

## Designing a Paradigmatic Model of Psychological Motivators for the Presence of Spectators in Football Stadiums of the Persian Gulf Premier League

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Spectators, like athletes, are the main customers of sports, whose motivation to participate in sports competitions is very important. Therefore, it is important to determine the motivations of Iranian spectators to attend the Premier League of the Persian Gulf.

**Methods:** The present research method is qualitative (grounded theory - with the Strauss and Corbin approach), exploratory in purpose, and applied in result. Through snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 experts in the field of football until saturation was reached.

**Results:** The findings showed that causal factors (social transformation, individual factors, the nature of harm, opportunities for exploitation in sports, and the quality of the venue) led to attention to the central phenomenon (investigating the psychological motivators for the presence of spectators in football stadiums of the Persian Gulf Premier League), contextual factors (modeling, the influence of the match day, the desirability of the club's income, and the social environment), intervening factors (mental, health, structural, economic, managerial, social, and executive constraints), its strategies (educational and health development, financial development, executive development, managerial development, and structural development), and the existing consequences (motivation enhancement, sports community productivity, managerial development, health knowledge enhancement, positive fan behaviors, and health consequences).

**Conclusion:** This model helps to better understand the needs and expectations of spectators and can lead to an improved experience for them, as well as an increase in their attendance at stadiums.

**Keywords:** Psychological motivation, spectators, football, Persian Gulf, Premier League.

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## Introduction

Among social phenomena, football has the largest audience due to its unique appeal (Mostafaei, & Kalate seifari, 2020). Sports spectators are those who have a great interest in watching sporting events. In a way, we can say that spectators are recognized as the main customers of sports (Bina et al., 2020). Spectators of sporting events mainly participate in events for the main products, namely competitive sporting events; while they enjoy the ancillary services such as being present at a time period and the day's advertisements that are only experienced at the event venue (Byon et al., 2013). The presence and support of spectators at football matches in stadiums and through the media has led to this field being recognized as the most popular sport in the world (Barajas et al., 2014). The main characteristics of the product (for example, the game itself and the players' performance) and the characteristics of the event support program (for example, the physical environment, staff, event, privileges, and advertising) may play an important role in the presence of spectators (Watanabe et al., 2020). Spectators have different beliefs when it comes to watching competitions. They believe that watching sports gives meaning and purpose to their lives. Attending and watching competitions helps spectators have a proper understanding of their environment and the events around them. They also try to use sports to create meaning in their lives. Presence in stadiums creates empathy and camaraderie among fans (Fernandez et al., 2021).

The psychological factor is one of the most important motivational aspects for the presence and participation of spectators in football matches. Spectators, due to having psychological emotions or experiencing excitement in a sporting event, express and experience these emotions, which creates positive effects such as increased self-confidence for the spectator (Salamat et al.,

2012). Mental health is one of the responsibilities of sports. Mental health helps individuals to be aware of their personal abilities, strengths, goals, motivations and needs, and to have self-esteem and use the prominent features of their personality. Individuals with self-confidence do not deny the reality of their existence and easily accept failures, and try to address their shortcomings without worry (Öktem et al., 2020). In other words, participation in sporting events can provide a context in which individuals can enjoy the psychological benefits of pleasure and self-esteem, and support personal growth and learning, which in turn can contribute to individual life satisfaction (Inoue et al., 2018).

The relationship between the presence of spectators and population health, such as participation in physical activities and life satisfaction, exists. Governments invest significant resources in preventive policies and measures to prevent the rise in public health costs. However, the level of inactivity is rapidly increasing (Murray et al., 2018). The presence of spectators at football matches has various reasons, one of which is the motivation among the spectators. There are many motivational factors for spectators to attend the matches, including the stadium condition, the timing of the matches, the psychological impact on the spectators, and the influence of friends to support the team. The facilities and equipment of the venue can be a motivation for spectators to attend and support their team. Another reason for the motivation of spectators is the psychological factors, as they, due to their work and life commitments, spend some time without work-related stress to express their emotions and excitement by watching the matches, and by being present at the venue, they can release their emotional and psychological states, thereby reducing their psychological burden, and by having interactions with other spectators, their social identity increases (Reyhani et al., 2013).

Football has become one of the most popular sports in Iran, attracting the largest number of spectators among all sports. The packed stadiums during domestic and international events demonstrate that this sport has a large fan base, and in addition to stadium attendance, several hundred million viewers watch the matches on television. The presence of spectators in the stadiums adds excitement to the competitions, and this excitement is enjoyable not only for the spectators themselves, but also for the athletes and those who watch the energy of the crowd through the television screen. One of the potential effects of spectator presence on sports is the attraction of financial resources for sports organizations (Falah Kazemi et al., 2017). The more prominent the presence of spectators, the more financial sponsors tend to invest in the sport (Rajabzadeh et al., 2018).

