



Design and Testing of a Model for the Development of the Disability Sports Ecosystem in Iran

Vahid Nikfarjam

Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran.

Vahid Saatchian

Associate Professor, Department of Sport Science and Health, Imam Reza International University, Mashhad, Iran.

Sanaz Soroori

Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran.

Seyyed Morteza Azimzadeh

Associate Professor, Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was the design and testing of a development model for the disability sports ecosystem in Iran. The research method was descriptive-correlational. The statistical population included top managers, experts, and active members of the National Paralympic Committee and the Federation of Sports for the Disabled; selected managers of rehabilitation centers in provincial capitals; and physically disabled athletes (with a minimum of 5 years of sports activity and recent medal achievements). Purposive sampling was used. The sample size was determined based on its adequacy for analysis. The results of the factor analysis of the main variable constructs indicated that all components played a significant explanatory role. Path analysis also showed that the relationships between variables were positive and significant, and the conceptual model had an excellent fit. The positive and significant relationships among the model's variables demonstrate its scientific validity in analyzing the current situation and predicting pathways for enhancing sports participation among people with disabilities at the national level. Key findings revealed the following factors, in descending order of influence, on the Iranian parasports development ecosystem: parasports facilities and services, structural capacity, and involvement of relevant institutions at 84%; parasports activities and events at 83%; economic support and industry for parasports and the flow of knowledge and technology in parasports at 76%; parasports capabilities within the disabled community at 71%; mechanisms for promoting and empowering parasports and the virtual and communications platform in sports at 70%; involvement of relevant individual roles in parasports at 48%; societal culture in supporting parasports at 33%; parasports infrastructure and facilities at 32%. The innovation of this research lies in providing a practical framework for developing the parasports ecosystem, which had not been comprehensively addressed in domestic or international literature. This model can serve as a guide for policymakers and sports managers in developing targeted programs for expanding sports for individuals with disabilities. Its findings also provide a basis for optimizing resource allocation and upgrading sports infrastructure to meet the needs of this group.

* Corresponding Author: v.saatchian@imamreza.ac.ir

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Introduction

This study was designed to create and test a comprehensive development model for the parasports ecosystem in Iran. Recognizing the vital role of sports in the rehabilitation, social empowerment, and improved quality of life for individuals with disabilities, the research aims to provide a practical framework for policymakers and managers to enhance both mass participation and elite-level parasports.

Methods and Materials

The research employed a descriptive-correlational methodology, utilizing purposive sampling. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed. The sample included top-level managers and experts from the National Paralympic Committee and the Federation of Sports for the Disabled, selected managers from provincial rehabilitation centers, and physically disabled athletes with a minimum of five years of experience and recent medal achievements. A total of 137 questionnaires were deemed suitable for the final analysis.

Results and Discussion

The research instrument's content validity was confirmed through expert feedback from eight scientific and executive professionals. Subsequently, composite reliability and construct validity were assessed and confirmed using SmartPLS 3 software. The results of the factor analysis confirmed that all components of the main variable constructs played a significant explanatory role. Path analysis further demonstrated that the relationships between all variables were positive and statistically significant, and the proposed conceptual model exhibited an excellent fit.

The model's scientific validity is underscored by the positive and significant relationships found among its variables, which proves its effectiveness in analyzing the current situation and predicting future pathways for enhancing sports participation among people with disabilities at the national level. Key findings, ranked in descending order of influence on the Iranian parasports development ecosystem, revealed the following:

- Parasports facilities and services, structural capacity, and involvement of relevant institutions were found to have the highest influence at 84%.
- Parasports activities and events followed closely with an 83% influence.
- Economic support and industry for parasports and the flow of knowledge and technology in parasports showed a significant influence at 76%.
- Parasports capabilities within the disabled community had a 71% influence.
- Mechanisms for promoting and empowering parasports and the virtual and communications platform in sports registered a 70% influence.
- Involvement of relevant individual roles in parasports showed a 48% influence.
- Finally, societal culture in supporting parasports and parasports infrastructure and facilities had a lower but still notable influence at 33% and 32%, respectively.

Conclusion

This research contributes a novel, practical framework for developing the parasports ecosystem, a subject not comprehensively addressed in previous domestic or international literature. The model is a valuable tool for sports policymakers, federations, and related organizations, guiding them in the design and implementation of more cohesive and effective programs. It can also assist in optimizing resource allocation and upgrading sports infrastructure to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities. Ultimately, the proposed model offers a structured approach to increasing social participation and improving the quality of life for this community.

Keywords: disabled sports, individuals with physical disabilities, sports development, sports rehabilitation