



Journal Website

Article history:

Received 07 September 2024

Revised 02 November 2024

Accepted 25 November 2024

Published online 30 November 2024

International Journal of Education and Cognitive Sciences

Volume 6, Issue 1, pp 25-37



E-ISSN: 3041-8828

Development of a Model for the Promotion of Women's Sports in Iraq

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Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Ismae I, Moshkelgosha E, Makki Mahmod H, Khodaparast M. (2025). Development of a Model for the Promotion of Women's Sports in Iraq. *International Journal of Education and Cognitive Sciences*, 6(1), 25-37.

<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijecs.6.1.3>



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of the present study is to develop a model for the promotion of women's sports in Iraq.

Methods and Materials: This research is exploratory in nature and follows a qualitative approach, utilizing grounded theory methodology. The participants in this study included faculty members (sports management) from universities, high-level sports officials and policymakers from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Iraqi National Olympic Committee. These individuals were selected through purposive and theoretical sampling for semi-structured interviews. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. The data were simultaneously collected and analyzed using the Strauss and Corbin method.

Findings: The results showed that, from an initial 215 conceptual codes, 88 final conceptual codes and 20 subcategories emerged. These were structured within six dimensions of the paradigmatic model, including causal conditions (decision-making bodies, distributive justice, technology, individual factors, interpersonal factors), the main phenomenon (women's sports in Iraq), strategies (creating the formal groundwork for promoting participation, promoting a culture of participation, designing a participation system), intervening conditions (structural weaknesses, lack of financial resources, lack of human resources), contextual conditions (social factors, cultural factors, economic factors, media orientation, laws and regulations), and outcomes (social capital, development of women's sports, women's health development).

Conclusion: The integration of these categories, based on the relationships between them, forms the paradigmatic model derived from the qualitative research. Achieving this objective will significantly assist the sports managers in Iraq.

Keywords: Sports promotion, women, Iraq, development.

1. Introduction

Public sports refer to sporting activities that are accessible and participatory for all individuals in society, regardless of age, gender, ability, or physical condition. The primary goal is to enhance public health, improve the quality of life, and promote physical activity among all members of society (Andersen et al., 2019). This type of sport encompasses a variety of activities, ranging from individual sports such as running and swimming to team sports like football and basketball. One of the main objectives of public sports is to improve individuals' physical and mental health, as regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases (Amoros-Aguilar et al., 2020). Furthermore, public sports provide opportunities for social interaction and foster positive relationships among individuals, helping to strengthen cooperation and social solidarity (Gard et al., 2018). Promoting a culture of sports within society and encouraging individuals to participate in sports activities are also significant goals of public sports. The features of public sports include accessibility for all individuals, diversity in offering various sports activities, and social support for participants in these activities (Parsajo et al., 2018). In general, public sports not only have a positive impact on physical health but also contribute to enhancing social spirit and creating a sense of belonging in society (Arghvan et al., 2023; Ghiabi et al., 2023; Yousef Mostafa et al., 2024).

The development of public sports for women is particularly important, as it helps improve their physical and mental health and can play a significant role in enhancing their quality of life. Participation in sports activities allows women to benefit from physical advantages such as strengthening the immune system, reducing the risk of chronic diseases, and increasing energy levels (Wakewich & Parker, 2002). Additionally, public sports help create a positive mindset, reduce stress and anxiety, and increase self-confidence in women (García-Moreno et al., 2005). Moreover, the development of public sports can strengthen social relationships and create support networks among women, which, in turn, contributes to increasing social interactions and family cohesion.

On the other hand, given the cultural and social challenges that may hinder women's participation in sports, the development of public sports can help shift attitudes and stereotypes about women's roles in society. These changes not only positively impact individual health but can also lead to an improvement in the overall health of the community.

Additionally, providing suitable sports infrastructure and facilities for women will create opportunities for greater participation in sports activities (Javadipour et al., 2013). Ultimately, investing in the development of public sports for women not only enhances individual health and vitality but also has positive economic impacts, as it can help reduce healthcare costs associated with diseases and improve the quality of life in the community.

The development of public sports for women faces multiple challenges that hinder their active participation in this field. One of the main challenges is cultural and social barriers, which include traditional attitudes toward women's roles and lack of family support for their sports activities (Guthold et al., 2018). These attitudes can decrease women's motivation to participate in sports and may also result in the absence of successful sports role models in society (Moshkelgosha, 2023). Furthermore, the lack of suitable infrastructure is another significant issue. Women's sports facilities are insufficiently developed, and many sports spaces are not specifically designed for them. This issue negatively affects not only elite sports but also public sports, preventing women from easily accessing sports activities (Ghodrati, 2008). The inadequate allocation of financial resources is another challenge in this area. Many governmental and private institutions do not adequately address women's sports, resulting in limited budgets allocated to this field. Consequently, women's teams, leagues, and sports programs face financial constraints, affecting their quality and attractiveness. Additionally, educational issues also play a role in the development of public sports for women. The lack of proper educational systems for providing technical and cultural training to female athletes hinders their progress in this area. These combined challenges have made the development of public sports for women difficult, requiring serious attention from responsible institutions and society to effectively address them.

