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Organizational Attractions of Physical Education Faculties from Postgraduate Students and Graduates' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to identify the organizational attractions of physical education faculties of state universities from the viewpoint of post-graduate students and graduates. The present study was qualitative research using a thematic analysis approach. The statistical population included all postgraduate students and graduates of physical education departments and faculties at state universities. The participants were purposively selected using the snowball sampling technique. A semi-structured interview was conducted with 13 individuals until theoretical saturation was achieved (10+3), and coding was employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the organizational attractions of physical education faculties encompass three main themes: structural, conceptual, and technology and innovation, along with 19 sub-themes and 71 concepts. The sub-themes comprised organizational order, organizational branding, organizational facilities, organizational climate, geographical environment, intra-organizational communication, extra-organizational communication, up-to-date status, educational, research, social status, remuneration, sports environment, educational sequence, sports events and competitions, departments, freedom of action, meritocracy, and amenities. The study's findings provide valuable insights into the organizational attractions as perceived by postgraduate students and graduates who are prospective applicants for physical education departments and faculties.

Introduction

Attracting talent is crucial for any organization (Boštjančič & Slana, 2018). When an organization presents a favorable image and communicates useful information about its organizational attractions, it can successfully draw capable and competent individuals. This issue is particularly significant, prompting researchers to propose various strategies in this field (Kapoor, 2010). Within

universities, professors play a pivotal role in the success of academic institutions and higher education centers. Recently, worsening employment conditions, declining salaries, and threats to job security have rendered academic careers less appealing, particularly for graduate students and young researchers (Civera et al., 2023). If an organization lacks a capable and suitable workforce, achieving necessary competitive advantages in a competitive economy becomes challenging (Broek, 2015). Therefore, employers should prioritize attracting applicants initially, and once recruitment is completed, they should focus on keeping employees engaged in their work (Florea, 2011).

Due to the importance of this issue, over the past few decades, both theory and practice have endeavored to identify and comprehend the factors that contribute to organizational attractions (Breaugh, 2008; Chapman et al., 2005). Organizational attractions has been recognized as a critical factor in attracting job applicants through organizational branding and in fostering retention of existing employees within the organization (Jiang & Iles, 2011). It has the potential to enhance both the quantity and quality of applicants who are inclined to initiate the recruitment process with a specific organization (Abell & Becker, 2021; Bacci & Bertaccini, 2021; Carpentier, 2019). Moreover, as background for person-organization fit, it has been found to have a positive relationship with desirable organizational outcomes such as self-efficacy, increased productivity, and reduced absenteeism or turnover (Chowdhury et al., 2021; Cinar, 2019; de Waal, 2018; Ghielen et al., 2021). This alignment encourages individuals to be attracted to organizations where they fit well, while those who do not fit tend to leave.

With reduced support from both state and private sectors and escalating costs, universities are increasingly seeking ways to deliver more services with fewer resources. In the competitive landscape, they are especially focused on attracting and retaining high-caliber students, professors, and staff (Cattaneo et al., 2019; Cattaneo et al., 2017). As a complementary and inseparable part of educational systems, faculties of physical education and sports sciences, in addition to meeting various educational needs, play a very important role in ensuring societal safety and addressing social, economic, and cultural issues. The recognition of faculties as attractive organizations by postgraduate students and graduates who are potential applicants to these faculties is considered a competitive advantage. So that the decision of prospective applicants, who are talented in academic and sports domains, to join the faculty of physical education as a desirable place for future activity and career can be influential. Therefore, achieving a proper understanding of these prospective applicants' perspectives is essential for creating, enhancing, and maintaining the organizational attraction of physical education faculties and departments.

The review of previous research indicates that most studies have focused on commercial or non-educational organizations, or they have examined organizational attractions in relation to other variables. In these studies, variables such as happiness at work, social responsibility, organizational identity, person-organization fit, and job satisfaction have been investigated (Bakanauskiene et al., 2017; Belinda et al., 2018; Chowdhury et al., 2021; Cinar, 2019; Dalkılıç et al., 2017; Mroueh & de Waal, 2020). Some studies have also generally addressed the attractiveness of universities and higher education for students (Abell & Becker, 2021; Bendaraviciene et al., 2014; Cattaneo et al., 2019; Cattaneo et al., 2016; Columbu et al., 2021; Lombardi & Ghellini, 2019).

For example Bendaraviciene et al. (2014) addressed employer branding in two Lithuanian higher education institutions and introduced job satisfaction, education and development, work-life balance, university environment, organizational culture, compensation and benefits, teamwork, supervisor relationships, strategic management, working conditions, and trust and fairness Abell and Becker (2021) also point out in their findings five key factors that enhance the attractiveness of universities to the new generation of talents, including reputation, organizational culture, role characteristics, career advancement and growth, and physical characteristics. They stated that universities, regardless of size, location, or ranking, should strive to differentiate themselves and their offerings from one another. When hiring faculty members, they should focus on certain key messages.

In previous studies, no information was found regarding the organizational attraction of faculties of physical education and sports sciences in Iran. However, the current research focuses specifically on faculties of physical education and aims to identify their organizational attraction in alignment

with the nature of these faculties in Iran. Furthermore, in most previous studies, organizational attraction from the perspective of employees within organizations has been the focus of researchers, primarily examining internal unity and the perspectives of current employees within the organization (Bakanauskiene et al., 2017; Belinda et al., 2018; Chowdhury et al., 2021; de Waal, 2018). Today, as academic positions increase, we are facing a shortage of talented applicants for work, diversity in physical education orientations, and challenges in attracting and retaining the required talents in Iran. Therefore, this study aims to sheds light on organizational attraction from an external perspective, focusing on the viewpoints of postgraduate students and graduates as potential applicants for faculties of physical education. Because selecting and attracting talented and capable applicants is the key to the success of any organization in the future. Therefore, organizations should strive to become more attractive (Scullion & Collings, 2011). This issue becomes particularly crucial when aiming to attract future human resources, graduates, and elites as the target community in Iran. In faculties of physical education, too, the target community consists of postgraduate graduates. Probably, they have many components in mind to join or maintain their relationship with a group or faculty. They are looking for the attractions that distinguish a faculty from other faculties in both theoretical and practical aspects. The unattractive nature of the faculty may have a negative impact on their decision to establish, join and maintain their relationship in the future. Hence, perceiving and appreciating their perspectives as elites and specialists is crucial for attracting qualified individuals to sensitive and important positions and tasks within faculties of physical education. This underscores the necessity of identifying the organizational attraction of Physical Education Faculties in Iran.

