


Developing Sports Through Hosting Major Sporting Events in Iran

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to analyze how hosting the Olympiad of Top Talents contributes to the advancement and development of sports in Iran. This qualitative research employed grounded theory using Charmaz's constructivist approach. Data were gathered from 15 purposively selected experts, including university faculty, officials of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, directors of provincial sports departments, federation heads, and physical education authorities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached, and documents and reports related to the topic were reviewed. Data analysis proceeded through initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical integration, resulting in eight subcategories—economic, cultural, political, social, and infrastructure development, sports heritage, empowerment, and career path determination—and two overarching clusters capturing direct and indirect effects. A conceptual model was subsequently constructed to illustrate the mechanisms by which hosting the Olympiad facilitates sports advancement. Analysis revealed that hosting the Olympiad of Top Talents produces direct effects through infrastructure enhancement, athlete career-path development, empowerment of sports managers and personnel, and expansion of sports heritage, particularly athlete branding and talent development. Indirect effects emerged across economic, social, cultural, and political domains, including increased financial circulation, social cohesion, intercultural exchange, diplomatic leverage, and reduced social problems. The theoretical model shows that while direct effects immediately strengthen provincial sports capacity, indirect effects create enabling conditions that collectively accelerate long-term sports development. Hosting the Olympiad of Top Talents significantly advances sports in Iran by generating substantive direct and indirect developmental effects. The event strengthens infrastructure, talent pipelines, managerial capacity, and social-cultural engagement, thereby contributing to sustainable sports growth at provincial and national levels.

Keywords: Sports development; Olympiad of Top Talents; grounded theory; talent identification; infrastructure development; Iran.

Introduction

In recent decades, the global sports landscape has undergone profound structural, technological, and cultural transformations. International and national sports events have expanded beyond their traditional function as competitive showcases to become comprehensive platforms for economic development, cultural diplomacy, urban transformation, and public engagement. The evolution of event management practices has been further driven by advances in technology, new governance paradigms, and a shift toward sustainability-oriented planning. Scholars increasingly recognize that sports events contribute not only to athletic excellence but also to societal enrichment and strategic national positioning, particularly when supported by structured talent identification and development



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systems (1). As nations invest in both the staging of events and the cultivation of athletic talent, integrated models linking event management, talent pipelines, and long-term sports development have gained academic and policy relevance.

The global expansion of mega-events has created new opportunities for host countries to pursue diversified development agendas. Events such as the Olympics, continental tournaments, and large-scale national festivals serve as catalysts for infrastructure renewal, social participation, and international visibility (2). Within this domain, a body of research has emphasized that cities and nations increasingly rely on sport event hosting to achieve sustainability objectives across economic, sociocultural, tourism, and environmental dimensions (3). The strategic use of sports events also aligns with broader urban development policies, where sports infrastructures, public transportation upgrades, and event-driven community initiatives contribute to legacy impacts that outlast the competitions themselves. In parallel, global analyses of event-hosting experiences, including those from advanced sports economies, offer important lessons for emerging and developing countries striving to professionalize their event portfolios (4). For countries in the Middle East, such as Qatar, the hosting of major events has demonstrated the geopolitical and economic leverage that can be gained through systematic investment in sport mega-events (5).

While the global environment sets the stage for broad policy learning, technological innovations have emerged as a critical dimension shaping contemporary sports management. Artificial intelligence, data analytics, and automation have introduced new paradigms in event planning, performance analysis, and operational efficiency. Recent studies have documented the integration of high-technology systems in sports events, ranging from predictive analytics for event management to intelligent monitoring systems that enhance athlete and spectator experiences (6). Artificial intelligence is increasingly recognized as a transformative force with the potential to reshape event operations, support environmental strategies such as carbon-neutrality programming (7), and drive innovation across the global sports industry (8). These technological capabilities also intersect with talent identification and development systems, where machine-learning models and digital diagnostics offer new pathways for detecting athletic potential and optimizing developmental environments.

