



## Developing a Strategic Leadership Model for the Iranian Sports Federations

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### ABSTRACT

Effective strategic leadership entails the implementation of diverse management strategies to develop a forward-looking perspective for the organization. Such a perspective enables the organization to adjust and remain competitive in a continuously changing economic and technological environment. This study aimed to design a strategic leadership model for sports federations in Iran. This study was applied in terms of purpose and adopted a mixed method with an exploratory approach. The statistical population of the qualitative study consisted of experts in the field of sports federations who were selected purposefully, and finally, 14 experts were selected as the research participants based on data saturation approach. The statistical population in the quantitative phase included 319 subjects (president, vice-president, secretary, and three members of the Board of Directors of sports federations) selected through stratified random sampling. The research data collection tool in the qualitative phase was a semi-structured interview whereas, in the quantitative section, a researcher-made questionnaire was developed from interviews' data. Data in the qualitative phase were analyzed using experts' points of view, and in the quantitative phase, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, divergent and convergent validity, and structural equation tests were used. Moreover, the face, content, and construct validity of the instrument were confirmed. Finally, the model of strategic leadership of sport federations was presented with seven factors including strategic orientation, human resources development, learning strategy, team leadership, strategic control, effective interaction culture, and ethical strategy.

## Introduction

Organizations play a crucial role in human civilization by engaging in essential activities that profoundly impact individuals' lives. Without the presence of organizations, life would be

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extremely challenging. Organizations have undergone significant transformations in the past two decades, evolving into decentralized and globalized entities. Additionally, management and leadership studies advancements have highlighted the importance of organizations and institutions. In the current era, there has been a shift in organizational focus from management to leadership (Rezaei & Monazami, 2020). Under this new leadership paradigm, managers prioritize involving employees in managerial leadership activities and collaborate with them to meet the needs of goals and visions. Many organizations struggle to adapt to changing conditions to ensure sustainability and success. Consequently, there is a higher demand for leaders who can develop and execute innovative strategies (Torabi et al., 2023).

The primary objective for any company to succeed in the market is to achieve organizational performance. Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of strategic leadership in attaining organizational performance (Carter & Greer, 2013). Strategic leaders understand the importance of developing their organization's resources, capabilities, and competencies to achieve long-lasting competitive advantages. They know that neglecting core competencies and focusing solely on short-term goals during a dynamic and uncertain environment can result in organizational failure. (Onyango, 2015). Research has demonstrated that organizations with strategic leaders achieve greater success in learning, both at the individual and group levels. Strategic leadership is crucial for the success of organization-wide learning initiatives. By expressing a clear vision, strategic leaders can transform the established learning practices within the organization.

Additionally, the strategic leadership approach significantly promotes and strengthens ongoing learning initiatives. Therefore, organizational learning and the creation and dissemination of knowledge are fundamental for the long-term sustainability of an organization, particularly when led by a strategic leader. According to Boal and Schultz (2007), strategic leaders are characterized by their ability to think strategically, considering the organization's long-term future and current context. This enables them to have a holistic view and establish a connection between long-range visions and day-to-day operations. An essential skill for strategic leaders is collaborating with others to develop and effectively communicate the organization's strategy, which is pivotal in determining the strategic direction (Mosavi Jad, 2022).

Numerous conceptual and empirical studies consistently emphasize the significant influence of strategic leadership on organizational performance. Strategic leaders possess absorptive capacity, effectively absorbing, assimilating, learning, and applying new information to achieve new objectives. Leaders must recognize, analyze, and utilize new information to steer desired outcomes in situations of ambiguity, complexity, and information overload. Therefore, leaders must have the ability to learn. Additionally, strategic leaders have a distinct capability to adapt or improve existing patterns of action within the organization (Schädler et al., 2021). Strategic leaders possess the qualities of adaptability and a strong desire to learn. They understand that effectively managing chaos, complexity, and change requires a fresh perspective and a flexible mindset. These leaders maintain a clear sense of purpose and motivation, allowing them to seize valuable opportunities and respond proactively to new information. By embracing change, leaders can successfully guide their organizations towards new strategic directions, harnessing their cognitive flexibility (Pasamar et al., 2019). Strategic leadership distinguishes itself from two other widely recognized leadership styles: managerial and visionary. Managerial leaders prioritize the organization's day-to-day operations but may lack a long-term vision for growth and change. This leadership style is commonly observed, particularly in large and diverse organizations.

Conversely, visionary leaders are primarily focused on the future, being proactive and open to taking risks. They base their decisions and actions on their personal beliefs and values, striving to communicate their desired vision to others within the organization effectively (Sehhat & Yar Ahmadi, 2016). Managerial leaders prioritize order and stability, often resorting to micromanagement. They may not be interested in setting goals or motivating employees and struggle to show empathy. Instead, they use reward systems, punishment, and coercion to maintain control. While managerial leaders are focused on the past, visionary leaders are oriented to the future. However, a major problem with most visionary leaders is that they tend to ignore the short-term stability and day-to-day functioning of the organization. Due to this drawback, visionary leadership is considered highly

risky. As a result, many organizations prefer to rely on managerial leaders, perceived as less risky and, although not more successful, as an alternative (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018).