In the present study, organizational attraction is considered a significant indicator related to decision-making and behavioral intentions. It can serve as a motivating factor to convince high-quality academic talent of the advantages of joining by focusing attention on it. Therefore, conducting this research, in addition to filling existing gaps in understanding the organizational attraction of faculties of physical education, can be significant as an innovation. These attractiveness factors can serve as important sources of information that provide valuable insights into how prospective applicants (postgraduate students and graduates) perceive the organizational attraction of the faculties. Furthermore, it demonstrates to applicants that their desired faculty operates effectively and possesses the necessary attractiveness. Moreover, administrators and staff of faculties and universities can leverage the research findings to attract more qualified individuals.

Methodology

This study aimed to identify the organizational attractions of physical education faculties in Iranian state universities from the viewpoint of postgraduate students and graduates. Given the gaps in the literature, this research was conducted with a qualitative and exploratory approach (Marne & Koenig, 1994). The interviewees consisted of all postgraduate students and graduates from physical education faculties in Iranian state universities. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods was used. Initially, the samples were selected purposively, and during the interviews, the interviewees introduced us to other individuals who were knowledgeable about the research topic. These individuals were also invited to participate, thereby incorporating the snowball sampling method into our research approach.

The initial contact with the interviewees was made through phone calls or face-to-face meetings. This included inviting them to participate, explaining the research objectives, and providing an overview of the general research questions. Additionally, they were informed about the audio recording and the process of the study. To collect data, in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted, all of which were recorded. Initially, interviewees were asked questions about their demographic characteristics and work history (Castillo-Montoya, 2016), followed by the main research questions (What are the organizational attractions of physical education faculties? Why these items are organizational attractions? How are organizational attractions created?). The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each and were transcribed and written up immediately after completion. Semi-structured interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached,

which occurred with 13 participants. Due to time constraints, geographical distance, and location, a few of the interviews were conducted via phone calls, and all interviews were recorded.

Thematic analysis was adopted to analyze the research data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method for identifying "patterns" or "themes" from important or interesting data in interviews for the researcher, who uses these themes to answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This method began with data collection and proceeded with transcription, repeated reading, and analysis and interpretation of the data. A six-step approach was applied to conduct thematic analysis: 1. The interviews were fully transcribed, and the authors read each text several times to become familiar with it; 2. Following a detailed examination of the texts, in the second step, the researcher generated initial codes by making notes within the text and in the margins; 3. In the third step, these initial codes were organized into themes; 4. The themes were then grouped into cohesive and similar categories; 5. The fifth step involved creating networks of themes; 6. Finally, the researchers analyzed and compiled the final research report.

Based on the criteria proposed by Creswell & Miller (2000) the present study employed a participatory approach to ensure reliability and transferability (validity) of the research findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Participants were simultaneously involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data. Additionally, member checking was conducted, where two experienced individuals reviewed the initial stages of the analysis process and the identified themes.

Eventually, to enhance reliability, Scott's formula was utilized. Accordingly, 10% of the interview transcripts, along with operational definitions, were provided to another researcher for coding. Categories, subcategories, and indicators were coded based on specific instructions. The percentage of agreement between the two coders was calculated using Scott's reliability coefficient.

The Scott's reliability coefficient was found to be 89% (Table 1), indicating high reliability of the research. According to Scott (1955) an agreement coefficient exceeding 70% suggests consensus between the coders (Scott, 1955).

$$\text{Intra-rater agreement percentage} = \frac{2 \times \text{Number of Agreement}}{\text{Total codes}} \times 100$$

Table 1. Reliability Report of Interviews

Interviews	Total Number of Codes	Number of Codes in Agreement	Number of Codes in Disagreement	Reliability Percentage
P1	57	26	5	91.22
P4	43	19	7	88.37
P7	38	17	4	89.47
Total	138	62	16	89.85

Results

A brief description of the demographic characteristics of the research samples such as age, education level, and field of study is presented in Table 2. There were 13 interviewees, comprising 9 males and 4 females. The average age of their interviewees was 34.92 years.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Research Samples

Interviewees	Field of study	Education	University	Marital Status	Age	Gender
P1	Motor Behavior	PhD	Ferdowsi University of Mashhad	Married	35	Male
P2	Sport Injuries and Corrective Exercise	PhD	University of Isfahan	Married	36	Male
P3	Sport Injuries and Corrective Exercise	PhD	University of Isfahan	Married	38	Male

P4	Sport Management	PhD Student	Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz	Single	29	Male
P5	Sport Biomechanics	PhD	Kharazmi University	Married	38	Male
P6	Sport Exercise	PhD	University of Isfahan	Married	40	Male
P7	Sport Psychology	MA Student	University of Tehran	Single	27	Female
P8	Sport Physiology	PhD	University of Guilan	Married	39	Male
P9	Sport Management	PhD Student	Urmia University	Single	37	Female
P10	Sport Management-Sport Marketing	MA Student	Razi University	Single	29	Female
P11	Sport Management-Sport Marketing	MA Student	Razi University	Married	41	Male
P12	Sport Injuries and Corrective Exercise	PhD Student	University of Guilan	Married	29	Male
P13	Sport Physiology	PhD Student	University of Kurdistan	Single	36	Female

Since qualitative research follows a non-linear nature, the coding process was iterated multiple times. Ultimately, through a multi-step coding approach, extracted codes manifested as concepts, sub-themes, and main themes, as detailed in Table 3 and Figure 1. Table 3 presents the analysis of research data, including main categories, subcategories, and themes, focusing on the identification of organizational attractions within physical education faculties at state universities from the perspective of the interviewees.

