


Research Article

# Structural Analysis of the Talent Management Model in School Sports

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to design and validate a model for talent management for school. this research was applied; regarding the nature of data, it was mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative); and in terms of execution approach. The participants in the qualitative part consisted of 19 experts in talent identification and elite development that were selected based on the principle of theoretical saturation and through purposive sampling. The statistical population in the quantitative part included 384 officials and experts from selected provinces completed a researcher-made questionnaire validated by 10 sports management professors (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). The data collection tool in the qualitative part was a semi-structured interview. The data collection tool in the quantitative part of the present research was a researcher-made questionnaire based on the findings of the qualitative part. Content analysis and confirmatory factor analysis identified 39 indicators grouped into 11 components: planning, interactions and communications, organization, executive actions, monitoring and control, individual motivational factors, organizational motivational factors, family motivational and attitudinal factors, human resources, financial resources, and facilities and equipment. Fit indices supported the measurement model ( $\chi^2/df=2.09$ , RMSEA=0.082, CFI=0.99, SRMR=0.071). Findings suggest that strategic planning, development of specialized human resources, implementation of educational programs aligned with long-term goals, and strengthened inter-organizational interactions enhance talent management in school sports.

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**Keywords:** Human Resources Development; Monitoring and Evaluation; School Sports; Strategic Planning; Talent Management

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## 1. Introduction

School sports are so much important, as the development of competitive and professional sports heavily relies on developing sports during childhood and adolescence. The habit of engaging in sports to improve lifestyle quality and enhance health is established during these years (Koochakzadeh, 2023). The development of school sports

involves providing attractive, cost-effective, and sustainable sports opportunities that consider the diverse and changing needs, motivations, and expectations of students, indifferent of age, interest, ability, or gender, to ensure participation in a supportive and safe environment. This leads to positive, satisfying experiences and performance improvement to the desired level. One of the goals of school sports development programs is to

increase sports participation, identify, and nurture sports talents (Slagle et al, 2022). Today, one of the most critical priorities in high-level sports is having an integrated and organized system for talent identification and development (Tofighi et al, 2020). Talent management is necessary in today's dynamic and fluctuating environment faced by sports organizations, and neglecting it can lead to failure in competitive arenas (Mohammadi, 2021). Talent management in school sports can develop and enhance the future of competitive sports in the country. Moreover, having a talent management program is crucial, as it is one of the most important factors for progress and success in any sports discipline (Darvishi, 2018).

To get successful talent identification and development for students, a comprehensive program is essential, without which desired outcomes cannot be gained. The path to achieving sports glory passes through the process of talent identification and management. Furthermore, progressing from the beginner level to elite status in sports is a long and challenging trip that requires precise and principled talent management (Asadi et al, 2017). Sports talent identification is the process of discovering athletes' potential capabilities and determining their balance with the fundamental and effective indicators of various sports disciplines. Therefore, employing scientific talent identification methods is needed.

In another definition, talent identification is a process through which young children are led where they have the greatest opportunity of success based on specific tests (Zheng & Chen, 2016; Vaeyens & Lenoir, 2008). The desire to identify sports talents has increased in many countries in recent years. Talent identification is a process through which adolescents and the young are evaluated and encouraged to participate in suitable disciplines where they are more likely to succeed. Talent management is an organized process aimed at continuous leadership in different critical situations, with the selection, development, and professional guidance of young athletes being a high priority in many countries (Esmaceli & Goharroostami, 2022).

Using appropriate tools and scientific, systematic talent identification methods can accelerate the process of identifying and nurturing sports talents to reach championship levels, enabling talented athletes to get their highest performance levels more quickly and experience longer championship careers. Studies in sports talent identification have been conducted to determine effective indicators or develop a manner for elite athletes (Nouri et al, 2019). In Iran, understanding the importance of talent identification among physical education and sports science researchers has led to the development of projects aimed at talent identification. These studies have often focused on talent identification and proposing models for

identifying talents in specific sports, trying to provide particular methods for talent identification in the studied sports disciplines (Asadi, 2014).