There are various factors that contribute to the diminished presence of spectators in stadiums. One of the reasons is the high cost of match tickets, the inconvenient timing of the matches, the scheduling of matches during working hours for spectators, the low quality of the matches, and the online purchase of tickets, which some spectators are not fully familiar with (Emadi et al., 2015). Fans are often referred to as the "12th man" of the team. They support their favorite football players and clubs in fair play (Szczeokowski et al., 2021). It is crucial for clubs to discover innovative strategies for engaging fans and generating revenue (Gouveia et al., 2021). Bringing spectators back to matches is essential for the survival of many clubs, which are referred to as the "football family." As mentioned earlier, football is a product that relies on the collaboration of various stakeholders. In fact, even lower-league clubs generate support revenue from local partners (Bond et al., 2020). In English football, millions of fans across the country attend matches in their local regions every season (Olczak et al., 2020). Fans are often portrayed as having more emotional

rather than rational behavior, but many of them are heavily involved in decision-making and the performance of the club (Parnell et al., 2021). On match days, revenue accounts for 14% of the total annual revenue for the 2019/2018 season, although the amount varies among different clubs. In total, match-day revenue generates £680 million for Premier League clubs (Maguire et al., 2021).

Having loyal customers is the key to a successful sports organization, especially if the fundamental factors of loyalty are understood and developed. They exhibit behaviors such as repeatedly purchasing tickets and consistently showing up (Bee et al., 2020). Sports consumers may have different interests, motivations, and reasons for attending games. Fans can express their allegiance based on their behavior and the degree of attachment to a team. Sports consumers are typically highly engaged. They often follow the sport closely. However, their behavior may be influenced by different characteristics in team sports products. Motivations are often based on gender, sport, and different preferences. Points of attachment also show differences as spectators may be attached to different aspects such as teams, clubs, athletes, and other fans (Da Silva et al., 2017).

Based on Vallerand's study, the presence of football fans in stadiums has various reasons, including the excitement of cheering for the beloved team, participating in small victory celebrations, escaping from everyday Holding matches behind closed doors severely affects the spectator experience as well as the economics of the leagues. This can lead to reduced revenues, less incentive for fans to attend in the future, and even less attractive leagues. Also, this situation can lead to a decrease in social connections and a sense of belonging of the fans to their teams.

One of the necessities of this research; Facilitating the process of buying tickets through electronic systems can help reduce

queues and gatherings in stadiums. This method not only helps in the comfort of the spectators, but also allows better control of the number of spectators (Zakizadeh & Atghia, 2020). By attending stadiums, spectators not only enjoy watching the game, but also seek to create social connections, experience excitement and feel a sense of belonging to a particular group or team. These psychological motivations can include positive emotions such as happiness, excitement and satisfaction, as well as negative emotions such as stress and psychological pressure (Kim et al, 2021). Economic and cultural factors also play an important role in attracting fans to stadiums. Holding special events, providing appropriate services and facilities, and creating a friendly and safe atmosphere for spectators can all help to increase people's willingness to attend football matches (Mazzei, et al, 2020). The damage caused to football is caused by the lack of strategic planning in the football body. Lack of attention to attract and retain spectators, as well as lack of effective marketing to increase their presence, are among the main reasons for the decrease in attendance in stadiums. Therefore, strategic and long-term planning to attract and maintain spectators should be considered as a priority for the Football Federation, clubs and sports organizations (Getnet et al, 2024). The low quality of services provided in stadiums and the higher quality of visual media (TV) have reduced the desire of spectators to attend stadiums. The lack of commercial and tourism services around the stadiums is also one of the important factors in reducing the number of spectators. In addition, factors such as comfortable seating, appropriate game location, access to the scoreboard, stadium public address system, healthy and affordable food and beverage offerings, and easy access to post-match transportation system are other critical factors in This is the field (Ramos et al, 2023). It should be noted that in order to attract spectators to the matches and their presence in the quality stadium in all dimensions of a

football match, from the performance of the players and coaches to the referees and other factors involved, it has a significant impact on the spectators' experience. The presence of first-class players and coaches, both local and foreign, can increase the attractiveness and quality of matches and strengthen the motivation of spectators to attend stadiums (Brochado et al, 2021). Reducing unnecessary rules and restrictions can help facilitate the attendance of spectators at matches. This reduction can include facilitating the purchase of tickets, entering the stadium and using the facilities. By lowering the barriers, more spectators will be encouraged to attend the matches (Erturan-Ogut, 2020).

