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The Role of Privatization in the Development of Public Sports Participation

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ABSTRACT

Sport, and especially public sports, is very important because it increases life expectancy by promoting community health. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of privatization in the development of participation in public sports in Alborz, Iran. This study was a mixed research (qualitative and quantitative). In the qualitative phase, the participants included 12 university faculty members and public sports administrators. In the quantitative section, 384 people were selected as a statistical sample based on Morgan table. Amiri et al.'s Privatization Questionnaire (2013) and a researcher-developed questionnaire were used to measure the research variables. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were used to test the research hypotheses. The results showed that privatization has a critical role in the development of participation in public sports in Alborz province. Therefore, expansion of the role and position of the private sector is one of the actions that can be taken in this field. It is suggested that sports, health and well-being officials seriously consider privatization in order to facilitate and increase the participation in public sports.

Introduction

Industrial revolutions and technological advancements and, as its result, machine life, have caused us to witness a poor mobility and a decrease in people's participation in appropriate physical activities. Promoting participation in physical activities is one of the best and most effective ways to reduce and prevent many diseases. One of the physical activities that are followed and implemented with the aim of creating freshness, vitality and health in different societies is public sports (Asefi & Asadi Dastjerdi, 2017). The policy of social participation in public sports in the direction of the development and expansion of sports among different strata of society and taking advantage of its benefits in terms of compensating for the reduction of people's mobility and helping to increase the vitality and physical and mental health of citizens is one of the priorities of every growing society, but despite the passage of several decades of the policy of sports for all, the opportunity to participate in sports for all is still not well prepared (Vandendriessche et al., 2012). Today, in the public sector, sports are evaluated

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less than optimal due to financial performance and operational efficiency, and this issue is not very popular with the general public. The lack of funds in the parts of sports that are managed by the government has caused the elimination or reduction of services and events arranged by them (Moharamzadeh, 2015; Moqaddasi, Sheikhalizadeh, & Faraji, 2020). Therefore, the organizations in charge of sports, including the Ministry of Sports and Youth, have turned to private organizations to promote sports goals; Because they have better and more investment compared to government organizations and can play a more effective role in the development of public and championships sports, as well as goals such as job creation and increasing the productivity of sports facilities and equipment (Javan, 2007; Zardoshtian & Ghayeb Zadeh, 2019).

The interference of the government in sports organizations makes their performance with serious risks (Van den Hurk & Verhoest, 2017). The performance of our government in recent years has shown that it has not been able to produce the necessary productivity in sports and non-sports fields due to legal and political issues and has not used the country's internal potential and has not been successful in attracting investors. The implementation of privatization increases productivity and creates opportunities for planning and investment in various fields, including sports (Vafaei Moghaddam, Farzan, Razavi, & Afshari, 2019). The participation of the private sector through providing facilities is very important in the development of public sports at the community level (Tohidi, Moharramzadeh, Imanzadeh, & Dastgiri, 2023). The private sector is able to produce and provide services more efficiently due to the competition, structure and human resources very different from the public sector (Babaei, 2020). The private sector, with its capacities such as the Required capital and sufficient equipment, can play a more active role in the improvement of spaces, the expansion of sports facilities, the production, equipment and maintenance of sports facilities that this requires a proper foundation, granting facilities and providing incentive mechanisms from the government in order to lead the private sector to take seriously the provision of sports services and consequently change the culture of the consumption pattern in the society and increase the share of sports in the family expenditure (Farahani, Alidoust Ghahfarrokhi, & Derakhshande Ghahferrokhi, 2015).

Just as participation in sports and physical activity can have positive and beneficial effects for the society, not participating or reducing people's participation in sports can also have negative economic, social, cultural and political consequences (Ebrahimipour, Ramezani Nezhad, & Amir Nezhad, 2017). Currently, due to the existence of different approaches regarding the amount and manner of physical activity, there is no accurate and definite statistics of the participation rate in public sports in the country, but all the available statistics show the participation rate to be insufficient. The emphasis of the sports officials is that sports for all should be developed to the point where it is placed alongside daily activities as a part of people's life style (Arabnarmi, Goodarzi, Sajadi, & Khabiri, 2017). Public sport is a low-cost and fun and effective tool that can be implemented for the public in terms of individual and social characteristics. In addition, public sport can be a part of people's daily life plan and have a significant contribution in improving their physical, mental and social health. Therefore, the officials of sports sanitation and health should investigate methods that increase the number of people participating in public sports (Afarinesh Khaki A, 2005). Now the researchers are trying to investigate whether there is a connection between the implementation of the privatization program and the development of participation in public sports.

