

# The Role of Multicultural Management in Dealing with Ethnic Inequality in School Sports: A Study of Iranian Physical Education Teachers

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This research aims to investigate the role of multicultural management in dealing with ethnic inequality in school sports.

**Methods:** The research method was descriptive-correlation. The statistical population of this study included all the physical education teachers in Iran in the academic year 2022-2023 (N=34000). 400 questionnaires were distributed and then, after collecting and removing distorted or incomplete questionnaires, 322 were analyzed as a statistical sample. The items and dimensions of the multicultural management questionnaire of Khodabakhshi et al. (2023) were used after verifying the face, content, and structure validity to measure the research variables. Multiple regression analysis was used in a stepwise method to examine and analyze the relationship between predictor and criterion variables.

**Results:** The results showed a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of cultural management of school sports and dealing with Ethnic inequality, and the regression analysis test was also significant ( $F(3, 96)=82.06$ ,  $P=.001$ ;  $R^2=.719$ ).

**Conclusion:** Therefore, the implementation of multicultural educational programs, the training of multicultural managers and teachers, attention to the behavioral problems of ethnic minority students, and the creation of multicultural spaces (e.g. Schedule regular meetings to discuss and plan multicultural events and initiatives, Organize cultural awareness workshops, where students can share aspects of their heritage, traditions, and customs.) in schools are suggested as solutions.

**Keywords:** cultural awareness, physical education teacher, cultural difference, multicultural society.

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## Introduction

Cultural diversity is one of the significant issues contemporary societies face; the existence of subcultures and religious and ethnic groups has led to the emergence of multicultural societies. Cultural differences affect societies and ways of doing things (Zahedi, 2009). Therefore, it is better to make the most of each subculture's potential capacity and capabilities to strengthen the national culture. Culture is a complex collection of knowledge, ideas, art, ethics, law, customs, and any other habits and characteristics that a person acquires as a member of society. Within this complex collection, there are common ways to understand things, learn, classify, and reward, using language, thinking about understanding reality, the emergence of emotions, using time and space, engaging in work and entertainment, and facing each other (Klipkova et al., 2022). Today, with the disappearance of borders and the influence of cultures on each other, a suitable mechanism is needed for the closeness and interaction between cultures and subcultures (Sadeghi, 2013).

Multicultural management is an approach that includes cultural perspectives, understanding differences, valuing the unique contributions of diverse groups, and promoting learning from many directions. Multicultural leadership encourages people to maintain their cultural identity and, at the same time, to participate in and help the larger society (Pourmoosavi et al., 2020). A person's membership in a particular nation and culture, in determining his/her social base, the role plays, the duties he/she undertakes, the privileges he/she enjoys, the understanding gains of himself/herself and others, the motivation he/she finds to study. Furthermore, even his/her perception of the world is affected. His/her cultural characteristics significantly

influence the degree of success of each student within the educational system (Hamidizadeh et al., 2019). Cultural differences undoubtedly affect the course of education and students' success in society.

Today, for various reasons, including immigration, the social fabric of schools has a lot of ethnic and religious diversity. The school is a very suitable space for the manifestation of the cultural elements of various ethnic groups and religions, which, if accompanied by proper management, will provide a lively and dynamic environment for educational activities and, at the same time, the participation of students in cultural, artistic, and sports (Pourmoosavi et al., 2020). Students should learn that differences do not necessarily mean inferior or superior and that studying ethnic and cultural group differences does not necessarily lead to dichotomy. They should also learn that in racially and ethnically pluralistic societies, difference is inevitable, but this difference is not necessarily destructive or divisive. Students must learn to be thoughtful, honest, caring, and active citizens in a troubled world (Ozturgut, 2011). Helping students recognize factors affecting interpersonal interactions and how these factors affect behavior can partially resolve the problems caused by ethnocentrism. Students must acquire the necessary skills and concepts to overcome factors hindering effective interactions. Skills include identifying ethnic and cultural stereotypes, describing ethnic and cultural values and attitudes, and cultivating intercultural communication skills (Bogotch, 2010). Teachers who focus only on the experiences of the dominant culture in the society and essentially ignore the experiences of the cultures and history of other ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious groups in their teaching have negative consequences for both the dominant and minority student groups (Nieuwboer et al., 2017; Hough & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2005) because the students'