Parallel to event-centered transformations, a rich body of research has focused on understanding how long-term athlete development evolves through social, psychological, physical, and environmental pathways. The developmental model of sport participation has provided a seminal framework for explaining how youth progress through sampling, specializing, and investment stages, emphasizing both structured and unstructured experiences in shaping sports trajectories (9). Systematic reviews have demonstrated that talent identification remains an exceedingly complex domain, heavily influenced by nonlinear developmental patterns, psychosocial factors, and contextual constraints (10). Scholars argue that traditional approaches to talent identification—often focused narrowly on anthropometric or performance indicators—have not adequately captured the multidimensional nature of talent (11). In response, emerging frameworks stress athlete enrichment, adaptable learning environments, and dynamic interactions between individual characteristics and contextual affordances (12). At the theoretical level, there has been sustained debate about the extent to which talent is innate versus developed, and empirical work challenges the notion of fixed athletic potential by emphasizing the importance of developmental trajectories and environmental supports (13).

Given these complexities, researchers continue to examine the practical, systemic, and structural challenges associated with implementing effective talent identification programs. Global reviews note that despite substantial scientific interest, the field still lacks methodological consistency and conceptual clarity (14). At the national level,

investigations into talent systems reveal barriers such as inadequate coordination among institutions, insufficient scientific infrastructure, and gaps in long-term strategic planning (15). Studies emphasize that successful talent systems must integrate psychological, physiological, cognitive, and coping-related indicators, reflecting the inherently interdisciplinary nature of athlete development (16). Educational and school-based environments also play a non-negligible role. Systematic reviews show that physical education programs can support talent identification when instruction is structured, assessment criteria are standardized, and teachers receive sufficient training to observe athletic potential (17). These insights converge on the need for national systems that simultaneously promote widespread participation, structured development pathways, and coordinated talent identification efforts.

Sports Olympiads—whether school-based, national, or thematic—have become an important mechanism for broadening participation and detecting emerging talent. Research demonstrates that well-designed Olympiads enhance motivation, strengthen physical literacy, and generate inclusive opportunities for diverse youth populations (18). In addition, Olympiads create a natural environment for evaluating skill progression and identifying students with advanced capabilities. Recent analyses of student sports Olympiads within Iran highlight their value in creating structured competitive contexts and improving the quality of school sports programming (19). Furthermore, specific event-based studies—such as those examining women's police sports Olympiads—underscore the role of specialized competitions in fostering empowerment, social participation, and professional development, particularly among underrepresented groups (20). These collective findings reinforce the idea that national events function not only as competitions but as strategic instruments for talent development, social engagement, and institutional capacity building.

In parallel with the evolution of athlete development models and national Olympiads, scholars have examined the economic potential of the sports industry, particularly within Iran. Analyses of the Iranian sports economy point to significant opportunities for financial growth, entrepreneurship, and international engagement, especially when large-scale events stimulate job creation, investment, and public interest (21). Studies exploring new professional pathways—such as emerging freelancing models within the sports sector—further highlight the dynamic evolution of sports labor markets and the increasing need for flexible, innovation-driven career structures (22). These developments demonstrate the broader economic ecosystem within which talent systems and event management operate, suggesting that national events can contribute to industry development by generating demand for skilled labor, managerial expertise, and sports-related services.

As sports events gain prominence as developmental tools, international research continues to highlight the capacity of event management models to generate value across the sports industry. Studies from Southeast Asia and Europe show that well-designed national event management systems increase industrial value through professionalization, stakeholder coordination, and long-term strategic frameworks (23). These findings underscore that the success of national events depends not only on competition outcomes but on how effectively they are embedded within larger policy, developmental, and economic systems. When talent identification mechanisms, event management processes, technological innovations, and national sports strategies are aligned, sports events can produce sustained advancement in performance, participation, and industry expansion.

The Iranian context reflects many of these global dynamics. Iran has a long tradition of participation in international sport, strong cultural interest in athletic achievement, and an expanding sports industry with significant human capital. Despite these strengths, challenges persist regarding coherent talent identification systems,

coordination between local and national institutions, and long-term event-driven development strategies. Research has shown that Iranian championship sports lack a unified and explicit executive model for identifying and nurturing talent, leading to fragmentation and reduced developmental effectiveness (24). National championship analyses likewise reveal that although Iran invests heavily in high-performance programs, gaps remain in strategic planning and structural integration (25). These challenges reflect broader systemic issues that can hinder the full activation of Iran's athletic potential.