The research findings of Balwel and Tayachi (2021) showed that privatization have strong relationship with improving the country economic and it also have quite relationship with the club's development(Balwel & Tayachi, 2021). The research findings of Razavi et al. (2018) showed that the implementation of privatization leads to the development of sports, the result of which is success in various sports fields (public to championship and professional) and the consequences of the implementation of privatization in sports are the increase of people's participation in sports and non-sports arenas. Kepoğlu and Çakmak (2017) by examining the organizational culture of employees of private and public sports institutions showed that the level of job satisfaction of employees of private sports organizations is higher than the level of job satisfaction of employees of public sports organizations(Kepoğlu & Çakmak, 2017). The research findings of Mohamadikharajo et al. (2020) showed that one of the threats to public sports in the country is the lack of motivation of the private sector for investment(Mohamadikharajo, Majedi, & NaderiNasab, 2020). Javadipoor et al. (2018)

stated in their research that the fields of social participation in public sports in Iran include five main categories of human factors, structural factors, management factors, environmental complexity and economic factors, in order of priority (Javadipoor, Zareian, & Parsaju, 2018). The results of the research of Norouzi et al. (2018) under the title of describing and explaining the relationship between the socio-economic base and the type and amount of women's sports participation showed that housewives with low education and income do not participate in sports while women with education and average income, regardless of their job, are more involved in public sports and student or working women with high education and income are more likely to participate in organized sports (Norouzi, Maleki, Parsamehr, & Ghasemi, 2018). Mollajafari et al. (2017) concluded in their research that, in general, the programs and actions carried out have provided the grounds for the promotion and development of public sports. However, the orientations, programs and actions carried out have been partial (Mollajafari, Tojjari, & Esmaeili, 2017). Vafaei Moghaddam et al. (2019) in their research under the title of surveying the development causes of sport for all based on grounded theory showed that many development factors are not related to the individuals themselves; Rather, by facilitating the environmental driving factors and removing the existing obstacles, people will freely choose sports among leisure activities (Vafaei Moghaddam et al., 2019). Keshavarz et al. (2012) showed in their research that handing over public sports facilities to the private sector in Tehran province did not have a significant impact on the development of public sports (Keshavarz, 2012).

Considering the importance of the participation of members of the society in sports activities and its development, it is necessary to take advantage of all experiences and capacities in this field. Public sports can make a significant contribution in improving the physical, mental and social health of people. Therefore, the officials of sports and health should investigate methods that increase the number of people participating in public sports. Many experts believe that extensive government ownership has caused many problems in important fields. The solution that is offered to eliminate these problems and issues is to try to reduce the government's entrepreneurship and establish a competitive structure and outsourcing things that the private sector can play a role in. The participation of the private sector can bring countless benefits in various fields, including sports, due to the adoption of functional and flexible structures, speed in decision-making, the ability to optimally allocate resources and provide quality goods and services. On the other hand, researchers' investigations showed that research related to the role of privatization in the development of participation in public sports has not been conducted in Alborz province so far, and this has created a scientific vacuum in this field, which requires such research to solve it and the research results can be useful for managers, planners and decision makers in the field of privatization.

Methodology

The current research is a type of mixed (qualitative and quantitative) research, analytical description, present tense based on time, practical in terms of purpose, and in terms of data collection, it is field that which was carried out in 2021. The statistical population includes two parts. In the qualitative part, the statistical population included academic staff members of universities and managers in the field of sports, of which 12 people formed the statistical sample. In the quantitative part of the statistical population, based on the official statistics, there are 50 associations, committees and groups in Alborz province, and according to the statistics obtained from the sport for all federation, 23,756 people have participated in the Iran-Active system as participants in public sports of the province, and using Morgan's table, 384 people were selected as a statistical sample in a relative stratified method. The data collection method is included library studies such as reading domestic and foreign books and journals and searching in databases (Internet) in order to obtain theoretical foundations and use the experiences of other researchers, interviews and using questionnaires. Amiri et al.'s (2014) privatization questionnaire was used to measure privatization (Amiri, Nayyeri, Saffari, & Delbari Ragheb, 2014). This questionnaire contains 40 questions based on a 5-point Likert scale with the options of very high, high, medium, low and very low with scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively, and it has five management components (questions 1 to 14), social-cultural (questions 15 to 24), political-legal (questions 25 to 31), economic (questions 32 to 40). The validity of this scale has been confirmed by the relevant professors. The reliability of this questionnaire was obtained 0.82 using

