

# Journal of New Studies in Sport Management



Journal homepage: <https://jnssm.uk.ac.ir/>

Vol 2 Issue 1/ February 2021/126-138

Online ISSN: 2717-4069

## The Mediating Role of Job Characteristics in the Relationship between Structural Empowerment and the Professional Commitment of Female Referees in Futsal Premier League

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Doi: 10.22103/jnssm.2021.2799

### A B S T R A C T

#### A R T I C L E I N F O

##### **Article history:**

Received: December 2020

Accept: December 2020

Online publish: February 2021

##### **Keywords:**

Females

Futsal referees

Job characteristics

Professional commitment

Structural empowerment

The aim of this study was to develop a model for examining the mediating role of job characteristics in the relationship between structural empowerment and professional commitment of referees in female's Futsal Premier League. To collect the required data, we distributed the research questionnaires among 75 Futsal Premier League referees invited to the pre-season qualifying class in 2020, and finally we received 63 valid questionnaires. We conducted structural equation modeling, confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis for data analysis by using PLS Smart software. The findings demonstrated that structural empowerment can predict professional commitment, but the relationship between the two variables was not significant. The relationship of structural empowerment with job characteristics and professional commitment was not significant. The mediating role of job characteristics in the relationship between the two variables was not significant. The components of information sharing in structural empowerment, attachment to professional commitment and diversity of skills in job characteristics had the highest averages. Given that the lack of significance of the relationship among structural empowerment, professional commitment and job characteristics, is questionable and it should be assessed in great details.

### Introduction

In traditional organizations, the role of the manager was to strictly control manpower and employees' behavior, but in the modern organizations, employees are empowered to make their own decisions

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and manage affairs (Susan et al., 2014). Environmental changes have put the issue of employee empowerment in the focus of managers. Because organizations with capable, motivated and committed employees can better adapt to the changes. (Maleki et al., 2012). Empowerment is the most important challenge for managers, because employees as the assets of the organization have become the main managers of the workflow and partners of the organization (Lalianopour et al., 2011). Managers multiply their effectiveness through employee empowerment and thus make the organization more efficient (Spritzer, 1995).

In the empowerment process, the manager helps employees to acquire the necessary skills for independent decision making. One of the dimensions of empowerment is its structural dimension, which includes modification of workplace structures by managers and facilitating access to organizational facilities (Eskandari et al., 2013). In this study, only the structural dimension of empowerment includes four components of participation in decision making, information sharing, delegation of authority, and control (from the perspective of Kordnahich et al., 2015) as well as the other two components of opportunities and supports (from Kanter's view, 1993) is considered.

One of the most important results of employee empowerment is increasing their loyalty and commitment to the organization. Committed manpower strives more than job descriptions (Sanchez, 2012). Commitment is one of the main pillars of ethics in any society. In fact, human relations with each other are based on commitment. Commitment is a value that governs all ethics and norms and it means adherence to the principles and contracts that human beings believe in (Rasouli, 2013). Profession means the continuous improvement of work experience at any time and place (home, organization or professional associations) and will continue even after retirement. Aranya et al. (2006) state that commitment is defined as loyalty, the desire to stay in a profession, and a sense of responsibility toward the profession's particular problems and challenges. Aranya et al (2006) also consider professional commitment beyond job and organizational commitment. They consider the three dimensions of Acquisition of identity, attachment and desire to stay in the job.

Studies show that empowerment is related to variables such as professional commitment, job characteristics, productivity, and so on. Maleki and Qurbaniyan's results (2014) confirmed the existence of a positive and significant relationship between professional commitment and structural empowerment of nurses. Mirreshkaridehkahan (2017) and Liu et al (2007) also showed that professional commitment has a significant and positive relationship with psychological empowerment. On the other hand, professional commitment in organizations is related to factors such as job characteristics. Job characteristics are a set of attributes that are present in job responsibilities. There are many approaches to job design, followers of socio-technical systems believe that the needs of the organization and employees should be considered in the job design (Robbins, 1996).