Table 3. Organizational attractions of physical education faculties

Theme	Main Category	Subcategory
Structural	Organizational Order:	Order in holding classes: P1-P11
		Administrative and information order: P1
		Suitable educational and research rules: P3-P11
	Organizational Facilities:	Availability of classes and facilities: P3-P8-P9-P10-P12
		Standard educational and sports facilities: P1-P2-P3-P7-P8-P10-P11
		Proper and beautiful design of the faculty: P1-P7-P11-P12
		Faculty independence: P3-P4
	Sport Events:	Holding student sports events: P1-P3-P4-P5-P7-P9-P11
		Holding competitions between professors and colleagues: P1-P9
	Departments:	The presence of well-known and experienced professors: P1-P3-P4-P5-P6-P7-P8-P9-P11-P13-P12
		Specific job domain for department members: P5
		Less use of qualified professors: P8
		Gender balance in the professor selection: P9
		Diversity in field of study and departments: P3-P4-P7-P9-P10

		Establishment of independent departments: P9
	Amenities:	Access to university facilities for faculty and their families: P2-P3-P5
		Providing married student housing: P3-P5
		Offering facilities or financial assistance for domestic and international scientific travels: P5-P13
	Educational:	Practicality of education: P1-P2-P3-P4-P5-P6-P7-P8-P9-P11-P12
		Variety in practical and theoretical physical education courses: P9
		Holding coaching, refereeing and specialized workshops: P9-P13
	Research-Oriented:	Applicability of researches: P1-P2-P3-P4-P5
		Active scientific associations: P4-P9
Conceptual	Branding	University brand: P1-2-P3-P8
		Reputation and high level of the university: P2-P4-P6-P7-P8
		High level of the faculty: P3
		Branding of the faculty: P3
	Geographical environment:	Indigenous: P1-P6-P10
		Regional and urban location of the faculty: P1-P2-P3-P7-P8-P10-P12
		Cultural compatibility: P1-P3-P8
		Climate conditions: P1-P2-P3-P8
	Social Status:	Prestige and high dignity of university professors: P1-P2-P5
		Positive societal views on sports and athletes in this field: P2-P8-P10
	Extra-organizational communications	The faculty's connections with other organizations: P1-P2-P4-P3-P7-P9-P12
		International communication: P1-P2-P3-P5-P7
		Engagement with different strata of society: P2-P5
		Sustaining enduring relationships with faculty and students: P1-P2-P10-P11
		Communications with various departments of the university such as Cultural and Student affairs: P1-P9
		Enhanced interaction between professors and students: P1-P2-P7-P8-P12-P13
	Remuneration	Economic and financial: P1-P2-P3-P5-P13
		Research grants: P2
		Job security: P5-P13
		Sabbatical: p2-p7-p13
		Social housing: P3-P5
		Scholarship: P7
	Meritocracy:	Developing qualified individuals for future job positions: P5-P7-P8
		Hiring qualified individuals: P4-P6-P5-P7-P8-P13-P11
Technology and innovation:	Freedom of Action:	Flexibility in professors' working and better balance in life: P2-P3-P5-P11
		Freedom in education: P2-P5-P11

