



The Role of Cultural and Psychological Capital in Women's Athletics Involvement (A Qualitative Study)

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the role of cultural and psychological capitals in women's athletics involvement. The statistical population encompassed all the female faculty members of sport management major fields in Khuzestan province. Snow ball sampling procedure was processed to select the sample. 12 subjects were interviewed to achieve a theoretic saturation. The research method was a qualitative one with an exploratory approach. To develop the proposed model "Grounded Theory" initiated method was implemented. Data were collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews. Data analysis and coding were conducted using the open, axial, and selective coding methods. The results revealed five main contents (causal factors, background factors, interventionist factors, strategies and consequences) and 23 axial categories. The causal factors were categorized in cultural (gender equality, economic status, social factors) and psychological capitals (resiliency, hopefulness, self-efficacy and optimisms). The background factors (cultural upbringing, education and awareness, media), interventionist factors (stereotypical thinking, gender discrimination, cultural concern about appearance, lack of social support, injustice, economic constraints), strategies (cultural awareness enhancement, promotion of representation, infrastructure development, financial support), and consequences (individual dimensions, social dimensions, and cultural dimensions) were also considered. It could be concluded that cultural and psychological capitals would help to form positive attitudes towards women's involvement in athletics and increase women's empowerment and social development.



Extended abstract

Introduction: Athletics, serving as a bridge for women's integration into society, not only significantly contributes to improving their physical health but also plays a powerful role as a tool for social change and enhancing women's active roles in societal structures. As an essential component of human life, athletics play a crucial role in culture and society. In recent decades, attention to women's participation in sports as a social phenomenon has significantly increased. This heightened focus on women's involvement in sports, as a tool for societal development and the promotion of individual and social health, entails various motivations. However, understanding this participation requires a deeper understanding of the various factors influencing women's decisions in the field of sports. One of these factors is cultural capital, which plays a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes, values, and behaviors. Athletics, as a form of cultural and social capital, have a vital role in improving physical health, increasing energy, and personal development. Attention to women's participation in this field has increased significantly in recent decades. This increased attention not only reflects changes in the social and cultural structures of societies but is also introduced as a symbol of women's empowerment and commitment to themselves and society. Cultural capital includes a set of values, perspectives, and cultural habits that impact individuals' choices and behaviors. Values and beliefs in our cultural society play a vital role in determining women's decisions to participate in the sports domain. This research aimed to investigate the role of cultural and psychological capitals in women's athletics involvement.

Method: The statistical population encompassed all the female faculty members of sport management major fields in Khouzestan province. Snow ball sampling procedure was processed to select the sample. 12 subjects were interviewed to achieve a theoretic saturation. The research method was a qualitative one with an exploratory approach. To develop the proposed model “Grounded Theory” initiated method was implemented. Data were collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews. Data analysis and coding were conducted using the open, axial, and selective coding methods.

Results: The results revealed five main contents (causal factors, background factors, interventionist factors, strategies and consequences) and 23 axial categories. The causal factors were categorized in cultural (gender equality, economic status, social factors) and psychological capitals (resiliency, hopefulness, self-efficacy and optimisms). The background factors (cultural upbringing, education and awareness, media), interventionist factors (stereotypical thinking, gender discrimination, cultural concern about appearance, lack of social support, injustice, economic constraints), strategies (cultural awareness enhancement, promotion of representation, infrastructure development, financial support), and consequences (individual dimensions, social dimensions, and cultural dimensions) were also considered.

Conclusions: Gender discrimination, appearance-related cultural concerns, stereotypical thinking, lack of social support, injustice, and economic constraints are highly impactful cultural barriers to women's sports participation. Women may face limitations in accessing professional training, equipment, and competition opportunities due to this discrimination. Promoting gender equality in access to sports resources, advocating for



gender-neutral competitions, and implementing cultural policies for equality can help reduce these barriers. A combination of cultural awareness enhancement, promotion of representation, infrastructure development, and financial support can serve as cultural capital strategies for women's sports participation, fostering continuous improvement in this domain. Women's involvement in athletics not only affected their individual dimensions but also influenced the social and cultural dimensions of communities. From an individual perspective, this involvement could contribute to improving women's physical and mental health. Additionally, from a social standpoint, it can enhance social interactions and strengthen positive aspects of solidarity and community belonging. It could be concluded that cultural and psychological capitals would help to form positive attitudes towards women's involvement in athletics and increase women's empowerment and social development.

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