

# Identifying Factors Influencing the Development of Organizational Sports (Case Study: Sari Municipality)

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Considering the importance of sports in today's era and the necessity to use it by organizational employees; the current research was conducted to identify the effective factors on the development of sports in Sari Municipality.

**Method:** The current research is qualitative in terms of approach and the directional content analysis method was being applied. The statistical population contained 15 people relating to the subject, including university faculty members in the sport management department, senior municipal managers, and senior sport managers. The purposeful sampling method was judgmental and the data collection tool was semi-structured interview.

**Results:** Factors affecting the development of organizational sports include: 6 main categories and 12 subcategories; structural dimensions (development of facilities and financial dimensions), social dimensions (individual and group dimensions), normative dimensions (monitoring and review, legal requirements), educational platforms (educational and informational dimensions), managerial dimensions (strategic and motivational dimensions), and communicative dimensions (sports interactions and media activities).

**Conclusion:** Therefore, it is of utmost importance for the senior managers of the municipality to exert the results obtained in this research on factors such as: standards of constructing and equipping sport facilities, not depending solely on the organizational government budget in relation to sports, the use of expert sport coaches and managers in the organization, and holding sport Olympiads for employees and considering prizes for them.

**Keywords:** Development, sports, organization, health, facilities.

## Introduction

Sport is an educational process during which a person acquires physical, mental and preparation skills (Kamoludin, 2021). Basically, sport is a social phenomenon that has involved millions of people in the world; such as ordinary people, athletes, journalists, media, managers and all people who are somehow involved in sports (Ghaedi et al, 2016). As a matter of fact, a large part of society deals with sports in various ways. Sports and activities thereof have formed a vast part of social life. Through looking at the news in the media, it is revealed that people devote time to sports in addition to their work activities (Eyedipour ET all, 2015). It is also considered as one of the best ways to cope with various physical and non-infectious diseases (Moeini ET all, 2010). Sports development is a holistic approach to help people start, stay and succeed in their chosen sport; and it is defined as an effective opportunity, system and structure and process that enable people of society at all levels or specific groups or regions to participate in sports, recreation and entertainment and improve their performance (Sotiriadou, 2013).

Fundamentally, sports and physical activities have existed in the configuration of human societies as well as people's daily lives from the past up to the now. The general nature of sports does not only encompass competitive goals, but also it has positive effects on social and cultural structures (Sobhani & Hashemi, 2017). Therefore, sports activities establish unique fields for the people's growth in different physical and mental dimensions (Lawrason ET all, 2022).

Universally, sport is considered as one of the most important indicators of real development and progress in countries (Mikkelsen ET all, 2017). Sport activities bring people's well-being and mental peace and play an important role in increasing the efficiency and enhancement of personality and moral patterns, self-restraint and self-esteem, understanding and feeling of

beauty (Hughes & Leavey, 2012). As people participate in sport activities, their self-control skills expand which leads to the improvement of proper communication and interaction with friends, family and other members of the society, development of social skills and the formation of positive emotions (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). Sports activities per se along with physical activity reduce stress and improve productivity in employees (Tengpongsthorn, 2017). The other benefits of the continuous participation of people in sport activities include: improving lifestyle, mental strength, creating a sense of freshness and vitality, improving the quality of life, developing mental performance in daily decisions, decreasing depression, and improving physical strength. Individuals are acquiring the aspect of team identity, perfectionism, spending leisure time properly, increasing skill level, improving cultural intelligence and strengthening social identity (Zare Abandansari et al, 2021). Therefore, dealing with sport activities by the members of the society leads to the development of the employees' condition, job satisfaction, and individuals' motivation in their job and subsequently the productivity of the employees (Jenkinson & Benson, 2010).

Despite the stated benefits of participating in sport activities, sometimes the employees of departments and organizations are not able to do sport due to the busy work, long working hours and the lack of suitable sports facilities in the organization, which may affect their physical and mental health; municipal employees are of the organization members that have little time to do sport activities owing to their numerous duties and busy schedule.

In the following, we would review the related literature regarding the development of municipal sports. In a research, Compiling a Sport Infrastructure Model of Tehran Municipality, conducted by Tori et al (2022), the managers of Tehran municipality for

planning and designing sports infrastructures can use the process of preparation of places and different aspects for the development thereof. As Reyahi et al (2022) stated in their research; there is a significant positive causal relationship between social cohesion and enjoyment of sport leisure time among the employees of Tehran Municipal Sports Organization. The mediating role of social cohesion in the relationship among adaptive passion, extreme passion and vitality with enjoyment of sports leisure time in the employees of Tehran Municipal Sports Organization was remarkable.

