



A Comprehensive Model of Strategic Thinking in Sport Federations

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to develop a comprehensive model for strategic thinking in sports federations in Iran. This research is a qualitative exploratory study and a practical one that has been done using thematic analysis. The research population consisted of experts and elites in the field of strategic sport management, with having knowledge of the sport federations. The research participants based on the triangulation technique included: faculty members of sports management of universities, senior managers with the experience in the field of sports, as well as athletes and referees with experience of professional sports. 16 participants were interviewed through purposive and snowball sampling until reaching theoretical saturation. The tools used to collect data included a semi-structured interview based on the main questions and objectives of the research. To increase the accuracy and validity of the analysis at different stages, the codes, sub-themes and main themes were provided to research team as well as two interviewed experts and the necessary modifications were made in accordance with their opinions. The retest reliability method was used to ensure the reliability of the findings. Credibility, dependability, transformability, and confirmability were also used to confirm the validity. Finally, based on the six-stage thematic analysis model of Braun and Clarke (2006), the final research model was developed which included: “effective factors”, “strategic thinking elements” in sport federations, and “Strategic thinking consequences” in sports federations. Considering the findings of this study can pave the way for developing strategic thinking in sport federations.

Introduction

The present era is the era of success for organizations that thoughtfully embrace challenges (Jaberi & Mazloomi Soveini, 2021). Thoughtful organizations operate by resorting to strategic thinking beyond the individual thoughts of their managers and employees and try to make strategic thinking a key strategy in their bodies (Mazloomi Soveini et al., 2024). Strategic thinking is a response to the

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growing needs of organizations, in accordance with an environment that is accompanied by uncertainty, ambiguity, increasing competition, chaos, and speed (Pishva et al., 2021). Strategic thinking and its institutionalization can be defined as a powerful tool for the success of various organizations, which requires a deep analysis and understanding of existing, past, and future conditions. Today's world is constantly changing and evolving, and one of the important aspects of today's organizations is the extent to which strategic thinking is used and transformed into a competitive advantage (Ershadi et al., 2019). Strategic thinking is a form of thinking that can be useful and effective in designing and advancing the goals of an organization (Verma et al., 2023). Being equipped with strategic thinking, along with considering the ultimate goal of the organization, is of great importance in predicting future changes and strategic choices (Kluka, 2021), and the behavior resulting from strategic thinking distinguishes the organization from other competitors (Honari et al., 2017). Creating and developing strategic thinking is one of the greatest needs in the field of management, and this type of thinking is necessary and vital at all organizational levels, especially at the senior management level (Verma et al., 2023).

In the third millennium, sports organizations, as the most important custodians of sports in any country, like organizations and institutions in other social and economic fields, need to become strategic organizations in order to survive and achieve greater success in the arena of national and international competition. Given that achieving sports goals at the macro level requires the desired performance of federations, equipping federations with strategic thinking is considered the most important factor for success and effectiveness in the field of sports (Shabani Bahar et al., 2016). Institutionalizing strategic thinking in sports federations can be considered a key step in promoting the sustainable development of sports, which can provide a basis for cultivating strengths by covering many weaknesses.

Sport is a dynamic phenomenon that is rapidly undergoing change and complexity with the globalization process. The nonlinear process of changes in the field of sport and sports organizations will require going beyond strategic planning as a relatively linear model and paying attention to promoting strategic thinking as a dynamic model in federations. Sports federations, which are the main custodians of various sports disciplines at professional and championship levels, need to strengthen and promote strategic thinking in order to achieve their long-term goals (Shahlaee et al., 2019).

Liedtka (1998) proposes the elements of strategic thinking in the form of five components: systems thinking, thinking in time, strategic determination, progress based on a scientific approach, and intelligent opportunism. The Morissey model (1990), which was presented in order to establish strategic thinking, divides the planning process into three complementary parts (strategic thinking, long-term planning, and tactical planning). Bonn (2001), in a study entitled "Developing Strategic Thinking as a Key Competency", presented a model, proposed strategic thinking at two different, but interdependent, individual and organizational levels and acknowledged that if strategic thinking is established and implemented at both individual and organizational levels, it will create a core competency for the organization and ultimately a sustainable competitive advantage. Goldman (2005) introduces strategic thinking as a combination of four components: conceptual thinking, systems thinking, foresight, and opportunism. Armstrang (2006) has presented a model based on the principles of scenario thinking, based on environmental requirements. Nuntamanop et al. (2013) have identified the competencies required by managers and have presented them in the form of seven components, which includes: conceptual thinking ability, perspective-oriented thinking, creativity, analytical thinking ability, learning ability, information synthesis ability, and realism. Ghaffarian and Kiani (2010) presented a model in the form of five commandments that provide the basis for creating strategic thinking and creative strategies. Lashkar-Blouki (2013) proposed a model consisting of 10 commandments in the field of strategic thinking and believes that strategic thinking can create value for the organization through these commandments.