However, considering that talent identification serves as a foundation for competitive and professional sports, a review of these studies indicates weak points in talent identification and development in Iranian sports (Emadi et al, 2022). Numerous structural barriers exist in Iran's sports talent identification system; it is required to pay attention to sports managers and policymakers to address them and enable Iranian sports to achieve its targeted goals. In this regard, human-related barriers are the most significant factors among the obstacles to talent identification in Iranian sports (Asadi et al, 2017). Several studies have been conducted on talent identification and management in sports. Below, some research findings are briefly reviewed.

This model is going to enhance player progress and national performance by improving efficiency and professionalization in top clubs. It primarily focuses on the academy structure and performance output, followed by training processes, personal development, and player well-being.

Hatungimana & Oladipo (2023) reported that talent management encompasses all key elements of human resource management, emphasizing the role of sports managers and coaches in the long-term development of athletes in sports organizations. Their study's specific objectives included strategic planning, talent attraction and retention, performance management, career development, and compensation and motivation. They believed that the government should provide a platform for grassroots sports, ensure facilities for youth, and prioritize investment in technical and managerial human resources, as well as the development of youth training centers and sports academies.

Adeboye (2022) indicated that the talent development process in sports requires a space that enables early identification of inherent sports potential in youths and provides the needed support to refine such potential into developed talents.

This requires collaboration among athletes, their coaches, families, schools, communities, and other important individuals and social institutions. Xiang et al (2022) reported that the main factors affecting sports talent identification in physical education curricula include individual physical performance quality, psychological quality, coach knowledge, and school talent identification policies.

Talebzadeh et al. (2023) explained organizational capacity, financial issues, managerial factors, talent identification processes, parental behavior, motivators, talent guidance, efficient management, appropriate goal-setting, equipment provision, information capital development, empowerment, and quality of educational

services. Mahmoudi (2023) identified political, individual skills, social, educational and research, structural, motivational, economic and financial, technical and specialized, managerial, and organizational factors in formulating the talent management process in futsal. Shojie (2023) identified six groups of indicators for talent development in Iranian educational sports: technical orientation, systemic orientation, educational orientation, event orientation, equipment orientation, and support orientation.

Faridnia et al. (2023) considered strategic planning, creative education, motivated teachers, parental awareness, special incentives, smart talent identification, competitions, and financial support effective in student talent identification. Rajabi (2022) identified components such as institutional interactions, appropriate organizational structure, comprehensive and operational program development, systematic evaluation and perspective, integrated and structured model formulation, increased budget and financial resources, regional planning studies, and human resource training for planning, attracting, and selecting talent management in handball.

Rastegar (2025) in research as Presenting the model of intelligent sales learning agent in sports start-ups According to the foundation's data method indicated that the most important causal factors affecting it include smart digital sensors, smart digital actors, augmented and virtual reality technology, Internet of Things, cross-linguistic information retrieval, intelligent information retrieval, cloud computing, machine learning, big data, knowledge architecture, information/content/organization Knowledge, smart digital support, digital structure, knowledge, knowledge and network attitude were smart contract platforms. A significant portion of the country's population consists of students who spend part of their daily time in schools. The golden age for the emergence of sports talents is during the school years (childhood and adolescence). well-Time, scientific, and principled identification and nurturing of sports talents not only supports school sports teams but also plays a fundamental role in building a foundation for competitive and professional sports in the county. They were worried that talent identification in the School Sports Federation might be conducted incompletely, traditionally, and limitedly, or even neglected. Another concern is that even if talent identification in school sports is based on specific indicators, without subsequent action, it would be ineffective. Identified talents need to undergo a multi-year, step-by-step training process for achieving the needful technical and skill quality. Therefore, developing sports talent management is of great importance, and providing a talent management model in school sports was necessary to enable managers to address this issue with greater knowledge and awareness.