The development of public sports for women is one of the most important dimensions of enhancing health, increasing social participation, and achieving gender equality in contemporary societies. Given the cultural and social changes in recent decades, the importance of women's sports as a key factor in boosting self-confidence, improving quality of life, and creating equal opportunities for women in various social and economic fields has become increasingly evident (Asadi, 2019).

A model for the development of public sports for women should be designed based on the specific needs and

challenges of this group. This model may include educational programs, the creation of suitable infrastructure, financial support, and the promotion of a sports culture. Additionally, attention to cultural and social factors that may hinder women's participation in sports activities is essential. In this regard, the development of a comprehensive and sustainable model for public sports for women can not only help increase their participation in sports activities but also strengthen their social and cultural identity. This model should be designed and implemented in collaboration with government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities to best meet the needs of women and contribute to positive changes in society. Developing a comprehensive model for the promotion of public sports for women requires a thorough understanding of the existing needs and challenges. This model should include educational programs, promotion of sports culture, development of appropriate infrastructure, and financial support. Furthermore, cooperation between government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities can play a crucial role in the success of this model. By creating a supportive and encouraging environment for women's participation in sports, significant steps can be taken towards achieving gender equality and improving public health.

The development of a model for public sports for women is not only a social necessity but also an opportunity to change attitudes and create a positive environment for the active participation of women in society. Given the existing challenges and barriers, a comprehensive and sustainable approach is needed to facilitate positive transformations in the field of public sports for women. This article aims to examine various aspects of this issue, propose practical solutions for the development of public sports for women, and play an effective role in enhancing their health and quality of life.

In Iraq, despite the existence of multiple sports organizations and departments, each claiming responsibility for public sports to some extent, the number of women participating in public sports remains relatively low compared to other countries. Supporting sports should be a primary priority for the government; however, evidence suggests that the government has not given sufficient attention to the budget for sports and related activities. The reality is that true public sports in Iraq is still far from being fully realized. Public sports is an inter-sectoral activity and should not be confined to the government and state agencies. It must be addressed as an obligation across all institutions and social movements, with senior managers recognizing its

importance before employees. If public sports are to be implemented as an obligation, the main part of its execution will be achieved through collaboration and cooperation among senior managers (Rostami Yangjeh et al., 2021). Despite efforts by public health institutions to promote regular physical activity, low levels of such activity among adults have been reported in many countries. Sports and recreational facilities that provide residents with appropriate and easy access to a wide range of physical activities can serve as a vital community resource for promoting physical activity. Considering the importance of this issue, the researcher in this study aims to develop a model for the promotion of public sports for women in Iraq. Therefore, the main research question is: What is the model for women's public sports in Iraq?

2. Methods and Materials

The present study is a qualitative research with an inductive approach and is considered basic research in terms of its orientation. Since this study emphasizes the development of a conceptual framework or theory building, the grounded theory strategy was employed. The sampling method for this study was purposive sampling, in line with qualitative research methods. The participants in this study were selected through a snowball sampling method from faculty members (Sport Management) of universities, as well as senior officials and policymakers in sports, including the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Iraqi National Olympic Committee. After outlining the objectives of the study, all interviewees participated in the study voluntarily and with informed consent. The research tool used in this study consisted of in-depth, exploratory interviews with open-ended questions. The average time allocated for each interview was 40 minutes.

After conducting the interviews, the interview content was transcribed verbatim. The sampling process continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that no new information was extracted from the data during the interviews. The data analysis was conducted using the method proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2011) after the first interview. After conducting 15 interviews, theoretical saturation was achieved.

Throughout the study, the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba were used to ensure the validity and robustness of the data. The researcher asked the participants to re-interpret the meaning of the words from their interviews to reach a consensus. Member checks, reading interview texts, revising

initial codes, categories, and concepts, and obtaining feedback were the methods used to determine the data's credibility. The acceptability of the data was confirmed through peer review, and the interview texts, codes, and categories were extracted. Out of the 15 interviews conducted, interviews number 5, 9, and 15 were randomly selected for reliability testing using the test-retest reliability coefficient (stability index) and two coders (reliability index). The results showed that coefficients above 0.80 indicated the reliability of the interviews. In this study, the test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.913 (Table 2), and the inter-coder reliability coefficient was 0.915, indicating high reliability of the interviews.

