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Iranian Women's Sports on the Path of Development and Transformation: From the Pahlavi Era to the Victory of the Islamic Revolution

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ABSTRACT

During the Pahlavi era, considerable efforts were made to transform the social and cultural status of women, and women's sports constituted one of the areas that received particular attention. Women's participation in sports in Iran emerged as a novel and influential phenomenon during the First Pahlavi period, especially in the context of the social transformations that followed the Constitutional Revolution. During this period, changing traditional attitudes toward women, together with the Pahlavi government's policies aimed at promoting sports, contributed to the formal establishment of women's participation in athletic activities. Women's sports in Iran began with the introduction of compulsory physical education in schools and attracted attention as a social phenomenon arising from the transformation of the traditional social environment during the First Pahlavi era. It was therefore regarded as both an emerging and highly contested phenomenon. During the Second Pahlavi period, women's sports gradually expanded as a result of increased governmental attention and the establishment of sports organizations and clubs, although social restrictions and resistance persisted. Using a descriptive-analytical case-study approach, the present research draws on library and archival sources, as well as relevant newspapers and scholarly articles. In addition to examining Iran's cultural and social conditions at the time women first entered the field of sports—covering the post-Constitutional Revolution period and the First and Second Pahlavi eras—and assessing the influence of the prevailing environment on facilitating social acceptance of this role, the study also investigates the subsequent development of women's sports after the Islamic Revolution. It seeks to analyze the process through which women's sports became institutionalized in Iranian society, identify the factors that contributed to its development and expansion, and examine the position of this social phenomenon over time. The findings indicate that, despite cultural and social barriers within a traditionally oriented society, the institutionalization and development of women's sports progressed effectively within Iran's cultural and social context from the Pahlavi era to the Islamic Revolution. Concurrent with the country's broader social and political transformations, this process laid the foundations for subsequent developments in women's sports after the Islamic Revolution.

Keywords: *sports, Iranian women, Pahlavi era, school sports, development of women's sports, sports policies*



Introduction

Women's participation in sport in Iran began during the First Pahlavi era, while female athletes entered international competitions during the Second Pahlavi period. Extensive cultural changes emerged in women's social activities as a result of the transformation of the traditional social environment and the tendency toward modernization during the First Pahlavi era. The publication of periodicals, the establishment of centers and associations headed by educated women, and the enactment of educational laws and regulations, especially in girls' schools, not only conveyed the message of the women's social movement and women's equality with men but also reminded women of many of their rights, including the right to engage in sport. Accordingly, one of the primary objectives of women-related associations was the cultivation of physical strength and, within that framework, participation in sport. During the First Pahlavi period, the publication of materials in *Ettela'at* newspaper aimed at enlightening public opinion concerning social reforms, particularly those affecting women, together with the presence of individuals and circles that emphasized the benefits of sport for women in opposition to negative views and speeches, played an influential role in preparing the social environment for the commencement of women's athletic activities. Nevertheless, it should also be recognized that the Constitutional Revolution and the transformation it produced within Iranian society facilitated women's entry into the sphere of sport. Every social phenomenon requires time to emerge and conditions conducive to its acceptance by the public. This was particularly important in the traditional Iranian society of the period, where women, because of their lack of social rights, faced restrictions in undertaking many social and cultural activities, and where women's participation in sport was considered contrary to both custom and religious norms. Despite brief interruptions, particularly during its formative years, women's sport in Iran continued on a path of development. Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian female athletes acquired opportunities to participate in international competitions and assumed managerial responsibilities within the country's sports administration. Over time, it became evident that women's athletic abilities were not necessarily inferior to those of men. Effective measures undertaken in recent years to develop women's sport for all and elite women's sport have resulted in considerable growth in this field. Today, Iranian women athletes have fulfilled their mission and achieved distinction in international arenas, while tens of thousands of female referees and coaches have become sources of national pride. The issue of Iranian women's sport during this period therefore reflects a process that began with early efforts to introduce women into sport within a traditional and restrictive society marked by numerous cultural and social barriers and gradually moved toward the development of sports structures and the expansion of women's participation in athletic arenas. Concurrent with the country's social and political transformations, this process provided the foundation for later developments in women's sport after the Islamic Revolution. Studying this trajectory contributes to a better understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and roles of cultural and media institutions in developing women's sport and highlights the importance of women's sport within Iran's broader process of social transformation. The examination and explanation of women's role in sport and the effects of sport on women's social lives are subjects that have not received sufficient scholarly attention. Nevertheless, the research background on this topic may briefly be traced through articles, archival documents, analyses of newspapers and periodicals published during the periods under study, and discussions within broader books related to the subject. Accordingly, works examining women's circumstances and problems after the Constitutional Revolution, their social and legal status under the modernization policies of the First and Second Pahlavi eras, and studies specifically tracing the development of women's sport at national and

