

## Presenting and Explaining the Quantitative Model of the Challenges of Women's Sports Development in Less Privileged Provinces

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research was to analyze and develop a model of the challenges of developing women's sports in low-income provinces. This research was applied in terms of purpose and quantitative in terms of research method and structural equation modeling (SEM) type of research.

**Method:** The statistical population consists of all managers and experts of the general sports and youth departments, experts of provincial boards, coaches, referees and athletes of different categories, who were selected by available sampling method. The research tool was developed by the researcher. In order to analyze the data, Kalmogorov-Smirnov (K-S), Friedman test and exploratory factor analysis test with Varimax rotation were used using SPSS 22 software. Smart PLS 2 software was used to check the construct validity, confirmatory factor analysis test and structural equation model test using the least squares method.

**Results:** Based on the results, among the challenges of advancing the development of women's sports in low-income provinces, the dimension of resources with a factor load (0.95) had the greatest effect. Also, managerial factors (0.85), behavioral factors (0.74) and environmental factors (0.37) were other effective dimensions in the structural model. According to the results, it can be stated that policymakers, governing bodies of sports, universities and society should cooperate to increase women's sports participation through increasing awareness, reducing economic barriers and improving physical health and physical fitness.

**Conclusion:** Increasing women's participation in sports may not only reduce gender inequalities, but may also lead to changes in traditional social norms.

**Keywords:** cultural context, development, behavioral challenges, women's sports.

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## Introduction

The concept of development has been receiving attention from economists, sociologists and various researchers for years, but the main problem is the definition of development and the differentiation of development (3). There is no precise and single definition of development, but the majority of experts consider development to be a multidimensional process (10). Development is a multi-dimensional flow that requires fundamental changes in the social structure, public perception and national institutions, as well as accelerating economic growth, reducing inequality, and eradicating absolute poverty (6). On the other hand, the development of sports is an important part of national economic-social development. The spread of sports in all sectors increases social vitality and national productivity, and the promotion of championship sports leads to the fame of victorious nations in the world (5). The relationship between sports and cultural, social, political and economic phenomena indicates the importance of this phenomenon and its role in the national development programs of countries, and in a general view, the development and progress of sports in any country is closely related to the authority and power of that country (34). In other words, the development of sports in interaction with other components of development provides the progress and prosperity of more countries. This concept has become an integral part of national and international policies designed to deal with wider social issues such as anti-social behaviour, obesity, unemployment, health, education and peace (29). The importance of sports development has caused them to spread it in different societies; But in the meantime, the lack of justice in programs, human resources and equipment related to sports has led to the formation of sports poverty in some areas. The fair development of sports in all urban areas can lead to the development of societies in a unified way (20). The goal of

balanced and balanced development is to create the best conditions and facilities for the development of all regions of the country, which increases the quality of life of people in all regions and reduces or minimizes the differences between provinces in facilities, infrastructures and use of resources (11). Despite the increase in women's participation and efforts to increase gender equality in social activities, sports is still a male institution and dominated by men (19). Women in rural and regional communities experience social, cultural, and geographical limitations for sports, physical activity, and participation in leisure time (33). This issue shows that women are more limited than men in terms of engaging in sports. In general, the development of sports for women in underprivileged communities needs a more detailed investigation (21, 33). However, although the challenges faced by female athletes have not decreased, some women's teams and some female athletes have been empowered to succeed at international levels (19). The international success of female athletes in international and Olympic competitions generally strengthens the image and prestige of that country at the global level. The importance of women's international achievements provides opportunities for learning, experiencing success, teamwork and privileged moments. Of course, women's championship sports is a cultural, social and political category apart from technical and sports issues, whose growth and development in any country reflects the overall development of the society (4). The presence of women as an important part of the human capital of any society in the field of championship sports can not only help the development of countries, but also shows the efforts of countries for development. Wherever the environment is prepared for women's social activities, their abilities will be more evident and their effects in the society will be more obvious (8). Women, like men, need the existence of standard sports facilities and infrastructures (1,

32), appropriate and high-quality equipment, financial resources, encouragement and social support from families (27) and similar things.