The performance of many sports federations in various fields in recent years in Iran indicates the fact that many of the current processes in the body of sports federations, such as dismissal and appointment, signing contracts, holding elections, international communications, public relations, participation in international competitions, management of athletes and fans, etc., have always faced serious challenges. The existence and abundance of these challenges in the performance of sports

federations indicate the fact that the performance of the federations in many cases is not based on a thoughtful, resourceful, far-sighted, and specialized view. Institutionalizing strategic thinking can be a key element in improving the performance and decisions of sports federations and underpinning a far-sighted view in the body of the federations. Therefore, presenting a model for institutionalizing strategic thinking in sports federations can be considered an important step towards improving the processes and performance of sports federations. Since the evaluation of strategic thinking elements and its components in sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran has shown that sports federations are not in a desirable state in terms of strategic thinking and its components (Shahlaee et al., 2019), addressing the process of institutionalizing strategic thinking and identifying effective factors in the institutionalization of this skill in sports federations can be one of the basic requirements in the field of research and implementation. This research can be considered a fundamental step in filling this gap. A review of the research literature shows that despite the large number of strategic thinking models in different organizations, a model that addresses this gap in sport organizations has not been found. Therefore, given the necessity of establishing strategic thinking in sports organizations, presenting a strategic thinking model in sports federations is considered one of the gaps in the research literature on a local and international scale.

Considering what was mentioned, the researcher seeks to present a comprehensive model of strategic thinking in sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In order to select the federations in this study, according to the opinions of experts in the field of sports management, federations were considered as selected federations whose performance is in the center of public and media attention and therefore there is more knowledge and awareness of their management aspects. Therefore, according to the desired indicators, popular team sports federations of football, basketball, volleyball and handball were selected and studied. Therefore, considering the main objective, the main question of the research is what is the strategic thinking model in the sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran?

Methodology

The present study was a qualitative-exploratory research using thematic analysis approach. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model was used for thematic analysis and theme identification. Theme analysis provides a flexible qualitative method for pattern identification (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The statistical population of the study included experts in the field of sports management who were interviewed with different specializations in strategic management in sports. Considering the nature of the research and thematic analysis method, the criterion for selecting the number of research samples was theoretical saturation. The sampling method was theoretical sampling method and accordingly, 16 experts were interviewed as participants and in a snowball method until theoretical saturation was reached. The tool used in the research process was a semi-structured interview. A combination of face-to-face and non-face-to-face methods was used to conduct the interviews. The interviews were conducted as a combination of audio and video interviews through social media and in person. The interview time was between 20 and 50 minutes, and the average interview was estimated to be 30 minutes. Thematic analysis method based on the six-stage model of Brown and Clark (2006) was used to analyze the data.

In the first step, familiarization with the raw data occurred by reviewing the contents of the interviews. According to this model, in the first stage, the raw data extracted from the interviews were examined in several stages, and an attempt was made to achieve a detailed and comprehensive familiarity with the collected raw data in this stage. After ensuring that the data had been carefully examined and a set of primary data had been created in the first stage, the second stage began with the initial coding of the raw data. In the second stage of the research, an attempt was made to make the main research question the reference for extracting the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the second stage, the extraction of primary codes from the primary data was carried out. The third stage involved searching for the main themes. After searching for the main themes, in the fourth stage, the themes were revised with greater precision, and finally, after several revisions and using the opinions of experts, the classification and naming of the main themes were ensured. With multiple and more detailed reviews in this stage, the extraction of sub-themes related to each main theme

was also put on the agenda. In this stage (explanation of sub-themes), the main themes extracted in the previous section were re-evaluated and re-analyzed. As a result of the revisions made in this stage, the sub-themes were classified into subsets of each main theme. To achieve this stage, the sub-themes were examined with regard to the semantic affinity of the codes and their relevance to the main themes in order to extract the clusters of sub-themes hidden in the main themes. The fifth stage included the definition and naming of the themes, and finally, in the sixth stage, which is the final stage of theme analysis, the interpretation of the themes was formed based on the main research question (in the discussion and conclusion section). The reliability and validity of the research were also given special attention in all stages and processes of the research. Examining reliability and validity in qualitative research has always been challenging, but Golafshani (2003) believes that reliability and validity in qualitative research depend to a large extent on the efforts and accuracy of the researchers. In order to ensure the reliability of the analysis, two members of the research team analyzed the data separately. In this way, each researcher analyzed the data independently and finally the findings of both researchers were compared with each other and the analysis process continued until agreement was reached (intra-subject agreement). Also, Guba and Lincoln (2005) use the criterion of reliability or trustworthiness instead of the terms validity and reliability to refer to the assessment of the quality of qualitative results.