The second approach is the theory of job/task characteristics model of Hackman and Oldham (1976) which suggests that in job / work design, the main elements of a job and the interrelationships between them should be defined. This model determines the main characteristics of the job, their interrelationships, and their effect on productivity, motivation and employee satisfaction. In fact, this theory predicts attitudes and behaviors based on reactions to job requirements in employees' duties. The five main dimensions of the job in this perspective include skill diversity, job importance, job identity, independence, and feedback. In the following Jacko (2004) enriched job characteristics by examining literature review in the field of the initial model of job characteristics (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, 1980). He was able to use the specialty variable instead of the task identity feature and added two new variables to the model called information processing and problem solving, in addition to the independence variable for the relationship of responsibility experienced at work. Thus, the Job Attribution Model was developed by Jacko (2004) and the main job dimensions for careers were upgraded to seven attributes: skill diversity, expertise, task importance, independence, information processing, problem solving, and feedback.

According to literature review, a direct relationship between job characteristics with psychological and structural empowerment of employees has also been confirmed (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Parastar et al., 2015). There is also a positive and significant relationship between job characteristics and professional commitment (Rasouli, 2013; Ramezanejad et al., 2017; Al-Abedi, 2015; and

Nasirloo, 2017). Researchers such as Simons et al. (2011) showed that the variables of professional commitment and organizational commitment play a mediating role between job characteristics and attitudinal outcomes. Simons et al. (2004); Said & Munap (2011) showed that job characteristics increase professional commitment.

The review of research conducted about research variables showed that the relationships between these variables in sports jobs have received less attention. One of the sensitive sports jobs is refereeing. Referees are one of the valuable human resources of sports organizations. The refereeing profession in all sports, especially in the field of futsal, has always been associated with stress and anxiety. Futsal referees, like coaches and players, as one of the main pillars of the Premier League, have the most important and difficult tasks of the federation and the referee committee. This group faces all kinds of disrespect at sporting events. Because the losers of the competition always attribute at least a share of their loss to the performance of the referees; and if they do their best, they still won't get much attention

Therefore, good and fair judgment will lead to right participation, making the competition more attractive and creating pleasure among managers, coaches, players and spectators (Dolatyari and Sadeghi, 2017). Undoubtedly, considering the job characteristics, the level of commitment and, of course, empowering the referees towards the desired goals can guarantee better judgment, and finally, futsal matches can be held with less problems. Examining the research literature demonstrated that studies have been done on the job characteristics of referees, and most of the studies have focused on stress, disorientation, aggression and job characteristics of referees in football rather than Futsal. Loghmani (2012) examined the job characteristics of Iranian football referees based on Jaco's job characteristics model and showed that there are not problem solving and independence in the refereeing job. Also, the job characteristic, the importance of the task as the main feature of the job of football referees is very important. Rasouli's findings (2013) also showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between all dimensions of professional commitment and the main characteristics of referees' jobs and job characteristics significantly affect professional commitment. Ramezanejad et al. (2014, a) by examining the relationship between job characteristics and important psychological feelings of football referees showed that The job characteristics of the specialty did not have a significant effect on the work and also the information processing feature did not have a significant effect on the responsibility of football referees. However, the diversity of skills and the importance of the task had a significant effect on the significance of the work. Ramezanejad et al findings (2017) showed that professional commitment can significantly facilitate the relationship between job characteristics and satisfaction of football referees. This means that the main job characteristics of football referees, directly and indirectly, and through professional commitment, can predict the job satisfaction of football referees. Al-Abedi (2018) by examining the relationship between job characteristics with job satisfaction and professional commitment of Iraqi football referees showed that there is a significant correlation between all dimensions of job characteristics and professional commitment. Nasirloo's research results (2017) showed that from the referees' point of view, the characteristics of task importance, specialization and diversity of skills were far greater than the characteristics of job feedback, job independence and problem solving in this job.

The futsal league in Iran is being followed every year with great progress and sensitivity, It seems that the presence of capable referees with the required job characteristics and high professional commitment can be effective in better performance of national futsal league matches. Referees are important part of the human resources in sports. Despite the sensitivity and importance of the role of referees in better holding sports competitions, less research has been done on refereeing jobs, especially in the field of futsal (in the women's community) compared to other sports professions, and this little research also focuses on specific and limited aspects.

The literature review revealed that previous researchers have not yet considered the mediating role of job characteristics in the effect of structural empowerment on professional commitment. In previous studies, psychological and structural empowerment, professional commitment and job characteristics, have been studied separately. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to fill this gap, especially in female sport context. Moreover, paying attention to empowerment and examining its dimensions is

one of the issues that have not been fully addressed. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to develop a model for examining the mediating role of job characteristics in the relationship between structural empowerment and the professional commitment of referees in female's Futsal Premier League.