## 1.1. Research question

What are the gnomons and components of talent management in Iranian school sports?

## 2. Method

Since the results of this research can be used directly, the present research is applied in terms of purpose and mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) regarding the nature of data. The participants in the qualitative part consisted of 19 experts in talent identification and elite development that were selected based on the principle of theoretical saturation and through purposive sampling. The statistical population in the quantitative part included 384 officials and experts from selected provinces completed a researcher-made questionnaire validated by 10 sports management professors (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). The data collection tool in the qualitative part was a semi-structured interview. The data collection tool in the quantitative part of the present research was a researcher-made questionnaire based on the findings of the qualitative part. The characteristics and backgrounds of the survey sample are presented in Table 1. Research information were collected through library and online studies, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with attendants. Data from literature reviews and open interviews were analyzed using content analysis and open coding, resulting in the extraction of initial concepts (19 concepts from the literature and 30 from interviews, totaling 49 concepts). After multiple reviews of the literature and interview texts, coding was revised to ensure fitness and eliminate potential disposition. The interview texts and literature were coded by two additional coders (besides the research team and participants). The initial concepts were then standardized and summarized by the research team, reducing the number of codes to 46. A Delphi panel was formed, and the summarized data were provided to panel members for review, editing, and correction. In the first round, after data analysis, curative opinions were provided, and after summarizing the panel's feedback, the number of concepts was reduced to 44, omitting irrelevant or less important factors. In the second round, the questionnaire was redistributed to the Delphi panel for further revisions, and similar items were standardized, reducing the number of factors to 41. In the third round, two more indicators were removed, and the panel reached a final agreement on the impact of 39 indicators. In the fourth round, the indicators were prioritized and categorized into 11 components: planning, cooperation and communications, organization, executive actions, monitoring and control, individual motivational factors, organizational motivational factors, family motivational and attitudinal factors, human resources, financial resources, and sports

facilities and equipment. A questionnaire was then prepared. The questionnaire's validity was confirmed by 10 sports management professors (including faculty members of Farhangian University and associate professors working in the Ministry of Education). The quantitative population included officials and scientists of the talent identification committee of the School Sports Federation and its provincial branches, as well as physical education managers and sports association officials of the Ministry of Education. Initially, provinces were accidentally selected through cluster sampling, and then 384 people were chosen as the sample non-accidental

gnomon convenience sampling. The research tool was a researcher-made questionnaire comprising 39 indicators affecting talent management in school sports. Its reliability was proved using Cronbach's alpha test ( $\alpha=93\%$ ). information analysis was performed using SPSS version 23 and LISREL software.

### 3. Results

The first Findings of this study were the demographic characteristics of the qualitative and quantitative samples. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the Research Sample

No.	Workplace	Position	Education	Service	Management	Publications
			Level	Experience	Experience	Over 20
			MSc	PhD	10-20 Years	Years
P1	Ministry of Education	Officer		*	*	
P2	School Sports Board	Officer	*		*	
P3	Ministry of Education	Expert	*			*
P4	School Sports Federation	Expert		*	*	
P5	University	Faculty Member		*		*
P6	University	Faculty Member		*	*	
P7	School Sports Federation	Officer	*			*
P8	School Sports Board	Department Head	*		*	
P9	Ministry of Education	Department Head	*			*
P10	University	Faculty Member		*		*
P11	Ministry of Education	Expert	*			*
P12	School Sports Board	Officer	*			*
P13	School Sports Board	Board Secretary	*			*
P14	University	Faculty Member		*		*
P15	Ministry of Education	Teacher	*			*
P16	School Sports Board	President	*			*
P17	University	FacultyMember		*		*
P18	School Sports Board	Vice President	*			*
P19	Ministry of Education	Teacher	*			*