Undoubtedly, women are deprived of equal opportunities to participate in sports activities and face limitations. Structural and managerial limitations, financial and facility limitations, cultural and social limitations are among these exclusions. These limitations and inequalities are the result and reflection of social-political factors, the inadequacies of the spatial planning system and incorrect policies, neglecting the integrated management of the country, the lack of attention to the capacities of the provinces and the lack of coordination of the organizations in charge of different aspects of development. 8). Therefore, those involved in the field of sports, in order to grow and develop women's sports, should pay special attention to the regular organization of women's provincial leagues in various disciplines, the existence of policy making and strategic planning in women's sports, systematic control and supervision of the performance of the delegations, and the use of educational technology for the development of women's sports. be (12). In this regard, Bibi and Khan (2016) introduced the obstacles to women's health in Pakistan as social restrictions, cultural norms and traditions, Islam's resistance to development and women's participation in physical activities. It also reports that female athletes face coaching and training problems at the championship level (18). Anderson (2022) in the analysis of the state of development of women's sports in the United States, showed that there is a gap between women's sports and men's sports in all areas, and commercial, technical, media and behavioral factors are effective in reducing this gap (14). Further, Yenilmez (2021) by studying the specific limitations and challenges of Turkish women in sports, came to the conclusion that the influence of the family, wage inequality, misrepresentation of the media, inappropriate sports facilities for women are some of the

limitations that should be considered significantly to improve the climate of women's participation in sports. be placed (35). Asghar et al. (2024) by examining the socio-economic obstacles of women's participation in sports activities, came to the conclusion that women's participation in sports is strongly influenced by family, socio-cultural support, economic obstacles, personal interest and motivation, and sexual harassment. 15). The findings of the study by Rich et al. (2022) indicate that sports development processes are often urban-oriented (especially in big cities) and this issue has been neglected in deprived urban-rural communities (33).

In Iran, it is necessary to reduce provincial differences in terms of sports development, pay attention to regional planning and follow balanced policies in creating equal opportunities for resources and facilities. On the other hand, a review of the theoretical bases and researches, and especially the programs and measures of women's sports, shows that the role of women in sports has become more prominent than in the past, and women in the field of general and championship sports can be the expressive language of Iranian culture and customs. Considering the importance of women's sports, in this research, an attempt has been made to solve some of the challenges of developing women's sports in the less fortunate provinces (including North Khorasani, South Khorasan, Kahgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Kurdistan, Sistan and Baluchistan, Bushehr, Hormozgan, Khuzestan and Ilam). Review. The analysis of these challenges can provide the possibility for the planners, managers and officials of the sports field of the less fortunate provinces to formulate appropriate programs for the promotion and participation of women in sports and the growth and development of women's sports in the said provinces, knowing these relationships.

## Materials and Methods

The current research is applied in terms of its

purpose and quantitative in terms of the research method and structural equation modeling (SEM) type of research. In order to test the research model and obtain the necessary information in this field, the statistical population consisted of all managers and experts of the general sports and youth departments, experts of provincial boards, coaches and referees of different categories, athletes of different categories (Table 1). Due to the large number of people in the research community, the available sampling method was used to provide the necessary data to test the model. The tool used was a 74-item researcher-made questionnaire taken from library studies and interviews with managers of general sports and youth departments in low-income provinces, national federations, and experts, including university professors, knowledgeable in the field of women's sports development, whose face and content validity was verified by 11 experts and It was approved by scientific, executive and research experts. From the total of 384 questionnaires distributed among the research samples and the non-cooperation of some of them in this scientific partnership, finally 369 complete questionnaires were collected. The overall reliability of the tool was obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.876. In order to analyze the data from descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation,

frequency, frequency percentage, etc.) and at the level of inferential statistics from the Kalmogorov Smirnov (K-S) test to check the normality of the data distribution of the research samples, in order to prioritize and rank examples of the development of women's sports Friedman's test and exploratory factor analysis test with varimax rotation were used using SPSS ver 22 software. Also, in order to check the construct validity, the confirmatory factor analysis test and the model test of the challenges of women's sports development in the provinces with little access to the partial least squares (PLS) structural equation model were used using Smart PLS 2 (beta) software.