Kim et al (2021) investigated the relationship between motivation, participation and loyalty of sports spectators. The findings suggest that a strong positive relationship was found between sport spectators' motivation and both socio-psychological involvement and behavioural involvement. Spectators' motivation displays a mediating (indirect) effect on their loyalty through both involvement constructs. However, non-significant relationships between motivation and loyalty were found. One of the strongest motivations we found for attending a football game was vicarious achievement, whereas behavioural involvement has the strongest effect on spectators' loyalty. [Ranjbar et al \(2021\)](#) they discussed the effect of team identity on the satisfaction and behavioral tendencies of Tabriz Tractorsazi soccer fans. The findings of track analysis showed that team identity of spectators is of impact on their behavioral intentions and satisfaction of them. Chou et al (2019) based on the cognitive-affective-behavioral theory examined how nostalgia and the motivation of fans of European football clubs influence the intention to visit a stadium abroad. The results from 301 fans of European football clubs who have not yet visited the stadium of their favorite football team showed that nostalgia has a positive

impact on motivation and, consequently, on the intention to visit the stadium. Kogoya et al (2022) they did a study on the biggest multi-sport event in Indonesia and the audience attendance. The involvement of the participant in the event was significantly associated with sports event image, satisfaction, motivation, stadium atmosphere, environment, and the perception of impact. Solberg & Turner (2010) examined the reasons for the decline in attendance at Norwegian Premier League stadiums. One of the most important findings was that the live broadcast of the European Championship on Norwegian public television led to a 68% decrease in attendance at Norwegian stadiums (Solberg et al., 2010). Theodorakis et al. in their research showed that the quality of the match and the services provided in the stadiums directly affect the willingness to attend football matches in the stadiums (Theodorakis et al., 2013). Carvalho et al (2015) identified important factors such as difficult access to stadiums, lack of security and peace, absence of well-known football stars, and high ticket prices as reasons for the decline in spectator attendance (De Carvalho et al., 2015). Gonzalez et al (2016) evaluated the reasons for the presence or absence of spectators in major European football leagues and referred to the type of stadium, team performance and results, weather conditions, year and season, and day of the week of the match (Gómez González et al., 2016). Recently, Schreyer & colleagues (2019) examined the determinants of spectator attendance in football stadiums, focusing on poor spectator behavior. Their findings clearly showed a direct relationship between poor spectator behavior and qualitative aspects of football, such as team performance and star players in traditional matches against rivals. For maintaining the loyalty of sports consumers due to the psychological perception of the importance of fans in influencing the outcome of the match is crucial for the team's success (Schreyer, et al., 2019). According to Ferreira

& Bravo (2007), the loyalty of true fans means they will always show up at the stadium regardless of ticket prices. The phenomenon of win/loss relationship between game atmosphere, game satisfaction, and behavioral intentions is significant, and it can be inferred that creating an exciting game environment leads to consumer satisfaction and a positive impact on the likelihood of returning to future events (Ferreira et al., 2007). Promoting a game environment in combination with the core features of the core product (i.e., player performance, team history, star players, competition, and community prestige) helps athletes satisfy and retain their customers (Yoshida et al., 2010). Cho et al. (2019) found that the direct effect of team loyalty and revisit intention on revisit goals. The stadium environment only affected revisit intention and revisit goals through interaction with team loyalty. Specifically, greater loyalty led to a greater desire to stay and revisit, while fans' positive experience of the stadium environment amplified this effect (Cho et al., 2019). Fontanokeet Ithavorn and Celito (2018) found that spectator satisfaction and quality related to attendance on the day of the game directly affected behavioral intention to attend future events. Team performance (defined as quality of outcome) and total attendance cost were found to significantly affect spectator satisfaction and behavioral intention to attend future games (Phonthanakitithaworn, & Sellitto, 2018). Mazi et al. (2020) identified the motivations for spectators to attend stadiums as entertainment and psycho-social motivations, ticket prices, marketing initiatives, quality of football, and the enjoyment of watching a football match in the stadium (Mazzei et al., 2020).

As a result, sport has always been a source of attraction and interest, and it has repeatedly been full of social and cultural meanings. Contrary to the commercial motives that characterize team owners, the relationship between fans and the team is based on deep

emotions. Empathy over the years has grown from a combination of core themes: love and loyalty, the formation of a community, and the construction of a personal identity that grows from identification with the group. In fact, for fans, there is usually a kind of motivation. Therefore, the present study aims to design a paradigmatic model of psychological motivators for the presence of spectators in the stadiums of the Persian Gulf Premier League football. It addresses the psychological motivations that influence the spectators.

### Materials and Methods

The present research is qualitative (grounded theory - with the Strauss and Corbin approach), exploratory in purpose, and applied in outcome. The research population included individuals with scientific and practical expertise in the field of sports. In this research, the samples were selected purposefully and through snowball sampling; the samples included football coaches, technical managers, referees, football experts, players, spectators, executive managers, league organization staff, students, football instructors, university professors, and veterans. Semi-structured interviews were used to conduct the research. The interviews continued until data saturation was reached. The validity and reliability of the data were determined using the method of review by experts. The findings were formed into a final model based on data coding and analysis. In this method, the researcher uses interpretive methods and procedures to gain an understanding of the phenomena from the

perspective of the participating individuals. In this research, the grounded theory strategy or method was used. The research population included experts in the field of sports management, athletes, coaches, association officials, club managers, and fans, and theoretical sampling was used to interview 20 people until theoretical saturation was reached. Based on the Strauss and Corbin (1998) theory, the central phenomenon, codes, and extracted articles were placed in causal conditions, contextual, intervening, strategic, and consequential factors, and the relationships between the factors were established using selective coding.