Within this landscape, the Olympiad of Top Talents has emerged as one of the most important national initiatives designed to address these gaps. By creating structured opportunities for youth participation, enhancing visibility for emerging athletes, and mobilizing provincial sports systems, the Olympiad functions as both a developmental mechanism and a strategic event platform. Evidence suggests that national talent Olympiads, when properly designed and managed, can expand participation, strengthen athlete pipelines, and provide broad social and cultural benefits (26). Moreover, the alignment of the Olympiad with contemporary technological, managerial, and developmental trends strengthens its potential impact. As Iran moves toward greater integration of scientific, managerial, and technological approaches in sports, national events such as the Olympiad can play a transformative role in bridging systemic gaps, stimulating infrastructure development, and supporting long-term athlete progression.

Taken together, the international literature on talent development, event hosting, sustainability, and technological integration, combined with national analyses of Iran's sports structures, underscores the necessity of examining how the Olympiad of Top Talents contributes to sports development across multiple dimensions—including economic, cultural, social, and athletic outcomes. Accordingly, the aim of the present study is to analyze the effects of holding the Olympiad of Top Talents on the advancement of sports in Iran.

Methods and Materials

In the present research, a grounded theory approach was employed analysis of the effects of holding the Sports Olympiad of top talents on the promotion of sports. This method is used to generate a comprehensive understanding of social processes hidden in human interactions and empowers the researcher to produce an understanding of a real subject. Grounded theory is utilized with various paradigms and approaches, the most important of which include the Strauss and Corbin approach or systematic approach, the Glaser approach or future approach, and the constructivist approach. This research followed Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory approach as it provides broader and more diverse patterns for data synthesis. The coding process involved two stages: core coding and selective coding, which helped create the final model. Initially, data was collected by conducting interviews with a purposeful sample from the statistical population, consisting of experts and stakeholders in the field of research, such as university professors, officials from the Ministry of Sports and Youth, directors and deputies of sports general departments, heads of sports federations, and officials from the physical education departments of the Ministry of Education. A purposeful snowball sampling method was used in this section, and interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached, involving 15 interviews. In this section, grounded theory and the Charmaz constructivist grounded theory approach were employed, leading to the creation of the final model.

Findings and Results

The table below illustrates the demographic characteristics of the participants in the research based on variables such as gender, age, work experience, education, and field of activity.

Table 1. Cognitive population Characteristics of the Participants in the research

Interview Codes	Gender	Age	Work Experience	Education	Field of Activity
P1	Male	52	25	Doctorate	Education, Academic Faculty
P2	Male	57	29	Doctorate	Academic Faculty
P3	Female	30	6	Master's Degree	Youth Sports Administration
P4	Female	28	5	Master's Degree	Youth Sports Administration
P5	Male	37	7	Doctorate	University and Youth Sports Administration
P6	Male	42	7	Doctorate	Youth Sports Administration
P7	Male	52	10	Doctorate	University and Youth Sports Administration
P8	Female	35	7	Doctorate	Youth Sports Administration
P9	Female	34	7	Master's Degree	Youth Sports Administration
P10	Female	50	15	Doctorate	University and Youth Sports Administration
P11	Male	47	10	Doctorate	University and Youth Sports Administration
P12	Male	45	10	PhD student	Youth Sports Administration
P13	Male	40	8	PhD student	Youth Sports Administration
P14	Female	32	5	Doctorate	Academic Faculty
P15	Male	44	15	Doctorate	Youth Sports Administration

Initial Coding: As previously mentioned, the Grounded Theory is structured around two main stages: coding and analysis. In the initial stage, called initial coding, all data obtained from the interviews need to be coded. The initial stage provides many potential directions for the theory and involves various coding styles within Grounded Theory, such as line-by-line or word-by-word coding. This method of coding somewhat differs from the coding approach in Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory and Glaser's grounded theory since they may be more hesitant about over coding descriptions. However, Charmaz's Grounded Theory includes the constant comparative method. Table 2 illustrates the results obtained from the initial coding stage. Based on this table, 54 final concepts have emerged from the analysis of the interviews, with some being unique and others being consistent among most participants.