## Results

Based on the findings, it was found that out of 369 participants in this research, 66 (17.9%) of the participants were between 1 and 5 years old, 65 (17.6) between 6 and 10 years, 83 (22.5 percent) between 11 and 15 years and 155 people (42 percent) have more than 15 years of experience in women's sports. Also, 94 people (25.4 percent) were working in the general sports and youth departments of the provinces, and 149 people (40.3 percent) were working in sports boards, and 126 people (34.3 percent) were coaches, referees, and athletes. Other results can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive indices of demographic properties**

Variable	Demographic property	Frequency	Percentage
Age	25-30 years	41	11.1
	31-35 years	74	20.1
	36-40 years	124	33.6
	41-45 years and above	130	35.2
Education	A.A.	47	12.7
	B.A.	161	43.6
	M.A.	128	34.7
	Ph.D.	33	9
Work experience in the women's sports domain	1-5 years	66	17.9
	6-10 years	65	17.6
	11-15 years	83	22.5
	>15 years	155	42
Organizational positions	General Office of Sports and Youth	94	25.4
	Experts of provincial boards	149	40.3
	Coaches, referees, and athletes	126	34.3

$\Sigma$		369	100
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According to the results of table (2), all factor loading coefficients are significant ( $P < 0.01$ ) and are greater than 0.4, which indicates the

appropriateness of the measurement models used in the research model.

**Table 2. Factor loading coefficients of measurement models**

Variable	Components	Factor loading	t static	Sig.
Environmental	Social	0.983	7.550	0.01
	Economic	0.423	3.482	0.01
	Cultural	0.785	5.057	0.01
Managerial	Executive	0.850	27.071	0.01
	Legal	0.531	10.684	0.01
	Media	0.927	139.117	0.01
Resources	Facilities	0.910	96.425	0.01
	Human	0.878	51.020	0.01
	Financial	0.913	79.036	0.01
	Research and technology	0.925	141.784	0.01
Behavioral	Item 70	0.819	27.151	0.01
	Item 71	0.752	14.409	0.01
	Item 72	0.611	11.186	0.01
	Item 73	0.483	8.362	0.01
	Item 74	0.740	10.194	0.01

In fitting the measurement models, three criteria of reliability, convergent validity (average variance extracted) and divergent validity (by Fornell Larcker method) were used. Reliability was also evaluated by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The criterion value for the appropriateness of factor loading coefficients is 0.4. The reliability coefficients and average variance extracted (AVE) values are shown in Table (3). All the constructs of the model have high composite reliability and are

greater than the benchmark index of 0.6 introduced by Bagozzi and Yai (1988). The value of Cronbach's alpha is higher than 0.7, which indicates acceptable reliability. In this research, convergent validity was investigated using this criterion. A value greater than 0.5 indicates acceptable convergent validity. Based on the obtained results, the average variance extracted for all hidden variables is greater than 0.5, which indicates the appropriate convergent validity of the model.

**Table 3. AVE values and reliability indices**

Variable	AVE (>0.5)	CR (>0.6)	$\alpha$ (>0.7)
Environmental	0.571	0.635	0.712
Managerial	0.545	0.636	0.814
Resources	0.822	0.949	0.928
Behavioral	0.542	0.669	0.784

Divergent validity is the third criterion for examining the fit of measurement models, which compares the correlation between the indicators of a construct with that construct and

the correlation between those indices with other constructs. The results of table (4) show the appropriate divergent validity and appropriate fit of the research measurement models.

