

Applied Research of Sport Management

Vol. 14(4), (Series 56): 185-200/ 2026

 DOI: [10.30473/arism.2026.76911.4028](https://doi.org/10.30473/arism.2026.76911.4028)

E-ISSN: 2345-5551

P-ISSN: 2538-5879

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Identifying Opportunities and Threats in Iranian Championship Sports: Emphasizing Capabilities and Challenges

 **Ali Sadeghi^{1*}**,  **Ali karimi²**

1. Assistant Professor,
Department of Sports
Management, Payame Noor
University, Tehran, Iran.
2. Assistant Professor,
Department of Sports
Management, Payame Noor
University, Tehran, Iran.

*Correspondence

Ali Sadeghi
E-mail: A.sadeghi@pnu.ac.ir

Received: 22/Dec/2025
Accepted: 25/Jan/ 2026
Published Online: 22/May/2026

How to cite

Sadeghi, A., & karimi, A.
(2026). Identifying Opportunities
and Threats in Iranian
Championship Sports:
Emphasizing Capabilities and
Challenges. *Applied Research of
Sport Management*, 14(4), 185-
200.

EXTENDED A B S T R A C T

Introduction

Sport holds significant importance in human life, playing a crucial role in optimizing leisure time and promoting both physical and mental health. Engaging in sports activities can substantially mitigate or eliminate adverse effects linked to social and economic environments, family backgrounds, and even genetic factors (Bailey et al., 2023). In today's world, organizations must continuously monitor both internal and external events to adapt to environmental changes. Relying exclusively on cross-sectional data and intuitive decision-making cannot ensure sustainable success. Instead, successful organizations must act based on scientific principles and strategic management (Wright et al., 2019). Strategic management is a broad discipline that transcends specialized branches of management, fundamentally guiding the direction and achievement of organizational goals. Zhang et al. (2020) and Antunes et al. (2023) highlight strategic planning as a vital tool enabling organizations to adjust to anticipated environmental changes (8). Stremikin et al. (2021) emphasize that this process is continuous, complex, and forward-looking (9). Wang et al. (2021) define strategic planning as designing and developing procedures for achieving a desired future, noting its distinction from reactive long-term planning. Research by De Boucher et al. (2015), Grix and Carmichael (2023), and Sahin and Akdag (2022) underscores the critical importance of targeted policymaking, sustainable investment, and the application of SWOT analysis in fostering the sustainable development of championship sports, often through big data analysis and expert interviews. Green and Oakley (2021) stress the necessity of adapting global strategies to national contexts and cultural differences. Furthermore, Valazaridis and Karakatsani (2023) identify a gap between theory and practice in the strategic planning of sports organizations, while Chaplet (2022) calls for the localization of sports policies at both national and local levels. The research review by Gorel and Tate (2017) examines the applications and methodological considerations of SWOT analysis, highlighting its relevance in the theoretical domain. Collectively, this body of work illustrates the importance of employing scientific, evidence-based, and contextually relevant strategies to enhance a country's standing in the global sports arena. Given this context, a comprehensive understanding of organizational states through environmental analysis—encompassing monitoring, evaluation, and continuous information dissemination—is essential for addressing threats and ensuring long-term organizational sustainability. Organizations confront both external and internal factors, each influencing their trajectory and success. This approach is particularly vital in championship sports, especially in light of the limited participation of Iranian women in mass sports and the country's youthful demographic. Conducting a scientific analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can effectively support the development and elevation of Iranian sports.

Methodology

This research is an applied study that uses an integrated approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, to achieve a deeper understanding of the problem's dimensions. In the first phase of data collection, official documents—including national sports championship policies, annual performance reports from federations, and related strategic documents—were reviewed. Additionally, theoretical foundations and backgrounds from domestic and international studies focusing on global strategies for developing championship sports were analyzed through searches in reputable scientific databases such as SID, IranDoc, Scopus, PubMed, and Web of Science. This ensured a comprehensive review of the research literature. In the subsequent stage, two main tools were developed to gather field data. First, researcher-designed questionnaires based on the localized standards of Bokhara and Splice (De Bosscher et al., 2015) were utilized, incorporating both open and closed questions as well as a 9-option Likert scale. These questionnaires underwent validity testing by 10 professors of strategic sports management and experts from the National Olympic Committee, utilizing the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI). Necessary amendments were made accordingly. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed through test-retest analysis and calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha=0.958$), indicating desirable consistency and stability in the data. For the qualitative aspect, the Delphi technique and semi-structured interviews with experts in competitive sports were employed to identify and confirm key influential indicators, particularly strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within managerial, technical, financial, environmental, and institutional dimensions. The statistical population consisted of 265 individuals, including managers and members of the Executive Board of the National Olympic Committee, leaders from the National Olympic and Paralympic Academy, high-level officials from the Ministry of Sports and Youth, heads of sports federations, and academic elites holding doctorates in physical education and sports management. Given the limited size of this specialized community, a full-count sampling method was adopted to enhance the validity and accuracy of the findings. To further improve the accuracy of the strategic analysis, particularly in data aggregation and validation, a second Delphi round was conducted with 15 national sports experts to weight and rank the identified factors, achieving expert consensus. In data analysis, content analysis led to the identification of 113 internal factors (48 strengths and 65 weaknesses) and 50 external factors (22 opportunities and 28 threats). After refinement and consensus, 61 final indicators were incorporated into the SWOT analysis. SPSS version 26 was utilized for data comparison and categorization. Friedman's test was performed on the aggregated data to rank the importance of factors within each dimension, allowing quantification of prioritization and weighting. In summary, through a comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative outcomes, the strategic position of the country's championship sports was illustrated in the SWOT matrix, leading to the identification of the most actionable strategies. The final results were substantiated by scientific evidence and insights from top management in the Iranian sports domain. All research stages were conducted in accordance with standard ethical guidelines, and informed consent was obtained from participants.