Cronbach's alpha. In order to measure the development of public participation, a researcher-made questionnaire was used, which was based on the study of research literature and through discussions and exchange of opinions with experts in this field, including university faculty members, managers of public sports, as well as reading books and scientific and internet articles. The construction of the questionnaire was done through interviews using the purposeful sampling method, which continued until theoretical saturation and data sufficiency. Finally, a 34-question questionnaire was designed with 6 components of service factors, socio-cultural factors, human resources, executive factors, planning and economic factors. Regarding data collection, after preparing the questionnaires and ensuring their suitability, the researcher distributed and collected the questionnaires among the participants in public sports in Alborz province. Descriptive statistics were used to classify the raw scores. In order to ensure the validity of the construct and confirm the identified factors, confirmatory factor analysis was used using partial square method. Also, to examine the conceptual model of the research, path analysis using structural equation modeling was used using SPSS version 23 and PLS version 2 software.

Results

The In this research, exploratory factor analysis was used to determine and identify factors affecting the development of participation in public sports in Alborz province. Therefore, in order to ensure the sufficient number of samples, the Kaiser- Meyer-Oklin (KMO) criterion was used and Bartlett's test was used to determine the correlation between variables (items).

Table1. Bartlett and KMO test results

	value	
Kaiser- Meyer-Oklin's value (Adequacy of sample size)	0.855	
Bartlett's sphericity test	Chi-square value (χ^2)	4614.264
	df	780
	Significance level	0.001

According to the findings of Table 1, the obtained KMO value is 0.855. This value indicates that the number of research samples is sufficient for factor analysis and it is possible to perform factor analysis for the desired data and the data can be reduced to a series of hidden factors. Also, the results of Bartlett's test (Sig=0.001, $\chi^2=4614.264$) show that there is a high correlation between the items.

In order to ensure the construct validity and confirm the factors identified in the previous stage (exploratory factor analysis), the factors were checked using the confirmatory factor analysis test using the partial square method. Based on the results reported in Table 2, the factor loadings of the research questions are acceptable.

Table2. Results of confirmatory factor

Factors	Question	Confirmatory factor	t-value	Significance level
Service factors	How important is the proper location of sports facilities and equipment for participating in public sports	0.87	30.99	0.001
	How important is it to you to have facilities and equipment at your disposal during the day and night for participating in public sports	0.85	19.57	0.001
	How important is the security of access routes to sports facilities and equipment by participating in public sports	0.55	3.84	0.001
	How important is the state of public transportation to access sports facilities and equipment by participating in public sports	0.55	11.23	0.001
	How important is the visual appeal of sports facilities and equipment to you by participating in public sports	0.69	22.36	0.001