**Table 4. Fornell-Larcker matrix for examining divergent validity**

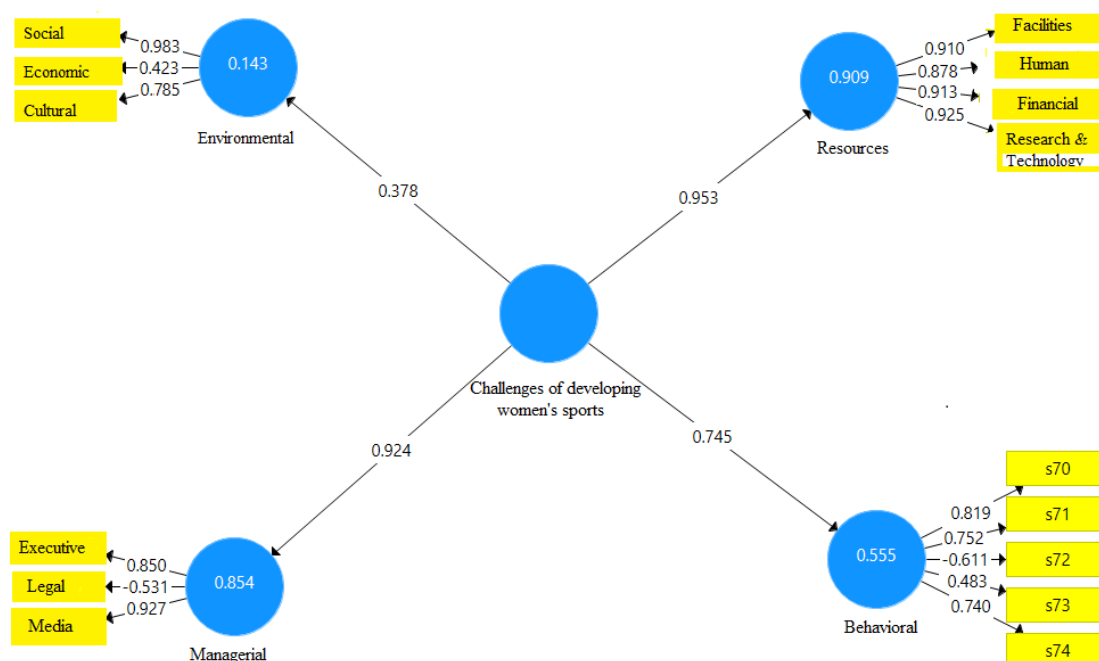
	1	2	3	4
Environmental	0.755			
Managerial	0.415	0.738		
Resources	0.194	0.652	0.907	
Behavioral	0.267	0.554	0.594	0.736

The R<sup>2</sup> coefficients of the Q<sup>2</sup> values of the variables were used to investigate the fit of the structural model. The fit of the structural model

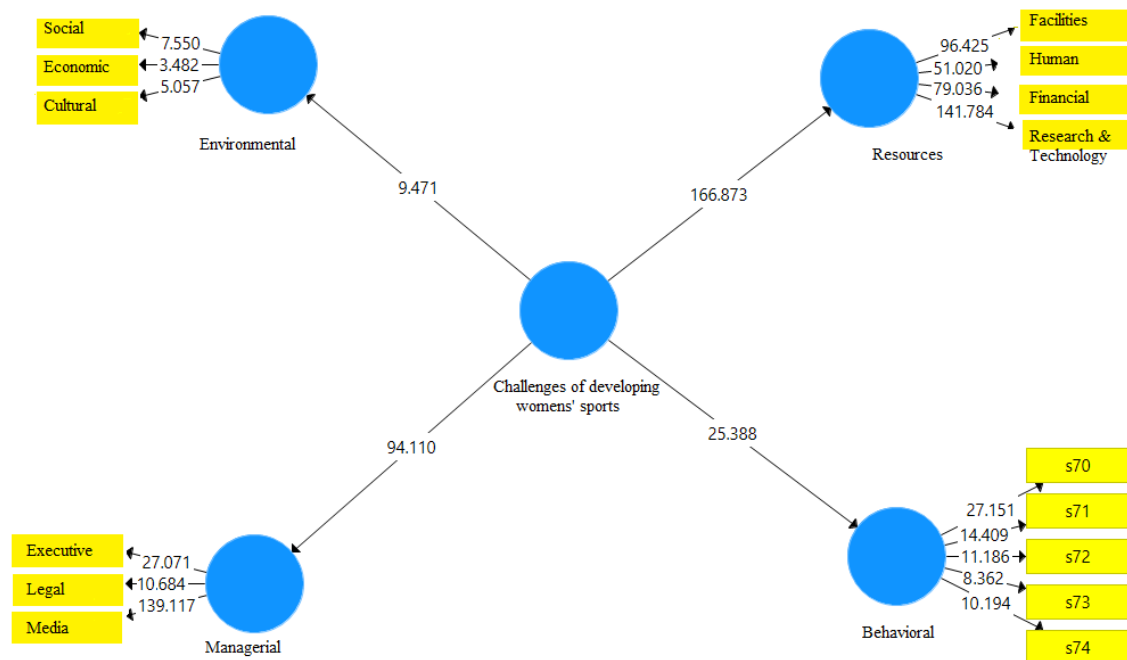
was confirmed considering the results in Table 5.