To determine the validity and reliability in qualitative research, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were utilized. For credibility, the interview texts and coding methods were sent to several participants and a few professors in the field of sports management, and their feedback was incorporated into the analysis process. To ensure transferability, all stages of the research and the demographic characteristics of the samples were reported in detail. For reliability assessment, an inter-coder agreement method was employed with two coders. These two coders, who are specialists in sports management and familiar with the coding method, coded the interviews, and the percentage of agreement between them was calculated to be 87% using the formula below. Given that this percentage is higher than 60%, the reliability of the research was confirmed.

**Table 1. Results of Two Coders Reliability Test**

Interview number	Total number of codes	Number of agreements	Number of disagreements	Reliability percentage
5	18	8	6	٪88
10	19	9	4	٪95
12	13	5	7	٪77
<b>total</b>	50	22	17	٪87

For confirmability, several professors of sports management and experts in the relevant field who were not involved in the research process reviewed all stages of the study, and their feedback was incorporated into the final analysis.

## Results

In this section, the information of the interviewees was presented in the format of Table 2. This table included the gender, age, expertise, and position of the samples relevant to the field of sports and football.

**Table 2. Information of the Interviewees**

Interviewee Codes	Gender	positions
P1	Male	Head Coach of Foolad Khuzestan
P2	Male	Technical Manager of a Professional Football Academy
P3	Male	Referee and Assistant Referee of the Premier League
P4	Male	International Referee of the Premier League
P5	Male	National Referee of the Premier League
P6	Male	Football Analyst
P7	Male	Football Analyst
P8	Male	Spectator
P9	Male	Premier League Player of Fajr Shaid Sepasi Shiraz
P10	Male	Player of Sanat Naft Abadan
P11	Male	Premier League Player of Foolad Khuzestan
P12	Male	Sports Management Student and Premier League Coach
P13	Male	Analyst and Coach
P14	Male	AFC Instructor
P15	Male	Professor of Sports Management
P16	Female	Professor of Sports Management
P17	Male	National Team Veteran
P18	Male	Former National Team Manager and Youth National Team Competitions Manager
P19	Male	Executive Manager of Youth Football at the League Organization
P20	Male	Competitions Staff of the Premier League Organization

For the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, after coding the interviews, the codes were categorized into five categories:

causal factors, contextual factors, intervening factors, strategies, and consequences. Most of the suggestions revolved around the

psychological motivators for the presence of spectators in football stadiums. As a result, the central phenomenon will be presented in the continuation of the process.

In this stage, using axial coding, 15 codes were identified as the causal conditions for the organization of football matches with the presence of spectators. From the researcher's perspective, five concepts were identified as the

final causal conditions: social transformation, individual factors, and the nature of harm, opportunities for productivity in sports, and the quality of the venue. The interviewees' responses regarding the causal conditions related to the reasons for the importance and psychological motivators for the presence of spectators in the Premier League football are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Causal codes and concepts of psychological motivators of spectators' presence in Premier League football stadiums**

The main category	concepts	Code
Causal conditions	Social transformation	Changing people's lifestyles
		Mental change from the virus
		Changing the expectations of the audience from the club managers
	Individual factors	The attraction of watching matches at the venue
		Spending leisure time
		Discharge of excitement
		Acquiring and obtaining social identity
	The nature of the damage	A threat to the health of the spectators
		Little awareness of the nature of sports
		Inadequate knowledge about prevention and treatment
	Productivity opportunities in sports	Electronic marketing of products and services
		Watching sports matches through national media
		Increase and attract more viewers foot receivers
		Earning through electronic means
		The presence of the private sector to provide financial resources
The quality of the venue	The appropriateness of the safety and health situation of the venue	
	Providing appropriate health and welfare facilities	
	The clarity of marked seats	
		Proper communication with the audience

In this research, the term 'contextual conditions' refers to the internal (intrinsic) organizational conditions of the psychological motivations of the audience's presence in football stadiums, which influence the strategies; these were systematically identified through interviews and studies. As observed in Table 4, the final concepts in the central coding under the

contextual conditions are categorized into three concepts. The results of the central coding on the contextual conditions include model formation, desirability of the club's revenue, the impact of the match day, and the social environment, which are among the contextual factors and approaches to this subject.