Trustworthiness, in simple terms, is the extent to which one can rely on the findings of a qualitative study and trust their results. In the present study, the criterion of trustworthiness or reliability was used to refer to the assessment of the quality of qualitative results, which includes four separate but related criteria: credibility, reliability, transferability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Trustworthiness actually refers to internal validity in qualitative research. Multiple data sources, multiple analysts, and multiple methods are among the ways that have been suggested to increase the credibility of qualitative research, and this study attempted to observe all of these. Trustworthiness is the ability to identify where the data of a given study came from, how it was collected, and how it was used. One way to increase the reliability of the results is member control, by which the researcher checks his assumptions with one or more knowledgeable people under study. Control by members is used throughout the data collection process to confirm the truth value or accuracy of the researcher's observations and interpretations, as they emerge. In the present study, an attempt was made to use the opinions of two interviewees and the research team to control the data and results at different stages of data analysis. In addition, test-retest reliability can also be an important step towards the reliability of the findings in this study. Transferability of research results indicates the generalizability of the results to other groups and similar environments. By extracting and presenting the maximum number of findings (as far as possible), this part of the validity of the research can also be ensured to some extent, which in this study, by reviewing multiple interviews and extracting maximum and non-repetitive content, an attempt was made to implement this recommendation. Transferability actually refers to external validity in qualitative research. The confirmability of qualitative research results is achieved when other researchers can clearly follow the research path and actions taken by the researcher. One way to achieve this is for the researcher to accurately describe the entire research process and the path of his decisions during the research in the report, which was attempted in this study. Also, in the process of advancing the research, an attempt was made to utilize the maximum presence of the research team colleagues despite limitations such as lack of time or lack of access.

Results

In this study, 16 experts participated in the interview process. The findings from the data analysis process, which was conducted with a qualitative-inductive approach, are presented in Table 2. Table 2 includes the research findings (main themes, sub-themes, and extracted codes) based on the six-step thematic analysis model of Brown and Clark (2006).

Table1. Extracting main themes from sub-themes and primary codes

Main themes	Sub-themes	Primary codes
Effective factors	Organizational factors	Collaborative management, Compatibility and adaptability, Interaction with national and international institutions, Transformationalism, Flexibility, Decentralization, Delegation of authority to boards, Hosting international events, Tendency to collective wisdom, Criticism, Organizational renewal, International agreements, Suggestion system, Organizational creativity, Management stability, Scientific management, Optimization of resources, Vision, Motivation, Feedback, leadership, Monitoring and control, Inspiration, Recruitment and selection, Promotion and upgrade, Analytical understanding, Networking, Modifying structures and processes, Strengthening the private sector, Fan club activation, Strengthening women's sports, Alignment of norms with international values, Development of sports entrepreneurship, International thoughts, Reward and punishment program, Discipline, Modify processes, Service compensation plans, Continuous improvement of service quality, Establishing identity for sports elements, International seats, Communication with universities and national and international academic centers, Using successful international experiences, Continuous education and learning, Establishing joint academies with international sports institutions, Enhancing knowledge, Exchange of players and coaches, International joint conferences and seminars, Learning from feedback, Strengthening virtual education and learning, Development of learning and education infrastructure, Knowledge-based development, Supporting start-ups in the field of sports, Using modern technologies in sports, Activation of R&D units in sports.
	Individual factors	Risk taking, Legalism, Commitment, Insight, Responsibility, Duty-oriented, Discipline, Social responsibility, Modernism, Adaptability, Motivation, Success seeking, Intelligence, Sociability, Systemic approach, Sports knowledge, Linguistic knowledge, Legal knowledge, Technological literacy, Media literacy, Cultural knowledge, Personal growth and development, Communication skills, The power of analysis, Job skills, Education and related expertise, Consensus, A flexible frame of mind, Encouraging new ideas, Welcome to the new experience, Critical spirit and receptivity to criticism, Diversity of views, Collaborative decision making, The spirit of partnership, Tendency to teamwork, Tolerance of ambiguity, Creativity and innovation, Consultativeness, New thinking and modernization.