**Table 5. R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup> coefficients**

Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>
Environmental	0.143	0.173
Managerial	0.854	0.446
Resources	0.909	0.701
Behavioral	0.555	0.263

**Figure 1. Primary model versus standard coefficients**





**Figure 2. Primary model versus significant numbers (t-values)**

Table (6) shows the results related to the path coefficient of the structural model of the challenges of women's sports development in less privileged provinces. Based on the

obtained results, all the obtained path coefficients are positive and significant at the alpha level of 0.01 ( $P < 0.01$ ).

**Table 6. Path coefficients of the structural model: Challenges of developing women's sports**

Path	$\beta$	t static	Sig.
Challenges of developing women's sports → Environmental	0.378	9.471	0.001
Challenges of developing women's sports → Managerial	0.924	94.110	0.001
Challenges of developing women's sports → Resources	0.953	166.873	0.001
Challenges of developing women's sports → Behavioral	0.745	25.388	0.001

In order to prioritize the challenges of women's sports development in less privileged

provinces, Friedman's test has been used. The results are presented in Table (7) below.

**Table 7. Freidman's test for rating challenges of developing women's sports**

Factors	Mean rate
1 Environmental	3.72
2 Managerial	2.51
3 Resources	2.43
4 Behavioral	$\chi^2$ 1.35
Friedman's test	Sig. 0.01

## Discussion

There are different forms of discrimination

from inequality of wages, inequality and access to sports facilities, lack of media coverage,

allocation of a low percentage of funding and credit in women's sports (9). These issues show the lack of development of women's sports in all regions of the country, especially the deprived and less privileged provinces. Regarding this topic, based on the results of the structural equation model, the basic challenges in the development of women's sports in low-income provinces are the resources dimension with a factor load of (0.95). This factor includes human resources, facilities, finance, research and technology. The results of the research show the low participation of women in the administrative structure of sports, the lack of female sports expert posts in the cities, the lack of trustees in the cities and small towns, the lack of sufficient authority of female deputies and experts in the cities, the existence of unenforceable programs. The weakness of the government system in empowering women managers, the lack of sports instructors, the lack of knowledge of coaches, the lack of strong executive staff, the lack of strong leagues at the provincial and national levels, the need to anticipate conferences, sports competitions, lack of attention to human resources training, the need It is to develop the system of discovering, cultivating and promoting sports talents. Improving the scientific and qualitative level of human resources by holding knowledge-enhancing courses, holding international seminars for the development of trainers, holding training classes for trainers and referees can also increase the efficiency of human resources. The result of Hindman, Walker (2020) confirms the current results and shows that women have a small percentage in management roles in sports organizations (28).