The analysis process included three types of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. According to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) "systematic approach," the categories derived from the raw data were organized into a model known as the axial coding model. This model includes six main axes: causal conditions, central category, strategies, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, and outcomes. Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining categories. Selective coding connects the categories through the narrative line. Therefore, in this study, the

analysis of the data obtained from the interviews is explained based on the dimensions of the paradigm coding.

3. Findings and Results

In the present study, the data analysis method is data-driven theory (with the Strauss and Corbin approach). The first stage of data analysis according to this theory is open coding. In the open coding stage, the data obtained from the interviews, which were recorded and transcribed, were studied, and 88 final concepts (codes) were extracted. Based on the open coding, in the axial coding stage, conceptually and semantically similar concepts were classified into 20 subcategories (sub-concepts), and then the shared meanings were grouped into six main categories (Table 1). In the third stage, through selective coding, the relationships between the categories were identified, and ultimately, the conceptual model of the study was derived. In total, using open, axial, and selective (chosen) coding, six categories were identified, including the core phenomenon, causal conditions, contextual conditions (environmental), strategies, final outcomes, and intervening conditions.

Table 1

Final Codes, Concepts, and Categories Derived from the Interviews

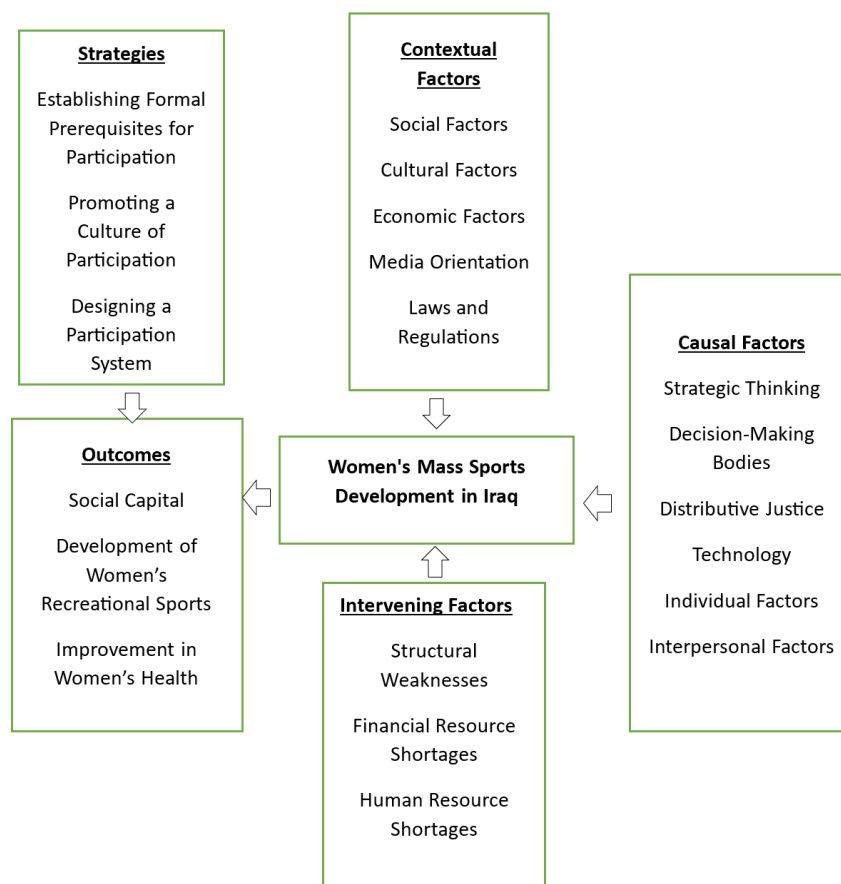
Main Categories	Subcategories (Main Concepts)	Final Codes (Sub-Concepts)
Causal conditions	Strategic thinking	Creation of managerial stability – Fundamental view of mass sports – Strategic branding of mass sports – Focus on long-term issues – Budget and financial allocations for active mass sports sectors
	Decision-making bodies	Unity in policymaking – Creating integrated management for women's sports facilities – Separate and coordinated planning by decision-making bodies – Defining missions for stakeholder institutions – Continuous interactions
	Distribution justice	Balanced resource distribution – Eliminating gender disparities – Equal support for professional and mass sports for women – Directing media for inclusive advertising campaigns for women's mass sports
	Technology	Use of hardware – Use of software – Social networks – Enhancing technical knowledge
	Individual factors	Psychological states of the individual – Attitude toward engaging in sports activities – Interest in engaging in sports activities – Religious inclinations – Lack of time – Employment – Family responsibilities – Physical health – Sports skills – Awareness of sports programs
	Interpersonal factors	Having a companion – Public relations – Interactions with family members – Socializing with peer groups – Membership in social networks
Contextual factors	Social factors	Family support – Social support – Social habits and tendencies – Social expectations – Social ignorance – Demographic background – Lifestyle – Social security – Mass media
	Cultural factors	Awareness – Education – Traditions and customs – Values and norms
	Economic factors	Dynamics of sports economy – Iraq's economic infrastructure – Household economic infrastructure
	Media orientation	Public awareness – Public communication – Social marketing – Monitoring and observing environmental changes – Monitoring public opinion and interests
	Laws and regulations	Provincial mass sports development documents – Urban mass sports development documents – Organizational mass sports development documents
Intervening factors	Structural weaknesses	Lack of study and needs assessment – Lack of access to equipment and infrastructure – Poor quality of equipment and infrastructure – Unequitable distribution of equipment and infrastructure – Lack of safety of equipment and infrastructure – Poor design of equipment and infrastructure
	Financial resource shortages	Inequality in government budgeting – Shortage of public institution financial resources – Lack of sponsors – Absence of insurance – Lack of public donations