international levels—particularly after the Islamic Revolution—fall within the scope of the present research. Regarding the origins of this social phenomenon, the principal background works include *Dokhtaran-e Iran* magazine, published in 1931; *Ayin-e Varzesh*, published in 1935; Badr al-Moluk Bamdad's *The Iranian Woman from the Constitutional Revolution to the White Revolution*, published in 1969; Ahmad Kasravi's *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, published in 1991; Majid Kashef's "Reconsidering Women's Sport," published in 1996; Esmaeil Kakhodazadeh's *Leading Figures in Iranian Sport*, published in 2009; Abbasi and Mousavi's "A Review of the Status of Iranian Women during the Pahlavi Era from 1921 to 1953," published in *Women's Research Quarterly* in 2014; Hosseinihah's *A History of Women's Sport in Iran*, published in 2017; Salmasizadeh and Amiri's "The Impact of First Pahlavi Modernization on Women's Position in the Family and Society," published in *The History of Iran after Islam* in 2017; Jahanbakhsh Savaqeb et al.'s "The Reflection of Women's Social Status during the Pahlavi Era in *Ettela'at* Newspaper, 1927–1941," published in 2019; and Khosrowzadeh and Azizi's "An Analysis of the Formation and Growth of Women's Sport during the Reza Shah Era," published in 2021. Nevertheless, despite providing valuable information, previous studies have rarely offered a comprehensive history of women's sport that simultaneously examines prevailing social beliefs concerning women's athletic participation in traditional Iranian society, the factors affecting the development and expansion of this process, and the institutionalization and growth of women's sport within the broader political and intellectual transformations of Iranian society. Although books and articles have approached the subject from different perspectives, the absence of more comprehensive research remains evident. Using a descriptive-analytical method, the present study therefore seeks to answer the following question: How did women's sport in Iran develop in the face of existing social and cultural restrictions, and through what transformations did it pass before reaching its present condition? It is hoped that, by adopting a new perspective on women's sport, the findings of this study will contribute to addressing the existing research gap, assist scholars in cultural and historical studies and those interested in sport, and provide a clearer understanding of women's role in Iran's cultural and social history.

Using a descriptive-analytical case-study method and drawing on library and archival sources, newspapers, relevant articles, and the existing literature, this research examines Iran's cultural and social conditions at the time women first entered sport—the post-Constitutional Revolution period and the First and Second Pahlavi eras—the influence of the prevailing environment on facilitating the acceptance of this role, and the process of its transformation up to the Islamic Revolution.

Women's Social Conditions and Their Entry into Sport

The earliest examples of attention to women and their social condition appeared during the middle years of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar's reign. During this period, intellectuals such as Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, and Mirza Malkom Khan Nazem al-Dowleh emerged and raised the issue of women's rights. Newspapers such as *Qanun* in London, *Akhtar* in the Ottoman Empire, and *Habl al-Matin* in Calcutta, India, used the term "woman" at a time when women in Iranian society were commonly addressed through derogatory expressions such as "the weak one" and "the humiliated one" (1).

Concurrent with the rise of the constitutionalist movement in Iran, Iranian women entered the political struggle through the spontaneous formation of various organizations and associations and under the influence of newly emerging nationalist sentiments. The Constitutional Revolution was, in fact, a genuine turning point in the history of Iranian women (2). The revolution increased attention to women's education and led to the establishment of girls'

schools, constituting a major turning point in improving women's social and cultural position. Specialized women's periodicals were published during this period, and the question of women and their participation in society received serious attention. Publications such as *Zaban-e Zanan* and *Nameh-ye Banovan* strongly criticized gender structures, while women used poetry and fiction to advocate modernization and participation in public life. Articles in these periodicals focused primarily on the need for women's education and the enhancement of their rights. The two works *Nesvaniyat: A Reappraisal of Women's Poetry in the Press*, which published women's critical poems, and *Nesvan-Nameh: An Analysis of Women's Fiction in Qajar-Era Periodicals* demonstrate how women engaged with the issues of modernization and citizenship. This pattern continued during the First Pahlavi era (1).