Another important challenge regarding the development of women's sports in these provinces is the lack of suitable sports facilities for women. Lack of dedicated infrastructure, improper placement of sports facilities, inequality in facilities and equipment, inappropriate time allocation for women, lack

of championship base of the province and cities, lack of dormitory in the provinces are the problems of women's sports in few provinces, which requires changes in policies. In the field of women's sports, by facilitating the issuance of licenses for the construction and operation of sports clubs, due to the existence of free zones in some of these provinces, the use of the potential capacity of these zones and the development of clubs and health centers to the expansion of women's sports in the provinces The aforementioned help. In a study confirming this finding, Farzaneh et al. (2021) stated that the all-round development of sports and women's participation in sports activities requires a change in the attitude of managers and policy makers in order to create infrastructure, provide more and better facilities in terms of availability, low cost (23) . Also, the current finding was in line with the results of the study by Yenilms (2021), Hayat et al. (2020) and Bevan et al. In this regard, the result of Hayat's study (2020) shows that structural discrimination plays an important role in restricting women from sports activities. In fact, there are no sports fields for women in rural areas. As a result, favorable conditions for girls' participation in sports are not observed in rural areas (26). In addition, the findings of Bevan et al.'s (2024) study show that although investment in women's sports has increased, women's sports teams still face many spatial injustices that limit their participation (17). On the other hand, the smaller share of provinces with little budget, the minimal injection of budget, the weak bargaining power of provincial officials, the reluctance of economic enterprises to invest, the unwillingness of provincial industries, the lack of financial support of industrial companies, the lack of motivation of investors in women's sports from the challenges of financial resources for The development of women's sports is to solve these issues by facilitating the business conditions of women's sports, facilitating the conditions of women's club ownership and the



necessity of giving subsidies to the women's sports sector, supporting electronic and online businesses and using the capacity of knowledge-based institutions. The present result is consistent with the research of Khatibi et al. (2019) and Agerlo et al. They point out that not investing in the development of women's sports facilities, not being sure of investing in the country's women's sports industry, are among the challenges of the financial sector in the development of women's sports in the country. They also state that the allocation of sufficient financial resources can have significant effects in the development process of women's sports.

According to the results of the structural equation model, the second challenge that has the greatest contribution to the development of women's sports in low-income provinces is management factors including legal, executive and media factors with a factor load of (0.85). In this regard, to such things as; Increasing female managers in decision-making centers or determining criteria for allocating funds and facilities for women's sports, amending the regulations of sports boards, placing women in structures in the form of law, modifying the advertising view of women's sports, paying attention to the women's sports training document, paying special attention to the festival He pointed out the special features of the villagers. Other results of the present study include the lack of appropriate media coverage, whether visual, press-print, in women's sports events and competitions, religious restrictions regarding the observance of women's hijab, the insignificant share of women's sports in sports news, the lack of mention of women's sports at the international level. The present finding was consistent with the results of the research of Naserian et al. (1401), Lar et al. (2022), Yenilms (2021) and Nolte, Roux (2022), who showed that the limitation of the mass media and inappropriate representation of women's sports in the media and legal challenges-Legitimacy is one of the most important factors

in the development of women's sports (13, 29, 35, 31). In this regard, Naserian et al. (1401) concluded in their study that the efficiency of the sports channel in the field of women increases the promotion of women's sports. In this regard, we can also mention the discussion of reducing gender discrimination, which with the efficiency of specialized programs for women's sports leads to the progress of sports. women and this progress can be one of the reasons for the reduction of gender discrimination in the society and another manifestation of it is attention to women and their sports (13). Long-term athlete development model of Nolte, Roux (2022) examined the stages of athlete development from school to international level. This model includes elements such as infrastructure development and talent search, scientific support, training facilities and development of coaches, league planning (31).