**Table 4. Codes and contextual concepts of psychological motivators of audience presence in Premier League football stadiums**

The main category	concepts	Code
Contextual factors	modeling	Modeling similar methods of control in stadiums
		Understanding the use and application of health outbreaks
	Match day effect	Spectators cheering and encouraging the players
		The effect of noise on referee judgment
		The effect of the audience's emotions on the coach's performance
	Profitability of the club	Increase sales of products and services
		The utility of average income of clubs
		The desirability of selling products and services of financial sponsors
		Advertising and marketing in the electronics sector
	Community space	Transferring emotions in communities
		Compliance with social interaction of fans
		Rules governing the absence of spectators in the stadium
		Compliance with health issues

In this research is the external conditions (macro environment) of the organization that stimulate the psychological motivation of the presence of spectators in football stadiums, which affects the strategies; which were identified through interviews and systematic review of studies. The results of the axial coding; The limiting intervening conditions of the spectators showed that seven concepts including; psychological and mental inhibiting barriers, health-limiting barriers, structural

inhibiting barriers, economic inhibiting barriers, managerial inhibiting barriers, social inhibiting barriers, and executive inhibiting barriers are among the intervening factors on this issue.

Also, the discovery of the categories of limiting intervening factors in the organization of football matches for spectators from the axial coding is shown in Table 5. The final concepts have been categorized under the conditions of the limiting intervening factors.

**Table 5. Intervening codes and concepts of psychological motivators of audience presence in Premier League football stadiums**

The main category	concepts	Code
Intervening factors	Mental and psychological barriers	The absence of spectators and the psychological effect on the players
		Demotivation of players
		Lack of mental imagery of the players on the audience
	Barriers limiting health	Improper spacing
		Toilet facilities
	Structural limiting barriers	Inappropriate structure of some clubs to disinfect places
		Lack of sanitary facilities
		Lack of medical staff at the time of attendance at the gym
	Economic barriers	Lack of funds
		Financial problems of clubs
		No income generation on the day of the match
		Reduction of media broadcasting rights
		Not selling tickets
		Reduction in sales of club products and services (flags, clothes, etc.)
		Reducing the transfer of athletes
		Reducing the salaries of coaches and athletes
		Non-responsiveness of sports officials to financial sponsors
		Not selling food and consumables inside the stadium
	Barriers limiting management	Lack of crisis management planning in sports
		Weak problem-solving skills of club managers
		Inadequate support and backing from sponsors
		Weak management in attracting diverse investors
		Lack of strategic planning to retain financial backers
		Limited understanding of current conditions by sports managers
	social limiting barriers	Lack of planning for unpredictable expenses in sports
		The lack of audience interaction with each other

Lack of audience safety

Obstacles

limiting

implementation

Low interaction with other clubs to model

Strategies are purposeful and intentional actions taken to solve a problem. These strategic tactics are essentially how the management of situations in dealing with the issues and challenges facing the organization of spectators' attendance is carried out, in order to successfully implement this system. As observed in Table 6, the final concepts in the open coding of strategies and actions have been categorized into five concepts.

The results of the open coding reveal that the effective strategies and actions for the psychological motivations of spectators to attend matches show that five concepts - developing education and health, developing financial resources, developing implementation, developing management, and developing structural aspects - are among the effective strategies for the organization and psychological motivation of spectators.

**Table 6. Codes and concepts of strategies, psychological motivators of spectators' presence in Premier League football stadiums**

The main category	concepts	Code
Strategic factors	Educational and health development	The cooperation of the spectators with the responsibility of the stadiums
		Observance of social distancing in the stadium
		Attending the gym without dangerous equipment
		The presence of medical personnel in the stadium
		Audience training and guidance
		Create banners and ads
		The audience's knowledge and belief in the need to respect privacy
	Financial development	Buy tickets only electronically
		Increasing sales of products and services through the Internet
		Government financial support to clubs
		Eliminating unnecessary expenses of clubs
		Funding part of the club's budget with the presence of spectators
		Economic balancing of the club through the reduction of players' salaries
		Interaction between the Ministry of Health and club managers
Forming a crisis committee at the venue		
Interaction with the police force		
Follow-up and requests of clubs for the presence of spectators in all competitions		

Management development	Cooperation of players with the club to reduce salaries and championship bonuses
	Cooperation between the Ministry of Health and sports federations
	Inflation control
Structural development	Updating venues
	Using human resources for disinfection before and after the venue of the competitions
	Attention to sports facilities and equipment

The results of the open coding of the outcomes and effective results of the organization of the psychological motivators of spectators show that six concepts, including enhancing the level of motivation, improving the productivity of the

sports community, developing management, enhancing the level of health knowledge, positive fan behaviors, and health-related outcomes, are among the effective outcomes and results, as shown in Table 7.