Goudarzi et al. (2022) stated that the results arising from most of the researches reveal the existence of relationship and the positive impact of talent management on organizational innovation and accordingly the performance of sports organizations; and in some other researches, other factors such as: demographic characteristics, knowledge management, organizational capital, and organizational intelligence are reported in addition to the effective and useful relationship of these variables. Dindar et al. (2022) declared in their research; due to the fact that the atmosphere of the organization has changed from the traditional form to a knowledge-centered one, the sports organization of Tehran Municipality should adjust their knowledge management strategies while adapting to the alterations. According to Safari et al. (2021) in their research; considering its nature, value engineering can be used as a great tool for problem solving and decision-making in sports organizations by Tehran Municipality. As remarked in the study carried out by Khazaei et al (2020), proper timing in the development of quality management system stages in providing services to citizens, appropriate communication with employees from the management side, periodic evaluation to ensure the quality of sports services and attention to the citizens' sport needs and evaluating the performance of employees in Tehran Municipality are suggested. The results of the study by Dizani

Maktabi et al (2021), indicated; the distribution of key variables on the future of the human resources talent management system in the municipal sports organization are unstable, and among the 34 factors examined in this research, 10 factors (job expectations, skill diversity, job dynamics, skill orientation, service compensation system, management style, hiring method, demographic changes, national and regional policies and information technology) played the key role in the future of the talent management system in the municipal sports organization.

The research problem in this case is to identify the factors that influence the development of organizational sports, specifically in the context of Sari Municipality. The aim is to investigate and analyze the key elements that contribute to the growth and advancement of sports activities within the municipality. This study will focus on understanding the various factors such as funding, infrastructure, policies, management, that play a role in shaping the organizational sports landscape. The research aims to provide insights and recommendations for enhancing the development of sports Possibilities within the Sari Municipality, ultimately leading to improved sports participation, well-being, and Staff engagement. Therefore, the main research question is as follows.

What are the significant factors in the development of sports in Sari Municipality?

## **Materials and Methods**

The current research is qualitative in terms of Practical via using the directional content analysis method based on inductive logic in the sense of reaching from part to whole. In the qualitative research, the statistical population is called the participating population. In this research, the participating community included university faculty members in the sport management department, senior managers of the municipality and senior sport managers of youth affairs and sport organization of

Mazandaran province. Semi-structured interviews with community members continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Purposeful and judgmental sampling methods were applied in which people who have the most information, knowledge, and experience relating to the research subject were selected to participate in the study. After conducting each interview, the researcher implemented, coded, and categorized the audio file in the form of written text. Then, based on the index of the previous interviews, the other members were selected. Therefore, a semi-structured interview with 15 related people was conducted.

Validity and reliability criteria were used to finalize the research. Validity means the degree of trust in the authenticity of the findings for

the participants in the research. For this purpose, after analyzing the interviews, they are surrendered to the interviewees to make the benefit of their opinions about the interviews to apply the necessary modifications. Reliability refers to the stability of data over time and under different circumstances. In order to check the reliability, the intra-subject agreement method of two coders was used. The reliability of the interviews equaled 87% through using an intra-subject agreement. The results are shown in Table 1.

$$PISA = \frac{2 \cdot \text{the number of agreements}}{\text{total number of codes}} \cdot \%100$$

**Table 1. Agreement percentage between two coders**

row	Interview number	Total number of codes	Number of agreement	Number of disagreement	Reliability between two encoders (percentage)
1	P3	21	9	5	85/71
2	P6	17	7	4	82/35
3	P12	15	7	4	93/33
	total	53	23	13	87/13

**Results**

Table 2 demonstrates the demographic information of the participants in the research.

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics of research participants**

Number	Gender	Specialty
1	Man	Associate Professor of Sports Management
2	Man	Associate Professor of Sports Management
3	Man	Associate Professor of Sports Management
4	Man	Associate Professor of Sports Management
5	Man	Associate Professor of Sports Management
6	Man	Associate Professor of Sports Management
7	Female	Associate Professor of Sports Management
8	Female	Associate Professor of Sports Management
9	Man	Senior managers of youth affairs and sport organization
10	Man	Senior managers of youth affairs and sport organization
11	Man	Senior managers of youth affairs and sport organization
12	Man	Senior managers of youth affairs and sport organization

13	Man	Senior managers of the municipality
14	Man	Senior managers of the municipality
15	Man	Senior managers of the municipality

The first main category introduces the structural factor as one of the factors affecting the development of sports in the municipality of Sari, having two subcategories of facilities development and financial dimensions as described in Table 3.