### Methodology

The research was a descriptive-correlational and applied research. The statistical population of this study consisted of 75 Iranian female referees invited to the pre-season class of the National Futsal Premier League in the 2020. According to Morgan table 63 referees were found appropriate to participated in this study, and finally 60 valid questionnaires were returned. The data collection tool consisted of three separate questionnaires. These questionnaires include a combination of structural empowerment of Kordaj et al. (2015) and Kanter (1993) with 18 questions in 6 dimensions (delegation, sharing of information, participation in decision making, control, support and opportunities), Arania et al.'s (1999) Professional Commitment Questionnaire including 12 questions in 3 dimensions (identity acquisition, staying in a job, and attachment), as well as Jacko's Job Characteristics Questionnaire (2004) with 16 questions in 5 dimensions (processing Information, skill diversity, specialization, task importance, and job feedback were used in the Likert 5 value range. The face and content validity of the questionnaires were reviewed and approved by 10 professors and experts in the field of sports management and refereeing experts. Convergent validity (factor loads and AVE values above 0.5) and divergent or diagnostic validity based on Fornell and Locker index were also confirmed. The composite reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by PLS software (0.86, 0.82 and 0.89, respectively). The total reliability of the questionnaire was obtained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. Kolmogorov- Smirnov (K-S) tests, sample t-test, linear regression and finally structural equation modeling using PLS software were used. Model processing was done in three stages. In the first stage, the evaluation of the external model or measurement model (validity and reliability) was performed. Finally, the hypotheses were tested at the level of significance ( $P \leq 0.05$ ).

### Findings

The demographic description of the research samples has been provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Statistical Description of the Research Sample

Variable	type	frequency	Percentage
marital status	Single	40	66.66
	Married	20	33.33
Degree of judgment	Grade 2	8	13.33
	Grade 1	23	38.33
	National	25	41.66
Educational degree	International	4	6.66
	Diploma	4	6.66
	post-diploma	2	3.33
	Bachelor	30	50
Field of study	Master's degree	24	40
	Physical training	34	56.66
	Non-physical training	26	43.33

The inferential analysis of data includes the evaluation of external and internal models and testing of hypotheses.

**First stage:** evaluating the external model (measurement).

At this stage, convergent validity, divergent (diagnostic) validity, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability were measured. Convergent validity was assessed based on the results of

extractive variance of each dimension. According to the values of this index, which was greater than 0.5 in all dimensions, the variance extracted from the structures was acceptable and convergent validity was confirmed. Reliability was also measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability (Delvin Goldeshtain coefficient). Considering that all values in both indicators are higher than 0.7, so reliability is also acceptable (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Variance Extracted from Constructs and the Reliability

Indices Variables	Variance extracted from structures	Total reliabi lity	Criterion	Result	Cronbach 's alpha	Criterion	Result	The reliability of the whole questionnaire
Structural Empowerment	0.53	0.86	0.70	confirmed	0.81	0.70	confirmed	0.78
Professional Commitment	0.50	0.82			0.79			
Job Characteristics	0.73	0.89			0.81			

Divergent or diagnostic validity was also confirmed based on Fornell and Larker index. According to the results, all values on the main diameter are greater than all the corresponding rows and columns, so the divergent validity of the model was also confirmed (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Variance Derived from Constructs and Correlations Coefficients

Variables Variables	Structural Empowerment	Professional Commitment	Job Characteristics
Structural Empowerment	<u>0.705</u>		
Professional Commitment	- 0.136	<u>0.727</u>	
Job Characteristics	0.397	0.300	<u>0.852</u>

### Investigating the relationship between research variables

Based on the data in Table 4, there is a relationship between structural empowerment and professional commitment ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.334$ ); But the relationship between structural empowerment and job characteristics ( $P > 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.016$ ) and between professional commitment and job characteristics ( $P > 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.233$ ) There is no significance.