Although we consider managerial and visionary leadership styles as two separate continuums, we combine and sum these two different leadership styles together to achieve strategic leadership. It is logical to assume that all organizations desire managerial and visionary leadership styles. Achieving this goal resulted in strategic leadership, defined as the ability to influence others to voluntarily make day-to-day decisions that lead to the organization's long-term growth and survival and maintain its short-term financial health (Sehhat & Yar Ahmadi, 2016). Strategic leadership is based on shared values and a clear vision, which allows employees to make decisions independently without constant supervision or control. This enables leaders to focus more on addressing immediate issues, such as adapting the vision to fit a changing business environment. Additionally, strategic leadership combines visionary and managerial qualities, encouraging risk-taking and logical decision-making (Muthimi & Kilika, 2018).

Silva et al. (2021) argue that strategic leaders need a combination of managerial competencies and skills to position the firm effectively in both the short and long term, resulting in superior performance. These competencies enable them to use organizational resources to achieve desired outcomes efficiently. Furthermore, Cortes and Herrmann (2020) suggest that strategic leaders exhibit behaviour that supports the successful execution of the firm's strategies. However, Israel et al. (2021) argue that strategic leadership alone does not guarantee performance, and only specific aspects, like inspiration, have a significant positive impact. Therefore, it can be inferred that strategic leaders must possess these competencies and be receptive to learning in order to enhance their ability to guide organizations towards improved performance.

The sports field has undergone rapid advancements that have significantly impacted the management of sports organizations. In response to an increasingly unpredictable environment, these organizations have been forced to adopt complex and global strategies (Shahlaee Bagheri et al., 2020). This has led to the emergence of new management concepts, including strategic leadership. Torabi et al (2021) assert that the strategic leadership theory emphasizes the crucial role of the top executive's demographics and leadership qualities in developing successful strategies. The authors contend that decision-makers must possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and leadership styles to guarantee effective execution of strategies. The nonlinear nature of developments in the realm of sports organizations necessitates moving beyond strategic leadership as a relatively linear model and focusing on promoting strategic leadership as a dynamic paradigm within federations. The current era is the age of success for organizations that thoughtfully rise to meet challenges. By utilizing strategic leadership, thoughtful organizations operate beyond their managers' individual thoughts and strive to operationalize strategic leadership as a core strategy (Shamounian et al., 2019).

Sport federations are key institutions responsible for governing competitive sports domestically. Institutionalizing strategic perspectives about both management and leadership within these federations has significant potential to positively impact the long-term growth and wider proliferation of sports nationwide. Strategic leadership encompasses visioning, environmental scanning, collaborative planning, and empowered decision-making - tools enabling national federations to navigate complexity successfully and meet evolving multi-stakeholder needs. By cultivating strategic leadership, sports federations can enhance competitive performance at the highest levels while promoting inclusion and grassroots participation. Mainstreaming strategic leadership thought represents an important undertaking to drive the sustainable evolution of the national sports system in a balanced manner (Goudarzi & Hamidi, 2022).

The "Federation" refers to the Amateur Sports Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a legally recognized public institution that operates independently of the government. It upholds the amateur sports policies and principles outlined in the Olympic Charter while also integrating Islamic values and the country's specific needs. The Federation is the ultimate governing body for all sports and operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Sports and Youth in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations (Gholamy et al., 2020). Sports federations are facing multiple challenges due to the fast-paced global environment. To tackle these hurdles, it is crucial to have strategic leadership, efficient technology management, and effective communication. Agility and adaptability are also vital for sports federations to stay ahead of their competitors. Traditional

methods are no longer sufficient to keep up with the rapid changes (Naghi Pour Givi et al., 2019). The Iranian sports federations are committed to providing diverse sports to individuals from all backgrounds and regions. Their primary objective is to enhance the quality and quantity of championship sports at national and international levels while fostering a sense of unity, pride, and national identity (Yousefian, 2022). Additionally, the federations aim to promote cultural and ethical values and encourage fair play. They prioritize transparent, impartial, just, and accountable management to ensure the effective execution of their duties and responsibilities (Salimi & Khodaparast, 2017). The sports federation has transformed significantly by implementing advanced technologies and strategic leadership systems. These changes have greatly improved sports competitions and made it easier to achieve success, particularly in international events (Hosseinnejad Asl et al., 2021). To overcome the challenges faced by sports federations, it is essential to explore various solutions, including adopting progressive technologies and establishing a forum for strategic leadership that promotes a cooperative approach. By encouraging teamwork, the focus can shift towards developing effective management strategies that empower and elevate sports federations through visionary leadership and innovative research (Faulks et al., 2021).

Sports organizations must be cognizant of the diverse and intricate external factors that impact them and establish efficient information system strategies to keep up with technological progress to attain their goals. Nevertheless, sports organizations encounter several obstacles in this domain (Grover et al., 2022). According to Teece (2022), some notable sports organizations have lost a significant percentage of their market share and have lagged behind their rivals due to inadequate strategic planning by their managers. Consequently, sports organizations must gain a competitive edge by implementing strategic leadership. Senior managers of organizations are constantly seeking strategic methods to equip their teams.