false sense of superiority reinforces the dominant culture and creates a misleading impression of their relationship with other ethnic and racial groups. They take away the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge and insight obtained through the study and experience of other cultures and groups (Ruiz-Montero et al., 2021). They also deprive them of the opportunity to see their culture from the perspective of other cultures and groups (Gutmann, 2004). Therefore, multicultural management is an education in which the same conditions are provided for all people, regardless of their cultural differences, and every student gets the opportunity to become a valuable and productive citizen of society according to his/her abilities (Banks & Banks, 2019). In this regard, Bagherzade et al. (2022) examined the multicultural curriculum's components, dimensions, and indicators. The results showed that the experimental average of multicultural goals in Iran's current educational system is higher than its theoretical average, and based on this, it was determined that the current system's goal-setting status regarding multicultural education is in a favorable state. Also, Alipour and Alipour., (2017) studied Multicultural education and ethnicity in the curriculum. The findings show that "multicultural education" and the category of "ethnicity" are among the most critical elements to maintain intellectual stability and self-confidence in the era of globalization, and whenever the fields of cultural education are not suitable, effective and efficient communication between people occurs. It has not come, and this has disrupted teaching and learning.

Sport is the ideal school for life. Skills learned through play, physical education, and sports are essential for general and moral growth and development (Anandamayi, & Madhumurthi, 2023; Musyimi, 2021). Sports have always been praised for their great appeal.

This means that people of different genders, races, and nationalities are placed in the sports environment through sports and establish social interactions and group cooperation with each other (Shabani Bahar & Maghbolli, 2013). Physical education classes in schools, like other classrooms in different geographical parts of the country, are made up of students with different races, ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultural differences, and the management of these classes requires experience and appropriate role models by school administrators and teachers. The widespread presence of different ethnic groups in Iranian schools requires that multicultural management in school sports be considered an effective tool in dealing with ethnic inequality. Some researchers have shown that by creating a multicultural atmosphere in school sports, people can better understand the culture and traditions of others and get to know each other mutually (Soraya & Supadi, 2023; Deng et al., 2022; Zaragas et al., 2022). As well, sports have long been recognized as a powerful social and cultural phenomenon, serving as a mirror to the values and dynamics of societies. The role of ethnicity in sports is a multifaceted and complex aspect that extends beyond the physical prowess of athletes. In this direction, Elling and Knoppers (2005), found that sport participation preferences of young people are still influenced by dominant normative gendered and racial/ethnic images. On one hand sport participation is less predictable with respect to gender, due for example to interactions with ethnicity. Although ethnic minority girls participate the least in sport, 'black,' traditional 'masculine' sports such as soccer and fighting/self-defense are valued relative highly. in addition for both ethnic minority and majority boys the fear of being labelled as a 'sissy' works as a strong mechanism of self-exclusion from participation in traditional 'feminine' sports. Also,

Lamprecht and Nagel (2023), highlights the underrepresentation of certain population groups in sport, such as those with low education, income, migration background, or disabilities, emphasizing the need to address social inequalities in sport participation. In addition, Nobis and El-Kayed (2019), showed that Class plays a significant role in life choices, lifestyles, and access to valuable resources, which also affects adolescent sport participation.

Also, research has shown that a multicultural atmosphere in school sports can help increase creativity and innovation in sports education methods (Xin, 2021; Hou & Yu, 2020). Multicultural education management is an approach that focuses on identifying and responding to the needs of people from different cultures. It involves planning for multicultural education, strengthening human resources for educators, implementing multicultural education, and evaluating multicultural cultures (Nurcholis et al., 2018). This approach can create a fair and transparent sports environment for all students, regardless of ethnicity. Ethnic inequality in school sports is a common problem. A report on organized sports participation among children aged 6-17 years in the US found disparities in sports participation across age, sex, race, disability, and socioeconomic subgroups (Black, 2022). This inequality can be attributed to various factors, including discrimination, lack of resources, and lack of proper planning. Another study found that students of color who attend schools with multicultural management programs are more satisfied with their athletic experience than students of color who attend schools without such programs (Velarde et al., 2020). Considering that school sports provide an opportunity for various people, including ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities, to participate in group activities and synergy, the importance of multicultural management in this