**Table 2.** Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Research Sample)

Demographic Characteristics		Qualitative Sample		Quantitative Sample	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	58%	224	58%
	Female	8	42%	160	42%
Age	Under 35	0	0%	109	28%
	35–45	9	47%	180	47%
	Over 45	10	53%	95	25%
Education	Bachelor's	0	0%	221	58%
	Master's	12	63%	125	32%
	Ph.D.	7	37%	38	10%
Management/Activity Experience	Under 10 years	0	0%	99	26%
	10–20 years	6	32%	130	34%
	Over 20 years	13	68%	155	40%

**Table 3.** Indicators and Components Affecting Talent Management in School Sports

Components	Indicators
Talent Management Planning	Defining the mission and vision of talent management in school sports
	Environmental analysis of school sports talent management and strategic plan formulation
	Developing educational and training programs based on long-term goals of school sports talent management
	Formulating and implementing a regional planning scheme for school sports talent identification
Interactions and Communications	Interaction of physical education with the School Sports Federation and other federations in talent management
	Collaboration with sports federations to align youth competitions
	Developing media communications to raise public awareness of school sports talent management
Organization	Establishing and developing school sports talent identification centers in provinces
	Task division, job descriptions, and role assignments
	Specialized sports schools and expanding student sports clubs with public support
	Quantitative and qualitative development of various school sports training programs
Executive Processes	Quantitative and qualitative development of school sports events
	Recruitment and retention of talents in various sports disciplines
	Application of principles of sports discipline training programs in practices and competitions to foster sports talents
	Creating a talent development environment by enrolling talented children and adolescents in sports teams and participating in official competitions
Monitoring and Control	Establishing a task force to oversee the sports talent management process with specialization in each sports discipline
	Developing evaluation indicators for school sports talent management
	Assessing the current and desired state of the school sports talent management system
Individual Motivational Factors	Training evaluators and increasing field assessments
	Motivation for fame and recognition through sports
	Attending in group activities with fellows and friends in sports
Organizational Motivational Factors	Knowledge and motivation of physical education teachers in student talent identification
	Incentives and motivators for successful instructors and managers in school sports talent management
	Stimulus and motivators for successful students
Family Motivational and Attitudinal Factors	Stimulus mechanisms for talented children and adolescents
	Media coverage of school sports
	Positive family attitudes toward sports
	Focus on improving children's physical and mental health
Human Resources	Potential future success and fame for their children
	Focus on enriching children's leisure time
	Recruiting talent identification and development coaches
	Empowering coaching and refereeing instructors in school sports
Financial Resources	Professional development of physical education teachers and talent identification and development coaches in school sports
	Developing technical, managerial, and specialized productivity in school sports talent management
Facilities and Infrastructure	Generating income and securing financial resources for talent identification and development
	Family support for school sports and talent development
	Developing standard and safe sports equipment and facilities for youth
	Standardizing software infrastructure
	Designing attractive and vibrant uniforms and sports equipment for youth athletes

Through documentary reviews, specialist consultations, and the Delphi method (in four rounds), the indicators and components affecting talent management in school sports were identified. The list of indicators and components is presented in Table 3 verifying factor analysis is a method that determines if the items measuring a construct have been appropriately selected. It verifies whether the questions in a questionnaire are suitable for measuring each factor. Thus, confirmatory factor analysis is a tool for assessing questionnaire validity, also known as construct validity or measurement model validity. Generally, factor analysis is used to identify underlying variables of a phenomenon or ensure the appropriateness of items measuring factors. The first information for factor analysis is the correlation matrix between variables. The output of the confirmatory factor analysis for the study's

components is presented in two diagrams: standard values and significance values, as shown below. To test the validity of the identified factors' scales, which included 11 latent variables and 39 observed variables, confirmatory factor analysis was used. Fig. 1 shows the confirmatory factor analysis model of the factors in the factor loading state (standardized coefficients). The above diagram shows whether the study's main variables are appropriately measured by their sub-factors (indicators). The results suggest that the observed variables effectively explain the latent variable. Since the factor loadings of all observed variables (indicators) are greater than 0.3, there is a common relationship between the indicators (observed variables) and their respective components (latent variables), playing an important and meaningful role in measuring the study's components.