**Table 4.** Relationship between Variables

Variables Variables	Structural Empowerment	Professional Commitment	Job Characteristics
Structural Empowerment	r	0.334	- 0.016
	Sig	0.018	0.912
Professional Commitment	r		0.233
	Sig		0.104
Job Characteristics	r		
	Sig		

### Investigating the explanatory and predictive status of professional commitment based on structural empowerment

According to the results of Table 5, the result of Durbin Watson test was (2.31), which confirms the regression. The practical interpretation of the regression coefficient of 0.334 indicates that the structural empowerment variable has a weak ability to explain and predict the professional

commitment variable. Its statistical interpretation is that for every unit change in the linear composition of structural empowerment (in terms of standard deviation), 0.334 units of change in professional commitment (in terms of standard deviation) are expected to occur. A coefficient of determination of 0.112 indicates that about 11% of the variance of professional commitment is explained by structural empowerment (in the sample), while in the statistical population it is expected that about 9% of the variance of professional commitment should be explained by structural empowerment.

**Table 5.** Determination Coefficients

Model	Regression coefficient	Squared r	Modified r squared	Estimated standard deviation	Durbin Watson
1	0.334	0.112	0.093	0.45	2.31

The results of Table 6 show that the linear relationship between the two variables of structural empowerment with professional commitment ( $P < 0.05$  and  $F = 6.034$ ) is confirmed. In other words, the coefficient of determination is significant.

**Table 6.** Analysis of Variance Test for Predicting Professional Commitment based on Structural Empowerment

	Mode l	Total squares	Df	Average squares	F	sig
structural empowerment	Regression	1.227	1	1/227	6.034	0.018
	remaining	9.763	48	0/203		
	Total	10/990	49			

According to Table 7, regression analysis shows that structural empowerment ( $P < 0.05$  and  $t = 2.457$ ) has the ability to predict professional commitment. Based on the beta coefficient results, for one unit of standard deviation increase in structural empowerment, the amount of professional commitment (0.334) of standard deviation increases.

**Table 7.** Linear Regression Coefficients

model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	sig
	B	standard error	$\beta$		
constant value	2.353	0.254		9.265	.001
structural empowerment	0.283	0.115	0.334	.457	.018

**Second stage:** evaluating the internal model (structural)

To evaluate the internal model, the coefficient of determination was measured. In the study, the coefficient of determination of  $R^2$  values equal to 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 are considered weak, medium and strong, respectively. According to the obtained results, the values of the determination coefficient are weak (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Model Coefficient Values

Variable	The coefficient of determination	Criterion	status	Result
Professional Commitment	0.168	0.19	weak	weak structural model processing
Job Characteristics	0.158	0.33	Medium	
		0.67	strong	

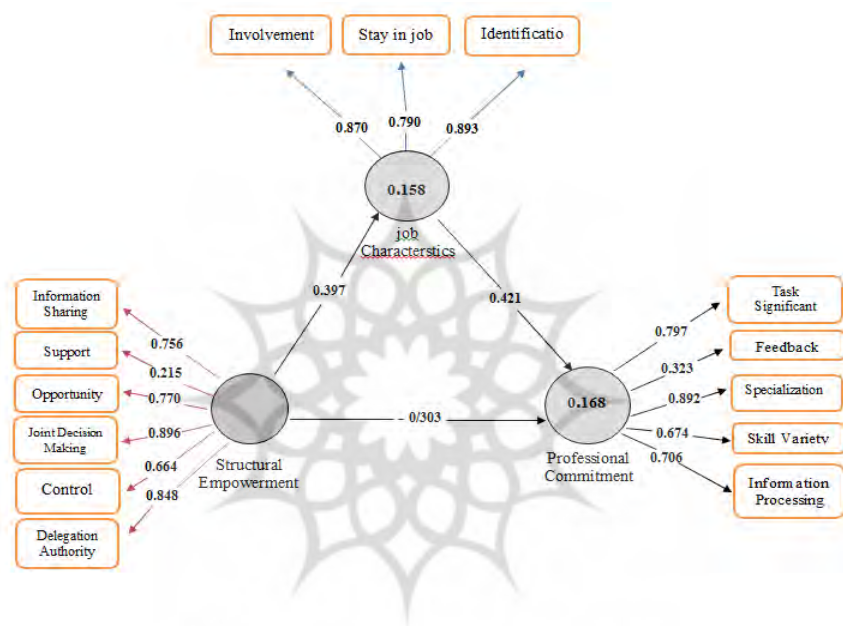
**Third Stage:** Structural Model processing (GOF)

In this section, five indicators d-G, d-ULS, Chi- Square, NFI and SRMR were used. Overall, based on the mentioned indicators, it can be said that the model processing is poor.