field is evident (Mokibelo, 2015). Also, considering that school sports are one of the most important spaces that bring opportunities for synergy and interaction between different minorities, it is vital to pay attention to the role of multicultural management in this field (Sinaga et al., 2018). Therefore, multicultural management by creating a more inclusive and pleasant environment can help to break the structural and cultural barriers that prevent students of all ethnic groups from participating and succeeding in sports. In the same vein, The research findings of Mohammadi et al. (2016) showed that Not only is the research on multicultural education a relatively new category for many Iranian researchers, but the conducted research suffers from numerous quantitative and qualitative deficiencies that must be compensated for in future research.

According to the statements above, the issue of ethnic inequality in school sports is a pervasive problem that has been widely acknowledged in the academic literature. Despite the increasing attention paid to this issue, there still needs to be a greater understanding of the role of multicultural management in addressing it. The main problem this research seeks is the need to investigate the effectiveness of multicultural management in dealing with ethnic inequality in school sports. The research delves into the critical issue of ethnic inequality in school sports, focusing on the efficacy of multicultural management strategies in addressing this pervasive problem. The main challenge lies in the existing gap within the scholarly discourse, where the specific mechanisms and impact of multicultural management in mitigating ethnic disparities remain inadequately explored. Despite the acknowledged importance of diversity in educational environments, there is a paucity of research elucidating how elements such as curriculum planning, multicultural planning, cultural awareness, and cultural

enrichment can be strategically integrated into management practices to alleviate ethnic inequalities in school sports. This gap impedes the development of targeted interventions and evidence-based policies necessary for fostering inclusivity in sports within educational institutions. The study aims to address this deficiency by systematically investigating the intricate intersections of multicultural management and ethnic inequality in the context of school sports, providing a nuanced understanding that can inform transformative practices, policies, and interventions for educators, administrators, and policymakers committed to promoting equitable opportunities for all students, irrespective of their ethnic background. Specifically, this research aims to examine how curriculum planning, multicultural planning, cultural awareness, and cultural enrichment can be used to create an inclusive and equitable sports environment in school. This problem is essential because school sports play an important role in promoting physical fitness, teamwork, and socialization of students. However, when specific ethnic groups are excluded or marginalized in school sports activities, it can negatively affect their academic performance, self-esteem, and overall well-being. Therefore, it is essential to understand how multicultural management can promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in school sports and identify best practices that can be implemented in schools in different contexts. This research aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing evidence-based recommendations that can help schools address ethnic disparities in school sports and create a more inclusive and equitable sports environment.

### Materials and methods

According to the practical purpose, the present research is survey-type in terms of data collection method and correlation-type in data

analysis method. To collect the required information mainly from two library methods (referring to documents, documents, books, articles, and publications to examine the available sources and review the work done) and field method (to collect the data required for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing) Used.

This study's statistical population included all the country's physical education teachers in the academic year of 2022-2023 (N=34000). Using the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size was considered equal to 380 people. Considering the purpose of the research, the geographical extent, and the lack of access to all the people of the statistical population, and for the sample to be a better representative of the society, the five geographical regions of North, South, Center, East, and West, respectively, the education departments of Golestan, Khuzestan, Tehran provinces, Razavi Khorasan and Lorestan province were selected (The reason for choosing these provinces was the large ethnic diversity in them), and the questionnaires were distributed among the teachers of these regions. The selection of research samples was done by random method. Finally, 322 questionnaires were analyzed as a statistical sample after collecting and removing distorted or incomplete questionnaires.