Outcomes	Human resource shortages	Shortage of administrative staff – Shortage of front-line staff – Shortage of volunteer staff
	Strategies	Mass sports branding – High-level strategies – Creating formal preconditions for participation development
	Promotion of participation culture	Persuasion and collective convincing – Public awareness
	Participation system design	Development of sports system – Development of sponsorship system – Design of sports participation system
	Social capital	Alignment and empathy – Interaction and mutual communication – Trust – Commitment and responsibility – Synergy and cohesion – Development of justice – Creation of positive psychological momentum
	Women's health development	Reduction in healthcare costs – Enhancement of vitality – Reduction of social harms

Finally, after examining all the categories, the selective coding paradigm model for women's mass sports in Iraq was developed:

Figure 1

Model of Women's Mass Sports Development in Iraq



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that in order to develop a model for women's participation in community sports, attention must first be paid to causal conditions. In this model, causal conditions, as factors directly affecting the

core phenomenon, include five categories: strategic thinking, decision-making bodies, distributive justice, technology, individual factors, and interpersonal factors.

The finding that strategic thinking is one of the causal factors in the development of women's community sports emphasizes the importance of long-term planning and

strategic approaches. Strategic thinking plays a key role in identifying specific needs and challenges faced by women, designing appropriate programs, and increasing their motivation to participate in sports. This type of thinking contributes to the creation of sustainable and effective programs that not only attract women to sports but also ensure their continued engagement due to robust structures that allow for the growth and sustainability of these initiatives. Additionally, strategic thinking helps attract more financial and human resources through organizational coordination and better allocation of resources, thus facilitating the development of women's sports. Overall, strategic thinking, with better planning and the creation of sustainable long-term solutions, can create a suitable environment for greater female participation in community sports. This finding aligns with the prior research ([Hao et al., 2023](#); [Soler-Tonda et al., 2023](#)) that noted that strategic thinking facilitates the establishment of clear goals and priorities for community sports programs and ensures alignment with the community's health and wellness objectives.

The next causal category identified was decision-making bodies. Decision-making bodies are among the most important and influential factors in the development of women's community sports because their role in creating infrastructure, allocating budgets, determining policies, and establishing facilities for women's participation in sports is pivotal. These bodies include governments, sports organizations, social institutions, and even NGOs, all of which can promote women's participation in sports by enacting supportive laws and regulations, improving access to facilities and resources, and raising public awareness.

Decision-making bodies can help change public attitudes and eliminate cultural barriers, such as gender stereotypes, by implementing educational and cultural programs. In many societies, these stereotypes are major constraints on women's participation in sports. Furthermore, through budget allocation and financial support for the establishment of sports infrastructure and women-only facilities, decision-making bodies can create safe and suitable spaces for women's sports activities, thereby encouraging and increasing their participation.

Additionally, decision-making bodies can ensure the sustainable development of women's community sports by coordinating between different sectors (government, sports organizations, the private sector, etc.) and overseeing the implementation of programs and policies. This coordination can lead to the execution of strategic and sustainable

programs that not only aim to increase participation but also guarantee the long-term sustainability and impact of these programs. In general, the active and committed role of decision-making bodies, along with appropriate planning and policies tailored to women's needs, is one of the fundamental factors in developing women's community sports.