Other results of the structural equation model of the effective factors in the development of women's sports in low-income provinces are the behavioral factors with factor load (0.74). Exercise plays a central role in the development of behaviors such as; Commitment and effort to achieve team and individual goals, socialization and a sense of belonging and personal identity. The importance of sports in the social life of girls and young women cannot be ignored without considering the long-term goals of individual sports (22). The perceptions that women have about themselves are often unrealistic, irrelevant and incorrect and lead to a decrease in their participation in sports. Despite the recommendations given to increase the level of active life, women participate less in the programs of leisure sports activities to the extent suggested. Improving women's skills, strengthening self-confidence, self-confidence of rural women, strengthening self-esteem of female athletes, lack of financial independence of housewives, involvement and employment of working women, lack of knowledge and awareness of sports, weak self-confidence in

women regarding their abilities, including related individual factors. It is for the women of these provinces. Participating in sports causes self-fulfillment of women, which can be achieved through emphasizing health and well-being, pleasure and vitality, increasing self-confidence, understanding the sense of independence and individual responsibility. Organizations working in the field of women's sports can provide the presence of female athletes from beginner to advanced levels; Of course, in recent years, the growth and maturity of their related movements have provided more opportunities for women's sports participation and achieving their sports successes (25). Today's attitudes about women emphasize that women can not only gain and maintain good health through sports, but participation in sports activities is necessary and necessary for them to be able to. To fully participate in education, work, family and social environments. The present finding was consistent with the findings of Farzaneh et al. (2021) and Aydin, Ozel (2023) (23, 16). In a separate research, they concluded that intra-personal and interpersonal limitations, personal problems, cultural attitudes and customary obstacles are the most important challenges facing women in sports. Also, the results of the study by Farzaneh et al. (2021) showed that two groups of urban and rural women reported similar challenges, and the biggest challenge was related to economic and personal obstacles (23).

The environmental factor was another important factor in the development of women's sports in low provinces. This dimension with factor load (0.37) includes social, economic and cultural aspects. In this regard, the lack of support from groups of friends, the lack of attention and lack of support from parents, the lack of awareness of parents and families, the negative attitude of parents towards sports for women and girls, the limitations and obligations of work and family, ignoring rural and nomadic sports, less use of The capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the

lack of a social platform to welcome some disciplines, society's closed view of women, families' opposition to girls' sports due to the fear of harm are among the environmental issues and challenges. According to the results of the research, it can be said that increasing social and cultural support for women is one of the best ways to increase the participation of women in sports activities, and it is recommended to support women's recreational and sports programs in the society. In order to solve these issues, creating special sports competitions for women at the level of cities and villages, regional, national, introducing and honoring the successful athletes of these courses, wider mass media advertising in the field of women's sports, in the development of women's sports according to the special characteristics of Iranian society. , will be effective. The existence of cultural challenges including; The fear of harming religious beliefs, the existence of thinking about the negative effects of sports on women's appearance, the sensitivity of local authorities, the unfavorable reception of sports in villages, the inappropriate view of sports in small towns, the strictness of some institutions, the closed regional-local space, Borders and local differences, cultural context and ethnic-tribal considerations are examples of the lack of development of women's sports, and solving these problems requires continuous and long-term training from the national and local media and the extensive efforts of institutions such as the police force in order to make the environments around the places safe. It is a women's sport. The research results were in line with the findings of Furukawa (2024), Yenilms (2021), Lar et al. (2022) and Asghar et al. (2024) (24, 35, 29, 15). Meanwhile, the findings of Yenilms (2021) show that family influence and wage inequality are among the challenges of women's participation in sports (54). Also, Furukawa's study (2024) shows that women's participation in leisure activities is influenced by many restrictions, including the cultural

structure of society, society's view of women, religious beliefs, traditions and customs (24). In addition, the results were not consistent with the findings of Lar et al. (2022). The results of their study showed that religious beliefs have no negative effect on Pakistani women's participation in sports (29).

## Conclusion

In general, based on the results of the research, the condition for the development of sports in women in less privileged provinces is the presence of factors such as suitable cultural background, financial and economic resources, the existence of equipment, facilities and infrastructure, supporting laws and regulations, human resources, supporting institutions and organizations, and the media. It is In fact, when the development of women's sports takes place, we can hope that the health of the society will reach the desired level because the root of many diseases is not exercising. Also, according to these factors, we can witness the development and discovery of sports talents and the improvement of the state of champion raising in female athletes in these provinces. Although these programs may not generate significant income for governing institutions, they can create positive results in the social and health dimensions of disadvantaged groups.

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