To evaluate and measure multicultural management factors (curricular planning, multicultural planning, cultural awareness, cultural enrichment) as well as the variable of ethnic inequality, after studying and searching in limited resources in this field, finally, among the factors and items used Help was taken in the questionnaire of multicultural sports management of Khodabakhshi et al., (2023). Therefore, the research tool had 27 items, each of the dimensions of lesson planning, multicultural planning, cultural awareness, and cultural enrichment has five items, and the



factor of ethnic inequality also has seven items on a five-point Likert scale (1=completely disagree; to 5= completely agree). In order to confirm the validity of the form and content, the questionnaire was given to 12 experts to express their expert opinions on how to write the items, the number of items, the content of the questionnaire, the relationship between the items and the options, and the coordination of the items with the research objectives; After reviewing and taking into account the opinions and suggestions and final approval, the questionnaire was prepared and given to the statistical samples of the research. To determine the reliability (internal consistency) of the tool, in a guided study, 30 questionnaires were distributed among physical education teachers, which were finally measured using Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient for the factors of curriculum planning, multicultural planning, cultural awareness, cultural enrichment, and Ethnic inequality was obtained as 0.88, 0.83, 0.76, 0.84 and 0.81, respectively. In addition, the psychometric properties of the research

instrument, including composite reliability, average variance extracted, and construct validity (convergent validity and divergent validity), were examined and confirmed.

SPSS version 20 software was used for statistical analysis in this study. Descriptive statistics methods (prevalence, mean, standard deviation) were used to evaluate demographic characteristics and determine the variables' importance. Cronbach's alpha was also used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Finally, multiple regression analysis was used in a stepwise method to examine and analyze the relationship between predictor and criterion variables.

## Results

Of the 322 teachers who participated in this research, 47.9% were women; Most subjects had a bachelor's degree (52.1). Only 17.5% of physical education teachers had more than 20 years of work experience, and 37% had work experience between 5 and 10 years (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of research samples

Demographic characteristics		Number	Percent
Gender	Male	173	52.1
	Female	159	47.9
Education	Bachelor's degree	173	52.1
	Master's degree	136	41
	PhD	23	6.9
work experience	Less than five years	69	20.8
	5 to 10 years	123	37
	11 to 20 years	82	24.7
	More than 20 years	58	17.5

Also, based on the findings of the research, the variable mean of dealing with ethnic inequality in schools was equal to  $3.80 \pm 0.98$ ; among the dimensions of multicultural management, the cultural enrichment factor with an average of  $3.90 \pm 1.00$  had the most importance and the lesson planning factor with an average of 3.46

$\pm 1.05$  had the most minor importance. Of course, according to the theoretical average of the research (the sum of the scores of the spectrum points, divided by the number of points), the level of dealing with ethnic inequality as well as all four dimensions of multicultural management of school sports is at a favorable level (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of criterion and predictor variables

Research variables	Mean	SD
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Dealing with ethnic inequality		3.8	0.98
Dimensions of multicultural management in school sports	Curriculum planning	3.46	1.05
	Multicultural planning	3.5	1.21
	Cultural awareness	3.49	1.14
	Cultural Enrichment	3.9	1.00

The results of the research showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of multicultural management of

school sports and dealing with ethnic inequality (Table 3), and the regression analysis test was also significant ( $F(3, 96)=82.06$ ,  $P=.001$ ;  $R^2=.719$ ).

**Table 3. Pearson's linear correlation coefficients**

Research variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Dealing with ethnic inequality	1				
2. Curriculum planning	0.76	1			
3. Multicultural planning	0.77	0.77	1		
4. Cultural awareness	0.79	0.8	0.85	1	
5. Cultural enrichment	0.76	0.77	0.66	0.78	1

To find out which of the four dimensions of multicultural management in school sports has the most impact in predicting dealing with ethnic inequality and which is a better explanation for the variance of dealing with ethnic inequality from multiple regression analysis using the stepwise method. The research findings show that in the first step, cultural awareness is entered into the regression model to explain the variance of dealing with ethnic inequality, and it alone explains 63% of the changes in dealing with ethnic inequality. In the second step, the cultural enrichment

variable was entered into the model, and along with the cultural awareness variable, they explained 68% of the variance of the factor of dealing with ethnic inequality. In the third step, the multicultural planning variable was entered into the model, which showed a correlation of 0.84, and the coefficient of determination increased to 71% (Table 4). The regression analysis ends in the third stage, and the lesson planning dimension is removed from the regression model. Therefore, 71% of the changes in dealing with ethnic inequality in school sports are caused by cultural awareness, cultural enrichment, and multicultural planning.