Distributive justice is another causal category identified in this study that plays a significant role in the development of women's community sports, as equitable access to sports resources and facilities is a key factor for attracting and retaining women's participation in sports. In societies where access to sports facilities is not equally available to all social and gender groups, women, in particular, may face significant barriers and limitations in utilizing these resources. Distributive justice means fair allocation of resources, facilities, and opportunities, which not only includes appropriate geographical distribution of sports infrastructure but also considers the costs and types of facilities provided. When distributive justice is considered, sports institutions and decision-makers must focus on specific needs of women, such as physical security and proximity to sports centers, to facilitate their access to sports activities. Moreover, financial resources should be allocated in a way that ensures equal opportunities for all women, especially those in underprivileged areas with fewer resources. Otherwise, certain segments of women will be excluded from participating in sports, preventing the achievement of the goals of community sports development. In conclusion, distributive justice in community sports for women ensures that all individuals benefit from the advantages of sports and contributes to enhancing women's health, social participation, and personal growth. This finding aligns with the prior research ([Benn et al., 2016](#); [Koller, 2019](#)).

Technological factors play a key role in the development of women's community sports, as technology can significantly increase access, education, and motivation for women to engage in sports. For example, digital technologies such as sports apps, wearable devices, and online platforms enable women to perform exercise routines independently and at home, using programs tailored to their needs. These tools not only allow women to engage in sports activities without spatial or temporal limitations but also provide instant data on their performance and health, helping to create motivation and better manage their training sessions.

Furthermore, social media and online platforms allow the creation of virtual communities and support groups, where women can share their experiences, motivate each other, and benefit from social connections. These tools help reduce feelings of isolation and increase motivation for sports participation. Additionally, technology plays an important role in education and awareness; for example, online training programs can provide up-to-date information on the benefits of sports, proper techniques, and the importance of physical and mental health. In general, the use of technology as a causal factor helps institutions and planners create a dynamic and motivating environment for broader female participation in community sports. This approach not only reduces existing barriers but also helps improve and expand access and motivation for women to participate in sports. This finding aligns with the prior research (Jamieson & Wijesundara, 2024) on the importance of digital platforms for community engagement.

Individual factors are essential in the development of women's community sports, as beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and personal characteristics directly influence their willingness and participation in sports activities. For instance, levels of self-confidence and feelings of empowerment can impact women's willingness to engage in sports. Individuals with a positive self-concept and belief in their abilities are more likely to participate in sports. Moreover, intrinsic motivations, such as the desire to maintain health and fitness or personal goals to improve quality of life, are among the factors that encourage women to engage in sports. Overall, to develop women's community sports, recognizing and strengthening individual factors, including intrinsic motivations, self-confidence, and positive attitudes toward sports, while providing the necessary support to reduce individual barriers, is crucial. These factors, when combined, can play a key role in increasing participation and sustaining women's involvement in sports activities. This finding aligns with the prior research (Pawan & Nisar, 2024) on the impact of intrapersonal factors, such as mental health, on women's sports participation.

Interpersonal factors play a crucial role in the development of women's community sports, as close relationships and social support directly influence women's motivation and willingness to participate in sports activities. Support from family, friends, and colleagues can increase women's self-confidence and foster a sense of belonging to the sports community, which is especially important for women who may feel isolated or unfamiliar in sports environments. Additionally, being part of sports groups that

create mutual support and motivation can help build commitment and continuity in sports participation.

Moreover, the role of role models and coaches is another aspect of interpersonal factors that can influence women's sports participation. Coaches and individuals whom women look up to as role models can impact their self-confidence and motivation by offering encouragement and appropriate guidance. This influence is often stronger when the coaches and role models share the same gender, as women in such settings feel more connected and relate the experiences closer to their own needs. Finally, social environments that foster positive and supportive interactions help women overcome obstacles and challenges in their sports journey with more confidence, boosting their motivation for continuous participation in sports. This finding aligns with prior research (James, 2008).

The findings of the study indicated that social factors, cultural factors, economic factors, media orientation, and laws and regulations were the main categories of contextual factors in this research. Social factors significantly influence the development of women's recreational sports, as these factors include the norms, values, and cultural attitudes of society towards women's participation in sports. In many societies, traditional beliefs and gender stereotypes can act as significant barriers to women's participation in sports activities. For instance, in societies where sports activities are predominantly assigned to men, women face more social obstacles and may limit their participation in sports due to social pressures and negative perceptions. Therefore, a positive social attitude and cultural acceptance can serve as a strong motivation for women's participation in sports. As a result, social support, changes in cultural attitudes, and the emphasis on equality in access to sports facilities through media and social institutions are all factors that facilitate the development of women's recreational sports and help create a positive culture around women's sports. This finding is consistent with the results of a previous study (Dharmendra, 2024).