|		Freedom in research: P1-P2-P3-P13
Organizational Climate:		Intimate and friendly climate: P1-P2-P5-P6-P7-P9-P10-P11-P12-P13
		Energetic and dynamic climate: P1-P2-P3-P4-P5-P8-P13
		Competitive climate: P4-P7
		Receptive atmosphere for criticism: P6-P7
Being Up to Date:		Passion for continuous learning and growth: P1-P3-P4-P5-P7-P8-P10-P11-P13
		Using diverse and innovative teaching methods in different levels: P3
		Up-to-date equipment: P1-P5-P8-P9-P12-P13
		Free high-speed internet: P4-P6-P11
		Access to databases: P4
		Up-to-date professors: P3-P6-P9
Sports Environment:		Flexibility and creativity in sports: P1
		Joy and enthusiasm: P1-P3-P4-P5-P6-P8-P11-P13
		High participation in team work: P1-P4-P10
		Different, attractive and sporty appearance: P1-P2-P3-P5-P6-P7-P9-P11-P13
		Encouraging participation in sports activities and maintaining physical fitness: P1-P2-P3-P4-P5-P9-10-P11-P13
		Fitness and compatibility with the sports environment: P4-P6-P10-P7-P11-P13
Educational Sequence:		Having three degrees: Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD: 3-P4-P7-P9-P11
		Differences among students at each level and the presence of different concerns: P3
		Opportunity to continue education at the faculty: P7
Intra-organizational Communication		Faculty members being role models: P1-P6-P7
		Existence of informal relationships: P1-P2-P5
		High cooperation among professors: P5-P8-P9-P10
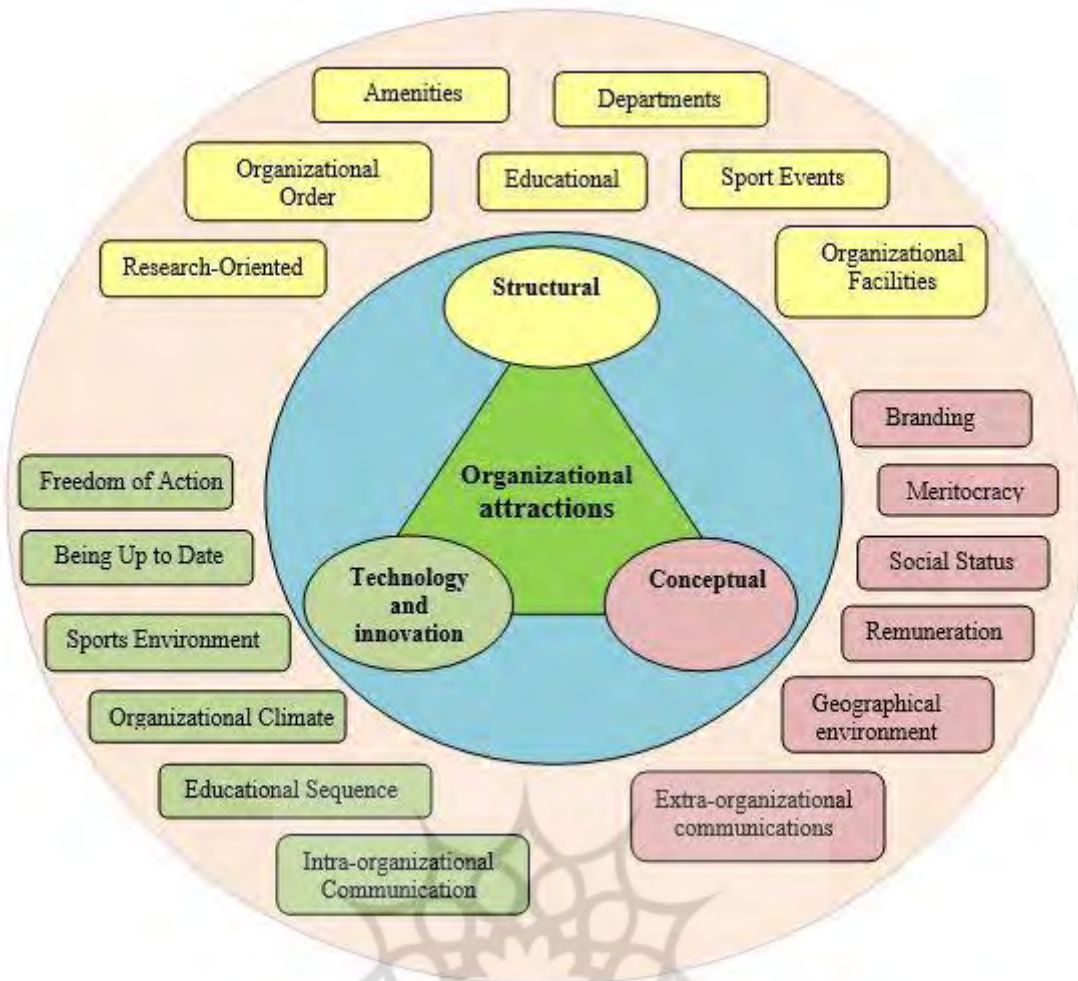
Figure 1. Organizational attractions of physical education faculties

Discussion and Conclusion

By analyzing the views of students and graduates of the master's degree in physical education groups and faculties, the present research determined the factors that create attraction for them by identifying organizational attractions. As seen in Table 3, the results of the qualitative data analysis revealed that the organizational attractions of physical education faculties include 3 main themes: structural, conceptual, technological and innovation, along with 19 sub-themes and 72 concepts. The main structural theme refers to the structural features of physical education faculties, which includes the sub-themes of organizational order, organizational facilities, sports events, departments, amenities, educational and research-oriented. Van Hoye and Saks (2011) also deem structure as one of the predictors of perceived organizational attraction for potential applicants in the Belgian defense industry (Van Hoye & Saks, 2011).

The sub-theme of organizational order in the conducted interviews comprises organization of class sessions, administrative and information organization, appropriate use of educational and research regulations. Mardiani and Wicaksana (2023) stated that organizational order and commitment have a positive effect on employee performance to some extent (Mardiani & Wicaksana, 2023). Therefore, a disciplined attitude should be cultivated in individuals to positively impact the faculty. Meanwhile, order contributes to creating a pleasant workplace, which may increase individuals' enthusiasm and commitment. This requires adherence to appropriate rules and regulations. Hence, organizational order refers to discipline in various affairs of the faculty, encouraging people to behave in a controlled and responsible way. Consequently, these issues should be taken into account to create attraction.

P1: The organization of the university makes me feel comfortable and at ease in the environment, such as the registration system, class schedules, number of students, classroom

setting, and class relocations… In many instances where we have dealt with disorganization, the quality of work decreases. I have usually observed this less in state universities and more in non-profit universities.

From interviewees' viewpoint, the sub-theme of organizational facilities refers to accessibility of classes and facilities, standard educational and sports facilities, appropriate and aesthetic design of the faculty, independence of the faculty. As the participants expressed, one of the noticeable issues in physical education faculties is the condition of sports spaces, facilities, and equipment. The lack of basic facilities and equipment, such as sports fields and equipment, can have a negative effect on advancing the goals of the faculty. In general, facilities and equipment facilitate teaching and research for professors and enhance learning for students. As noted by other researchers, the presence of good and sufficient facilities and infrastructure supports the effective implementation of physical education learning processes (Khalipah et al., 2023). Furthermore, the presence of sports equipment in universities and faculties, along with the quality and quantity of sports facilities, and a conducive educational environment have been identified as factors contributing to the promotion and development of sports in universities (Chin et al., 2019; Masmanidis et al., 2009; Wang & Lu, 2017). Maier et al. (2022) noted that the creative design of the workplace can enhance organizational attraction (Maier et al., 2022). Therefore, the mentioned views show a new aspect in the discussion of organizational recruitment in physical education faculties for potential applicants, which is of considerable importance. For example, the accessibility and integration of classes and sports facilities are significant because theoretical and practical classes require proximity in their locations. This facilitates quick and easy movement for professors and students between theoretical and practical classes.