**Table 4. The final results of stepwise regression analysis in the third step**

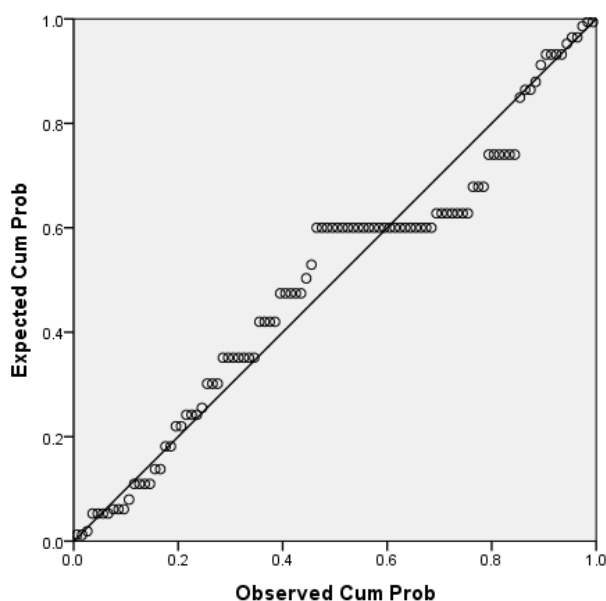
The variable entered into the regression model	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
Cultural awareness	0.798	0.637	0.633	171.819	0.001
Cultural awareness, Cultural enrichment	0.83	0.689	0.683	16.415	0.001
Cultural awareness, Cultural enrichment, Multicultural planning	0.848	0.719	0.711	10.296	0.002

In the regression analysis, before the analysis results are used, and the regression equation is written based on them, two basic assumptions about the regression analysis should be examined: 1. Uncorrelatedness of the residuals of the regression line, and 2. Normality of the residuals of the regression line. If the above assumptions are true, then it is possible to refer to the regression analysis results and write the equation of the regression line.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was used to check

the non-correlation of the residuals of the regression line; since the value of this statistic was equal to 1.995, the non-correlation of the residuals of the regression line is established because the above statistic must be around the number 2 to establish the relevant assumption. Also, the regression plot of the standardized residuals was used to check the normality of the residuals of the regression line (Figure 1). Considering that all the points are located around a straight line, the assumption of normality of the residuals of the regression line

is also established.



**Figure 1. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual**

According to the confirmation of the underlying assumptions, the results of the regression analysis, and based on the coefficients of the predictive variables in the analysis (Table 5), the following equation can be expressed for the relationship between the

dimensions of multicultural management of school sports and dealing with ethnic inequality. This equation can predict coping with ethnic inequality based on the dimensions of cultural awareness, cultural enrichment, and multicultural planning.

$$\text{Dealing with ethnic inequality} = .209(\text{cultural awareness}) + .379(\text{cultural enrichment}) + .339(\text{multicultural planning})$$

**Table 5. Coefficients of the variables of the regression line equation in the third step**

Variables	B	$\beta$	T	Sig.
(Constant)	0.751		3.471	0.001
Cultural awareness	0.18	0.209	2.638	0.002
Cultural Enrichment	0.373	0.379	4.323	0.001
Multicultural planning	0.276	0.339	3.209	0.002

## Discussion

Despite progress in recent years, significant disparities in participation, achievement, and leadership opportunities exist for students from different ethnic groups. Multicultural management can be a powerful tool to create a fair and transparent sports environment for all students. Therefore, this study investigated the role of multicultural management (curriculum planning, multicultural planning, cultural awareness, and cultural enrichment) in dealing with ethnic inequality in Iranian school sports. Based on the findings of this research, it can be

said that schools can reduce ethnic inequality in school sports by using multicultural management and thus improve the sports experience of students. This finding aligns with past research. For instance, a study conducted by Smith et al. (2018) showed that multicultural planning and cultural enrichment in educational environments can contribute to reducing ethnic inequality among students. Additionally, recent research by Johnson et al. (2022) shows that cultural enrichment and cultural awareness can serve as effective strategies in combating ethnic inequalities in school sports. Based on the results of this research, the average of all the



