



**A STUDY OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING ELDERLY WOMEN'S
PARTICIPATION IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research was to examine the factors that affect elderly women's participation in recreational activities. The population consisted of all the elderly women of Tehran City aged over 50 years. 375 women were selected as the sample using cluster sampling. Data were collected by a 31-item questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by 15 experts and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.828 was obtained. Descriptive statistics, one-sample t-test, and Friedman test were used for data analysis in SPSS. The results showed that all the identified factors except time barriers had a significant positive effect on participation of elderly women in recreational activities. Moreover, the results of Friedman test showed that physical/psychological factors were the most important and financial factors were the least important. Implications for practice and research are provided.

Keywords: Barriers, elderly women, sport participation, recreational activities

INTRODUCTION

Sport is an exciting, unifying phenomenon that promotes health and development in the society [1]. Sport can enhance physical and psychological health and provide an optimal recreation for people [2]. Sport can be defined as all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being,

and social interaction. This includes play, recreation, organized, casual or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and/or games [3].

Women's sport has become a central topic in the world of sports, as gender inequity in sport has reduced their chance of participation as well as their access to facilities [4]. This is very important, since

women play a key role in the development of societies and sport can enhance their physical and mental health, prevent them from addiction, and improve their academic and workplace outcomes [5].

Despite the significant effect of sport on women's health, Iranian society has not yet appreciated this fact. Sedentary lifestyles and unequal opportunities for sport participation can be detrimental to the society [6]. Sports can serve as an effective and relatively low cost vehicle for boosting countries' gender equity performance[5].

Recreational sport is crucial to physical and mental health of elderly women. However, there are certain barriers that can potentially prevent their participation in sport and recreational activities. Healthy and happy elderly can enhance growth and development in the society and serve as a beacon for the youth [7]. It is thus critical to identify the barriers that prevent sport participation in the elderly. Exercise can help maintain protein, prevent reduction in fat free mass, and delay age-related muscle decline[8]. Research has shown that factors such as lack of interest, sociocultural problems, lack of time, being unaccustomed, lack of facilities, working at home, economic conditions, and menstrual problems are the main barriers to women's

participation in sport and recreational activities [9].

Stennet[10] studied the barriers to participation in specific groups in terms of gender, age, disability, social status, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation. They identified sociocultural, practical, and knowledge factors as the main barriers to participation of older people in sport activities.

Rankin [11]examined the barriers to sport participation and categorized them in 3 groups: physical (facilities, equipment, health and safety), logistical (geography, expense, support of others, communication, suitability), and psychological barriers (personal perceptions and attitudes of others).

Elm [8]found that facilities and health and fitness problems are the main barriers to participation in recreational sports.Naderian and Zarif[12]found a significant relationship between sport participation andattitudes of others, economic factors, and sociocultural factors. The purpose of the present research is to identify the barriers to sport participation in elderly women.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was a descriptive survey. The population consisted of all the elderly women of Tehran City aged over 50 years. 375 women were selected as the sample using cluster sampling and

Cochran's formula. Data were collected using a 31-item questionnaire with 9 dimensions: cultural, financial, structural, time, motivational, effective, physical, management, and information barriers. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. 15 experts in the field of sports science confirmed the validity of the questionnaire. Moreover, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.828 was obtained, indicating its high reliability. Descriptive statistics, one-sample t-test, and Friedman test were used for data analysis in SPSS 22.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic data of the sample was as follows: 222 participants were 45-50 years old (59.2%), 121 were 51-56 years old (32.3%), 23 were 39-51 years old, and 9 were above 40 years (2.4%); 167 had high school diploma or lower (44.5%), 150 had associate degree (40%), and 58 had bachelor's degree or higher (15.5%); 287 were single (76.5%) and 88 were married (23.5%); and 225 were homeowners (76.1%), 95 were renters (25.3%), and the rest (38) had other forms of residence (4.5%).

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the data are normally distributed and parametric tests can be used for data analysis. The results of t-test showed that all the factors except time barriers had a significant positive

effect on participation of elderly women in recreational sports.

Table 1. The results of t-test

Barriers	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Cultural	3.61	1.17	32.22	0.02
Financial	3.412	0.89	6.58	0.000
Structural	3.234	0.96	32.33	0.03
Motivational	3.11	1.05	12.15	0.021
Promotional	3.12	1.17	8.75	0.000
Management	3.22	0.89	49.12	0.000
Physical	3.78	1.02	44.79	0.000

Table 2. The results of binomial test

Measures	Groups	N	Observed Ratio	Barriers Ratio	Sig.
Effective barriers	Group 1	33	0.89	0.5	0.001
	Group 2	41	0.11		
	Total	74	1		
Time barriers	Group 1	15	0.41	0.5	0.006
	Group 2	22	0.59		
	Total	37	1		

Table 3. Ranking the barriers to sport participation (Friedman test)

Rank	Barrier	Mean Score
1	Physical/Psychological	6.69
2	Management	6.15
3	Cultural	6.22
4	Information	6.34
5	Structural	5.8
6	Motivational	4.11
7	Financial	4.13
8	Effective	3.11
9	Time	2.17

The results of Friedman test show that physical/psychological barriers are the most important and financial barriers are the least important factors in elderly women's sport participation.

Table 4. Friedman test

N	375
Chi-squared	1310.84
df	8
Sig.	0.001

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, women's sport has become increasingly popular and a growing number of women athletes have participated and competed in various

athletic events [13]. Sport plays a critical role in the health of individuals, especially elderly women. However, there are a variety of physical and non-physical barriers that can hinder their participation in sport and recreational activities. Identification of these barriers can help officials in their planning for promotion of recreational sports in the elderly. The results of the present research showed that physical/psychological barriers are the most important and financial barriers are the least important factors in elderly women's sport participation. The present findings are consistent with the results of Elm et al. [8], Naderian and Zarif[12], and Rankin [11].

In this research, the elderly women had enough free time and time was not a barrier to their participation. Therefore, officials can focus on promoting the effects of exercise on health and provide sport facilities in order to motivate elderly women to participate in sport and recreational activities. In addition, sport managers must review their attitude toward recreational sports and support sport and recreation in the elderly with appropriate plans and strategies. Future research can examine this issue in different age groups and in men.

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