Sports organizations require effective leadership to tackle diverse challenges with suitable strategies and solutions. Abbasi & Fattahian (2018) conducted a study to explore strategic leadership's impact on performance improvement in Hamedan and Kermanshah provinces' sports and youth departments. The study emphasized the significance of organizational learning as a mediator in this relationship. The results indicated that strategic leadership has both a direct and an indirect impact on employee performance, with the latter being mediated by organizational learning.

Samimi et al. (2020) state that various factors, including internal contextual factors such as organization size, age, structure, and resources, and external factors such as uncertainties, complexity, competition, technology level, and social culture, impact the effectiveness of strategic leadership. Utilizing this type of leadership can enhance performance, strategy selection, social and ethical concerns, and overall organizational innovation. According to Akingbola et al. (2019), profitable performance heavily depends on strategic leadership. They highlight the significance of strategic planning in achieving this and assert that the effectiveness of leadership practices determines the return on investment. Additionally, Bhardwaj et al. (2020) underscore the critical role of strategic leadership in organizational performance in the current environment. Given the prevailing challenges such as information insecurity, resource constraints, environmental instability, and the need for continuous transformation, strategic leadership is the key to addressing these issues.

The rise of professional sports has created a demand for managers to think creatively and discover new ways to improve their performance. The concept of strategic leadership thinking is highly valuable to meet this objective. It is widely acknowledged that developing strategic leadership thinking in management, particularly at the senior level, is crucial to tackling the increasing competition in organizational and non-organizational sports sectors. Recent studies have highlighted a significant problem within sports federations: the lack of strategic leadership thinking. This type of thinking is essential for organizations to thrive in the present and the future, as it focuses explicitly on the benefits it brings. In today's rapidly changing and unpredictable era, the current state of sports leadership and management reveals an imbalance between the complexities and capabilities of sports organizations. To succeed in this dynamic environment, sports federations must continuously prepare for internal transformations and adapt to changes.

The study's literature review highlights a significant gap in research on strategic leadership within sports federations. To fill this gap, sports federations must conduct an environmental

assessment of internal and external factors and then develop, implement, evaluate, and control strategies accordingly. Sports federations must implement a strategic leadership model that combines scientific and practical approaches to enhance leadership abilities and prevent potential harm. As no such model has been presented previously, this study aims to investigate and identify the crucial components of a strategic leadership model that would be well-suited for sports federations.

## Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method approach that combined qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct a descriptive content analysis. Abuhamda et al (2021) stated, "Quantitative and qualitative methods are the engine behind evidence-based outcomes." In the qualitative section, the data were analyzed using The Ground Theory Method (GTM), which emerged from the work of Glaser and Strauss (Draper, 2004). The exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used in the quantitative part. The statistical population of the qualitative study consisted of experts in the field of Sport Management, Professional sport and Sports marketing who were selected purposefully, and finally, due to the saturation method, 14 experts were selected as a sample. Theoretical saturation was the main criterion to justify the sample size. Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The researcher achieved data saturation after interviewing the thirteenth participant, which aligns with the saturation law. However, to ensure the adequacy of the data, the interviewing process continued until the fourteenth participant. The validity and reliability of this research were evaluated with the contribution of interviewees and a PhD student of sport management as the assessor. He was asked to help the research group in the coding process for the first four interviews to find the percentage of accordance between the codes and intercoder reliability (ICR). The below equation shows how to find this percentage:

$$ICR \text{ Percentage} = \frac{2 \times \text{agreements}}{\text{Total number of Codes}} \times 100\%$$

The coding process between the research group and evaluation group is demonstrated in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Researcher and Assessor's Coding Comparison

Interviewee	No. of Codes	Agreements	Disagreements	ICR
I	11	4	7	72%
II	18	7	11	77%
III	17	7	10	82%
Total	46	18	28	78%

According to the above Table, 46 codes were defined from four interviews, in which 18 comments agree, and 28 disagreements were identified between the research and evaluation groups. This shows a good percentage of reliability that is above 60%. After the coding process and classification, primary drafts were given to the interviewees to check the accuracy of the notes collected by the research group, which were based on their opinions, and their agreement proves the validity of this research.

The researcher reviewed relevant literature and theoretical foundations on strategic leadership in sport federations to initiate the study. The first step involved conducting face-to-face interviews with selected experts and stakeholders of sports federations, following the specifications outlined in Table (2). Each interview session lasted approximately 30 minutes and was recorded. The research topic was explained during the interviews, and the interviewees were invited to share their opinions on strategic leadership in sports federations. The interviews commenced with an introduction to the research topic and the idea of strategic leadership in sports federations. Subsequently, additional questions were posed based on the participants' answers. The interviews were recorded, and experts

were given a survey form. Following each interview, the recorded information was transcribed into written form, and the data from the interviews were analyzed to establish the research model. To observe the ethical consideration in this research, it was tried to collect the data after obtaining the participants' consent.

Moreover, the participants were assured of the confidentiality of their personal information, and results were provided without specifying the names and details of participants. The statistical population in the quantitative phase included 319 participants (president, vice-president, secretary, and three members of the Board of Directors of sports federations) selected by stratified random sampling. They were asked to answer the researcher-developed questionnaire that was extracted from interviews. To create a questionnaire from the conceptual model, 20 specialists in sport management, sport marketing and professional sport were consulted. After two rounds of consensus, a final model was derived with an impressive agreement rate of over 80% among the experts. Ethical considerations were also carefully considered throughout the research process in the quantitative section, demonstrating the researcher's commitment to respecting the participants' involvement and confidentiality. The confirmatory factor analysis test was used to ensure the construct validity and confirm the factors identified in the exploratory factor analysis stage by the partial square method. The demographic characteristics of the experts involved in the research are presented in Table 1.