	<p>Environmental factors</p>	<p>Supporting sporting events, Supporting the hosting of sports events, Activating sports diplomacy, Diplomatic support for sports, Awareness of the role of exercise in personal and social health, Strict control and monitoring, Non-discrimination in the distribution of resources, The process of isolation and installations, Dealing with rent-seeking, Dealing with monopoly, Demanding from sports institutions, Spiritual support of sports institutions, Specialized approach to sports, Acceptance and compliance with the statutes, Supporting managerial stability, Financial and tax transparency, Intellectual property protection, Financial support, Providing facilities, Attention to sports in national production, A capital look at sports, Performance based budgeting, Financial monitoring and control system, Decreasing government dependence, Supporting the private sector</p> <p>Purposeful privatization, An industry-oriented approach to sports, Fighting against money laundering, Decisiveness in dealing with economic corruption, Intercultural management, Fan culture, Cultural compatibility, Etiquette of hosting events, Public surveillance culture, The culture of public demand, Supportive culture, Legalism, Media demands, Teamwork and collaborative culture, Behaviors and professional performance, Lack of conservatism in questioning and answering.</p>
<p>Strategic thinking elements</p>	<p>Transformationism</p>	<p>Lack of attention to results-orientedness in sports, Multidimensional view of sports, Developmental view of sports, Changing the entertainment-oriented attitude towards sports, Industry-oriented sports, Scientific approach to sports, Strengthening the economic approach to sports, Consolidating a professional view of sports, Encouraging creativity and innovation, Drawing a system of suggestions and ideas in federations, Following the current view in sports, Investing in grassroots sports, Special attention to talent acquisition, Consolidating a customer-oriented view in sports, Reducing dependence on government institutions, Changes in the election mechanism of federations, Changes in the appointments of federations and boards, Creating a succession-training mechanism, Delegating provincial authorities to boards, Changes in statutes in line with current needs, Consolidating a technological system in sports, Forecasting the R&D field in federations.</p>
	<p>Monitoring</p>	<p>Monitoring of developed programs, Monitoring of outlined goals, Compliance of programs with federation goals, Activation of supervisory institutions Continuous review of programs, Drawing up a feedback mechanism, Drawing up a reward and</p>

		<p>punishment system, Having performance agreements with boards, Increasing the Ministry of Sports' supervision of federations, Developing indicators for the selection and appointment of members, Developing performance indicators for federation committees and boards, Closely monitoring the performance of board and staff, Continuously monitoring the performance of provincial boards, Monitoring the performance of talent centers, Monitoring educational centers and academies, Taking advantage of economic opportunities around sports, Using the sports capacities of different provinces, Monitoring environmental factors, Monitoring opportunities, Monitoring threats, Having a regional planning plan, Using government capacities, Using the potential of the private sector, Monitoring scientific and research capacities in the provinces, Optimal use of international capacities</p>
	<p>Fluidity of Mind</p>	<p>Thinking by reviewing the past, Using previous experiences, Having a mental archive of the past</p> <p>Trying not to repeat unsuccessful performance, Experience-building, Arranging thoughts using successful past experiences, Experimentography, Explaining the reasons for past performance, Transferring past experiences, Sharing experiences among employees, Referring to the past to cover weaknesses, Focusing on the present by reviewing the past, Focusing on the present by seeing the future, Giving importance to the present, Focusing on carrying out activities in the present, Not delaying in carrying out daily affairs, Not postponing activities to the future, Using opportunities available in the present, Taking advantage of the present in doing work, Performing activities on due dates, Performing current activities based on past experiences, Present-day thinking in carrying out activities in progress, Decision-making in the moment, Movement based on future research, Succession development with a view to the future, Empowerment with an emphasis on future requirements, Foresight, Setting goals for the future, Having a vision for the future, Drawing a path for the future, Having strategic planning, Taking action based on foresight.</p>
	<p>Intelligence</p>	<p>Capacity to understand differences in sports, Capacity to be aware of cultural diversity in sports, Capacity to manage intercultural relationships in sports, Recognize customs and traditions of different countries and regions, Get to know different cultural patterns in sports, Capacity to adapt to new conditions, Capacity to manage cultural conflicts in sports, Capacity to interact with different groups and groups inside and outside the country, Capacity to manage media relations with sports events, Effective use of media capacities in</p>