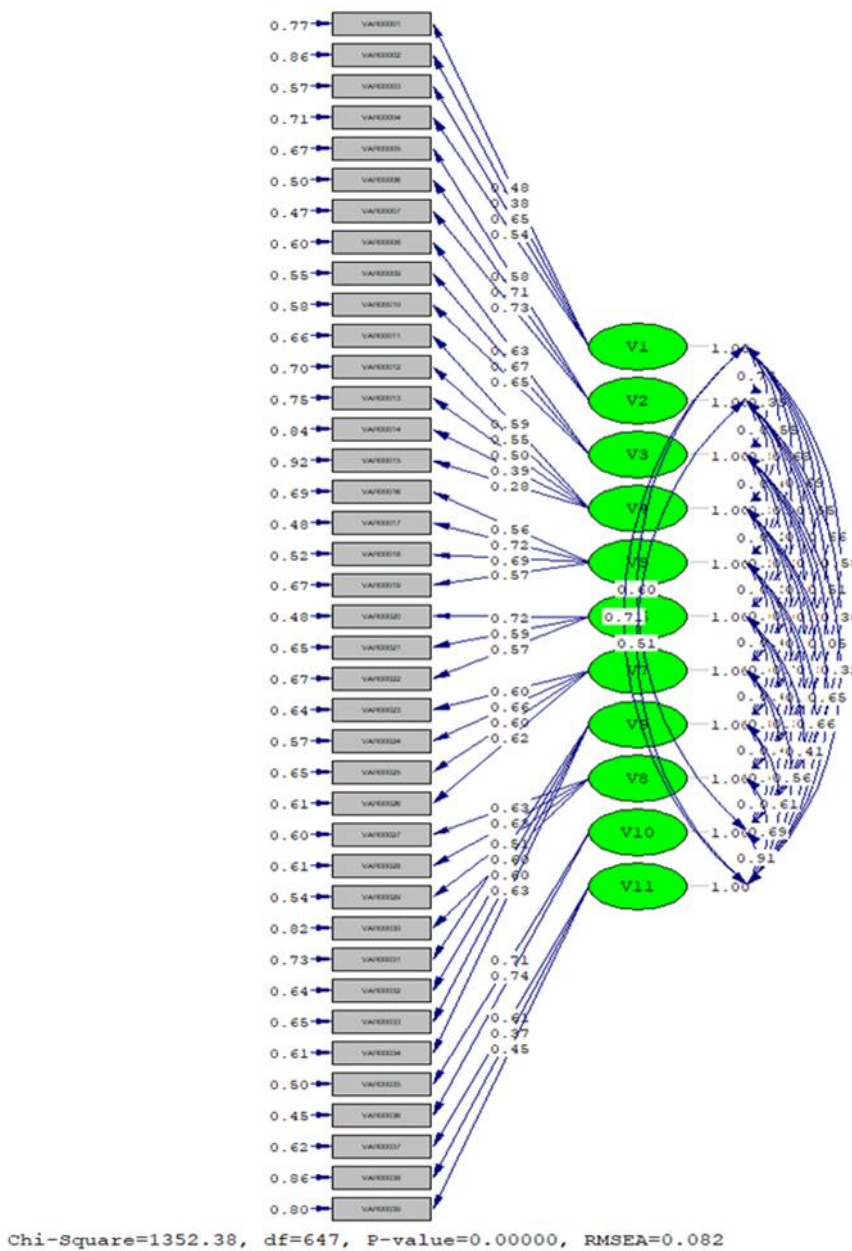


Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis in Standard Estimation State (Factor Loadings)