investigated dimensions of multicultural management was higher than the theoretical average of the research and was at a relatively favorable level. This part of the findings aligns with the study of Bagherzade et al. (2022). Among the dimensions of multicultural management, the cultural enrichment component had a higher average. This result shows that the positive attitude towards culturally diverse groups should be strengthened in the physical education class and school sports field. Strengthening teamwork, altruism, and respect among students, along with local and cultural sports festivals and competitions, have been given serious attention and should be at the top of the programs of physical education teachers and school administrators.

Also, this study's results showed a positive and significant relationship between all dimensions of multicultural management in dealing with ethnic inequality. Nevertheless, based on the results of the regression analysis, it was found that only three of the four dimensions of multicultural management are effective in dealing with ethnic inequality. So, cultural awareness, enrichment, and planning explain 71% of the variance in dealing with ethnic inequality. The dimension of cultural awareness was the first factor that entered the regression model to explain the variance of coping with ethnic inequality and explained 63% of the variance of coping with ethnic inequality. Based on this, we expect to form a common identity between diverse cultural groups in the school, inform and educate students and parents about subcultures and cultural differences, and attract parents' participation and support for multicultural programs in schools. They can play an influential role in dealing with ethnic inequalities. Cultural enrichment was the second factor that entered the regression model, and together with the previous factor, explains

68% of the variance in dealing with ethnic inequality. This relationship shows that to deal with ethnic inequality, strengthening teamwork and strengthening coexistence based on respect and altruism should be considered. Multicultural planning was the last factor among the four dimensions of multicultural management that was entered into the regression model, and together with the previous dimensions, explains 71% of the variance of dealing with ethnic inequality. This relationship shows that native physical education teachers are familiar with the dominant culture of the educational region, and appointing administrators familiar with ethnic, racial, and cultural identity and prejudice can play a vital role in confronting ethnic inequality. In this regard, Khodabakhshi et al. (2023) also believe that multicultural planning is one of the most important components influencing the multicultural management of school sports.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study show that multicultural management can be used as an effective solution to ethnic inequality in school sports. In this regard, the implementation of multicultural educational programs, the training of multicultural managers and teachers, attention to the behavioral problems of ethnic minority students, and the creation of multicultural spaces in school sports are suggested as solutions. Also, using multicultural managers in sports teams and creating opportunities for synergy and interaction between ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities are recommended as other solutions. In addition, the following are other suggestions for using multicultural management to deal with ethnic inequality in school sports. Schools can offer educational programs about different cultures so that students and parents can have a better

understanding of each other; Schools can employ teachers with diverse cultural backgrounds so that students are in contact with different cultures; Schools can provide support programs for ethnic minority students participating in sports activities; Schools can establish policies to prevent discrimination in school sports. Also, multicultural management can help increase awareness of cultural differences, promote cultural understanding, and strengthen intercultural cooperation, which can contribute to reducing prejudice and discrimination and creating a more welcoming environment for all students. Multicultural management can help students understand the different strengths and perspectives that different cultures bring to sports. By addressing structural, cultural, and individual factors in addressing ethnic inequality in school sports, multicultural management can help create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all students.

In this study, using robust and multivariate statistical methods such as regression analysis and the use of valid and reliable tools, the role of multicultural management (cultural awareness, cultural enrichment, multicultural planning, curriculum planning) in dealing with ethnic inequality in sports was tried. Schools should be checked. However, the correct interpretation and analysis of any research results depends on understanding its limitations, and it is believed that these limitations provide new and innovative opportunities for conducting new research. Therefore, in the following, suggestions for future research are mentioned. This study found that only 71% of the variance in dealing with ethnic inequality is explained by multicultural management dimensions, so 29% of it is related to other factors that should be determined by future research. In addition, in this study, only the opinions and perceptions of physical education teachers were measured through a

questionnaire; it is suggested that in future research, using qualitative and quantitative methods, the opinions and perceptions of managers, officials, parents, and even students about multicultural management and coping With being evaluated with inequality in school sports.

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