	<p>sports, Capacity to recognize sports media, Capacity to analyze broadcast content in sports, Get to know the virtual media space in sports, Mastery of the real media space in the field of sports, Capacity to participate in media activities, Awareness of the benefits of media for sports, Recognize the harms of media in sports, Capacity to interact effectively with the media, Mastery of social and media networks, Capacity to produce media content, Media activism, Capacity to interact positively with sports audiences, Capacity to recognize Timely, Responsibility, Monitoring feelings and emotions, Capacity to create motivation, Capacity to encourage effort and perseverance, Capacity to manage oneself, Capacity to manage stress, Hope for the future, Capacity to social skills, Awareness of strengths and weaknesses.</p>
<p>Political thinking</p>	<p>Ability to resolve disputes between clubs, Capacity to prevent disputes between clubs, Efforts to prevent sports cases from being referred to domestic judicial centers, Legal capacity to deal with conflicts, Supervision of international sports law, Having a seat in international sports legal institutions, Capacity to resolve disputes between teams and the federation, Capacity to resolve disputes between clubs and players, Explanation of the mechanism for resolving potential conflicts, Capacity to resolve conflicts peacefully, Conflict management in resolving contracts, Active mediation in sports conflicts, Effective communication with boards, Close communication with clubs, Communication with players, Capacity to establish effective relationships with domestic sports institutions, Capacity to establish effective relationships with international sports institutions, Capacity to establish effective relationships with domestic non-sports institutions, Capacity to establish effective relationships with international non-sports institutions, Supervision of international relations in sports, Familiarity with the pillars of sports management at the international level, Attendance at national and international gatherings International, Having communication skills in the federations' bodies, Investing in important individuals and departments, Welcoming new opportunities, Having memorandums of understanding with national and international authorities, Having bargaining power, Opportunistic interaction, Multilateral interactions, Recognizing common interests with other institutions, Recognizing the federation's advantages and capabilities in national and international interactions, Establishing a participatory approach in federations, Problem-solving ability in negotiations, Ability to communicate effectively in negotiations, Ability to influence</p>

		relationships
Strategic thinking consequences	Sport development	<p>Quantitative and qualitative development of sports stakeholders, qualitative improvement of coaches, quality improvement of athletes, professional behavior of fans and spectators, improvement of managers, professional behavior of federation employees, professionalization of clubs, specialization of club management, specialization of federation management, discovery and attraction of sports talents, development of sports and management talents, psychological development of human resources in sports, development of volunteer movement in sports, participation, increasing human resource productivity, development of clubs and teams, success in international events, development of sports disciplines, hosting international events, development of women's sports, obtaining international seats, improving the international status of sports, increasing legionnaires, strengthening human and moral values in sports, distancing from the result-oriented attitude in sports, respect for cultural diversity, strengthening ethical behaviors. Chivalry in sports, Justice in sports, Distance from racial and gender discrimination, Cultural mutual understanding, Professional behavior, Professional beliefs, Effective interaction with the media</p> <p>Respect for laws and regulations, Ethics and polite speech in sports, Adherence to social responsibilities, Charitable activities in sports, National integration and cohesion, Gender justice, Attention to grassroots sports, Focus on talent development in sports, Strategic approach to infrastructure construction and design, Development of transparent standards for the maintenance and upkeep of sports venues, Updating standards, Use of modern technologies, Purposefulness in development activities in sports, Scientific approach to the phenomenon of sports, Science and research-based movement, Attention to standards in sports equipment, Development of academies, Use of technology in the management and implementation of events, Development of infrastructure for hosting international events.</p>
	Economic development	<p>Industry-Orientation of Sports, Consolidation of Industry Principles in Sports, Industrial Perspective and Attitude to Sports, Consolidation of Cost-Benefit Perspective in Sports, Interaction with Sports-Related Industries, Monetization of Sports, Cost Management, Customer-Oriented Performance, Utilization of Sports' Peripheral Capacities, Investment in Economic and Industrial Sectors, Activity in the Tourism Industry, Privatization of Clubs and Teams, Playing the Role of Sports in the National Economy, Linking the Sports</p>

	<p>Industry with Domestic Production, Managing Sports as an Economic Enterprise, Explanation of Consumption and Capital Aspects of Sports, The Role of Sports in the National Budget, Employment Creation in Sports, Creating Opportunities for Self-Employment in Sports, Hungarian Entrepreneurship, Marketing Through Sports and Sports Events, Marketing for Sports and Sports Events, Establishment of Relationship, Marketing in Sports, Branding Federations and Clubs, Branding of Sports Events, Providing Various Services in the Field of Sports, Attracting expert and expert marketers in the field of sports and marketing, Activating marketing committees, Strengthening the role of marketing in the body of clubs and federations, Participating in national and international marketing programs, Investing in fans as core customers of sports, Targeting sports advertising, Standardizing sports advertising, Reputation of federations and clubs, Segmenting sports customers, Effective use of endorsements, Integrating financial resource attraction programs, Awareness of television broadcasting capacities, Recognizing media capacities in attracting resources, Attitude of revenue generation towards sports, Creating media attractions for revenue generation, Using cyberspace for revenue generation, Drawing a roadmap for increasing revenues, Implementing financial agreements with various sectors, Using the capacities of donors, Launching television and satellite networks, Removing legal and legal obstacles to revenue generation, Attracting more fan support.</p>
<p>Organizational development</p>	<p>Transparent performance, Critical monitoring, Transparency of dismissals and appointments</p> <p>Transparent elections, Financial independence of sports and federations, Independence from government and non-government agencies, Financial transparency in income and expenses, Transparency of player and coach contracts, Transparency of sponsorship contracts, Transparency of broadcasting rights contracts, Transparency of tax performance of federations, teams, and players, Transparency of financial transactions of federations and clubs with government companies and agencies, Transparency in transfers and privatization, Transparency of financial and administrative corruption, Strict and deterrent measures against corruption, Management stability, Elitism and selection of elites in sports, Elitism in the management of federations and teams, Consolidation of the attitude of sports for sports, No interference of politics and politicians in sports, Improvement of management skills of managers and employees, Development of academies and educational bodies of federations and</p>