**Table 3. Structural factors affecting the development of sports in Sari municipality**

Main category 1	Subcategory	concepts
Structural factors	Development of facilities	1. Standardization of sports facilities and equipment 2. Improving sports infrastructure in organizations 3. Using new sports technologies in the constructing and equipping of sports facilities 4. Development of virtual and face-to-face sports training facilities and structures for employees 5. Considering the per capita of sports facilities 6. Providing suitable facilities and structures for women's sports 7. Providing suitable infrastructure for special sports 8. Taking into account the equipment in sports places 9. Considering the health condition of sports facilities 10. Equipping sports facilities using standard lighting systems and fire protection system 11. The active presence of a doctor to resolve possible sports injuries of employees
	Financial dimensions	12. Fair distribution of the budget 13. Creating a suitable mechanism to generate income through sports places 14. Annual increase in the budget dedicated to sports 15. Timely payment of the salaries of coaches and sport officials of the organizations

The second category introduces social factor as one of the factors influencing the development of sports in the municipality of Sari, having two subgroups of individual factors and group factors presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Social factors affecting the development of sports in Sari municipality**

Main category 2	Subcategory	concepts
social factors	Individual factors	1. Having a positive attitude towards sports activities by employees 2. Having a good physical health to perform physical activities 3. Having former successful experience of participating in sports activities
	Group agents	4. Increasing the sense of trust among employees in order to participate in group sport activities 5. Increasing the sense of belonging to the group to strengthen the team spirit 6. Strengthening the sense of self-confidence in employees to be able to perform various sports activities 7. Improving relationships and social interactions among employees

The third main category introduces normative dimensions as effective factors on the development of sports in the municipality of

Sari, having two subcategories of monitoring and investing; and legal requirements as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Normative factors affecting the development of sports in Sari municipality**

Main category 3	Subcategory	concepts
Normative dimensions	Monitoring and Investing	1.Continuous monitoring and evaluation of employees' sports by senior managers 2.Survey of employees in order to develop organizational sports 3. Periodic physical fitness tests 4.Forming a comprehensive system to assess the physical fitness of employees 5.Periodic visits of inspectors to the process of equipping or the existing facilities of sports facilities 6.Continuous presence of senior sports managers during sports courses
	Legal requirements	7.Compilation of rules and regulations supporting sports for the use of employees 8.Increasing the amount of legal knowledge in relation to employees' sport field 9.Adoption of laws relating to mandatory minimum hours of exercise for employees during the week 10. Implementing regulations related to the leisure needs of employees' families 11.Approval of laws relating to compliance with ethical and disciplinary standards during sports activities 12.Approval of laws relating to the annual physical fitness review of employees and its effect on job promotion

The fourth main category introduces educational platforms as factors influencing the development of sports in the municipality of

Sari, having two subgroups of educational and informational dimensions shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Educational platform factors in the development of sports in Sari Municipality**

Main category 4	Subcategory	concepts
Educational dimensions	Educational dimensions	1. Training human resources specialist in sports in human resources field. 2.Using scientific and new training approaches in sports activities of employees 3. Using sports consultants to develop the sports in organization. 4.Preparation and distribution of comprehensive sports training programs 5.Using national and international expert sport coaches in the organization's sports bases 6.Holding classes for training and promoting sports' coaches 7.Holding workshops and training courses for the promotion of athletes 8.Talent identification and systematic sport talent development in the organization 9.Preparation and compilation of up-to-date sports books and resources for the use of employees 10.Creating a research system in sports for the benefit of employees 11.Documentation in the sports activities department of the organization 12.Teaching sports such as martial arts and shooting
	information dimensions	13.Promoting an active lifestyle among employees 14.Holding educational seminars in the cultural sector related to participation in sports activities

- 15. Morning exercises of the employees
- 16. Informing employees about the negative consequences of not exercising
- 17. Changing the views of organization managers regarding physical education and sports training

The fifth main category introduces the management dimensions as factors influencing the development of sports in the municipality of

Sari, including two subsets of strategic and motivational dimensions illustrated in Table 7.