	How important is it to you to pay attention to the cleanliness of sports facilities and equipment by participating in public sports	0.82	20.04	0.001
	How important is the diversity of sports facilities and equipment to you by participating in public sports	0.77	13.13	0.001
	How important is the safety of sports facilities and equipment to you by participating in public sports	0.79	14.39	0.001
Socio-cultural factors	How important is it to you to fill your free time with participation in public sports	0.87	28.78	0.001
	How important is it to you to increase your social connections by participating in community sports	0.71	11.08	0.001
	How important is it to you to be in the company of friends and acquaintances and participate in public sports	0.61	8.19	0.001
	How important is family support to you by participating in public sports	0.58	5.88	0.001
	How important are religious beliefs to you by participating in public sports	0.67	8.29	0.001
	How important are the thoughts of your friends and relatives to you by participating in public sports	0.81	17.65	0.001
	How important is it to you to hold native and local games by participating in public sports	0.46	3.35	0.001
Human resources	How important is proper training to you by participating in public sports	0.48	3.65	0.001
	How important is your coach's knowledge by participating in public sports	0.85	27.99	0.001
	How important is your coach's athletic skill to you by participating in public sports	0.67	3.57	0.001
	How important is your coach's communication skills to your participation in public sports	0.48	3.47	0.001
	How important are educational workshops to you by participating in public sports	0.74	13.28	0.001
	How important is your coach's education to you by participating in public sports	0.37	2.40	0.001
Executive factors	How important is the proper management of sports facilities to you by participating in public sports	0.80	19.64	0.001
	How important is it to you that the institutions related to holding sports competitions and festivals are aligned with participation in public sports	0.52	4.23	0.001
	How important is the emphasis of public sports managers on the development of physical activities by participating in public sports	0.56	5.63	0.001
	How important is the presence of specialist forces in sports venues to participate in public sports	0.66	7.24	0.001
	How important is it for you to have expert coaches in sports venues with participation in public sports	0.71	12.32	0.001
	How important is the relationship between the associations, committees and groups of the Federation of Public Sports on the development of physical activities by participating in public sports	0.44	4.57	0.001
Planning	How important is the proper planning of sports venues for participating in public sports	0.46	3.11	0.001
	How important is the coordination of different sports departments with participation in public sports	0.64	5.35	0.001

Economic factors	How important is the strategic planning of the general committee to you with participation in general sports	0.84	18.66	0.001
	How important is the short-term planning of the community board with participation in community sport	0.37	2.56	0.001
	Is per capita welfare important to you by participating in public sports	0.50	2.88	0.001
	How important is the market situation to you by participating in public sports	0.63	4.99	0.001
	How important is the budget of the provincial public sports committee to you by participating in public sports	0.89	25.01	0.001

Cronbach's alpha index and composite reliability index were used to check the reliability and assessment of internal consistency reliability of the variables of the measurement model. The extracted average variance index was used to check the convergent validity of the research measurement model. As can be seen in Table 3, the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are acceptable for all research variables, and considering the values of the extracted average variance index, the convergent validity is confirmed.

Table3. Cronbach's alpha values, composite reliability and average variance index extracted for the research variables

Components	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	Significance level
Privatization	0.92	0.95	0.56	0.001
Development of participation in public sports	0.84	0.87	0.82	0.001

Fornell & Larcker index was used to check the divergent validity of the research measurement model. According to Table 4, divergent validity was confirmed.

Table4. Values of Fornell and Locker index in order to determine the differential validity of the measurement part of the research model

Components	1	2
Privatization	0.71	
Development of participation in public sports	0.88	0.90

Based on the calculations made based on the GOF2 index, the value of the goodness of fit index for the research model was calculated as 0.73. Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall fit of the model is appropriate.

Table5. The fit of the variables and the general model of the research using the GOF criterion

Variables	Communalities	R ²
Privatization	0.82	-
Development of participation in public sports	0.56	0.78
GOF criterion		0.61

The results of Table 6 and figures 1 and 2 show that at the level of 0.01 and with 95% confidence, privatization has a positive and significant role on the development of participation in public sports in Alborz province.

Table6. The results of the direct relationship and the significant coefficients of the research hypothesis

structural path	Path coefficient	T-Value	Test result
Privatization → Partnership development	0.88	48.72	Confirm

Figures 1 and 2 show the structural model of the research. As can be seen, considering that the t coefficients are greater than 1.96, their significance is confirmed at the 95% level.