		<p>clubs, Regulation of the process Promotion in federations, Using the succession approach in federations, Transformation in the federations' educational system, Review of educational processes, Development of managerial and sports talents, Improving the professional ethics of federation employees, Job enrichment of employees, Skill enhancement of employees and managers, Enrichment courses for managers, coaches, employees and athletes, Convergence and synergy, Preparation and motivation of employees and athletes, Playing the role of social responsibility, Committed performance, Strengthening citizenship behavior in sports, Improving social capital in sports, Public interest activities in sports, Promoting conscientiousness, Developing green sports events, Environmental activities, Partnering with social institutions, Social modeling in sports, Activating non-governmental associations, Ethical commitments, Continuous accountability, Individual accountability, Organizational accountability, Continuous information provision, Activating public relations of federations and clubs, Responsibility to Public demands, Criticism.</p>
	<p>Coping with crises</p>	<p>Monitoring sports business challenges in crisis situations, Monitoring strategic challenges, Monitoring restrictions on holding events in crisis situations, Monitoring financial challenges of federations and clubs in crisis situations, Monitoring emergency needs related to crises in crisis situations, Monitoring flexible approaches in facing the crisis, Monitoring national and international interactions in crisis situations, Monitoring weaknesses of federations in crisis situations, Monitoring safety, Security and health challenges in crisis situations, Monitoring challenges of technical and human resources and infrastructure in crisis situations, Redefining jobs in crisis situations, Monitoring coping strategies, Developing supportive approaches in crisis situations, Improving and updating approaches and resources, Developing relationships with key domestic and international stakeholders, Establishing research and development and future studies in the federations' bodies, Developing and activating potential capacities with an emphasis on strategic strategies, Focusing on information and communication technology as a competitive advantage in the future of sports organizations.</p>

In inductive studies, the output and summary of analyses in the form of a visual model is defined as a fundamental element in studies (Braun & Clark, 2006). In this regard, the output of the present study was visualized in the form of Figure 1.

