depression in women and men and women reported more time pressure than men (Roxburgh et al, 2016). Resources obtained by work are necessary to maintain health. Employed women inevitably spend their limited time on housework and caring for others (children, elderly and disabled

members of the family) and have less time for self-care, exercise, proper nutrition and rest (Craig et al, 2016). According to Jenkins (2010), the most important sports constraints are family responsibilities and financial, time, work and health constraints; this finding is consistent with current study. Therefore, attitude of women to sports should be transformed as cultural context of women's sports. Hierarchy of the constraints evaluated in this study is structural, personal and interpersonal constraints; the results obtained for importance of structural constraints are consistent with Ehsani et al (2007), Aghai and Fatahian (2012), Vafai-Moghadam (2012), Jahanbakhsh (2014), Motameni et al (2014), Alborzi and Mozafari (2015). It seems that structural constraints intervention participation in physical activity and recreation. Perhaps facilities are adequate, but a bigger problem is easy access to these facilities which is partially involved in discouraging sports and recreational activities.

As findings showed, the results regarding age and number of children was significant; these variables did not change hierarchy of the predicted constraints. Results showed that participation was reduced in older people and participation was lower in women who had fewer number of children. Other personal characteristics such as education and marital status did not show a significant relationship with level of participation. In this regard, Babaifard (2013), and Islami et al (2014) showed that physical activity of women decreased as they grew older. To explain this finding, the increase in age and the number of children increases responsibilities and leads to loss of strength; this discourages participation in physical activities. According to female employees who never exercise as well as female employees who exercise, structural, interpersonal and personal constraints, respectively, discourage participation in physical activities. Participation of women do not change hierarchy of the predicted constraints. Hierarchy of three constraints in this study do not match the Crawford hierarchy model of leisure constraints. It seems that the Crawford hierarchy model cannot be generalized to all people and different conditions in which people live. In fact, order and sequence of three constraints depends on certain environmental, cultural and social conditions. According to findings, development of women is very essential and has positive outcomes for both women and society. It seems that governments should focus on development of women and provide cultural contexts to leisure of women by using sports and recreational facilities.

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PRIORITETI SPORTSKIH BARIJERA MEĐU ŽENSKIM DJELATNICIMA: STUDIJA SLUČAJA

Sažetak

Koristeći odgovarajuće metode kako bi se privuklo više žena sportu i poboljšalo njihovo zdravlje i dobrobit, potrebno je utvrditi čimbenike koji ograničavaju njihovo sudjelovanje u sportu. Ovo istraživanje nastoji stvoriti prioritete sportskih i rekreativnih aktivnosti među ženskim zaposlenicima Sveučilišta Zabol. Studijska populacija obuhvaćala je sve ženske zaposlenike sveučilišta, među kojima je 214 žene angažirane za studiju. Za mjerenje sportskih barijera korišten je standardni upitnik. U tu svrhu proučavana je hijerarhija tri čimbenika na različitim razinama sudjelovanja, sudionici u usporedbi s ne-sudionicima i sudjelovanje u smislu individualnih karakteristika. Friedmanov test pokazao je da su strukturni čimbenici, praćeni individualnim i međuljudskim ograničenjima, najvažniji čimbenici za sudjelovanje žena u sportu. Ovo je fiksno u svim aspektima studije. Rezultati pokazuju da hijerarhija triju ograničenja nije potvrđena u ovoj studiji. Stoga je neophodno razmotriti i ukloniti strukturna i infrastrukturna ograničenja na istraživanom području radi promicanja zdravstvene i sportske kulture u ovoj klasi društva.

Ključne riječi: rekreacija, sportske barijere, ženske zaposlenice

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