**Table 2.** Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewees

Code	Gender	Position	Experience	Field
1	Male	Professional Club CEO	14	Professional Sport
2	Male	PhD	18	Sport Management
3	Female	PhD	19	Sport Management
4	Female	Professional Club CEO	24	Professional Sport
5	Male	Professional Club CEO	15	Professional Sport
6	Male	Director of Sport marketing	9	Sport marketing
7	Female	Professional Club CEO	8	Professional Sport
8	Female	Director of Sport marketing	23	Sport marketing
9	Male	Professional Club CEO	12	Professional Sport
10	Male	Professional Club CEO	17	Professional Sport
11	Male	Director of Sport for all	27	Sport marketing
12	Male	Director of Sport marketing	14	Sport marketing
13	Male	PhD	15	Sport management
14	Male	PhD	23	Sport management

## Results

### *The qualitative part of the research*

The study employed a qualitative research method, specifically utilizing the Grounded Theory based on Glaser's approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The research goal in Glaser's approach is to discover the participants' main concerns and behavioral patterns (Draper, 2004). The Glaser approach involves a systematic coding and analysis process designed to allow theories to emerge

from the data rather than being imposed on the data from the outset. This means that the researcher avoids preconceived notions or hypotheses about the phenomena under study.

In the qualitative research part, the semi-structured interviews were used to extract the appropriate model's indicators, components, and dimensions. First, the researchers marked the key points related to each semi-structured interview by listening to the recorded interviews and studying the notes taken during the interviews, and then they extracted essential points from each interview. In the following, they did the necessary labelling by using the classification of key points in the form of professional terms, and then, the tagged terms of each interviewee were organized in a table. To analyze qualitative research in grounded theory, the initial step was to conduct open coding, which entailed gathering data by transcribing texts.

The researchers identified distinct concepts and themes for categorization, and this process was termed the concept-indicator model. This stage involved breaking down the data into smaller segments and assigning codes. Subsequently, the codes were linked and sorted into categories in the axial coding phase. Collected data was shifted, refined and categorized to create distinct thematic categories in preparation for selective coding. Finally, selective coding aims to develop a theory that explains the topic of study by refining and organizing data into a core category or central theme. In selective coding, all categories were linked to a central category that represented the main thesis of the research.

During the coding stage, open coding was utilized to establish connections between the created categories. This process followed the paradigm model, which helps develop theory and facilitates the theoretical process. The communication process in this stage involves expanding and extending the categories. Open coding is an analytical process that involves identifying concepts, their features, and dimensions within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The grounded theory data processing approach shapes the initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied through data segmentation (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). To extract data from the conducted interviews, the interviews were transcribed into text and then open coding was performed as a conceptual key coder during the open coding stage. The analysis of the interview texts resulted in the creation of initial open codes. This study's initial open coding produced 167 codes from 14 interviews. Interviews were analyzed based on Strauss and Corbin's Grounded Theory, and according to the coding process, findings exposed 167 concepts in open coding, reduced into 87 categories by axial coding, and categorized into 7 main themes (components) after selective coding to support the final development of the model (Table 3).

The second stage of the process was the implementation of axial coding. Axial coding is a method that connects categories and establishes links between them based on their characteristics and dimensions. The term "axial coding" is used because it centres around a main category (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). During this stage, the categories, features, and dimensions obtained from the initial open coding phase are refined and organized in order to gain a deeper understanding of their relationships. In simpler terms, axial coding results in the creation of categories and subcategories. All the final open codes were thoroughly reviewed and compared with existing research literature in this stage.

Selective coding is a systematic process that carefully selects main categories and establishes connections with others. This step is essential for theory development as it builds upon the findings of open coding and axial coding. It validates and refines the relationships between categories that need further development. Additionally, selective coding includes linking the central category to other categories, presenting these relationships in a narrative framework, and enhancing and developing the categories as needed. The study's model is presented in Figure (1).

**Table 3.** Axial coding: combination of codes extracted from open coding and formation of categories

Categories (resulting from the combination of primary components)	Extractive primary components (Open coding)	Codes
Strategic orientation	Vision and values+ support and protection+ common vision+ Creating opportunities to achieving goals+ Personal goal setting+ Strategic path	A11, A7, A12, A56, A5, A91, A60, A61, A78, A107, A112, A122, A137, A141,