**Table 7. Management-related factors affecting the development of sports in the municipality of Sari**

Main category 5	Subcategory	concepts
Management dimensions	Strategic dimensions	1. Correct and appropriate management in the organizational sports department
		2. Investigating the reasons of inadequate participation in sport programs by employees
		3. The use of sports managers in the physical training department of the organization
		4. Using creativity and ideas in sports by the employees using focus groups
		5. Signing a joint contract with other organizations regarding the use of sports facilities
		6. Strengthening and developing the organizational structure of sports in the organization
		7. Proper planning of managers in the field of allocating sufficient and free hours for employees to exercise
		8. Optimum and maximum use of sports facilities in the organization
		9. Forming a scientific working group for physical education
		10. Developing appropriate strategies to promote the professional sports of the organization
		11. Attention and proper planning in connection with sports championship competitions within the organization
		12. Appropriate organization of the organization's athletes
		13. Creating a permanent seat for sports in the organization
		14. Modeling successful sports organizations in the world
		15. Having a strategic and long-term attitude in the sports managers of the organization
		16. Easy and quick access of employees to sports facilities
	Motivational dimensions	17. Creating interest in employees to do sports activities
		18. Free sports in the organization
		19. Holding sports Olympiads for employees
		20. Creating a sense of sports competition in employees
		21. Holding sports and recreational camps continuously throughout the year
		22. Giving rewards such as service charge or leave to top people in the field
		23. Continuous holding of sports festivals in the organization
		24. Cooperation with employees in the field of hourly leave in order to benefit them from sports activities
		25. Allocation of free or discounted quota of sport complexes to employees
		26. Acknowledgment of the best athletes of the organization in special annual ceremonies
		27. The effectiveness of sports in the career advancement of employees
		28. Enriching employees' free time with various sport programs
		29. Organizing sport and leisure camps such as mountain climbing

The sixth main category brings forward communicative dimensions as factors influencing the development of sports in the

municipality of Sari, having two subcategories of sports interactions and media activities as exhibited in Table 8.

**Table 8. Factors of communicative dimensions in the development of sports in Sari municipality**

Main category 6	Subcategory	concepts
Communication	Sports	1. Increasing interaction with universities of physical education and sport sciences

dimensions	interactions	and taking advantage of their capabilities 2.Using the capacities of private sector participation in the development of sports facilities 3.Attracting sponsors in various sports events 4.Interaction with delegations, sports and youth departments and various sports federations 5.Use of sports diplomacy in organizational sports department 6.Existence of sports interaction with other organizations 7.Communication with sport departments in other provinces 8.Interaction with organizations of other countries in the field of sports 9.Mutual and continuous interaction with sport institutions of different federations 10.Hosting important sport events at the national and international level using the sports facilities of the organization
	Media activities	11.Interaction with radio and television for live broadcasting of intra-organizational sport competitions 12.Bringing up and introducing famous athletes of the organization through using the capacities of the media 13.Using social media to advertise intra-organizational sports

Figure 1 shows the final Pattern resulting from the research findings.

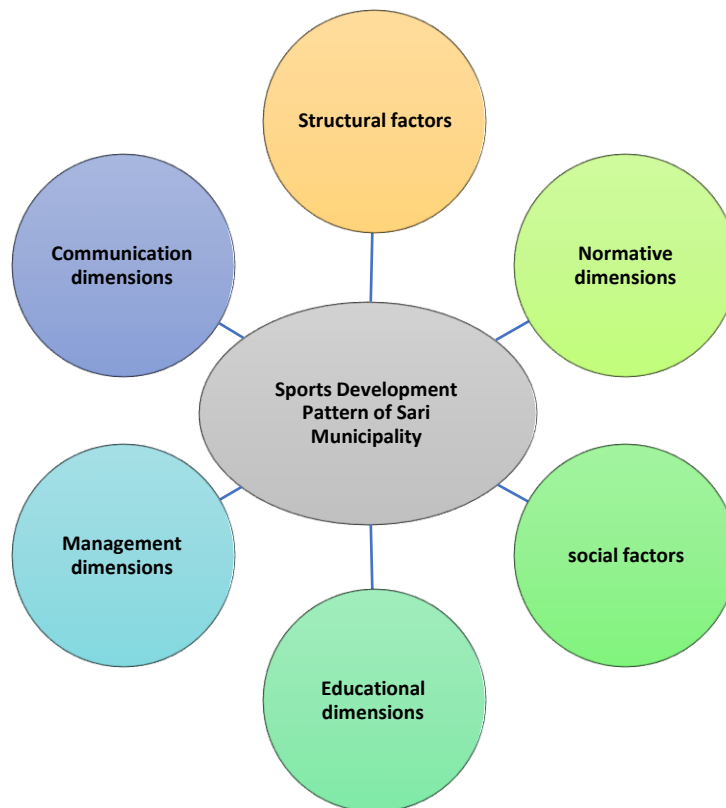


figure1, Sports Development Model of Sari Municipality

According to Figure 1, Sports Development Model of Sari Municipality include: 6 main subcategories; structural dimensions, social dimensions, normative dimensions, educational platforms, managerial dimensions, and

communicative dimensions.