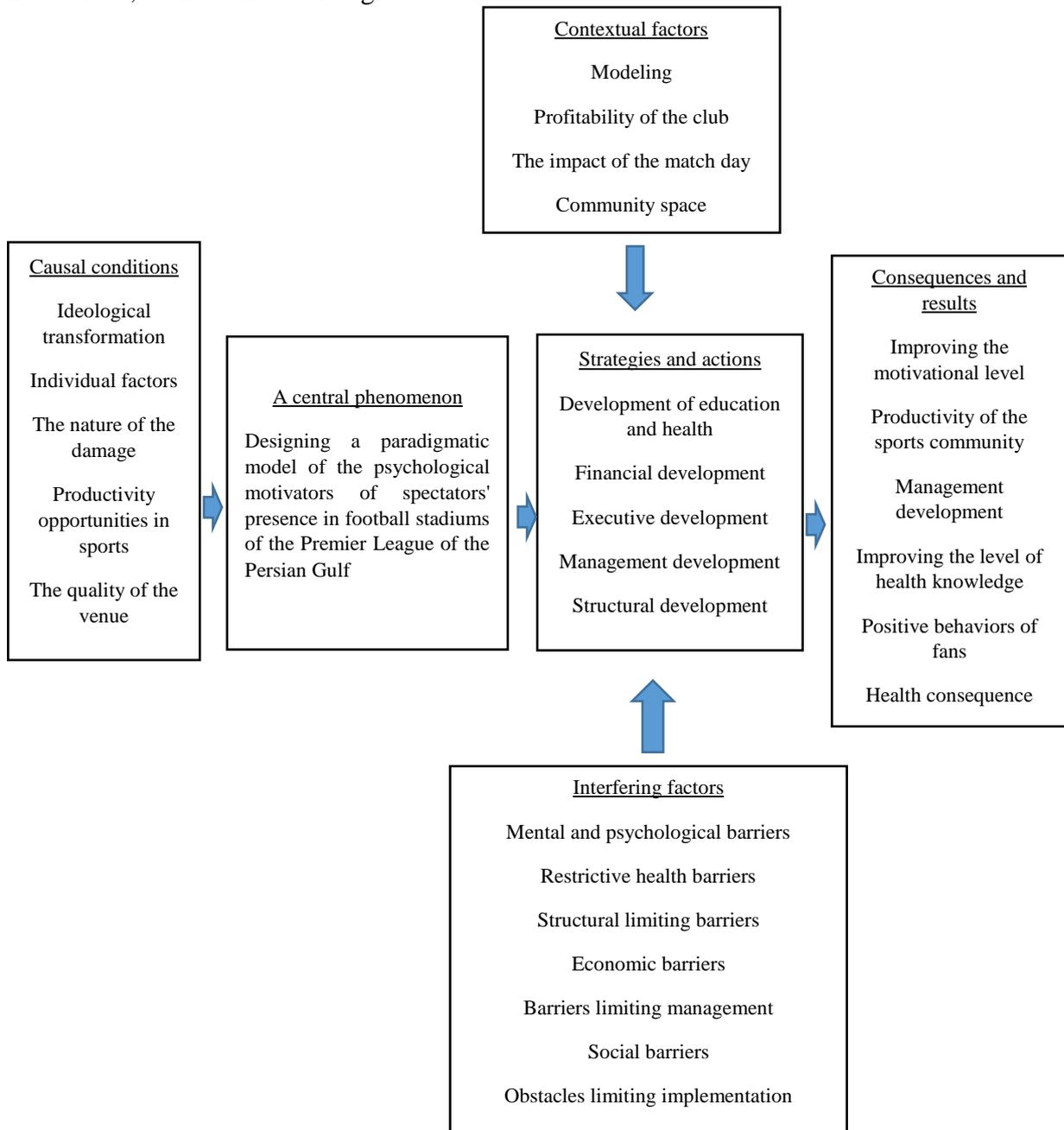
**Table 7. Codes and concepts of the consequences of psychological motivators of the presence of spectators in Premier League football stadiums**

The main category	concepts	Code
Outcome factors	Improving the motivational level	The charm of the game with the audience
		Audience presence as human and financial capital
		The excitement of the game again
		Access to spectators and their proximity to favorite players
		Feeling the right decision to attend the gym
		The importance of the presence of spectators in the stadium again
	Productivity of the sports community	Increased productivity on match day
		Increasing sponsors again
		Increase variable income
		More audience increase
		An increase in viewers due to the excitement created by the audience
		Increased productivity on match day
	Management development	Having strategic plans in times of crisis
		Having enough funds in the necessary times
	Improving the level of health knowledge	Compliance with health protocols
		Cooperation with club officials
		Use of sanitary tools for disinfection
	Positive behaviors of fans health	Controlling emotions and feelings during the game
Word-of-mouth advertising for psychological motivators in gyms		
Buying favorite club products and brands		
		Attention to environmental health

consequences Full compliance with health protocol

The paradigmatic model of the psychological motivations for the presence of spectators in the stadiums of the Persian Gulf Premier League football is shown in Figure 1. The causal conditions represent the necessity of the central phenomenon, which is the organization and psychological motivation of spectators to the match venues, and the strategies were

determined based on the contextual conditions and intervening factors. As a result, the consequences of the organization and psychological motivation of spectators in the further development of sports as well as the increased interest of spectators have also been identified.