		A142
Human resources development	Professional development of employees+ field of occupation+ field of profession+ Research+ scientific seminars + In-service courses + Increasing knowledge and expertise+ Persuasion and encouragement + Extensive support + Increasing basic skills+	A24, A30, A25, A33, A36, A37, A48, A76, A16, A87 A84, A32, A28, A106, A126
Learning Strategy	Rethinking business decisions + New strategy information+ Organization agreement+ Strategy issues + Strategic dialogue+ Sharing strategic information+ Routine and normal+ Collect learning information+ Provide better services	A34, A35, A81, A68, A51, A82, A71, A85, A26, A55, A120, A130
Team leadership	Executive exchange between managers and employees+ Holding official meetings+ Participatory decision making+ Encouraging and promoting teamwork + Supportive leadership	A43, A100, A3, A1, A5, A2, A9, A6, A10, A4, A13, A19, A102, A103, A108, A113, A116, A124, A117, A138
Strategic Control	Clarify vision and strategy feedback+ Timely revisions+ performance management+ Achieving strategic goals + Internal harmony and alignment units and employees	A41, A42, A44, A45, A47, A63, A88, A65, A66, A72, A67, A83, A90, A93, A86, A92
Effective Interaction Culture	Appropriate and relevant staff experience+ Field+ Talent and skill of employees + Assigned job+ Employee development process+ Program+ Succession+ Career advancement+ Mental strength and ability+ Basic knowledge and information of employees	A31, A50, A22, A57, A39, A23, A75, A52, A27, A77, A38, A62, A64, A111, A115
Ethical Strategy	Promulgated standards and rules and regulations+ Deviant behaviors from promulgated laws+ Orbital relationship committed+ Clear ethical codes+ Activities of the organization	A73, A118, A14, A127, A129, A133

Table (3) displays a total of 76 indicators identified and approved through integrating various indicators. The analysis categories underwent a refinement process to eliminate overlap and similarity, culminating in identifying these 76 indicators. The researchers were able to achieve theoretical saturation with this number of indicators.

**Table 4.** Selective coding: combination of codes extracted from axial coding

Factors affecting the strategic leadership in sports federations	Components	Extractive components (Axial coding)
	Strategic orientation	Support and Protection, Values, Vision, Opportunities



Human resources development	Professional Development, Occupation, Scientific Seminars, In-service Courses, Increasing Knowledge and Expertise
Learning Strategy	Strategy Issues, Sharing Strategic information, Collecting Information, Decision-making Issues
Team leadership	Executive Exchange between Managers and Employees, Holding Official Meetings, Participatory Decision-making, Encouraging and Promoting Teamwork
Strategic Control	Clarify Vision, Performance Management, Achieving strategic Goals, Internal harmony and Alignment Units and Employees
Effective Interaction Culture	Talent and Skill of Employees, Assigned Job, Development Career Advancement+ Mental Strength and Ability
Ethical Strategy	Rules and Regulations, Deviant Behaviors, Orbital Relationship, Committed+ Clear Ethical Codes

The findings are displayed in Table (3) refer to selective coding stage. Selective coding involves a systematic and iterative process of analyzing qualitative data and identifying the core category. By identifying the core category and integrating other categories, researchers refine their understanding of the central phenomenon and develop a comprehensive theory.

### ***The quantitative part of the research***

To investigate our research questions, we utilized a questionnaire consisting of 31 items. We then performed an exploratory factor analysis to identify and rank our data's various dimensions and components. Before analyzing the data, we conducted the Kaiser-Meyer-Elkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's goodness-of-fit tests to ensure suitability. To determine the variables' adequacy, we utilized the KMO statistic, with a value above 0.70 being deemed appropriate for factor analysis. Additionally, we utilized Bartlett's test to assess the correlation between the variables, which is essential for a meaningful and useful factor analysis model. As a result, we formulated a statistical hypothesis with regard to Bartlett's test to ensure sufficient samples and to determine the correlation between the variables (items).

**Table 4.** The results of the Bartlett and KMO test

		Value
Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin value (adequacy of sample size)		0.860
	Chi-square value ( $\chi^2$ )	3854.342
Bartlett's sphericity test	Degrees of freedom	595
	Significance level	0.001

The result of the KMO test in Table 4 was 0.860, which reflected strong since it was higher than the significance value of 0.80. This value indicates that the number of research samples is sufficient for factor analysis, and it is possible to perform factor analysis for the desired data. The data can be reduced to a series of latent. Also, the results of Bartlett's test (Sig = 0.001,  $\chi^2 = 34544342$ ) show a high correlation between the items, so it is permissible to continue and use other stages of factor analysis.

**Table 5.** Cronbach's Alpha Values, Composite Reliability, and Average-Variance Extracted Index for Research Variables

Components	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Significance Level
Strategic Orientation	0.91	0.93	0.67	0.001
Human resources	0.80	0.86	0.56	0.001
Learning Strategy	0.77	0.84	0.47	0.001
Team leadership	0.82	0.75	0.43	0.001
Strategic Control	0.76	0.82	0.55	0.001
Effective Interaction Culture	0.74	0.76	0.52	0.001
Ethical Strategy	0.79	0.68	0.54	0.001

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability indexes were used to assess the reliability of the internal consistency of measurement model variables. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all of the constructs were over the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating the adequate internal consistency of multiple items for each construct. Therefore, the reliability and internal consistency of research variables were confirmed. The extracted average variance index was used to assess the convergent validity of the research measurement model. Convergent validity indicates whether a test designed to measure a particular construct correlates with other tests that assess the same or similar construct. The extracted average variance index estimates the explanation of the variance of the questions by the latent variable. The minimum accepted value for the extracted average variance index was 0.5. The convergent validity is confirmed according to the values of the extracted average variance index in Table (5).