Cultural factors play an important role in the development of women's recreational sports because the culture of society shapes people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward sports and physical activities. In many societies, traditional cultural views may perceive women's sports as an unnecessary or even inappropriate activity, hindering widespread female participation in sports. These cultural attitudes can create barriers such as dress code restrictions, concerns about women being in public spaces, or undervaluing the sports needs of women. Such beliefs not

only reduce women's participation but also negatively impact their health and quality of life. On the other hand, modern and progressive cultures that recognize sports as part of women's public health and personal growth offer more opportunities for women to engage in sports. These societies, by embracing diversity in physical activities and promoting sports as a right and necessity, not only increase women's motivation to participate but also provide access to sports infrastructure and resources. Therefore, cultural development through education, advertising, and media support can help change negative attitudes toward women's sports and strengthen their participation. Cultural and educational institutions play a vital role in changing societal beliefs and can contribute to building a culture that views sports as appropriate and even essential for women. This finding aligns with the results of prior studies (Ciomag & Pop, 2024; Paudel et al., 2023).

Economic factors are one of the key aspects in the development of women's recreational sports, as financial and economic conditions can directly impact women's access to and participation in sports activities. In societies with limited financial resources, sports facilities for women are usually scarce, which can lead to a decrease in their motivation and interest in sports. The lack of adequate funding for the establishment and maintenance of sports centers, equipment, and training programs, particularly in rural or underprivileged areas, can be a major barrier to women's participation in sports. Moreover, the costs associated with sports activities, such as membership fees at clubs, purchasing sports equipment, and travel expenses for competitions or events, can also serve as a significant obstacle for women. These limitations are particularly important for low-income women and families who may have other financial priorities. Conversely, in societies that pay more attention to investing in sports and providing economic resources for promoting women's sports, we see increased participation and access to sports facilities. Additionally, support programs and financial assistance can help reduce economic barriers and provide equal opportunities for women. Ultimately, economic policies that include supporting women's sports and investing in sports infrastructure can lead to the sustainable development of recreational sports for women. This approach not only helps increase women's sports participation but also improves their health and quality of life. These findings are consistent with prior research (Richard et al., 2023).

Media factors are key elements in the development of women's recreational sports, as media plays an important

role in shaping public attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral patterns regarding women's sports. Appropriate and positive media coverage of women's sports can help promote successful and inspirational role models and increase women's willingness to participate in sports activities. When the media portray women's successes in sports and introduce them as strong role models, this can not only boost women's self-confidence but also contribute to creating a positive image of women's sports in society (Şahin et al., 2024).

On the other hand, insufficient or inaccurate media coverage of women's sports can reinforce negative stereotypes and neglect the sports needs of women. Therefore, the media must promote diversity in women's sports and provide accurate and comprehensive information. Media can also help change societal attitudes and reduce cultural and social barriers by creating awareness campaigns on the importance of sports for women. Finally, the use of digital platforms and social media can also enhance access to sports information and create supportive online communities for women (Martinez & Bhalla, 2023). These spaces can foster the exchange of experiences and motivations and lead to the creation of a positive and energetic sports culture for women. Overall, the media, by creating a supportive and positive environment, can play a decisive role in the development of women's recreational sports and help encourage their greater participation in sports activities. These findings are consistent with a prior study (Şahin et al., 2024).

Legal factors play a very important role in the development of women's recreational sports, as laws and regulations can provide an environment in which women can participate in sports activities freely and without barriers. These factors include policies and laws related to gender equality, women's rights in sports, and access to sports facilities. The existence of supportive laws can help increase women's confidence in participating in sports and reduce cultural and social barriers. For example, laws related to gender equality in hiring in sports sectors or allocating resources to sports programs for women can promote and expand women's recreational sports.

In many countries, supportive laws and policies directly impact the development of women's recreational sports. For instance, the adoption of laws against discrimination in sports and the encouragement of female participation at various levels can create an environment in which women can actively engage in sports, whether as professional or non-professional athletes. On the other hand, the absence of supportive laws or the existence of restrictive laws can

become a barrier to women's participation. For example, in countries with traditional laws regarding women's dress codes or their role in society, women may face greater challenges in accessing sports facilities and participating in physical activities. Overall, legal factors, by creating supportive frameworks and reducing social and cultural barriers, can contribute to the development of women's recreational sports and lead to the creation of a positive environment for women's active participation in sports. This finding is consistent with the prior research (Pawan & Nisar, 2024; Pawan, 2023).

The findings of the study revealed that structural weaknesses, the lack of financial resources, and the shortage of human resources were the main intervention factors in this study.