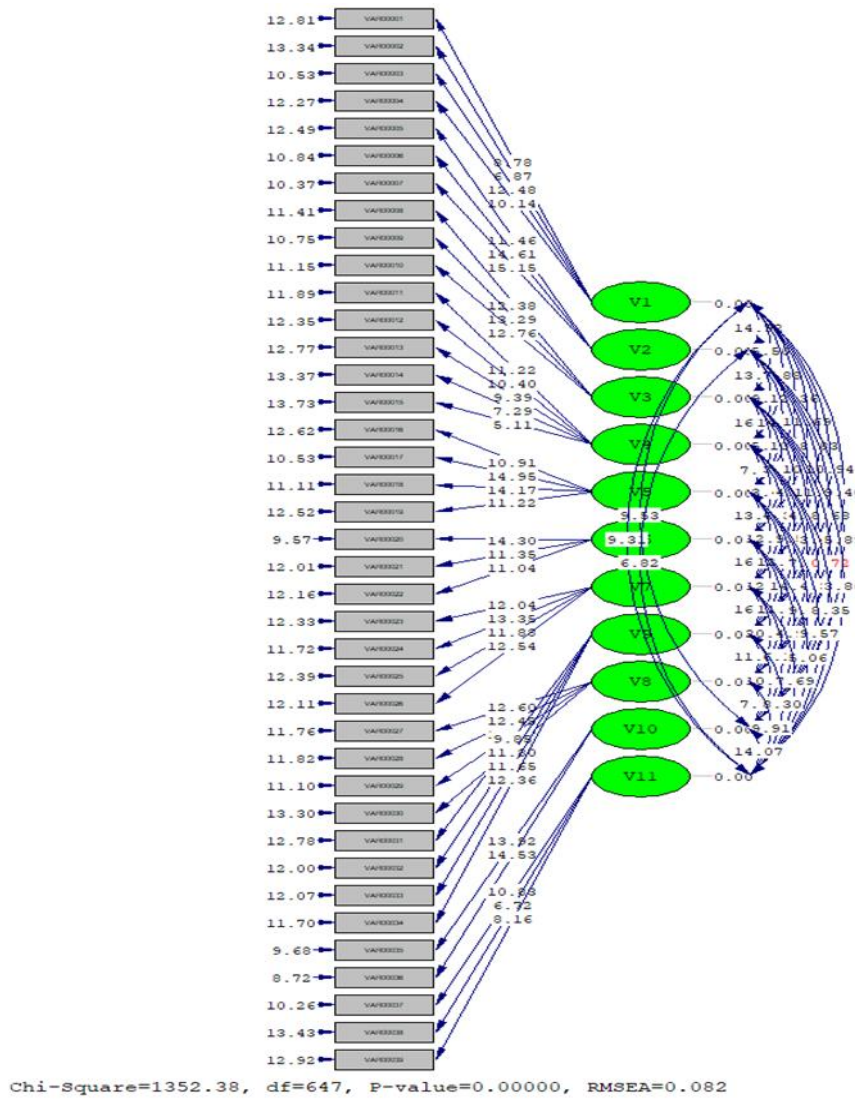


Figure 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis in Significance Coefficients State (T-Statistics)

Table 4. Fit Indices of Identified Factors

Model	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	GFI	IFI	RFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	SRMR
Acceptable Level	<5	<0.1	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.08
Calculated	2.09	0.082	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.9	0.604	0.532	0.611	0.071

Figs. 1 and 2 show the significance of the coefficients between observed and latent variables. Since significance is examined at the 0.05 level, if the obtained values or coefficients (t-value) fall outside the  $\pm 1.96$  range, the relationship is significant. The results indicate that the t-values for all relationships are significant. Factor loadings indicate the extent to which the observed variable contributes to explaining and measuring its respective latent variables. Significance levels are considered to confirm factor loadings.