P3: The proximity of facilities to the faculty, such as having a swimming pool within the university campus rather than outside, ensures a cohesive environment within the university premises.

The sub-theme of sports events in physical education faculties refers to organization of student sports events and competitions and organization of competitions among faculty and staff. Implementing recreational sports programs helps increase active student participation. Researchers also stated that organizing large-scale sports events contributes to the development of sports in universities (Wang & Lu, 2017). Interviewees opined that organizing competitions not only increases active student participation but also provides valuable experience and the opportunity to earn medals and prizes, which are attractive and motivating. It creates a lively and dynamic environment. Therefore, focusing on events and competitions is important for creating and maintaining organizational attractiveness.

P11: For example, once when we were at the Physical Education Faculty of University of Guilan, we hosted the Caspian Sea Games. All Caspian region countries participated in these competitions, and we were involved in organizing and contributing to them. It was very exciting for us, and the memories of it are still vivid in my mind…

The sub-theme of departments, as analyzed from the interviews, includes the presence of renowned and experienced professors, specific expertise within the department members, limited use of adjunct professors, gender balance in selecting professors, diversity in disciplines and departments, and the formation of independent departments.
The interviewees stated that professors with impressive resumes, high-level publications, and academic achievements enhance the attractiveness of faculties. Departments where most professors are permanent academic staff, and adjunct professors are less frequently utilized, tend to have stronger and more cohesive teams, fostering greater potential for collaborative and specialized work. Having independent departments increases the possibility of engaging in more specialized activities and focusing on advancing the goals of specific fields, thereby strengthening the departments.

P9: Having various disciplines in the faculty at all levels—undergraduate, master's, and doctoral—with all disciplines offered at each level is a positive aspect for a faculty and is considered one of its advantages.

The analysis of the interviews indicates that the sub-theme of amenities refers to access to university facilities for faculty and their families, providing married student housing, offering

facilities or financial assistance for domestic and international scientific travels. Altmann and Suess (2015) demonstrated that temporary relaxation programs have a positive impact on employer attraction, and risk-averse individuals perceive companies offering temporary holiday programs as more attractive (Altmann & Suess, 2015). Therefore, officials and stakeholders should consider that paying attention to the views presented affects the morale of professors and can cultivate a more committed and happier workforce. This indirectly benefits the Faculty of Physical Education. Because a happier workforce provides better service. Better services increase student and stakeholder satisfaction, and this cycle can lead to increased commitment among both professors and students. It attracts talented and capable students.

P3: See, one of the attractions that physical education faculties can have for families is the use of university and faculty facilities for our children, family, and spouse, using sports facilities for family members. Well, when I teach at the faculty, my child can have his physical activities there, which is an attractive benefit.

The educational sub-theme from the perspective of postgraduate students and graduates involves practicality of education, variety in practical and theoretical physical education courses, holding coaching, refereeing and specialized workshops. Bendaraviciene et al. (2014) introduced training and development as indicators of organizational attraction for the employer brand in higher education (Bendaraviciene et al., 2014). The interviewees opine that the presence of science-seeking and eager-to-learn students who can apply the courses they have learned gives them a better understanding of their field and also brings a sense of pleasure and satisfaction from working in the faculty and making an impact. Also, familiarity with the types of physical education tests and experiments is one of the attractive aspects of the educational programs of the physical education faculties, which is useful for measuring and conducting various researches. The educational attractions of physical education faculties are not limited to a diverse curriculum and theoretical and practical classes. The organization of coaching and refereeing courses, along with specialized workshops, is also significant. Thus, it is crucial to emphasize these aspects as organizational attractions of physical education faculties to motivate applicants.

P4: Now, if I want to say a second part, it's the educational structures that exist in the faculty, like the teaching structure that the faculty has and can be attractive to individuals and can attract them to itself.

The research-oriented sub-theme refers to the applicability of researches and active scientific associations. The interviewees stated that the opportunity for research in physical education faculties is available to them, which is considered one of the important pillars of sustainable progress and development in every country. The application of research findings and the impact of these studies on other individuals, organizations, and society, as well as the development of sports in the country, are motivating factors for them. Considering the importance of physical education and sports in community health, the type and level of research activities in physical education faculties are deemed to be key indicators of development and progress. Therefore, research and studies serve as vital tools for attracting and cultivating the interest of researchers and enthusiasts, and they are essential for advancing the missions that faculties aim to accomplish.

P1: One of its attractions is doing research and interaction with students. I teach in other places, and as time goes by, this attraction grows stronger for me, making me want to one day become a faculty member somewhere so that I can do more research, connect with students, supervise theses, and guide them. I always think about it, plan for it, and gather information for it, and this is very appealing to me.

The main conceptual theme encompasses issues presented conceptually and perceptually from the viewpoint of the interviewees. This theme includes sub-themes such as branding, geographical environment, social status, extra-organizational communication, rumination, and meritocracy.

The sub-theme of branding contains university brand, reputation and high level of the university, high level of the faculty, and branding of the faculty. Since university branding instills confidence in customers and the target community when choosing the best university for services or products, universities emphasize brand development (Mampaey, 2018). DelVecchio et al. (2007) in their research on brand equity's role in attracting human capital, found that the perception that strong brands enhance resumes is influenced by the beliefs of career-seekers who aspire to work for

prestigious brands. Branding allows individuals to advance in internal positions, receive job-related training and skills, and showcases their dedication and work ethic (DelVecchio et al., 2007). Therefore, branding should be recognized as a significant factor in organizational attraction. Following this approach, interviewees highlight that branding cultivates a positive perception of the university and its faculty, fostering a stronger desire to join and remain within the faculty. Therefore, paying attention to these perceptions and actively shaping and promoting faculty branding can significantly enhance organizational attraction

P1: The university brand can persuade me to choose that university because a university with a strong brand presumably has organization and good facilities…

The geographical environment sub-theme, from the perspective of the interviewees, includes aspects such as indigenous, the regional and urban location of the faculty, cultural compatibility, and climatic conditions. Examining the organizational attraction in Taiwan's hotel industry (perceptions of native and non-native employees), Hsiao et al. (2014) stated that organizational diversity is crucial for hotel employees, especially for native staff members. The results highlight the importance of managers accurately understanding employees' attitudes towards organizational diversity. Therefore, effective management of organizational diversity enables employers to implement equal opportunity, affirmative action policies, and diversity management strategies more successfully, thereby attracting and retaining both native and non-native employees (Hsiao et al., 2014). According to the interviewees' opinions, climate and weather, in addition to native status, can be significant factors. Specifically, favorable weather is crucial for engaging in sports activities. Generally, the overall environment, region, and city are also important considerations.