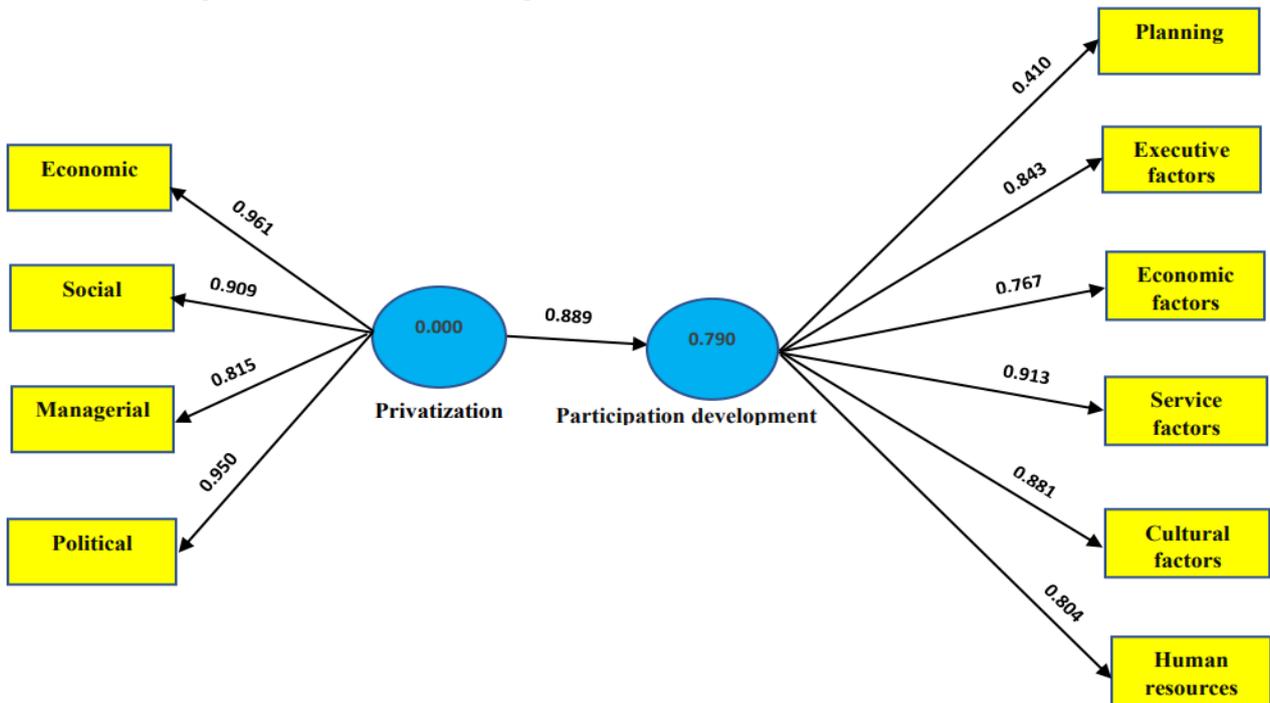


Figure1. The fitted model of the research (Significant coefficients)