Structural problems, such as the lack of space and facilities, are some of the main barriers to the development of women's recreational sports, as access to proper sports infrastructure is vital for active participation. When there are insufficient and suitable sports spaces for women, their participation in sports activities becomes limited. Particularly in societies where the number of public sports centers or clubs is limited, women may avoid participation due to overcrowding, lack of time, or safety concerns in these spaces (Das et al., 2023).

The lack of sports facilities, particularly in rural and peripheral areas, can create obvious discrimination in access to sports. This issue becomes even more significant for women who may not feel comfortable using public spaces due to family responsibilities or concerns about social safety. Additionally, if sports spaces do not meet safety and hygiene standards or fail to consider women's specific needs, such as suitable facilities for exercising during pregnancy or postpartum, their participation in these spaces will face additional challenges. For this reason, investing in the development of sports infrastructure and providing safe and suitable facilities for women is essential. This not only increases access to sports but also helps increase women's sense of security and comfort while exercising. As a result, from a structural perspective, creating sports spaces with special conditions and facilities for women, including physical, cultural, and social considerations, can play a key role in facilitating and expanding women's participation in recreational sports. This finding is consistent with the prior research (Trussell et al., 2024).

The lack of financial resources is one of the primary obstacles to the development of women's recreational sports, as such programs require sustainable funding to provide

equipment, maintain infrastructure, deliver educational programs, and execute promotional campaigns. Insufficient budget allocation for women's sports can lead to reduced quality and quantity of facilities and programs. This issue is particularly pronounced in economically constrained communities or regions where women's sports are not prioritized. Without adequate financial support, sports clubs and facilities may struggle to cover costs associated with space, equipment, coaches, and advertising, ultimately decreasing women's participation in sports.

Additionally, limited financial resources mean that women have less access to free or low-cost sports facilities, leaving many unable to participate in sports programs due to high costs. For instance, membership fees, purchasing sports clothing and equipment, and attending sports competitions or events can be burdensome for many women, particularly in low-income households. Therefore, supportive policies and funding from government sources, private sectors, and non-profit organizations are essential to expanding recreational sports among women. Investment in women's sports not only promotes public health and social well-being but also helps create a fair and inclusive sports environment for women. This finding aligns with the prior research (Rich et al., 2022).

The shortage of human resources is another critical barrier to the development of women's recreational sports, as programs require qualified coaches, facilitators, and administrative staff. Specialized human resources can improve women's sports experiences by designing suitable programs, providing educational environments, and supervising sports activities. In the absence of adequate human resources, women may receive lower-quality services or be discouraged from participating in sports due to a lack of coaches and supporters.

Furthermore, the presence of coaches and staff who understand women's specific physiological and psychological needs can enhance women's participation and long-term engagement in sports. In many areas, particularly those facing cultural or social restrictions, the lack of human resources in the sports sector limits women's access to these programs. Consequently, training programs and sports activities may not be available on a wide scale, especially in underserved communities. For these reasons, investing in the training and development of specialized personnel, including coaches, facilitators, and sports consultants, is crucial for the advancement of women's recreational sports. Such investments can create supportive programs that encourage more women to participate actively in sports.

The findings of this study identified creating formal prerequisites for participation, promoting a culture of participation, and designing participation systems as the main strategic categories.

Establishing formal prerequisites for participation, such as branding community sports and developing high-level strategies, can play a significant role in the advancement of women's recreational sports. Branding community sports ensures that sports are recognized as an integral part of lifestyle, motivating people, especially women, to engage in sports activities. By creating a strong brand identity and highlighting the benefits of recreational sports through advertising and media, positive attitudes towards sports can be fostered, leading to increased participation among women. This approach encourages women to incorporate sports into their daily routines and reap its physical and mental health benefits.

Additionally, national and local-level high-level strategies aligned with the goals of developing community sports can provide practical roadmaps to support and promote women's sports. Supportive and incentivizing policies, such as allocating funds to women's sports, establishing accessible sports infrastructure, and implementing educational programs, can help increase women's participation. These strategies can also address cultural and social barriers that may hinder women's participation and ensure equitable access to sports facilities. Overall, branding recreational sports and implementing high-level strategies can shift public perceptions of women's sports, improve infrastructure, and increase access to facilities, ultimately leading to the sustainable development of women's recreational sports.

Promoting a culture of participation through collective persuasion and public awareness is one of the key strategies for the development of women's recreational sports. This can help change societal attitudes and beliefs regarding women's sports. Public awareness campaigns through advertisements, media campaigns, and public education programs inform individuals about the importance of sports for physical and mental health, encouraging them to actively engage in sports activities (Andersen et al., 2019). This approach is particularly effective in societies where traditional beliefs or negative stereotypes about women's sports exist, as it can change individual and social behaviors and pave the way for greater participation by women in sports.