**Table 6.** The Furnell-Locker index values to investigate the divergent validity of the research model

Components	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strategic Orientation	1						
Human resources	0.78	0.71					
Learning Strategy	0.71	0.87	0.81				
Team leadership	0.72	0.83	0.76	0.71			
Strategic Control	0.46	0.67	0.71	0.69	0.71		
Effective Interaction Culture	0.27	0.22	0.18	0.30	0.67	0.72	
Ethical Strategy	0.70	0.25	0.27	0.43	0.67	0.74	0.57

The Furnell-Locker index was

used to investigate the divergent validity of the research measurement model. According to the Furnell - Locker index, a latent variable should have more dispersion among its questions than other latent variables. Divergent validity refers to the extent to which a test is unrelated to other tests that measure different constructs. In other words, the root mean of the extracted variance of each latent variable must be greater than the maximum correlation of that variable with other latent variables of the model. According to the values of the Furnell-Locker index in Table (6), the divergent validity is confirmed.

**Table 7.** The results of confirmatory factor analysis

Components	T-Value	Workload	Ranking	Significance level
Strategic Orientation	0.49.40	0.81	1	0.001
Human resources development	0.46.43	0.74	3	0.001
Learning Strategy	0.73.75	0.66	6	0.001
Team leadership	0.48.11	0.62	7	0.001
Strategic Control	0.70.10	0.77	2	0.001
Effective Interaction Culture	0.76.80	0.72	4	0.001
Ethical Strategy	0.49.69	0.71	5	0.001

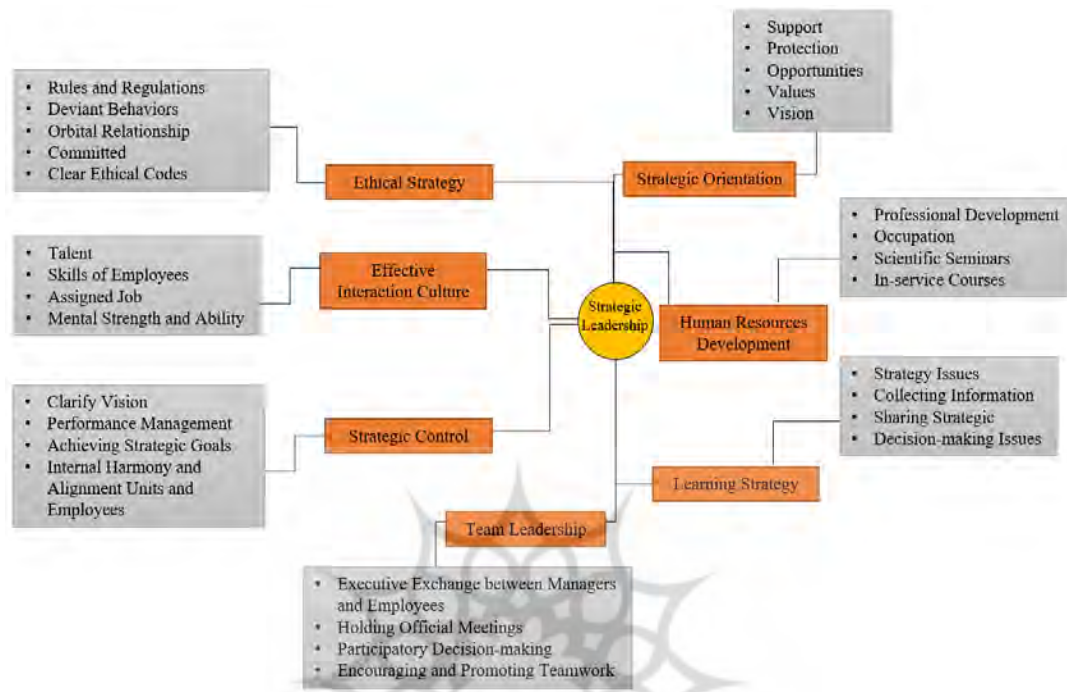
The confirmatory factor analysis results listed in Table (7) show that at the 99% confidence level, the T-Values for all strategic leadership components are outside the range (2.58, -2.58). The strategic orientation component, with a workload of 0.81, has more impact, and the team leadership component, with a workload of 0.62, has less impact. Based on the results of Table (7), it was found that the effect of all components of strategic leadership is confirmed. The strategic orientation component with a factor loading of 0.81 has the first rank, and the team leadership component with a factor load of 0.947 has the last rank. Additionally, all indicators are statistically significant and acceptable, with a T-Statistic value greater than 1.96, signifying a 99 percent confidence level.

**Table 8.** Index values and predictive power of the research measurement model

Components	Shared Index Q <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance Level
Strategic Orientation	0.42	0.72	0.001
Human resources	0.38	0.55	0.001
Learning Strategy	0.16	0.75	0.001
Team leadership	0.11	0.66	0.001
Strategic Control	0.19	0.30	0.001
Effective Interaction Culture	0.38	0.38	0.001
Ethical Strategy	0.23	0.47	0.001

Based on the results of Table (8), the research model's coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is favourable. The coefficient of determination index (R<sup>2</sup>) determines the accuracy of the prediction, and the index (Q<sup>2</sup>) determines the correlation of the prediction. According to the results of Table (4), the values of variables are generally obtained in the range of 0.15 to 0.35 or greater than 0.35.