Table 2. Initial Coding of Interview Texts

Concepts Derived from Initial Coding	Interview Code
Renovation and rehabilitation of sports facilities	15-13-12-11
Increased demand for certain sports	1-6-7-13
Introducing sports capacities	12-13
Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of sports	9-5
Instilling pride and honor for the hosting community	11
Increased voluntary workforce in sports	7-5
Increased investment in sports	10-8
Creating opportunities for sponsorships	3-4-2-7
Boosting sports-related businesses	5-13-12-11
Training professional athletes	7-4-12-13-6-5
Opportunities for hosting other events	14-10-2-3-1
Collaboration between sports organizations	9-4
Team building	2-9-6-4
Enhancing the experience of management teams	2-7-6-8-10
Increased marketing opportunities	10-13-5
Boosting sports tourism	7-6-5
Increased financial circulation in sports	15-14-5-1-4-2
Creating employment	1-9-7-5
Strengthening cross-cultural interaction	2-7-1

Increased government support for sports	12-11-6-5-1
Improving cooperation between authorities	5-2
Changing the management perspective on sports	2
Sports branding	9-5-1-2
Enhancing marketing activities	8
Promoting sports culture	10-6
Fostering cultural exchanges	10-6-1
Awareness among authorities of sports issues	13-7
Awareness among authorities of sports capacities	2
Reducing social issues	13-14-10-9-4-1-3
Increased social cohesion	2-15
Enhancing the province's diplomatic power through sports	12-10-9-2
Increased political attention to sports	13
Enhancing sports identity	3-15-1
Joy and enthusiasm within society	14-11-13-15
Identifying sports talents	14-8-9-6
Nurturing and developing talented athletes	7-1-8
Facilitating the path to sports progression	5-6-2-3
Guiding sports	15-14
Increasing sports participation	3-9-7
Boosting community mobility and vitality	9-14
Creating motivation and vitality among athletes	11-2
Visibility of athletes	1-11-2
Transferring athletes abroad	13-12
Establishing centers of excellence	11-15
Overcoming infrastructure deficiencies	1-13-15
Improving sports equipment quality	11-7-8
Constructing new sports facilities	13-11-2-4-1
Increasing the number of athletes	8-9-13-1
Recognition of athletes by citizens	15-2-12
Strengthening championship sports	3-15-12
Enhancing the athletes' brand	11-15-14-5-10
Empowering coaches, referees, and athletes	10
Empowering sports event organizers	1-12
Empowering sports managers	11-7-2

Centralized Coding: The second stage of grounded theory, known as focused coding, involves organizing the data obtained from the first stage, and based on that, generating sub-concepts. Drawing from the results of focused coding in this study, 8 sub-concepts were created (Table 3).

Table 3. Focused Coding Based on the Results of Initial Coding Interview Code

Sub-Concepts	Concepts Derived from Initial Coding	Interview Code
Economic Development	Creating opportunities for sponsorships	3-4-2-7
	Increased marketing opportunities	10-13-5
	Boosting sports tourism	7-6-5
	Increased financial circulation in sports	15-14-5-1-4-2
	Creating employment	1-9-7-5
	Sports branding	9-5-1-2
	Boosting sports-related businesses	11-12-13-5
	Enhancing marketing activities	8
	Increased investment in sports	10-8
Cultural Development	Promoting sports culture	10-6
	Fostering cultural exchanges	10-6-1
	Strengthening cross-cultural interaction	2-7-1
Political Development	Increased government support for sports	1-5-6-11-12
	Improving cooperation between authorities	5-2
	Changing the management perspective on sports	2