Women's Entry into Sport

Women's entry into the world of sport has a long and complex history that, from antiquity to the present, has been shaped by diverse cultural, social, and religious factors. In ancient Iran, particularly during the Achaemenid and Sasanian periods, women participated in certain physical activities, including horseback riding and archery, primarily for military preparedness and physical conditioning.

Following the Constitutional Revolution and women's political participation, women gradually organized their own associations and became increasingly involved in social activities. In the field of education, women initially acted independently, after which the government facilitated women's education and authorized the establishment of girls' schools through licenses issued by the Ministry of Education (3). As the number of such schools increased—to 25 schools by 1914—approximately 890 girls were enrolled, of whom nearly 192 studied free of charge (4). With the expansion of girls' schools, female students began participating in physical exercise. This activity was not professional sport, because schools a century ago lacked both adequate facilities and physical education instructors. What is important, apart from the issue of professional sport, is that women's physical activity began to be taken seriously (5). Following the Constitutional Revolution, most efforts intended to transform people's lives, particularly in the sphere of sport, initially benefited men, who entered professional sport, while women remained of secondary importance. The first sports associations, established for men under the title "Association of the Founders of Sport," appeared in the final years of the Qajar period. Comparable associations for women, however, were not established until the second half of Reza Shah's reign (6).

Women's Sport during the First Pahlavi Era

The coup of February 21, 1921, and Reza Khan's subsequent rise to power initiated a new phase in the historical development of Iranian society. Seeking to achieve political centralization through a policy of cultural homogenization, Reza Shah's government attempted to advance this objective by expanding modern schools and establishing organizations such as the Organization for the Cultivation of Public Thought (7). Reza Shah succeeded in implementing innovations previously proposed, but not realized, by reformers such as Abbas Mirza, Amir Kabir, Sepahsalar, Malkom Khan, and the democrats of the Constitutional Revolution. These measures were undertaken in pursuit of his long-term objective of reconstructing Iran according to a Western model. His principal instruments for achieving this objective included secularization, the dismantling of traditional structures, nationalism, educational expansion, and the state budget (8). Following the coup of February 21, 1921, numerous social domains underwent relative change under the new quasi-modern political order, one of the most important being the sphere of women and women's affairs. From the Constitutional period onward, women sought to remove the obstacles and restrictions

that had isolated Iranian women. They attempted to expand women's participation in politics, education, and cultural affairs and to improve women's status in the family and society. Sport, however, received attention somewhat later because men's organized sport had not yet been formally established and women themselves had shown little interest in athletic participation (9).

The development of women's sport during this period confronted cultural, religious, and social barriers. One of the principal obstacles to the formation and advancement of women's sport was the misconception held by both society and women themselves that physical exercise was unnecessary and that performing household tasks constituted sufficient exercise. The press was the only medium available for promoting women's sport and informing women about its importance, and even this medium reached only literate women, among whom the subject was often not taken seriously. Nomadic and rural women constituted the majority of Iran's female population, yet illiteracy and tribal restrictions prevented them from understanding the meaning and necessity of sport. Even in girls' schools, young students displayed little interest in physical activity. Unlike boys' schools, girls commonly sat in small groups in school courtyards and conversed rather than participating in exercise, while the games they played generally involved no meaningful bodily movement. One possible reason was the widespread misconception that sport diminished women's grace and beauty (9). This attitude persisted until the final years of Reza Shah's rule. In 1938, *Ayin-e Varzesh* stated that football, weight throwing, long-distance running, the long jump, and the high jump were unsuitable for women and that women should instead engage in delicate and appropriate sports such as tennis, volleyball, basketball, swimming, and outdoor walking. Such beliefs may explain why tennis remained the most popular sport among women for an extended period (9).