Moreover, collective persuasion using inspiring figures such as successful female athletes can significantly

encourage women and girls to participate in sports. These role models demonstrate to society that women can achieve remarkable success in sports, increasing motivation and self-confidence among women. By emphasizing the social and health benefits of sports through awareness programs, resistance and cultural barriers can be reduced, fostering greater public participation in sports. Promoting a culture of participation and collective awareness not only changes attitudes but also creates a supportive and inclusive environment where women can participate in sports activities without fear of judgment. These efforts can strengthen women's recreational sports and lead to sustainable development in this domain (Hoseini et al., 2014).

Designing participation systems for the development of women's recreational sports, including creating a sports system, financial support system, and sports participation platforms, is an effective strategy for attracting and retaining participants in this field. Developing a sports system can provide a structured framework for organizing and managing sports activities, ensuring coherence and coordination, and preventing resource wastage while guaranteeing sustained participation. This system can establish standards for planning, monitoring, and evaluating sports activities to better meet women's needs and provide broader opportunities for participation.

The financial support system also plays a critical role in securing funding and resources for women's sports programs. By attracting sponsors from various sectors, including private and public entities, necessary resources can be allocated for developing infrastructure, purchasing equipment, and delivering educational programs. Additionally, a well-structured financial support system promotes transparency and increases public trust, encouraging organizations and companies to invest more in this area.

Designing sports participation platforms enhances access to information and facilitates women's involvement in sports. These platforms, which can be made available online, provide information about activities, classes, events, and sports programs. Women can easily register for sports programs, benefit from these activities, and effectively communicate with coaches and sports managers through such systems. In sum, creating an integrated and efficient participation system provides a sustainable foundation for developing women's recreational sports and contributes to improving their health and quality of life.

The study revealed that social capital, the development of women's recreational sports, and the enhancement of women's health were the main outcome categories in this research.

The development of women's recreational sports plays a significant role in enhancing social bonds and community cohesion by fostering social capital. Social capital comprises networks of relationships, trust, cooperation, and solidarity among individuals, which can be strengthened in sports environments. When women actively participate in recreational sports, new interactions and social connections are formed, leading to increased trust, solidarity, and mutual support within the community. These social connections provide women with the social support needed to boost their confidence and motivation to continue sports activities and maintain their health (Brown et al., 2014).

Furthermore, fostering in-group and out-group interactions through recreational sports can help reduce discrimination and promote social equity. Sports act as a bridge between women from different social classes and cultures, creating opportunities for dialogue and understanding. These interactions contribute to greater cohesion and solidarity within the community, helping women realize their potential in various social arenas (Lewandowski, 2018).

Ultimately, women's recreational sports can lead to the development of a dynamic and supportive community where trust and social participation increase, improving public welfare. This social capital not only enhances women's quality of life but also strengthens the social and economic foundations of the community (Schulenkorf et al., 2011).

Developing women's recreational sports is a key factor in improving their health and can have significant impacts on their physical, mental, and social well-being. Physically, sports help strengthen cardiovascular health, improve muscular endurance, enhance bone density, and control weight. These benefits are particularly important for women during specific life stages, such as pregnancy and menopause, as they can prevent chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis (Bull & Bauman, 2011).

In addition to physical benefits, sports positively affect women's mental health. Sports reduce stress, improve mood, increase energy levels, and alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety. Participation in sports activities can also enhance women's sense of satisfaction, confidence, and self-worth, ultimately improving their quality of life. Group sports provide opportunities for social interactions and

positive relationships, reducing feelings of isolation and enhancing women's mental health (Doré et al., 2016; Sorenson et al., 2014).

Women's recreational sports also significantly reduce social harms. By creating sports opportunities and encouraging women to participate, issues such as addiction, domestic violence, depression, and social isolation can be mitigated. Sports serve as an alternative outlet for stress and negative energy, preventing harmful behaviors. Participation in sports also connects women to new support networks, providing social and psychological benefits that protect them from risks and social harms (Purcell et al., 2020).

Overall, women's recreational sports improve their physical and mental health, foster a sense of belonging, and boost self-esteem. These factors reduce risky behaviors such as substance abuse and enhance life skills like anger management and healthy communication. In the long term, developing recreational sports for women reduces societal healthcare costs, as improved public health among women, who comprise a significant portion of the population, decreases disease prevalence and treatment expenses. Therefore, investing in women's recreational sports is a public health strategy that enhances productivity and overall societal well-being.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We hereby thank all individuals for participating and cooperating us in this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Each participant received an informed consent form to understand the study's objectives.

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