Findings

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that out of the 15 strengths of Iran's championship sports identified through the Delphi method, only 10 displayed acceptable factor loadings. The remaining factors were discarded as they exhibited factor loadings below 0.3 and t-values less than 2. The identified strengths in the development of Iran's championship sports include:

1. Numerous research initiatives in talent identification.
2. The establishment of talent identification centers across various provinces.
3. Significant advancements in the fields of physical education and sports sciences in recent years.
4. The popularity of certain sports disciplines (e.g., wrestling, taekwondo, weightlifting).
5. Broad national acceptance of championship sports.
6. A substantial youth population.
7. Strong government and parliamentary support for championship sports.
8. An abundance of talent in most sports disciplines.
9. Qualitative improvements in team sports like volleyball and basketball on Asian and global platforms.
10. Increasing participation of women in championship sports.

The analysis also highlighted weaknesses in national championship sports. Out of 19 identified weaknesses from the Delphi method, only 15 had acceptable factor loadings, while the others were eliminated for similar reasons as before. The weaknesses include:

1. An inefficient talent identification system for national sports.
2. An imbalance in the number of athletes across public, championship, and professional sports.
3. An ineffective selection process for national teams across various age groups.
4. Inconsistency in organizing sports competitions among different governing bodies.
5. Poor distribution of sports facilities and resources nationwide.
6. Variations in technical standards between men's and women's sports in many disciplines.
7. Lack of coordination among key sectors (e.g., Ministry of Sports and Youth, National Olympic Committee, Ministry of Education).
8. Inadequacies in the payment system for athletes and officials.

Regarding opportunities, the analysis revealed that out of 11 opportunities identified through the Delphi method, only 6 had acceptable factor loadings. The opportunities for national championship sports are:

1. A wealth of scientific expertise in sports.
2. The presence of Olympic, world, and Asian champions with education in physical education and sports sciences.
3. Favorable government policies supporting the development of facilities and equipment.
4. An increasing interest among women in participating in championship sports.
5. Allocation of special funding from the Solidarity Olympics for the enhancement of championship sports in various countries.

Finally, the analysis identified threats to the development of national championship sports. Out of 16 threats recognized, only 8 had acceptable factor loadings. The threats include:

1. Devaluation of the national currency against foreign currencies, negatively affecting sports federation budgets.
2. Many sports managers prioritizing medal acquisition and efficiency at the expense of overall effectiveness.
3. Reluctance from the private sector to invest in various sports disciplines.
4. Lack of supportive legislation for sponsors in championship sports.
5. Restrictions imposed by some sports federations against women wearing Islamic attire in international competitions.
6. Inconsistent commitment among sports officials to implement comprehensive programs.
7. Economic difficulties faced by some families affecting participation.
8. Loss of influence and representation in Asian and world sports federations.

Discussion and Conclusion

In general, despite its valuable capacities and opportunities, Iranian championship sports face numerous challenges and limitations. Key strengths include the presence of specialized, enthusiastic, and young human resources, as well as robust scientific infrastructure and the advancement of several sports disciplines to a global level. Additionally, the relative support from government institutions and public acceptance of championship sports have created a favorable environment for growth in this field. Conversely, significant obstacles such as structural inconsistencies among responsible institutions, weaknesses in the talent identification and resource distribution systems, a lack of effective connections between research and implementation, and economic influences pose serious challenges. Managerial and cultural issues, along with insufficient sustainable financial resources, further threaten the development of championship sports in the country. To address these challenges and threats, it is essential to strengthen scientific and coordinated management, leverage the capabilities of specialized human resources, enhance infrastructure, improve talent search systems, and expand targeted support. Achieving a desirable position in both national and international arenas requires a comprehensive approach, extensive cooperation among institutions, and ongoing attention to research evidence and successful practices.

KEY WORDS

Championship Sports, OpportunitiesThreats, Strengths, Challenges, TOWS Analysis.