P3: The priority is with a faculty located in a city and province where the cultural environment aligns with mine or is at a cultural level that attracts me, and also contributes to elevating my own culture. Well, these days it is one of the priorities in the life of all the culture of the society. Ultimately, our children want to grow up in that community, and its culture can have a significant impact. It is essential to have a suitable environment where they can grow in a rich culture and live a peaceful life.

Another sub-theme is social status. During the interviews, participants highlighted the social status of professors in the Faculty of Physical Education and the community's favorable perception of sports and those active in this field, particularly students and professors of physical education. Jiang and Iles (2011) in their research on private companies in Zhejiang, China, emphasized social value as a significant factor influencing job applicants' decision to accept job offers during recruitment processes (Jiang & Iles, 2011).

P5: The reasons for aspiring to become a university faculty member have evolved over time. Initially, we recognized the societal prestige associated with being in an academic environment... people have a special respect for university professors that has always existed, and hopefully, it will remain so that it won't fade away; after all, the educated members of our society are the architects of our nation, which was the first thing that was very important for me, then their social position.

The sub-theme of extra-organizational communication includes factors such as the faculty's connections with other organizations, international communication, engagement with different strata of society, sustaining enduring relationships with faculty and students, communication with various departments of the university such as Cultural and Student affairs, and enhanced interaction between professors and students.

From the interviewees' perspective, the attractions of the Faculty of Physical Education include its connection with the industry and labor market, collaboration with other organizations like the Sports and Youth Department, the influential communication skills of professors, and their role in decision-making within other university faculties and departments, such as Cultural and Student affairs, and the physical education department. These connections are also emphasized at the international level. Maintaining strong relationships with external stakeholders, particularly students, is crucial. This relationship extends beyond graduation. Increased interaction between physical education professors and students, ongoing communication with retired professors, and leveraging their experiences are among other significant factors. As the interviews indicate, all the mentioned factors contribute to creating a cohesive image of the faculty, particularly in external

communications, which effectively enhance the attractiveness and reputation of physical education faculties.

P12: The fact that the faculty has good communication with the Sports and Youth Department, and can encourage students to participate in conferences, events, and programs, as well as collaborate with the Physical Education Department, can also be attractive features.

The sub-theme of remuneration includes economic and financial, research grants, job security, sabbatical, social housing, and scholarship. Organizational attraction refers to the benefits and personal experiences associated with working for a specific organization (Berthon et al., 2005). Bendaraviciene et al. (2014) conducted research on organizational attraction, highlighting factors such as compensation, allowances, and employer branding in higher education (Bendaraviciene et al., 2014). Additionally, Nam et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of job security for coaches in advancing sports in Korean universities. Lievens et al. (2007) also found that attraction to the Belgian army is primarily influenced by instrumental dimensions such as team/sports activities, organizational structure, and job security (Lievens et al., 2007; Nam et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Jiang & Iles (2011) identified "economic value" as a crucial factor that attracts employees and prospective applicants to organizations and private companies in Zhejiang, China (Jiang & Iles, 2011). Similarly, Bakanauskiene et al. (2017) reported in their research that competitive remuneration and engaging career opportunities are mentioned by employees as key factors in attracting talent to commercial employers in Lithuania (Bakanauskiene et al., 2017). In general, the findings from research should be considered because when professors receive good salaries and allowances, they are more likely to stay in the faculty, feel satisfied, and be motivated for career advancement. Additionally, for prospective applicants, this has a significant impact on attracting them and serves as a motivating factor. As a matter of fact, sufficient salaries and allowances demonstrate the organization's appreciation for the efforts and contributions of professors. This appreciation can increase their motivation and energy and act as an attractiveness factor.

P5: They provide married housing, dormitories for married couples, and you can feel at ease about that. However, when you become a teacher, a municipal employee, or work anywhere else, these facilities are not available. Facilities are very important; on one hand, there is organizational housing, and on the other hand, there is the university environment. Typically, there are schools for professors' children within the university itself, which are affiliated with the university. You know that children are in a better environment compared to many schools that unfortunately have poor conditions.

The sub-theme of meritocracy refers to the development of qualified people for future job positions and the hiring of qualified people. In their study, Lievens & Highhouse (2003) identify competence as a key predictor of organizational attraction for employers (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Interviewees' perspectives underscore the importance of using rules and regulations to select competent individuals based on their abilities and merits in physical education faculties. Hence, the qualifications of professors in education, sports, and research, along with their dedication to training competent individuals for future roles, are also key factors contributing to the organizational attractiveness of physical education faculties. For instance, in practical courses such as swimming, professors must possess the necessary skills and competence in the sport and its techniques to effectively teach. Without these qualifications, they cannot adequately instruct students. Thus, proficiency in the required courses and sufficient training skills are essential for teaching swimming courses, as an example.