**Figure 1. Designing a paradigmatic model of the psychological motivators of spectators' presence in football stadiums of the Premier League of the Persian Gulf**

## Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to design a paradigmatic model of the psychological motivations for the presence of spectators in the football stadiums of the Persian Gulf Premier League. Spectators in professional sports leagues are recognized not only as consumers, but also as key agents in the production process and sports experience. Their role is very important in providing the budget and revenue of leagues and this role is different depending on the type of league and its financial strategies. Some leagues need live audiences to generate revenue from ticket sales and stadium attendance, while other leagues may focus more on attracting television audiences (Horky, 2021).

Football spectators naturally experience intense emotions during matches. These emotions include joy when goals are scored, frustration when opportunities are missed, and even anger at refereeing decisions. This expression of emotions is not only related to the game itself, but also depends on social connections and interactions between fans. Fans share these feelings with each other and this helps to create a passionate and exciting atmosphere in the stadium. Attending the stadium provides an opportunity to communicate with other fans. These connections can include friendly chats, game sharing, and even new friendships. Many fans regularly go to the stadium with friends and family, and this shared experience helps strengthen social ties. These social connections are especially strong among fans of a particular team and can lead to a sense of belonging and common identity (Van Ours, 2021). These shared feelings and experiences help the audience to connect more deeply with the team and other fans. Attending the gym and social experiences related to it help to form sports culture. This culture includes specific customs, slogans, and team symbols that develop over time. This culture not only affects fans, but can also lead to an effect on society and general

culture. For example, some teams and their fans are known for their unique behaviors or customs. Finally, attending a stadium and watching a football match has become a deep social and emotional experience that includes emotional expression, building social connections, a sense of belonging and identity, and cultural influences. These dimensions not only add to the appeal of the games, but also help the spectators to establish deeper connections with the team and other fans, and as a result, have an experience beyond just watching a sports match.

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These emotional expressions and social connections greatly affect the overall audience experience. Spectators are not only looking to watch a game, they are looking for a social and emotional experience that goes beyond the outcome of the game. This experience can include shared joys, moments of frustration, and even post-victory celebrations. These shared feelings and experiences help the audience to connect more deeply with the team and other fans. Attending the gym and social experiences related to it help to form sports culture. This culture includes specific customs, slogans, and team symbols that develop over time. This culture not only affects fans, but can also lead to an effect on society and general culture. For example, some teams and their fans are known for their unique behaviors or customs. Finally, attending a stadium and watching a football match has become a deep social and emotional experience that includes emotional expression, building social connections, a sense of belonging and identity, and cultural influences. These dimensions not only add to the appeal of the games, but also help the spectators to establish deeper connections with the team and other fans, and as a result, have an experience beyond just watching a sports match.

Spectators are looking for activities that they can spend their free time well. Attending sports competitions is one of these activities that can lead to fun and entertainment. Social

developments and changes in people's lifestyles increase the need for spectators. Due to cultural and social changes, spectators are looking for new and exciting experiences, which attendance at stadiums can meet this need. The presence of spectators in stadiums helps to create an energetic and exciting atmosphere. This energy not only has a positive effect on the players, but also gives the spectators a feeling of freshness and vitality. This excitement can act as a motivating factor for the spectators and encourage them to attend the matches. Spectators in stadiums get a chance to connect with other fans. These social interactions can include conversations, exchange of opinions and even new friendships. These connections help strengthen the sense of belonging and social identity and enrich the audience experience. Being in the stadium and supporting the team gives the audience a sense of being part of a larger community. This interest in the team can lead to increased loyalty and support for the team and, as a result, help improve the team's performance in competitions. This support can lead to strengthening the morale of the players and increasing their motivation to provide the best performance. Also, this support can help attract new sponsors and investors. Audiences are looking for an engaging and exciting experience that can engage them. This attraction can be created through the quality of the game, close competition and exciting moments. According to the mentioned points, the presence of spectators in sports matches has many advantages not only for them but also for the clubs. This presence helps increase energy, social interactions and interest in the team, while at the same time leading to increased revenue and support for the teams. Causal conditions such as social transformation, individual factors and the quality of the venue increase the need for spectators to attend, and paying attention to their individual needs can lead to the attractiveness of competitions and richer social experiences. The research results

are consistent with Fernandes and (Walker, 2021), (Watanabe et al., 2020), and (Bajas & Rodríguez (2014).