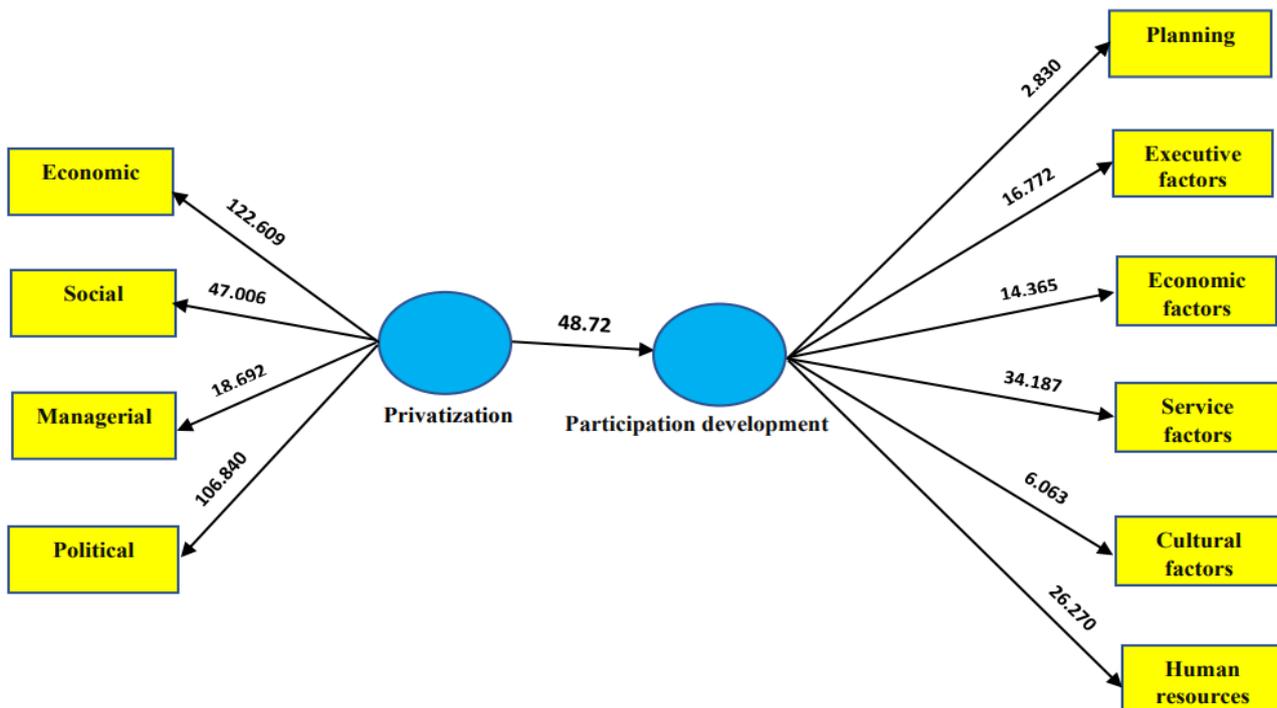


Figure2. The model with the significance coefficient of Z

Discussion and Conclusion

Many experts and specialists believe that the country's economy has suffered a lot of damage due to extensive government ownership, monopoly market structure, introversion and lack of interaction with the outside world, which has caused many problems in all important fields. The solution that is offered to eliminate these problems and issues is to try to reduce the government's entrepreneurship and establish a competitive structure and outsourcing things that the private sector can play a role in. Private sector due to adopting functional and flexible structures, speed in decision-making, ability to develop relationships based on trust and mutual benefit, risk management, access to resources, technologies and expertise, ability to optimally allocate resources and the provision of goods and services with good quality has a lot of capacity to manage the country's economic affairs, and its participation in the country's economy, especially in the field of sports, brings countless advantages. Privatization is one of the most important components of modern management and has supporters and opponents who argue in this field. In Iran, privatization as a policy has been accepted and implemented in the whole political and economic system of Iran. However, the obstacles and malfunctions in the implementation of privatization have reduced its effectiveness and efficiency in solving the country's problems (Pour Ahmadi et al, 2018). On the other hand, in recent decades, social participation has been considered as one of the development indicators in the framework of the institutionalization of people's activities (Javadipoor et al., 2018). Therefore, in this research, the role of privatization in the development of participation in public sports in Alborz province was investigated.

The results showed that privatization plays a role in the development of participation in public sports in Alborz province, which is consistent with the research results of Razavi et al. (2018). During the last two decades, privatization mechanisms have been designed and implemented in many countries, and it is used as a solution to rationalize the economic structure of society, reducing the financial burden, increasing efficiency, expansion of activities and efficient use of existing facilities and resources. Privatization is like many other policies, including social, political and economic trends and its most important goals are decentralization in the economy and attracting more people's participation in production and service activities and achieving a higher level and promoting economic growth. In the implementation of the policies of Article 44 of the Constitution and the continuation of economic, social and cultural development programs, privatization has been considered as an important issue. So that in the set goals of the economic transformation programs, the transfer of government activities to the private sector is being seriously pursued, and the country's sports are also subject to these approvals and among this, the privatization of sports facilities has a special place as the country's sports infrastructure. The review of the literature on privatization in the field of sports shows that almost all countries of the world attach special importance to the role and position of privatization in the sports sector. In general, governments have also taken actions in this direction (Amiri et al., 2014). But it must be acknowledged that these actions are not enough and if more facilities and amenities of public sports be available to the people and the necessary incentives and support be provided to the private sector and proper interaction with organizations related to public sports be established, it is possible to see more participation of community members in public sports (Mollajafari et al., 2017). In this connection, Yaghobi and Forghani Ozrudi (2021) also point to providing incentives for the private sector to participate in various sub-categories of physical education and sports, including the development of student sports (Yaghobi, 2021). On the other hand, the research findings of Keshavarz et al. (2014) showed that handing over government sports facilities to the private sector in Tehran province did not have a significant impact on the development of public sports (Keshavarz, 2012) which is not consistent with the results of the present study, the reason for which requires more detailed investigations, but academic research has shown that by considering a set of components and providing preparations, privatization can increase participation, improve the efficiency and quality of services. Success in privatization requires creating a suitable environment for the private sector to be able to work in those conditions (Atghia, Gharekhani, & Yaghoubi, 2021). Therefore, in order to develop participation in public sports, the sports officials should be careful in the successful implementation of the sports privatization policy and its executive considerations.