The absence of a strong state and an official program for aligning Iranian women with global society during the period between the Constitutional Revolution and Reza Shah's rise to power allowed the press to function as an informal, modern, and influential institution. By criticizing existing conditions and presenting a new vision, periodicals played an important role in preparing public opinion for women's acquisition of new identities in sport, health, education, and employment (6). *Ettela'at*, as a newspaper aligned with the government and influential in advancing the First Pahlavi state's cultural and social programs, devoted substantial attention to women's entry into sport. Throughout the First Pahlavi era, it encouraged women to participate in sport by publishing articles on the benefits of exercise and reporting cultural and athletic events involving women in Iran and abroad. It therefore played a considerable role in popularizing women's sport within society (6). The principal themes addressed by the newspaper included changing social attitudes toward women's sport, emphasizing sport as a major determinant of health, highlighting its positive effects on facial beauty and bodily fitness, and introducing appropriate athletic disciplines together with instructions for their practice (6). Another approach to women's sport was associated with a national mission and racial-nationalist outlook, according to which the physically active Iranian woman would become the progenitor of a powerful generation capable of restoring Iran's greatness (9).

Alongside negative views and attitudes toward women's sport, numerous individuals and social circles emphasized its benefits. One such figure was Mir Mehdi Khan Varzandeh (9). The first half of the First Pahlavi era constituted a period of cultural preparation for the establishment and expansion of women's sport, while women's athletic participation became more visible during the second half of Reza Shah's reign (9). With the commencement of modernization in Iran, women's economic, social, cultural, athletic, and political participation gradually increased. Social groups influenced by modern ideas, which did not support the continuation of women's traditional roles, demanded higher social positions and broader roles for women. The dominant current within the religious

establishment, however, resisted this demand to some extent and emphasized loyalty to tradition (10). Before the Islamic Revolution, the preferred image of womanhood was that of a woman displaying modern or Western characteristics. Although women's participation in sports arenas was not readily accepted by all social groups, national policy encouraged such participation. Images of female football players, swimmers, gymnasts, and other athletes on the covers of women's and sports magazines indicate that the female athlete had become one of the models of successful womanhood (1).

Reza Shah's first measures in the field of sport were cultural and infrastructural. They included orders to provide sports grounds and construct stadiums, the establishment of physical education associations, the creation of coeducational schools, the revision of textbooks and curricula, the introduction of compulsory education, and the mandatory teaching of physical education in all schools beginning in 1927. Three hours of women's physical education per week were included in the new curriculum for girls' schools. The establishment of the National Physical Education Association in 1928, the organization of sports competitions, and the dispatch of athletes to international events brought this policy to its height. Reza Shah's unveiling policy also significantly affected the promotion and diversification of women's sport, after which new forms of clothing appropriate to particular sports were designed and became widespread (6). Another cultural policy of Reza Shah's government was the establishment of the Women's Center in May 1935 under the leadership of a group of educated women. One of its important programs was "encouraging women to engage in appropriate sports for physical training in accordance with proper principles" (6). During the same year, a considerable number of girls entered the scouting organization. Physical education and sport had already begun advancing in 1933 and 1934, and physical education associations were established in many cities (9). Concurrently, women's periodicals were able to promote women's sport openly, although they often emphasized women's maternal roles because of the resistance of traditional society. By comparing sport in Iran with that of European countries, these publications further contributed to spreading physical activity among women (6).

Women's elite sport at the international level was first discussed in *Ettela'at* in late 1935. As a result of the measures described above, a delegation of Iranian female athletes participated in the Olympic Games for the first time, although they did not achieve favorable results (6). The earliest scattered references to girls' sports competitions include a volleyball match between female students in Qazvin held at the city's Naderi Building on June 21, 1936, and a girls' cycling competition in Urmia during the same year. The organization of such competitions outside Tehran demonstrates that women's sport was not confined to the capital and was also developing, although at a lower level, in other cities (9). Despite serious quantitative and qualitative differences from Tehran, women's sport in the provinces was approaching a more advanced stage (9). The year 1936 may also be regarded as the beginning of modern mountaineering among Iranian women.

A relay race held during the celebration of November 4, 1938, at Jalaliyeh Stadium, the first skiing competition held in Lashkarak on February 24, 1939, and volleyball competitions among girls' high schools at the Women's Center volleyball court on May 15, 1939, were among the other developments in women's sport during this period. Simultaneously with the organization of sports competitions, attention was given to expanding athletic disciplines and improving the quality of physical education. In 1939, the Physical Education Department, seeking to develop and promote girls' sport, introduced handball—considered appropriate for girls—into schools through an official circular. It was also stipulated that beginning in 1940, track-and-field events, particularly running and jumping, would be added to the official competitions for female students and held annually in May. In July of the same year, cycling

competitions were added to the national championships. During this period, the Ministry of Education constructed regulation swimming pools at Amjadieh Stadium in accordance with technical standards and ordered the Physical Education Department to organize instructional classes beginning on June 10, 1941, under the supervision of trained instructors, especially for children aged five to nine, including girls (9). Following the Allied occupation of Iran in September 1941 and the resulting social consequences, which plunged the country into years of crisis, athletic activities, particularly women's sport, were disrupted. Sports competitions in girls' schools and high schools ceased entirely and, according to the periodical *Niru va Rasti*, were not resumed until 1947 (9).