Therefore, the predictive power of the research constructs is estimated as moderate to strong. The Stone- Geisser's Q2 value predicts the model's power. The Stone- Geisser's Q2 is predictive relevance, which measures whether a model has predictive relevance or not ( $> 0$  is good). The Stone- Geisser's Q2 establishes the predictive relevance of the endogenous constructs. The Stone-Geisser's Q2 values above zero indicate that your values are well reconstructed and that the model has predictive relevance. The value of the Stone-Geisser index is positive, so the prediction's validity is confirmed.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model of factors affecting the strategic leadership in sports federations

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to develop a strategic leadership model in the sport federations of Iran. To achieve this, the researchers adopted a mixed research approach and conducted a comparative content analysis of relevant sources. Through the three stages of coding (open, central, and selective) of the grounded theory, the effective elements and aspects of the proposed model were identified. The quantitative study was conducted to test the reliability of the research questionnaire, and the results demonstrate that both the questionnaire and its dimensions are confirmed. This is evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient value that exceeds 0.7. To evaluate its validity, the research questionnaire underwent factor analysis. The results demonstrated the validation of all 76 indices with factor loading numbers beyond 0.5 and significance levels below 0.05. The questionnaire's design was found suitable for factor analysis, as confirmed by the KMO test value of 0.714, which surpassed the recommended threshold, and a significant Bartlett test below 0.05. The results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion test revealed that the variables had divergent validity, indicating that each variable was better explained by itself than by the other variables. Additionally, significant differences were observed between the variables. The confirmatory factor analysis results showed that at the 99% confidence level, the T-Values for all strategic leadership components are outside the range (2.58, -2.58). The strategic orientation component, with a workload of 0.81, has more impact, and the team leadership component, with a workload of 0.62, has less impact. Based on the results, it was found that the effect of all components of strategic leadership was confirmed. The strategic orientation component with a factor loading of 0.81 has the first rank, and the team leadership component with a factor load of 0.947 has the last rank. Additionally, all indicators are

statistically significant and acceptable, with a T-Statistic value greater than 1.96, signifying a 99 percent confidence level.

The study results revealed that the strategic leadership of the sports federations model has seven components. These components included strategic orientation, human resources development, learning strategy, team leadership, strategic control, effective interaction culture, and ethical strategy. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Zarandi et al. (2023), Samimi et al. (2020), Pasamar et al. (2019), Abbasi and Fattahian (2018), Akingbola et al. (2019), Alnamrouti et al. (2022); Bhardwaj et al. (2020); Teece (2022); Amanah et al. (2021); and Torabi et al. (2021). The research results showed that strategic orientation impacts the strategic leadership of sports federations. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the strategic orientation with a workload of 0.81 has the highest impact on the strategic leadership of sports federations. The vision and mission of sports federations play a crucial role in shaping their strategic orientation. These elements determine their purpose, values, and desired results.

With a well-defined vision and mission, leaders have the guidance to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions. Effective communication of these objectives to stakeholders is essential for strategic leaders in sports federations. Additionally, they must also inspire and motivate others to work toward achieving the shared vision and mission. Sports federations must consistently analyze their external environment and adjust for a strategic orientation. This involves closely monitoring market trends, competitor activities, technological advancements, and regulatory changes. Strategic leaders must possess the skills to evaluate the external landscape and make well-informed decisions to take advantage of emerging opportunities and address potential threats. They navigate the organization through change and ensure that its strategic orientation remains up-to-date and adaptable to the evolving sports industry. According to Pasamar et al. (2019), many organizations face the challenge of not having a clear and well-defined leadership orientation strategy. This deficiency in effective leadership can impede the achievement of the organization's objectives, making them mere concepts. Unfortunately, only a few leaders devote their time to envisioning their organization's future and devising strategies to achieve it.

The research results showed that human resource development impacts sports federations' strategic leadership. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the development of human resources with a workload of 0.74 impacts the strategic leadership of sports federations. The development of human resources has a significant impact on the strategic leadership and management of sports federations. The effective execution of operations, program implementation, and achievement of organizational goals rely heavily on the contributions of staff and volunteers. Hence, sports federations must invest in training, mentorship, and professional development opportunities for their human resources. Doing so can enhance their strategic leadership capabilities and strengthen the organization's overall effectiveness. Alnamrouti et al. (2022) conducted a study exploring the obstacles that human resource development must overcome, theoretically and socially. Among the social challenges that the human resource department confronts is the development of staff. To accomplish this, it is crucial to prioritize meritocracy, implement organizational reforms, and enhance management skills. One of the main reasons for the lack of human resources development is the absence of employee support, which can be attributed to insufficient human capabilities and competencies required for success. Professional development programs, workshops, and training play a crucial role in improving the skills and competencies of both staff and volunteers. These initiatives are designed to enhance expertise in various areas, including financial management, fundraising, marketing, event planning, and communications. Consequently, sports federation leaders can confidently depend on a team that is highly skilled and strategic-minded when it comes to making critical decisions.

