

## Identification and Evaluation of Factors Affecting Gender Inequality and Women's Participation in Sports Activities

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction mentions gender stereotypes as one reason for limited women's participation in sports. However, no clear connection is made between these stereotypes and the specific research question. Clarify how these stereotypes directly impact women's sports participation and integrate it with the study's objectives.

The sentence "One reason for the lack of progress toward gender equality is the prevalence of negative gender stereotypes" is broad. Consider providing specific examples or studies that illustrate how these stereotypes manifest in the sports industry.

The statement "The majority of respondents were male" requires further analysis. Explain why there was a male majority in a study focused on women's sports participation and how this affected the results.

The presentation of axial codes lacks clarity on how these codes were derived from the qualitative data. Consider adding a column explaining the linkage between the selective coding and axial codes for better traceability.

When presenting the structural equation modeling results, the sentence "Structural factors ( $\beta = 0.88$ )" lacks an explanation of the significance level or the context of how this coefficient was interpreted. Add a brief interpretation of each coefficient's impact.

The limitations section does not mention potential biases introduced by snowball sampling or self-reporting methods. Include these as potential limitations and discuss how they might have impacted the study's findings.

The recommendations suggest infrastructure development as a solution but lack specificity on how this could be implemented, especially considering governmental constraints. Provide more actionable and context-specific recommendations for policymakers.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The sampling method in the qualitative section is snowball sampling, but the rationale for choosing this method is not clear. Justify why snowball sampling was appropriate for this study and whether it introduced any biases.

In the qualitative section, it is mentioned that "the researcher reached theoretical saturation after 15 interviews." Provide more details on how theoretical saturation was determined and explain how the saturation point was assessed in this context.

The article states that both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. However, the transition from qualitative data to quantitative testing is not sufficiently detailed. Include a clear explanation of how the qualitative findings informed the quantitative survey development.

In the findings section, you mention that 208 statements were extracted and reduced into 36 themes. This thematic reduction process needs more detail. Explain the criteria for selecting and merging themes and whether inter-rater reliability was considered in the coding process.

The discussion mentions that "built environmental features such as proximity to sports facilities" impact participation. Provide empirical evidence or references that support this claim, especially in the context of the research location (Iran).

The statement "Inequality in sports participation is shaped by a system where individuals and the environment interact" is too vague. Clarify this interaction by providing concrete examples from the data or literature that illustrate how structural, behavioral, and environmental factors influence each other.

The article mentions the use of Cochran's formula for sample size determination, but the calculation itself is not shown. Include a brief explanation or the actual calculation of how Cochran's formula was applied to determine the sample size.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in Table 2 suggest that the data were normally distributed. However, normality is not always required for SEM. Consider discussing why normality was critical for this analysis and whether non-parametric alternatives were considered.

The conclusion states that "increasing sports facilities" will reduce gender inequality, but it does not explore the deeper cultural or policy-driven barriers that may also play a role. Expand the conclusion to include how cultural shifts or policy changes could complement infrastructure improvements.

The factor analysis results show that behavioral factors have the lowest explanatory power ( $\beta = 0.28$ ). Discuss the potential reasons behind this lower coefficient and whether behavioral interventions might be less effective in the context of women's sports participation.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