Women's Sport during the Second Pahlavi Era

Following Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's accession to the throne, sport, like many other social phenomena, received growing public attention. The Second Pahlavi government's efforts to transform women's social and cultural position in both private and public life resulted in increased attention to women's sport. During the Second Pahlavi period, the Women's Organization of Iran, as an institution aligned with the government, played a significant role in advancing cultural and social programs concerning women.

The year 1947 marked Iran's first participation in the Olympic Games. Iran's first appearance in the Winter Olympic Games occurred in 1956 (1).

One year later, in 1957, the Higher Teachers' Training College began admitting both female and male students to the field of physical education (1), while the Higher School of Sport began admitting students of both sexes in 1972. Subsequent changes in attitudes toward women's athletic disciplines, together with the motivation and abilities of female athletes themselves, led women's sport to assume a more serious character. Attention to women's sport at both professional and nonprofessional levels, planning for its expansion and consolidation among women, and the allocation of a dedicated budget began during the Second Pahlavi period. In addition to establishing the Youth Scouting Organization, which created a suitable context for girls' participation in domestic sporting events, this period witnessed the diversification of women's athletic disciplines and the introduction of new sports into Iran. For the first time, Iranian women participated in international competitions and eventually won the Asian volleyball championship (1). Because of the Pahlavi state's imitative policies arising from its relationship with the West and based on promotional and operational theories, efforts were made to expand both specialized and mass participation in women's sport.

During the Second Pahlavi era, most Iranian women lived in rural or nomadic communities and were largely excluded from policies promoting sport because governmental attention was concentrated on major cities. Nevertheless, women's sport reached some small towns through girls' schools. In subsequent years, following the reforms associated with the White Revolution of January 26, 1963, and through programs conducted by the Literacy Corps, rural women acquired limited opportunities to engage in exercise and pay greater attention to their physical health (1). Parviz Natel Khanlari was the principal initiator of this institution.

The organization of festivals and sports competitions among girls from different schools, sometimes held before the general public at Jalaliyeh Field or Amjadieh Stadium, constituted one of the government's measures to encourage female students and their teachers to participate in sport. Before long, competitions among women's teams became common. Initially, however, this development appears to have been largely confined to schoolgirls and had not yet spread among women generally. Instructional programs teaching physical exercises to women were also frequently published in periodicals of the period, particularly *Ettela'at* (1). Girls' scouting associations were

established in 1957 under the National Scouting Organization of Iran, headed by Farah Pahlavi, while amendments to the relevant law were approved by the Senate in December 1974. The organization sought to provide girls with physical and psychological education based on international scouting principles and national values and to promote their social development and preparation for a better life. Scouting began at age seven and was implemented through practical and theoretical instruction at different educational levels under the supervision of a board of directors (1). The Higher School of Sport commenced its activities in 1972 by admitting female and male students. From that year onward, sports administration became more coherent and athletic facilities expanded (1). Women's football in Iran began in 1970 (9), while women's handball dates to 1965. Before the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian women's national volleyball team's success in Asian competitions constituted the greatest achievement of Iranian female athletes during this period. Women's athletic activities repeatedly extended beyond national borders and resulted in a number of modest successes (5). During the Second Pahlavi era, female athletes participated in international competitions on six occasions and won five medals. Two of these appearances were at the Olympic Games and involved eight female athletes, none of whom won medals (11).

One of the most important measures concerning women's sport during the Second Pahlavi era was the establishment of independent sports clubs, which was discussed and approved by the Council of Ministers on January 10, 1944, under National Archives document No. 19114. Another significant development was Iranian women's participation in international forums. The first international appearance of Iranian female athletes dates to the 1940s. Female athletes gradually began traveling abroad and participating in international competitions, although their numbers remained extremely limited. The Iranian women's national volleyball team's success in Asian competitions was one of the principal international achievements of Iranian women athletes. National policy encouraged women's participation on the international stage. Magazine-cover images of female football players, swimmers, gymnasts, tennis players, shooters, volleyball players, basketball players, track-and-field athletes, and practitioners of various martial arts demonstrate that the female athlete had become one of the accepted models of successful womanhood (5).