Imitating the processes and successful practices of other clubs in different leagues can help attract more spectators. This imitation can include marketing strategies, the way matches are held, and creating engaging experiences for spectators. By taking inspiration from best practices, clubs can improve service quality and increase spectator satisfaction. The enthusiastic presence of spectators and creating noise in the stadiums can have a significant effect on the judges' judgment. This noise can lead to putting pressure on the referees and as a result, influence their decisions. This issue can benefit the host teams and add to the attractiveness of the matches. The average income of clubs and its desirability for spectators are also important factors that can affect their attendance. Clubs that are financially well managed and have a good income can provide better service to spectators and provide them with a more enjoyable experience. According to the mentioned background factors, it can be concluded that paying attention to these factors can help to improve the attendance of spectators in football matches. Imitation of the successful processes of the clubs, the effect of noise on referees' judgment, the favorableness of the income of the clubs, effective advertising, compliance with health issues and reducing the rules, all can lead to the attractiveness of the competitions, increasing the income of the clubs and improving the performance of the athletes. These factors will not only help to increase the motivation of the spectators, but will also lead to the creation of a positive and lasting sports experience. The research results are consistent with (Murray et al., 2018), (Bayon et al., 2013), (Bina et al., 2017), and (Rajabaizadeh et al., 2015).

Considering the challenges in football and the obstacles facing the presence of spectators, solutions can be provided to facilitate this

presence and increase the enjoyment of the spectators from the matches. These solutions not only help to improve the experience of the spectators, but also can have positive economic and identity effects on the football community. Establishing an effective and constructive relationship between the spectators and the officials of the stadiums can help to improve the condition of the spectators. This collaboration could include exchanging opinions and suggestions to improve the audience experience and comply with health protocols. Holding training courses and providing the necessary guidance to spectators regarding compliance with health protocols and appropriate behaviors in stadiums can help increase their awareness and cooperation. These trainings can include health tips, social behaviors and how to buy tickets. The creation of crisis committees in clubs and cooperation with sports federations can help to better manage situations and respond quickly to challenges. These committees can review and analyze the current situation and provide appropriate solutions to improve the situation. The research results are consistent with Vallerand (2008) (23), Solberg & turner, 2010), (Theodoraki et al., 2013), and (De Carvalho et al., 2015).

Creating appropriate measures and paying attention to the resulting consequences can have positive effects on the attendance of spectators in football matches. These measures not only contribute to the attractiveness of the games, but also clearly show the importance of the presence of spectators. The presence of spectators in stadiums is recognized as a key element in the sports experience. By adopting appropriate measures, the attractiveness of the games can be increased and positive psychological motivations can be created for the spectators. These incentives can lead to a re-increase in the presence of fans and, as a result, facilitate systematic planning to attract and maintain spectators. In addition, repurchasing the clubs' products and services

before and after the matches helps to strengthen the relationship between the spectators and the clubs and can lead to an increase in the economic income of the clubs. Word-of-mouth advertising also serves as an effective tool in creating psychological incentives for viewers and can help attract new viewers. Finally, these measures and the resulting consequences can have potential effects on spectators and sports. Due to the importance of this issue, it is necessary for sports clubs and authorities to pay serious attention to these measures and take measures to improve the experience of the spectators and increase their participation in the matches. This approach will not only help to improve the economic situation of the clubs, but will also lead to the creation of a positive and stable sports culture. The research results are consistent with (Mostafae & Kolahsefari, 2020).

As one of the main pillars of the sports experience, the presence of spectators in football matches requires appropriate measures and infrastructure that allow them to buy tickets easily and without spending a long time in the queue. One of the key aspects in this field is the design and construction of high security stadiums. In order to increase the attendance of spectators in football matches, the sports federation and the officials of the stadiums should have more interaction and pay attention to improving the quality of services and facilities. These measures not only help to reduce the mental and emotional burden of the audience, but can also lead to value creation and create a positive experience for them. Considering these points, we can hope to improve the attendance of spectators and improve the quality of football matches.

### **Practical Suggestions**

Practical suggestions regarding the psychological motivations for spectators' attendance at Persian Gulf Pro League football stadiums are as follows:

**Strengthening Social Connections:** Organizing social events and side activities around matches can help create a friendly and social atmosphere. This may include hosting competitions, concerts, or recreational activities that bring spectators closer together.

**Creating an Exciting Experience:** Designing and implementing engaging and thrilling programs during the game, such as live performances and light shows, can enhance the excitement and enjoyment of spectators, encouraging them to attend the stadium.

**Addressing Cognitive Needs:** Providing accurate and engaging information about teams, players, and the history of matches through social media and mobile applications can increase spectators' interest and awareness. This information can include statistics, technical analyses, and game predictions.

**Facilitating Access and Amenities:** Improving the infrastructure and facilities of the stadium, including public transportation, parking, and sanitary services, can enhance the experience of spectators and encourage them to attend the stadium.

**Fostering a Sense of Belonging:** Strengthening the sense of belonging to the team through loyalty programs, special discounts for fans, and offering team-related merchandise can enhance the psychological motivations of spectators and encourage them to attend the stadium.

These suggestions can assist sports managers and planners in designing effective strategies to attract and retain spectators in stadiums by better understanding their psychological motivations.

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