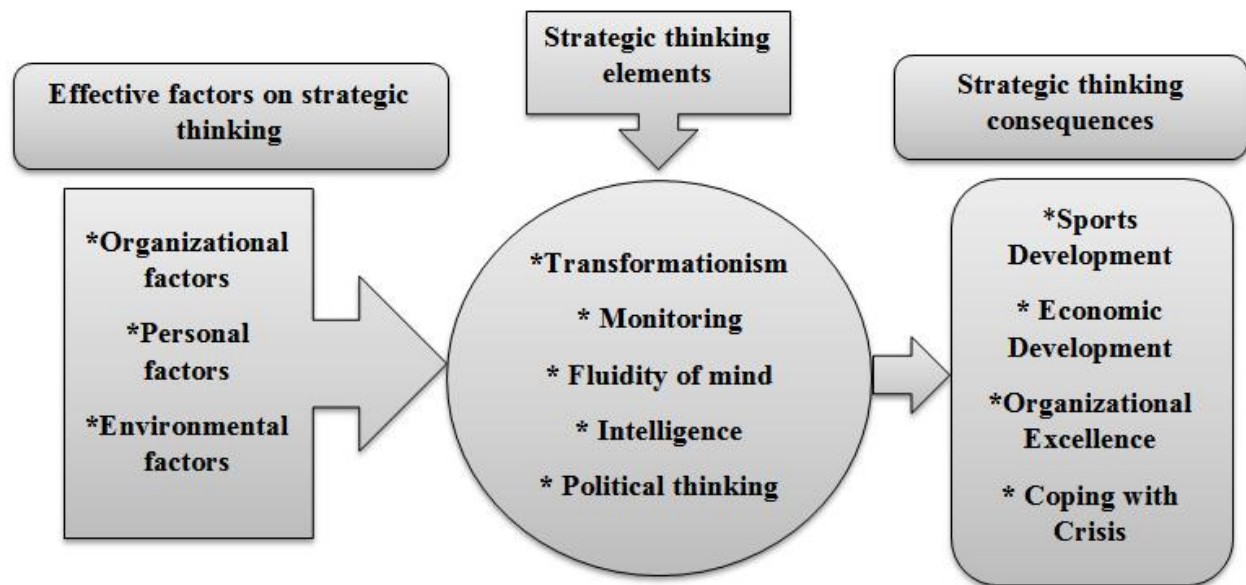


Figure 1. The Strategic Thinking model in Sports Federations

The model drawn in Figure 1 represents a model for summarizing and summarizing research findings based on data content analysis, which is in the form of a comprehensive model of strategic thinking in sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to identify and explain the strategic thinking model in the sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Next, each of the themes extracted from the research will be discussed and examined separately. The strategic thinking model in sports federations (Figure 1) can be interpreted as the output and product of the analysis of the research findings. This model includes factors affecting strategic thinking, components of strategic thinking, and consequences of institutionalizing strategic thinking in sports federations.

What is important before identifying the factors affecting strategic thinking and the consequences of institutionalizing strategic thinking in sports federations is to accurately recognize and identify the components of strategic thinking in sport federations. It seems that the results of the present study are among the first studies that introduce a model whose strategic thinking components are unique to sports and sports federations. The findings of this part of the research indicate the fact that the components of strategic thinking in sports federations are different from the models that have been carried out in the research literature. In this research, "transformationalism", "monitoring", "fluidity of mind", "intelligence", and "political thinking" were identified as components of strategic thinking in federations. In other words, having strategic thinking in sports federations requires equipping federations with the aforementioned components, and the factors affecting these components in federations should be proposed and interpreted in accordance with these components.



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Liedtka (1998) proposes the elements of strategic thinking in the form of five components: systems thinking, thinking in time, strategic determination, progress based on a scientific approach, and intelligent opportunism. Goldman (2005) introduces strategic thinking as a combination of four components: conceptual thinking, systems thinking, foresight, and opportunism. Nuntamanop et al. (2013) have identified the competencies required by managers and have presented them in the form of seven components, which includes: conceptual thinking ability, perspective-oriented thinking, creativity, analytical thinking ability, learning ability, information synthesis ability, and realism.

According to the final research model, "organizational factors", "individual factors" and "environmental factors" along with their sub-categories are among the factors that influence strategic thinking and its components in sports federations. Without a doubt, various factors related to the organization can to a large extent guide the way individuals and different units in organizations perform. The general and dominant atmosphere and approaches in organizations can in different ways guide the movement and behavior of the organization. Sports federations are also subject to this principle and their movement and performance can to a large extent have organizational origins. Participatory management, adaptability and adaptability, interaction with national and international institutions, transformation, flexibility, decentralization, delegation of authority to committees to host international events, tendency towards collective wisdom, criticality, organizational modernization, international agreements, suggestion system, organizational creativity are among the factors that can play a role as organizational factors in the institutionalization of strategic thinking in selected sports federations. Along with organizational factors, individual factors have also been defined as factors affecting the institutionalization of strategic thinking in selected sports federations. Risk-taking capacity, legalism, commitment, insight, responsibility, duty, discipline, social responsibility, modernity, adaptability, motivation, success-seeking, intelligence, sociability, and a systemic attitude are among the factors that have their roots in individual factors, and the existence of these approaches can lead to the institutionalization of specific thoughts in selected sports federations. The presence of people with these tendencies and approaches will stabilize the outlook and thinking of effectiveness on the federations and their pillars as a whole, and in the long run, it will lead to the institutionalization of strategic thinking in the federations.

Environmental factors are also factors affecting strategic thinking in sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Without a doubt, the activities and performance of sports federations do not take place in a vacuum, and the environment that surrounds sports federations largely affects their approaches, attitudes, and behaviors. The managerial, political, social, and cultural atmosphere that governs society in general and sports in particular can shape the type of thinking and attitude of sports federations and sports managers and trustees. The attitude and thinking of management trustees at different levels of governance in the country can, in the long run, shape the attitude and thinking that governs federations, managers, and their pillars. When governance policies and approaches in various areas of management and policymaking in the country and the sports space are consistent with strategic and forward-looking principles, this atmosphere will also cast a shadow on sports and federation managers in sports, and this strategic outlook and approach will also be generalized to other pillars and trustees of sports. Part of the environmental factors affecting the institutionalization of strategic thinking in selected sports federations include economic and financial factors governing the atmosphere of society and sports. Today, sports are an attractive