P4: In the Faculty of Physical Education, competency is structured in a way that positions are based on merit. For example, a professor who teaches swimming must possess the competence to teach this course, meaning they have the ability and coaching certification required to instruct the class. I can say that in the field of physical education, achieving a position is largely based on meritocracy, and there are fewer nepotistic relationships compared to other fields. For instance, someone who has never practiced swimming cannot teach as a swimming instructor under any circumstances. Therefore, discussions of competency and meritocracy are more prevalent in faculties of physical education because individuals can teach courses based on their competence, skills, and abilities. In my opinion, this can enhance motivation and attractiveness within the field.

The main theme of technology and innovation includes freedom of action, organizational climate, being up-to-date, sports environment, educational sequence, and intra-organizational communication.

In their study, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) proposed innovation as a significant predictor of organizational attraction as an employer. The freedom of action sub-theme refers to the flexibility in professors' working and better balance in life, freedom in education, freedom in research. Academic freedom pertains to the right to choose along with security in academic matters. The possibility of freedom in the research and education among professors allows individuals to make decisions based on their own will. Interviewees believe that professors have freedom of action in classrooms, teaching methods, research tools, and communities in which they conduct research. They can continue their previous research and explore new areas of interest and expertise. The flexibility of working hours allows professors to plan differently for different semesters. Nadler et al. (2010) recommended that flexible working schedule affects potential employees' perception of organizational attraction (Nadler et al., 2010). Broek (2015) also examined the occupational and organizational factors that make a company attractive to potential workers (students) and current employees. They found that students value learning and development opportunities, flexibility in working hours, and the importance of assignments (Broek, 2015).Since it is beneficial for the faculty to hire highly qualified people, it is important to consider the attitude of interviewees with higher education and expertise. The effects of freedom of action can affect the motivation and interest of applicants to join the faculty even before they are hired.

P2: In organizational charts, such as within any department you consider, you cannot exceed the framework set for you. For example, in education, one of the requirements might be that you have to be at work from 7:30 to 2:30. However, in a physical education faculty, you can conduct research freely, have autonomy in teaching classes, and in research. Your scope of action is much broader. However, in administrative roles within the organization, this flexibility may not exist. Being able to achieve your goals and having the freedom to act exactly as you wish is invaluable for your progress, progress in any field.

The organizational climate sub-theme includes a set of characteristics that describe the faculty and distinguish it from other organizations. These characteristics are relatively stable over time and influence people's behavior. From the point of view of the interviewees, the organizational climate includes a friendly and friendly atmosphere, an energetic and dynamic atmosphere, a competitive atmosphere and a critical atmosphere. Due to the favorable organizational climate in the workplace, employees, professors, and students become more motivated, their morale is strengthened, and new talents are attracted to the faculty, leading them to start working there. A friendly climate in the Faculty of Physical Education creates a pleasant relationship between professors and students and improves the overall atmosphere. The faculty's involvement in sports activities contributes to an energetic, dynamic, and competitive environment. As the interviews suggest, the organizational climate should effectively create a positive atmosphere that enhances the faculty's attractiveness, encouraging the recruitment of specialists and elites in the field of physical education.

P1: The prevailing atmosphere between professors and staff, and among the professors themselves: The friendlier this atmosphere is, while maintaining order and discipline, the more it creates a friendly environment that does not lead to misconduct. If the previous conditions exist but the atmosphere is not friendly, I cannot be attracted to the faculty. It should not be a top-down perspective. The friendly atmosphere and the sense of belonging I feel are also important factors.

The sub-topic of being up-to-date includes the passion for continuous learning and growth, the use of diverse and innovative teaching methods at different levels of education, up-to-date equipment, free high-speed internet, access to databases and attendance. From up-to-date professors in a study, Van Hoy and Saks (2011) identified advancement opportunities as one of the predictors of perceived organizational attractiveness for potential applicants in the Belgian defense industry (Van Hoye & Saks, 2011). Interviewees believe that interest in learning and increasing expertise is one of the main reasons for participation and membership in physical education colleges. Up-to-date educational, research and laboratory equipment, high-speed internet and access to databases in

all three stages of physical education, the college becomes an attractive environment. Highlighting these aspects can increase the modernity and attractiveness of physical education faculties.

P4: How are the facilities available in the college, including the library website, technology and communication? How is access to the systems? We have faculties with wide access to all databases, which is very important to me. Access to this faculty is open and I can use it.

The sub-topic of sports environment distinguishes physical education faculties from other faculties. According to the opinion of the interviewees, this issue is related to characteristics such as flexibility and creativity in sports, happiness and enthusiasm, high participation in teamwork, different, attractive and athletic appearance. Encouraging to do sports activities and maintaining physical fitness and fitness and adapting to the sports environment. De Waal (2018) findings on the effect of workplace happiness and organizational attraction indicate a positive effect on organizational performance, including increased productivity, reduced employee turnover, and fewer customer complaints (de Waal, 2018). In general, improved employee happiness correlates with how appealing the organization is perceived to be by both employees and external individuals. Interviewees suggested that the dynamism and vitality of the sports environment within the faculty can positively influence the broader community, impacting the work and lives of active individuals associated with the faculty. The interviewees pointed out the distinct clothing and appearance of physical education professors and students. This physical appearance attractiveness stimulates individuals mentally and can lead to changes in their attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, the physical attractiveness derived from participating in physical activities among physical education students and professors can positively impact how others perceive them. Actually, these individuals are often perceived as more competent, sociable, and reliable. Examining the mediating effect of organizational attraction on the relationship between organizational identity and person-organization fit, Cinar (2019) found a significantly positive relationship between fit with organizational identity and organizational attraction. Furthermore, a significantly positive relationship was found between organizational attraction and organizational identity (Cinar, 2019).

Therefore, according to the views of the interviewees, an individual's adaptation to the faculty environment, influenced by their background in sports and interest in the sports environment, reflects their fit with the faculty, thereby making it an attractive environment for them. In this context, the research findings of Rentsch and McEwen (2002) highlighted that goals, values, and the alignment between job and individual have a significant impact on organizational attraction. Individuals tend to be more attracted to organizations that resemble them in terms of goals and values (Rentsch & McEwen, 2002). Therefore, it is crucial to consider the perspectives related to the sports environment in order to attract individuals who are familiar with and value sports and its environment.