The first major international event involving Iranian women was the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo, where four female athletes competed in track and field and table tennis but did not win any titles. The second major event was the 1974 Asian Games in Tehran, where Iranian women's fencing achieved the first gold medal won by Iranian women in a prestigious international competition. Iranian women's mountaineering achievements, including ascents of Mount Tochal in 1936 and Mount Damavand in 1947, were also among women's important national and international accomplishments (5). May 28, 1955, constituted a turning point in Iranian girls' sport. On that day, a ceremony was held at Jalaliyeh Field to distribute sports awards to athletes before an audience of thousands. Such events were among the government's measures to encourage girls and their teachers to participate in sport for recreation.

Beginning in 1963, camps and scouting activities received increased attention. Following the commencement of the White Revolution on January 26, 1963, girls were dispatched to villages through Literacy Corps programs, where they taught physical exercise and helped sport establish a broader position throughout the country. Women's football in Iran began in 1970. Because of women's interest in the sport, the Football Federation decided to send several talented women to FIFA coaching courses and subsequently established football teams to train promising female players. Taj Club, now Esteghlal, was among the first clubs to organize training classes for women. Other clubs, including Persepolis, Deyhim, and Oqab, also established classes for female players (5). On Friday, May 7,

1971, the Taj women's football team, representing Iran, played a friendly match against an Italian women's football team. The match ended in a 2–2 draw (5).

In volleyball, a club competition was held in Tehran in 1973, with Darband Club winning the championship trophy. Several friendly matches were also held among Tehran women's teams during the same year. The first Iranian women's national volleyball championship was held in 1975 (5). Iranian women later competed against teams from South Korea, Egypt, and Türkiye. Women also participated in badminton, swimming, basketball, and other athletic disciplines. Farah Pahlavi played a central role in initiating numerous sports events in Iran.

Overall, women's sport emerged as a social phenomenon during the second half of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, particularly from 1955 onward. The Iranian Women's Sports Center and the organized women's sports system were among the institutions that placed the organization of girls' sport on their agendas. Different athletic disciplines were soon established, and competitions among girls from various schools and high schools commenced and continued successfully until 1976.

During the Second Pahlavi era, compulsory physical education in schools was implemented, modern sports were incorporated into school curricula for the first time, Iran participated in the Olympic Games in 1948 and in the Winter Olympic Games in 1956, and the Higher Teachers' Training College began admitting female and male students to physical education programs in 1957. In 1960, the General Department of Physical Education was established within the Ministry of Education. The Higher School of Sport also began its work in 1972 by admitting both female and male students.

Conclusion

The present study examined the growth and development of women's sport in Iran over time, from the past to the present. On the basis of the collected materials and extracted findings, it may be concluded that women's sport emerged as a social phenomenon in Iran in the context of the transformation of the traditional social environment during the First Pahlavi era and began with the introduction of compulsory physical education in schools. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Revolution and its consequences played an influential role in preparing public opinion for the restoration of women's social rights and their acquisition of a new identity in this sphere. It should also be noted that the earliest attention to women's social role began during the middle years of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar's reign through intellectuals who defended women's rights. At that time, women remained subject to traditional social attitudes and lived in isolation, while the press sought to create an appropriate environment for women's social development and their emergence from this socially imposed seclusion.

With the establishment of the Pahlavi state and the extensive cultural measures undertaken during this period, particularly under the First Pahlavi regime, women's participation in sport became institutionalized and their formal athletic activity commenced. Considerable efforts were made to persuade public opinion to accept women's sport and to transform both dominant social attitudes and women's own perceptions of physical activity in light of its necessity and importance. Gradually, through the establishment of various sports disciplines and the activities of government-affiliated institutions—particularly the Women's Organization, the scouting system, the Women's Center, and other bodies that organized girls' sport—as well as the prominent sociocultural role of periodicals, especially *Ettela'at*, in promoting women's sport in Iranian society, this movement acquired a more independent identity. Although it was briefly interrupted in September 1941, it resumed its path of growth over time. Women's

formal participation in sport, which began during the First Pahlavi era, entered national and international competitive arenas during the Second Pahlavi period.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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