**Discussion**

Using the conducted interviews, we will further examine the results of the research in the



following. Regarding the structural dimensions; *"Interview number(1) assumes: The existing sports facilities in the organization must comply with the standards and frameworks of the sports disciplines, and in some ways, the field of improving the sport infrastructure in the organization should be provided via sport technologies". In the continuation of interview number (3), it was stated; "Providing suitable facilities and structures for women's sports in the organization is one of the requirements that should be sufficiently taken into account". Interview number (8) also stated; paying attention to sport per capita as a dimension of sports facilities within the organization is one of the subjects that should be paid attention to, since the lack of suitable space for employees to perform physical activities is the reason of their reluctance in participating in sports activities. Therefore, the essential stated subjects in this section should be afforded by the senior managers of Sari Municipality.*

The second main category, Social dimension, is related to the identification of factors affecting the development of sports in the municipality of Sari. *In this regard, interview number (5) believes; "In order for employees to participate in various physical and sports activities inside and outside the organization, there should be a positive mentality of participation in sports activities ". In the continuation of interview number (13), it is stated; "Increasing the sense of trust among employees in order to participate in group sports activities, causes employees to engage in group sports activities".*

The Normative dimension is the third main category identified in connection with the identification of factors affecting the development of sports in the municipality of Sari. *In this regard, interview number (11) postulates that; "One of the methods of developing sports within the organization is surveying employees in order to develop sports. By conducting continuous and periodical surveys of employees in relation to various*

*dimensions of organizational sports, different deficiencies and problems have been identified which has positive effects in the long term. It is useful to periodically conduct physical fitness tests for employees as well.*

The Educational platforms, as the fourth main category, identified in relation to the factors affecting the development of sports in Sari municipality. *In this respect, interview number (9) stated; "The existence of people who are experts in sports fields makes various activities go well within the domain of management and organization, consequently the organization does not suffer from lack and weakness in planning and similar subjects, hence, it causes the development of organizational sports." On this matter, interview number (12) believes; "Promoting an active lifestyle among employees is one of the effective ways to involve people in sports activities and ultimately developing sports. And one of the effective ways to promote an active lifestyle is doing morning exercises".*

The Management dimension, is the fifth main category recognized in relation to the factors affecting the development of sports in the municipality of Sari. *On this point, interview number (10) considers; "Employees may not have the opportunity to participate in sports activities due to their busy schedule, and the reasons for their insufficient participation in sport programs should be investigated in order to improve their active participation by solving existing obstacles and adopting appropriate planning." In the continuation of interview number (2), it is declared; "One of the important management dimensions for developing intra-organizational sports is the conclusion of a joint contract with other organizations concerning the use of sports facilities". In this regard, interview number (4) believes; "Free exercise for the employees in the organization is one of the efficient ways to motivate and encourage employees to participate in sports activities". In the*

*continuation of interview number (2), it is expressed; holding sports and leisure camps continuously throughout the year plays an important role in proper spending of leisure time and the tendency to sports activities among employees."*

The Communicative dimension is the last main category noticed in relation to the factors influencing the development of sports in Sari Municipality. On this matter, *interview number (5) supposes; "having interactions is an effective way to develop intra-organizational sports. For instance, increasing interaction with universities of physical education and sports sciences and taking advantage of their capabilities is one of these methods". In the continuation of interview number (7), it is put forward; "The managers of the organization can establish sports interactions with other organizations, or even with the physical education department in other provinces." In the continuation of interview number (5), it is imported; Interacting with radio and television to promote organizational sports is a leading issue for developing intra-organizational sports".*

As a consequence, the senior managers of Sari municipality should pay enough attention to the indispensable matters stated in the study, so that with the participation of employees in sports activities and the physical and psychological development of employees, the organization of Sari municipality will ultimately take the advantages of this issue.

### Conclusion

The results of the research are the representative of more than 93 extracted codes or basic concepts in form of six main categories and 12 subcategories to which the senior managers of Sari Municipality should pay enough attention.

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