economic market and involve significant financial transactions at various levels. When sports are defined and seen as an economic enterprise and a large industry, paying attention to financial and economic principles in sports and its management is considered an essential and key principle. An industrial and economic approach to the field of sports requires the implementation of economic and financial principles in this area. Paying attention to sports as an economic enterprise affecting employment, national income, and the development of social, cultural, and economic infrastructure in the country will cause sports to be viewed and managed from a different perspective. Intellectual property protection, financial support, provision of facilities, attention to sports in national production, capitalistic view of sports, performance-based budgeting, financial monitoring and control system, lack of government ownership, support for the private sector, targeted privatization, industry-oriented attitude towards sports, combating money laundering, and decisiveness in dealing with economic corruption are examples of financial and economic factors that can lead to the institutionalization of strategic thinking in the body and pillars of selected sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the long run. Another part of the environmental factors affecting the institutionalization of strategic thinking in selected sports federations includes cultural factors governing the social atmosphere. The interaction of sports with the dominant culture in society is such that the dominant cultural examples in society are clearly reflected in sports and events surrounding sports. Sports and phenomena surrounding sports can be considered part of the puzzle of society, where the dominant cultural characteristics in society can be observed and experienced on a smaller scale in the field of sports. The prevailing way of thinking in society in dealing with cultural diversity, the culture of demandingness, the manners of dealing with different events, and the culture of participatory activities in society can directly and indirectly create specific demands at the level of society and sport that guide sports federations and other sports authorities towards adopting specific and strategic approaches. Sensitivities related to intercultural management, the spirit and practice of questioning, accountability among the general public, fans and the media, responsibility, commitment and law-based performance among citizens of the society are some of the characteristics that, as part of cultural examples in society, can help to form a special atmosphere around sports authorities and sports federations.

According to the final research model, strategic thinking in sports federations can lead to consequences for sports and sports federations. Attention to the research model indicates the fact that sports development, economic development, organizational excellence, and dealing with crises have been extracted as the main consequences of institutionalizing strategic thinking in selected sports federations. Strengthening strategic thinking as powerful software can carry special results and consequences for selected federations. Given that one of the main missions of sports federations is the development of sports, institutionalizing strategic thinking in selected sports federations can be a key factor in the development of this sector. Therefore, establishing the principles of transformation, monitoring, fluidity of mind, intelligence, and political thinking in sports federations and federations' bodies will lead to the development of sports in various aspects of human resources, professional sports, culture in sports, and infrastructure and standards. Economic development has been identified as another consequence of institutionalizing strategic thinking in selected sports federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian sports, with the management of sports federations in various disciplines, have always faced various financial and economic challenges in recent years, and financial dependence on government resources has caused sports to fail to flourish in the economic sphere. One of the reasons for the lack of movement of sports on the path of industrialization is the lack of industrial and economic thinking in sports administrators. According to the findings of this study, institutionalizing strategic thinking as a systemic and integrated thinking can also lead to the economic development of sports. The industrialization of sports, marketing performance, and the attraction of financial resources are dimensions of economic development. The consolidation of strategic thinking in the structure of sports federations causes

sports managers and administrators in sports federations to seek to create economic transformation in the sports they manage with a long-term perspective, and this is not possible without an industrial perspective on sports.

The final research model is a combination of findings related to different aspects of strategic thinking, which is presented and introduced based on the main research challenges and research gaps in the research literature. One of the challenges and research gaps in the research literature was the lack of observation of a model of strategic thinking components centered on sports federations and organizations, which these components (transformationalism, monitoring, fluidity of mind, intelligence, and political thinking) are shown in a graphical model. The absence of a strategic thinking model in sports federations has also been another research gap, which has been drawn and presented with a focus on the factors affecting strategic thinking, the components of strategic thinking, and the consequences of institutionalizing strategic thinking in sports federations.

According to the findings, five main components including transformational orientation, monitoring, fluidity of mind, intelligence, and political thinking were identified as the main components of strategic thinking in sports federations. It seems that the results of the present study are among the first studies that introduce a model whose components are unique to sports and sports federations. The findings of this part of the research indicate the fact that the components of strategic thinking in selected sports federations are different from the models that have been carried out in the research literature and in different fields.

Given the novelty of some of the concepts extracted from the findings in the research model, a separate examination of each of the components and subsets extracted from this research in sports federations is recommended for a deeper understanding of the identified components. Moreover, according to the lack of a quantitative study of the model derived from the findings in this study, it is necessary to study the model derived from this study with a quantitative approach in federations and other sports organizations in the country. Since only one approach and method (thematic analysis) was used in this study to analyze the data, it is recommended to use other qualitative methods such as grounded theory, Delphi, to conduct related studies in sports federations.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study followed ethical guidelines.

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Author's Contribution

The author independently designed, conducted, and analyzed the research presented in this study. The author also prepared and revised the manuscript for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no potential conflict of interest related to this article's research, authorship, and publication.

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