#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the talent management model in school sports. The findings revealed that 39 indicators, categorized into components

including organization, talent management planning, interactions and communications, executive actions, monitoring and control, individual motivational factors, organizational motivational factors, family motivational and attitudinal factors, human resources, financial resources, and facilities and infrastructure, affect talent management development. Identifying indicators that influence the development of sports talent management increases the awareness of school sports managers and physical education teachers, as some factors and indicators may have been overlooked. Recognizing these factors will assist them in managing sports talents. The components of talent management in school sports are discussed below.

Based on the Findings, talent management planning is one of the components affecting talent management in

school sports. These findings align with those of [Hatungimana & Oladipo \(2023\)](#), [Mahmoudi \(2023\)](#), [Faridnia et al. \(2023\)](#), and [Rajabi \(2022\)](#). For any mission, having a long-term and operational plan increases the probable of success in achieving predetermined ends. The School Sports Federation has a strategic plan. In addition to this strategic plan, it is necessary to define the mission and vision of talent management, identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and develop and implement an appropriate strategy. Based on these ends and vision, educational and training programs for each active sports discipline in schools and the School Sports Federation should be developed and implemented. Moreover, given the climatic and cultural differences across regions and the potential for higher talent in certain areas, it is needful to prepare and implement a regional planning program to foster greater talent development. Therefore, it is recommended that while the School Sports Federation and the Ministry of Education's physical education department operate within the framework of the strategic plan, they should not rely this one only on this general plan for talent management. Instead, they should take steps to develop strategic thinking in talent management and elite development within this structure.

Based on the Findings, interactions and communications are components affecting talent management in school sports. These Findings align with those of [Darvishi \(2018\)](#). In this study, interactions and communications are among the components. However, in reviewing of talent identification and sports talent management studies, interactions and communications are rarely mentioned. This may be due to the numerous disciplines in school sports and the need to develop technical and specialized human resources for each discipline with the help of the relative sports federations. Without interaction with the relevant federation, technical development, such as improving coaching and refereeing quality, seems challenging. Moreover, collaboration with sports federations to align youth competitions can contribute to talent management development. Media, including television and press, can also play an important role in developing school sports and talent management. Therefore, effective interaction and communication between the School Sports Federation and media are recommended.

The Findings indicate that organization is a component affecting talent management in school sports. These Findings align with those of [Adeboye \(2022\)](#) and [Mahmoudi \(2023\)](#). It is evident that any organization's activities require organization. For developing talent management in sports organizations, in addition to task division, job descriptions, and role assignments, establishing and developing school sports talent identification centers in provinces is essential. Therefore, provincial boards, in coordination with other sports

discipline boards, should allocate sports facilities for talent identification and pursue talent management diligently to align and enhance elite development quality. Additionally, conditions can be created to establish specialized sports schools and expand student sports clubs with public support.

Based on the Findings, executive processes affect talent management in school sports. These findings align with those of [Hatungimana & Oladipo \(2023\)](#), [Talebzadeh et al. \(2023\)](#), and [Rajabi \(2022\)](#). In this regard, implementing the principles of various sports discipline training programs in practices and competitions is essential for fostering sports talents. To engage and absorb talents in various sports disciplines, it is necessary to enhance the quantity and quality of various school sports training programs and school sports events. In addition to improving the quality of student sports competitions and providing up-to-date training aligned with the latest sports science and techniques, creating a talent development environment by enrolling talented children and adolescents in sports teams and participating in official competitions at levels beyond the province is necessary. Therefore, it is recommended to increase official competitions, particularly in the summer season, for secondary school students.