The results of this research also showed that socio-cultural, political and economic factors have an effect on the development of participation in public sports in Alborz province, which is consistent with the research results of Norouzi et al. (2018) and Javadipoor et al. (2018). One of the important aspects of the participation of people in public sports for governments is the political aspect (Casey, Fowlie, Charity, Harvey, & Eime, 2019). The main weakness that most sports organizations and sports programs are facing is the lack of funds, which due to the lack of revenue generation of public sports and the great variety of sports, as well as the legal vacuum in the form of support packages in this field and on the other hand, the unwillingness of the private sector to invest in the field of public sports due to the lack of proper advertising and investment return, the dependence of departments on government resources and the small share of sports in the family's expenses, public sports are associated with weakness in this respect. In addition to that, people's acceptance of public sports activities, the attention of senior officials to the development of public sports, increasing the role of the press and media in the country's public sports are among the potential opportunities of public sports (Mohamadikharajo et al., 2020). Among them, we can refer to the allocation of a larger share of television programs to public sports. Therefore, the development of macro-economic, socio-cultural and political sectors by using the capacities of the private sector can be considered as an important solution in the policy of developing participation in public sports.

The results showed that the factors of human resources, planning and services have an effect on the development of participation in public sports in Alborz province, which is consistent with the research results of Javadipoor et al. (2018). With the progress of science and technology, the role of management and human resources and planning in the development of social and executive partnerships has become prominent. Nowadays, the development of sports as a public policy is preferred over other political issues of governments and most of the advanced countries of the world compete with other countries in planning and organizing their public sports and are regularly presenting creative programs for the growth of this sport (Parsaju, Javadipoor, & Zareian, 2019). If the government has a supporting role in the privatization of sports, the cooperation and activity of the private and public sector together will cause more synergy and efficiency (Vafaei Moghaddam et al., 2019). Therefore, the correct and rational program of privatization and the use of services provided by the private sector can be considered a positive step towards the development of participation in public sports. Changing traditional methods and non-comprehensive programs to targeted short and medium-term programs and using new methods to invite and participate in the private sector can be effective in developing public participation in sports.

The private sector can play an important role in the development of sports, especially public sports. Investing in the construction of sports facilities, building sports equipment with appropriate quality, training experienced human resources, teaching different sports are among the important things that the private sector can apply in the development of sports. A comprehensive needs assessment in public sports and physical activity and providing services based on it is one of the suggestions arising from the research. As Rahmati et al. (2020) point out in their research, privatization requires the creation of a transparent and suitable platform so that managers can engage in privatization in a suitable competition (Rahmati, Yektayar, Khodamoradpoor, & Ahmadi, 2020). Establishing appropriate laws can be provided to managers as a suitable executive tool. The background literature shows that the parallel interference of government organizations and institutions is one of the most important obstacles to privatization in the field of sports (Nasseh, 2013). Therefore, the development of public sports, championships, as well as goals such as job creation and increasing the productivity of sports facilities and equipment, require the sincere cooperation of all government and private institutions. Finally, it should be mentioned that by moving towards privatization in sports, in addition to economic benefits for the whole country, the context of more active participation in sports is also provided.

A review of the privatization law in sports shows that what this law is considering is championship sports and there is no mention of public sports. The results of this research show that Privatization is extremely needed for the development of participation in public sports and the structure of public participation in sports can be modified and developed with the help of privatization and it is better to provide public sports services in the society through the private sector. But it should be noted that there are many problems and challenges that hinder the process of privatization and development of

participation in sports for all, which should be recognized and figure out the solutions. In reverse there are many factors for successful privatization in this field that must be carefully considered and implemented. In general, the results of the research showed that privatization has a role in the development of participation in public sports. Therefore, the officials of sports and health should take the necessary actions and plans to expand the role and position of the private sector in order to increase the number of people participating in public sports. Finally, the researchers recommend future researchers to investigate more about this topic and this research can be used as a reference.

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