P1: When students participate in class, they are much more flexible to work with. When physical education students usually engage in team activities, and when we assign them a project, they easily collaborate, work as a team, and perform their tasks with a much better sense of satisfaction. When we assign them a project, we experience that team spirit and observe that creativity is generally very high. This is because the sports environment, which differs from other situations, fosters creativity and requires intelligence, ingenuity, and creativity in class for the students.

The sub-topic of the educational sequence, as stated by the interviewees, includes having three bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees, the difference between students at each level, and the existence of different concerns and the opportunity to continue studying in the faculty.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, the academic progression can render a faculty an appealing choice for students and prospective applicants seeking admission, as it signifies the opportunity to pursue studies up to the doctoral level in their desired field. The presence of undergraduate students enhances the dynamism and reinforces the sports focus and partnerships of the faculty. Besides, the interaction among students across different academic levels and with diverse interests is appealing to professors. Furthermore, the adoption of diverse and innovative methods across all three academic levels promotes diversity and offers opportunities for challenge and attractiveness. Therefore, the efforts of faculty and physical education department officials should align with the elements highlighted in the educational sequence sub-theme.

P9: Having all three levels of education - bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees - with all specialties available is a positive point for a faculty and considered one of its advantages. A student who is pursuing a bachelor's degree in a faculty and sees that it also offers master's and doctoral programs would prefer to stay in that faculty to pursue their master's and doctoral degrees as well.

The sub-topic of intra-organizational communication includes role models of faculty members, the existence of informal relationships and high cooperation between professors. Since professors and students have diverse academic and sports expertise and complement each other in achieving the college's goals, it is essential to ensure coordination between them. Communication is what fosters this harmony. An interesting observation from the interviews is that there are individuals within the physical education faculty who share many commonalities. Furthermore, their familiarity with each other and their distinct characteristics reduces the likelihood of conflict within and between them. They are more inclined to come together to align with the organizational goals of the faculty. This intra-organizational communication enhances coordination among units, departments, employees, professors, and students within physical education faculties. The role modeling of professors and their perception within faculty departments and among students, as well as their awareness of the attitudes and judgments held by members, stem from intra-organizational communication. Professors who serve as role models and effectively utilize intra-organizational relationships are mindful of what to communicate, when, where, and in what manner. This enables them to determine the most appropriate and effective behavioral styles. Collaboration between faculty in conducting interdisciplinary research in their fields of study and in various areas of physical education, along with building strong interpersonal relationships with teams from other departments, can significantly enhance the faculty's ability to achieve its goals. In such an environment, when specific issues arise, it becomes easier to identify whom to approach for assistance. The organizational culture of physical education faculties fosters increased interaction due to the sports-oriented atmosphere and the spirited nature of individuals involved. Effective communication among physical education professors, including informal channels, facilitates intra-organizational interactions within the faculty. These interactions allow professors, employees, and students to exchange information during office hours, theoretical and practical courses, and beyond. At times, various departments or teams within the faculty collaborate to achieve common objectives. Thus, since the presence of favorable intra-organizational cooperation and communication is crucial for executing large-scale projects and research and achieving the ambitious goals of the faculty of physical education, it is essential to heed the insights derived from research. Conversely, when organizational units, departments, and individuals do not interact and cooperate effectively, this can ultimately impede the short-term growth and development of the faculty, as well as any organization.

P1: Another aspect that attracts me to physical education faculties is the interaction between professors and students. In non-physical education fields, the atmosphere is not as vibrant; it's drier. The kind of positive interaction found in physical education faculties is not typically found elsewhere. In physical education, there is a more informal and flexible environment, driven by the spirit of physical education students.

Organizations compete to attract skilled professionals across various fields. Therefore, organizations that successfully attract top talent gain a significant advantage in the market (Maheshwari et al., 2017). Physical education faculties, which aim to recruit capable and skilled academic and sports personnel, are not exempt from this competition. This study identifies the organizational attraction of physical education faculties from the perspectives of potential applicants, presenting their perceived views and exploring the factors and reasons that attract individuals to physical education faculties and departments. In general, the findings of the study revealed that the organizational attraction of physical education faculties and departments for post-graduate students and graduates, as potential applicants, revolves around three main themes: structural, conceptual, and technological innovation.

The findings of this research, both theoretically and practically, offer significant implications for physical education faculties and departments. On one hand, since no previous studies have specifically addressed the unique characteristics and nature of physical education faculties in Iran,

this study stands as the first research conducted on the organizational attraction of physical education faculties and departments. It fills a significant gap in both domestic and international research in this field. On the other hand, this study presents a comprehensive understanding of the concept of organizational attraction in physical education faculties and departments. It analyzed the perceptions and viewpoints of interviewees as potential applicants to these faculties, highlighting a broad spectrum of factors that are crucial for attracting individuals to physical education faculties and departments. Therefore, the research data are practical and can be used by the authorities and stakeholders to increase the recruitment of talented and skilled people and thereby strengthen their successful and effective participation in physical education faculties and departments. This can be achieved by improving the organizational attractiveness of physical education schools based on the perception of students and graduates as potential applicants. Its purpose is to inform eligible staff about the benefits of joining the faculty and to encourage them to participate and contribute to its growth and development . At the same time, officials and staff of physical education faculties and departments can incorporate effective solutions and strategies based on three key areas of organizational engagement including structural, conceptual and technological innovations in their agenda. The purpose of this approach is to facilitate the establishment and maintain the organizational attractiveness and distinguish the faculty among the applicants. Furthermore, by leveraging research findings, they can attract high-caliber students and graduates to the faculty.

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Author Contributions
Contribution of all authors have is confirmed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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