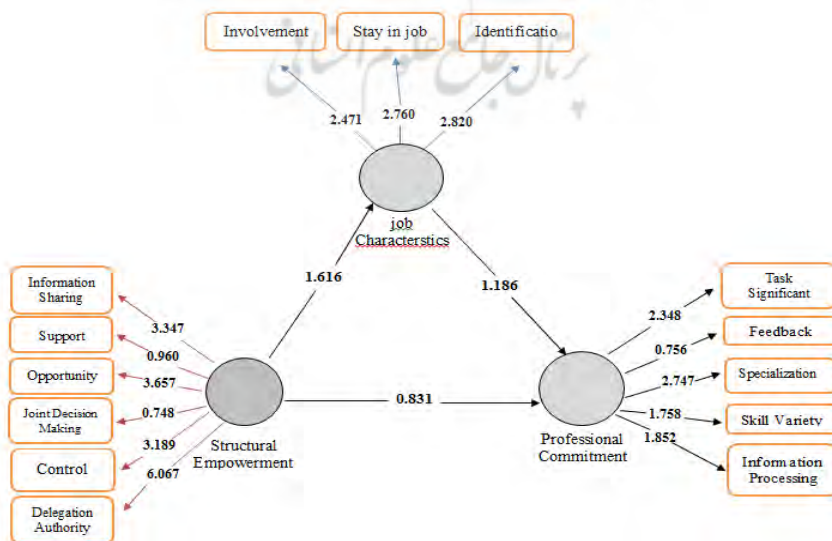
**Table 9.** General Model Processing

Model processing indicators	SRMR	d_ ULS	d_ G	Chi-Square	NFI
Values obtained	0.084	2.539	0.690	172.563	0.555
Criterion	0.155	Below 95%	Below 95%	---	Above 90%

To investigate the effect of model variables, the method of variance-based structural equation modeling was used. The results of the research path model are presented in two modes of standard coefficients (Figure 1) and the other significant coefficients (Figure 2). A summary of the hypothesis test results is also provided in Table 9. The obtained values for the impact coefficients in the structural model are evaluated in terms of sign, quantity and significance.



**Figure 1.** Research Model and Standard Coefficients



**Figure 2.** Research Model and Significance Coefficients

The effect of structural empowerment on professional commitment (T-Value = 0.831 and  $\beta$  = - 0.303) was not negative and significant, so the first hypothesis was rejected. The effect of structural empowerment on job characteristics (T-Value = 1.616 and  $\beta$  = 0.397), positive and non-significant and the second hypothesis was rejected. The effect of job characteristics on professional commitment (T-Value = 1.186 and  $\beta$  = 0.421) was not positive and significant, so the third hypothesis was not confirmed.

Also, in examining the fourth hypothesis, the mediating variable role of job characteristics does not have a causal relationship between structural empowerment and professional commitment (T-Value = 0.826 and  $\beta$  = 0.167) (Table 11).

**Table 10.** Investigating the Mediating Role of Job Characteristics

Effective variable	Mediator variable	dependent variable	Indirect effect rate	T- Value	P- Value	Result
Structural empowerment	Job characteristics	Professional commitment	0.167	0.826	0.409	Not accepted

### Discussion and conclusion

The results showed that structural empowerment could predict professional commitment. The results also suggested that the effect of structural empowerment on professional commitment is negative and not significant (T-Value = 0.831 and  $\beta$  = 0.303). This finding is not consistent with the findings of Makeki and Ghorbaniyan (2014), Akbari-Sefideh et al. (2015), and Aggarwal et al. (2018).

The results of Makeki and Ghorbaniyan's studies (2014) have confirmed the existence of a positive and significant relationship between structural empowerment and professional performance of nurses. Aggarwal et al. (2018) also reported that Indian nurses have experienced a high level of structural empowerment, which lead to high commitment. Also, the findings of Akbari-Sefideh et al. (2015) showed that there is a significant relationship between nurses' empowerment and professional commitment among the nursing community of Milad Hospital. Possible reasons for this finding can be attributed to several factors. The nature of the refereeing profession, along with the culture and type of view of the referees and the officials of the Futsal Referees Committee and the federation. This may also be because of this fact that there is no consistent idea of empowerment in terms of opinion or action in both groups (referees and officials) (Jamshidi, 2012). The referees probably also took into account many considerations when answering the questionnaire. Therefore, a change of attitude in each group (referees and officials) in relation to the effects and function of empowerment is necessary. It is also necessary to formulate effective programs in order to empower the referees in order to strengthen the necessary professional commitment.