The results of the research showed that the learning strategy has an impact on the strategic leadership of sports federations. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the learning strategy with a workload of 0.66 impacts the strategic leadership of sports federations. Strategic leaders in sports federations must embrace a culture that prioritizes continuous learning and development. By implementing a learning strategy that fosters ongoing education and skill enhancement, leaders equip themselves with the essential tools and knowledge to effectively respond to evolving trends, technologies, and best practices. Investing in learning opportunities

such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and online courses enables strategic leaders to stay abreast of industry advancements and make well-informed decisions that align with the organization's strategic objectives. According to Teece (2022), the competitive landscape of modern businesses is becoming increasingly complex and challenging, and this trend is expected to continue in the future. Failing to acknowledge this reality and neglecting to implement effective solutions will result in being left behind in the competition. Organizations face a major hurdle in the form of inadequate knowledge and learning strategy among employees. The inability to share knowledge effectively can lead to reduced productivity and efficiency, eventually leading to the organization's downfall (Zarandi et al., 2023). An effective learning strategy within sports federations fosters a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration. Strategic leaders are instrumental in promoting and facilitating employee exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices. This can be achieved through internal training sessions, mentoring programs, and cross-functional projects. By creating an environment that values collaboration, strategic leaders harness the collective expertise of the workforce, leading to innovative solutions and improved decision-making.

The results of the research showed that team leadership has an impact on the strategic leadership of sports federations. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that team leadership with a workload of 0.62 has the lowest impact on the strategic leadership of sports federations. The role of team leadership is to translate the strategic goals and objectives of sports federations into actionable plans and initiatives for the team. Competent team leaders ensure that their teams align with the organization's strategic direction. They communicate the strategic vision, set specific goals for the team, and guide team members in completing tasks that contribute to achieving strategic objectives. Team leadership ensures that everyone's efforts are directed towards the organization's strategic priorities by promoting alignment. Bhardwaj et al. (2020) conducted a study entitled "An Analysis of Understanding the Job Satisfaction of Employees in the Banking Industry." The study revealed that effective team leadership influences the performance and success of the bank's staff and contributes to the overall strategic direction and organizational outcomes. Team leadership is essential in managing and growing talent in sports federations. A successful team leader is skilled at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each individual and assigning them roles that make the most of their strengths. They also provide opportunities for skill improvement and personal development. The professional growth of team members is a top priority, ensuring that the team has the necessary skills and abilities to carry out strategic initiatives successfully. By fostering talent, team leadership greatly enhances the organization's effectiveness and accomplishments.

The research results showed that strategic control has an impact on the strategic leadership of sports federations. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the strategic control with a workload of 0.77 impacts the strategic leadership of sports federations. Strategic control involves monitoring and evaluating the progress of sports federations in achieving their strategic goals. Effective strategic leaders establish systems to track key performance indicators, evaluate the effectiveness of strategic initiatives, and measure progress towards desired outcomes. Through regular performance monitoring, strategic leaders can identify both successful areas and areas requiring improvement, empowering them to make informed decisions and implement necessary corrective actions. The research results showed that the effective interaction culture has an impact on the strategic leadership of sports federations. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the effective interaction culture with a workload of 0.72 impacts the strategic leadership of sports federations. An effective interaction culture is essential for fostering effective communication, collaboration, and relationships within sports federations. It involves fostering an environment that promotes open and transparent communication, constructive feedback, and collaborative decision-making. By cultivating trust, respect, and engagement among all stakeholders, an effective interaction culture enables the exchange of ideas and the achievement of shared goals. Bhardwaj et al. (2020) suggest that effective strategic leadership can improve organizational performance, allowing them to compete effectively in an unpredictable environment. Amanah et al. (2021) state that effective strategic leadership is crucial for the success of sports organizations, both in the boardroom and on the training ground.

The research results showed that the ethical strategy has an effect on the strategic leadership of sports federations. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the ethical strategy with a

workload of 0.71 impacts the strategic leadership of sports federations. Creating a values-based culture in sports federations requires an ethical strategy. Strategic leaders are responsible for effectively communicating and promoting ethical values that guide the organization's actions and decisions. By fostering an environment that values integrity, transparency, fairness, and accountability, leaders ensure that ethical considerations are incorporated into all aspects of the organization's strategic decision-making process. This culture, driven by values, encourages trust, engages stakeholders, and contributes to the organization's long-term sustainability.

The strategic leadership plays a crucial role in the organization by creating a vision and strategic direction that inspires and aligns the efforts of everyone involved, including staff, volunteers, coaches, and athletes. Effective strategic leaders foster a culture of adaptability and innovation to keep the organization relevant in changing circumstances. This may involve exploring new events, partnerships, or participation models. Leaders must ensure that the Federation's structure, resources, systems, and capabilities are in line with the strategy to gain a competitive advantage. They are also responsible for identifying and managing risks while seizing opportunities for growth and development. This requires striking a balance between protecting the organization and pushing for progress. Strategic leaders must secure the necessary financial, political, community, and other resources to achieve the Federation's goals. Strategic leaders are also responsible for effective governance, ensuring transparency, representation, oversight, and financial stewardship to maintain ethical, strategic leadership by connecting the organization's strategy to its mission and values. Strategic leaders inspire athletes, staff, stakeholders, and partners through clear and consistent communication.

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