Based on the Findings, individual and organizational motivational factors affect talent management in school sports. These findings align with those of [Xiang et al \(2022\)](#), [Mahmoudi \(2023\)](#), and [Faridnia et al. \(2023\)](#). Individual motivations, both extrinsic and intrinsic, are significant factors in the sustained participation of adolescent and youth students in sports, contributing significantly to the success of school sports talent management. Therefore, measures should be taken to ensure that individual motivations are not diminished and are instead strengthened. According to the findings, adolescents and youths are motivated by the prospect of fame and participation in group activities with peers and friends. The knowledge and motivation of physical education teachers in student talent identification significantly impact school sports talent management. In addition to individual motivations, actions by the School Sports Federation and the Ministry of Education's physical education department are necessary to support the talent management process in school sports. Coaches play a primary role in identifying and developing talents. Therefore, motivational factors such as diverse rewards and financial benefits should be considered for successful coaches and managers in school sports talent management. In addition to successful managers and coaches, organizational motivators such as providing uniforms and facilitating school-related matters, such as free remedial classes due to participation in competitions and camps during school hours, are necessary for students. The role of media in fostering talents and broadcasting youth

competitions should not be overlooked. Therefore, national media and press officials should recognize the importance of youth sports and collaborate with School Sports Federation and Ministry of Education officials to broadcast significant student competitions.

The Findings points that human resources are a component affecting talent management in school sports. These Findings arrangement with those of Hatungimana & Oladipo (2023), Talebzadeh et al. (2023), Rajabi (2022), and Asadi et al (2017). During the percentage, specialized and capable human resources play an important role in organizational success. The School Sports Federation and the Ministry of Education's physical education department are no exception. Recruiting talent identification and development coaches from among physical education teachers in schools and enabling them is vital to prevent challenges in school sports talent management. Empowering coaches in various sports disciplines and physical education teachers requires capable instructors for coaching and refereeing courses. In this regard, assistance can be sought from sports federations to empower the federations' education committee instructors. Moreover, the professional development of physical education teachers and talent identification and development coaches in school sports, as well as improving technical, managerial, and specialized productivity in school sports talent management, is highly important and should be prioritized by officials. Therefore, developing technical and managerial human resources in the School Sports Federation and the Ministry of Education's physical education department through coaching courses, workshops, in-service training, and conferences is necessary. Based on the Findings, financial resources and facilities and Fragmentation are components affecting talent management in school sports. These Findings arrangement with those of Rajabi (2022), Talebzadeh et al (2023), Shojie (2023), and Mahmoudi (2023). In education, financial resources are limited, and private sector involvement is rare. Some financial challenges may be addressed through family support for their children. Therefore, governmental financial resources for the School Sports Federation need to be increased. Additionally, the per unit availability of standard sports facilities, such as sports halls and pools, is limited in schools, with only a few schools having such facilities. Even in counties where sports facilities have been built for education, the per unit availability is low, managed by the physical education departments of educational districts. Meanwhile, schools accommodating large student populations in complexes should have dedicated standard sports facilities. Childhood and adolescence are critical periods for the emergence of talents, including sports talents. If talent management in school sports is developed and students' sports talents are identified and properly nurtured, reaching maturity in

competitive and professional leagues, a reliable foundation for the country's sports will be established, leading to international and global sports successes for Iran. Iranian school sports, including the School Sports Federation, the Ministry of Education's physical education department, and school sports associations, needed a model to improve awareness of the factors affecting talent management development. This study identified the indicators and components affecting talent management in school sports.

Based on the Findings, human resources are a component affecting talent management in school sports. Therefore, it is recommended to recruit talent identification and development coaches, empower coaching and refereeing instructors in school sports, and enhance the knowledge of sports coaches and physical education teachers through workshops and scientific conferences to improve technical, managerial, and specialized productivity in school sports talent management. The findings indicate that organization affects talent management in school sports. Therefore, it is recommended to divide provinces into several regions, select one province as the hub (main province) for each region, and strengthen talent identification and development in these hub provinces.

#### Authors Contribution

All the authors have participated sufficiently in the intellectual content, conception, and design of this work or the analysis and interpretation of the data (when applicable), as well as the writing of the manuscript.

#### Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

#### Conflict of interest

The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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