The results showed that the structural empowerment had a positive and non-significant effect on job characteristics (T- value = 1.616 and  $\beta$  = 0.397). These results are inconsistent with the findings of Parastar et al. (2015), Khalili et al. (2015) and Khormiantoosi et al. (2020). Findings of Parastar et al. (2015) showed that in male and female employees, the direct effect of job characteristics with structural ability was significant. Khalili et al. (2017) also reported that there is a significant relationship between job characteristics and employee empowerment. Khoramiantousi et al. (2020) also examined the relationship between talent management and employee empowerment with the role of mediating job characteristics and showed that job characteristics have a positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

The result of this finding can be due to reduced self-confidence and lack of positive motivation in referees, which ultimately lead to reducing the level and role of job characteristics dimensions. When employees engage in empowerment programs in specific situations, they display more desirable behaviors with greater self-confidence. Eventually, consequences such as initiative, hard work, innovative behavior, quick response and flexibility that are necessary for the success of organizations



are achieved (Spritzer, 1995). In addition, this insignificant effect can be attributed to the nature of the refereeing job and the low experience of women in this profession and the lack of necessary attention of the authorities to women empowerment.

The results also showed that the effect of job characteristics on professional commitment is positive but not significant ( $T\text{-Value} = 1.186$   $\beta = 0.421$ ). Therefore, according to these results, the job characteristics of referees cannot predict their professional commitment. These results are not in line with the researches of Rasouli (2013), Ramezanejad et al. (2017), Al-Abedi et al. (2015), Nasirloo (2015), and Nugroho and Haryanto (2019). Studies by Simons et al. (2004), and Said & Manap (2010) showed that when jobs and the importance of job responsibilities are well understood by employees, they become more involved in their work, so absence and leaving the job will be decreased, and the attachment to professional commitment increases.

Findings of Rasouli et al. (2013) showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between professional commitment and the main characteristics of referees' jobs. According to these results, as the job characteristics of football referees become richer, commitment factors will improve. Ramezanejad et al. (2017) reported that the attitudinal and psychological structures such as professional commitment can have much better conditions in the cycle of job characteristics in sports. They also pointed out that all 5 main characteristics of referees' jobs have a positive and significant relationship with professional commitment, so that as the main characteristics of football referees' jobs become richer, the factors of commitment and job satisfaction will also increase. Al-Abedi et al. (2015), in their findings, concluded that there is a significant priority between the main job characteristics and between the dimensions of professional commitment of football referees. There is also a significant correlation between all dimensions of the main characteristics of the job and professional commitment. The findings of Nugroho and Haryanto (2019) also showed that job characteristics and professional commitment have a positive and significant effect on keeping responsibilities as well as performance.

The reasons for the recent findings can be relevant to the dimensions of job characteristics that may lead to a lack of intrinsic motivation in referees and thus reduce professional commitment. Another factor is the reduction of professional commitment due to job dissatisfaction in referees. In other words, the lack of appropriate job characteristics in refereeing has reduced job satisfaction and the professional commitment of referees. By reducing motivation, attachment to work and gaining identity (from the dimensions of professional commitment) due to inappropriate job characteristics, may lead to a positive effect on professional commitment.

According to the findings of final hypothesis, job characteristics does not play a mediating and significant role in the causal relationship between structural empowerment and professional commitment ( $T\text{-Value} = 0.826$   $\beta = 0.167$ ). This finding is not consistent with the results of Khormiantousi et al. (2020) and Khalili et al. in examining the mediating role of job characteristics in the relationship between talent management and employee empowerment showed that job characteristics have a positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior. According to the results, it can be inferred that the nature of the refereeing job and the dimensions of job characteristics through lack of intrinsic motivation in individuals, reduced promotion of referees' social status and also the values in the job have caused job dissatisfaction among referees. According to the results of Rasouli et al. (2013) and Al-Abedi et al. (2015), there is a positive and significant relationship between professional commitment and the main characteristics of referees' jobs. According to other results, there is a significant difference between the observed and hypothetical means of structural empowerment, professional commitment, as well as job characteristics and all components of all three variables. The results also show that among the main variables of the research, structural empowerment has the highest average (3.40) and professional commitment has the lowest average (2.97). Findings also showed that the skill diversity component had the highest mean (3.62) among the components of job characteristics in referees, which is consistent with the results of Niehoff et al. (2001). These findings are in conflict with Results of Loghmani (2012), Rasouli (2013), Ramezanejad et al. (2017) who all stated the importance of duty as the most important component of the main job characteristics and reported the diversity of skills in the second priority. It also contradicts the results of Nasirloo (1398)

and Hwang and Jang (2020). The result shows that referees need a variety of skills such as physical, mental and perceptual. For this reason, the federations of each country allow their refereeing committee to take physical fitness tests for their referees every year, and try to teach them the techniques of reading, management, psychology, etc. to prepare the referees to the highest level to judge the upcoming matches. It seems that this feature can make the referees more loyal to the futsal refereeing job. In this regard, Niehoff et al. (2001) showed that among job characteristics, skill diversity is the most effective factor on employee loyalty.

At the end of the results, the job feedback component obtained the lowest mean (3.02), which is completely in line with the results of Loghmani (2012), Rasouli (2013) and Ramezanejad et al. (2017). The low priority of job feedback also indicates that referees do not need to review many data to make decisions on various issues on the field due to formal and somewhat specific rules and regulations.

Although the job feedback feature did not have a significant effect on the judges, the role of this job feature in refereeing should not be overlooked. In principle, referees receive their job feedback internally, because they know whether their decisions are right or wrong. However, they give feedback on their performance directly and immediately through the reactions of players, coaches, spectators, referee observers, other referees, federation officials, Referees Committee, families, club managers and the media. Although these reactions may not be completely accurate, with a little modification, their role in job feedback can be considered effective. In this regard, the role of referee supervisors is very crucial. Because the most important and effective job feedback is provided by them. The decision of the managers of the refereeing department is based on the information of the observers and the selection of the referees for the future games is done with the evaluations of the supervisors. Therefore, referee supervisors should provide the most accurate feedback while accurately understanding their duties and the working conditions of the referees. The views of colleagues (other referees) affect the referees' job feedback.

Many referees pay attention to the feedback of colleagues to determine the correctness or incorrectness of their performance and their decision. Because of their specialization in this field, they can influence the referees' performance before, during and even after the competition more than the other groups mentioned. Thus, the feedback of this group constitutes a strengthening of the job characteristic of the feedback for the referees, which leads to their job enrichment. Examination of the components of professional commitment of futsal referees showed that the highest average (3.38) is related to the job attachment component of referees and the lowest average (2.31) is related to the component of staying in the job. In fact, attachment is the most important factor in predicting the level of professional commitment of referees. These results are completely consistent with the findings of Rasouli (2013), Ramezanejad et al. (2017) and Nasirloo (2017). Teng et al (2007) also stated that attachment is the most important component in Taiwan nurses' professional commitment. Of course, the common feature between futsal refereeing and nursing is the effect of the results of referees and nurses on people's lives. There are also hardships and high job pressures in both ones. Gendron & Suddaby (2009) identified attachment as the most important component in examining the professional commitment of accountants in large Canadian corporations. Maria (2009) studied the teachers' professional commitment and concluded that the acquisition of identity is the most important component for predicting teachers' professional commitment, this result is not in line with the findings of the present study. The referees accept any legal orders and recommendations in their area of work from the relevant authorities and make every contribution to its development. Internal reasons seem to have attracted the referees. People who choose the job of refereeing for these reasons respect all the rules and values in that profession and consider themselves obliged to follow them. These people are very sensitive to the position and future of their job, and they work hard to reach a higher level. The findings also showed that the information-sharing component has the highest average (2.51) among the structural empowerment components, which with the results of Abedzadeh (2016) who reported the support component as the highest average is in a conflict. Also, in the study of Jamshidi (2012) and Maleki and Ghorbaniyan (2014), access to opportunity had the highest average and in the findings of Rashidinia (2017), delegation of authority had obtained the highest average, is

inconsistent. In the present study, the information sharing component that has the highest average among all the variable components of structural empowerment refers to the provision of necessary and sufficient information and resources that may lead to appropriate judgments. It also provides the refereeing committee with a lot of information that help referees to be more update. This process must continue to improve the referees' performance and to provide successful results in the future.

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