	Enhancing the province's diplomatic power through sports	2-9-10-12
	Increased political attention to sports	13
	Awareness among authorities of sports issues	13-7
	Awareness among authorities of sports capacities	2
Social Development	Reducing social issues	3-1-4-9-10-14-13
	Increased social cohesion	2-15
	Enhancing sports identity	3-15-1
	Joy and enthusiasm within society	14-11-13-15
	Increased voluntary workforce in sports	7-5
	Instilling pride and honor for the hosting community	11
Infrastructure Development	Renovation and rehabilitation of sports facilities	12-11-13-15
	Establishing centers of excellence	15-11
	Overcoming infrastructure deficiencies	1-13-15
	Improving sports equipment quality	11-7-8
	Constructing new sports facilities	1-4-2-11-13
Cultural Heritage	Increasing the number of athletes	8-9-13-1
	Increased demand for certain sports	6-7-13-1
	Creating motivation and vitality among athletes	2-11
	Visibility of athletes	2-11-1
	Transferring athletes abroad	12-13
	Recognition of athletes by citizens	12-2-15
	Strengthening championship sports	12-15-3
	Enhancing the athletes' brand	10-5-14-15-11
	Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of sports	5-9
	Increasing sports participation	5-9-3
	Boosting community mobility and vitality	14-9
	Opportunities for hosting other events	1-3-2-10-14
Empowerment	Collaboration between sports organizations	4-9
	Team building	4-6-9-2
	Enhancing the experience of management teams	10-8-6-7-2
	Empowering coaches, referees, and athletes	10
	Empowering sports event organizers	12-1
	Empowering sports managers	2-7-11
Career Path Determination	Identifying sports talents	6-9-8-14
	Nurturing and developing talented athletes	8-1-7
	Facilitating the path to sports progression	5-6-2-3
	Guiding sports	15-14
	Introducing sports capacities	12-13
	Training professional athletes	5-6-7-13-12-4-7

Theory Building: The final stage of grounded theory data analysis encompasses theory building in all approaches. Various definitions and interpretations of theory have been presented before. One such definition provided after reviewing past definitions is as follows: Theory means that the relationships between variables are specified in a theoretical model. In other words, it should be clear what factors play a role in explaining a phenomenon and how these factors interact (Borkehor et al., 2019). It is worth mentioning that a theoretical model is part of a conceptual model, and as long as the conceptual model and the theoretical model are considered the same, this is an incorrect inference. According to Borkehor et al. (2019), in the conceptual model, all factors, contexts, stakeholders, policies, and everything relevant to the phenomenon are depicted, but in the theoretical model, only the relationships between the variables that have been indexed are tested, and it is not necessary to measure the roles of stakeholders, policies, and programs that affect the phenomenon but are not measurable because there are no sub-indicators or indices for them. It is worth noting that in the grounded theory data-based structural approach, also known as Charmaz's grounded theory, clustering of sub-concepts is required to clarify the

cause-and-effect relationship between the indexed concepts. Thus, in this study, in addition to understanding the primary concepts and constructing sub-concepts, clustering of concepts was also presented to create a theory based on it. Based on the conducted analyses, two main clusters were formed.

Cluster 1: Direct Effects Based on the analyses conducted, it was determined that the Olympiad of Top Talents has a direct impact on the sports in Isfahan Province. The first effect is that it leads to the development of sports infrastructure in the province. This development is defensible from various aspects; for example, by organizing this Olympiad, sports facilities are renovated and upgraded, infrastructure deficiencies are addressed, and new sports facilities are constructed. Another direct effect of holding these Olympiads is the Sports Legacy, which is composed of 12 main concepts. The concept that most participants emphasized in interviews is that it enhances the branding of Isfahan's athletes. Furthermore, it was revealed that this specific Olympiad empowers different aspects, including team building, collaboration among sports organizations, increased managerial and human resource experience, sports event hosting, and sports management empowerment. Ultimately, it was determined that organizing the Olympiad of Top Talents leads to career path determination. This career path consists of a combination of six main concepts: Identifying Sports Talents, Nurturing and Developing Talented Athletes, Facilitating the Path of Sports Progress, Guiding Provincial Sports, Introducing Sports Capacities, and Training Professional Athletes (Figure 1).

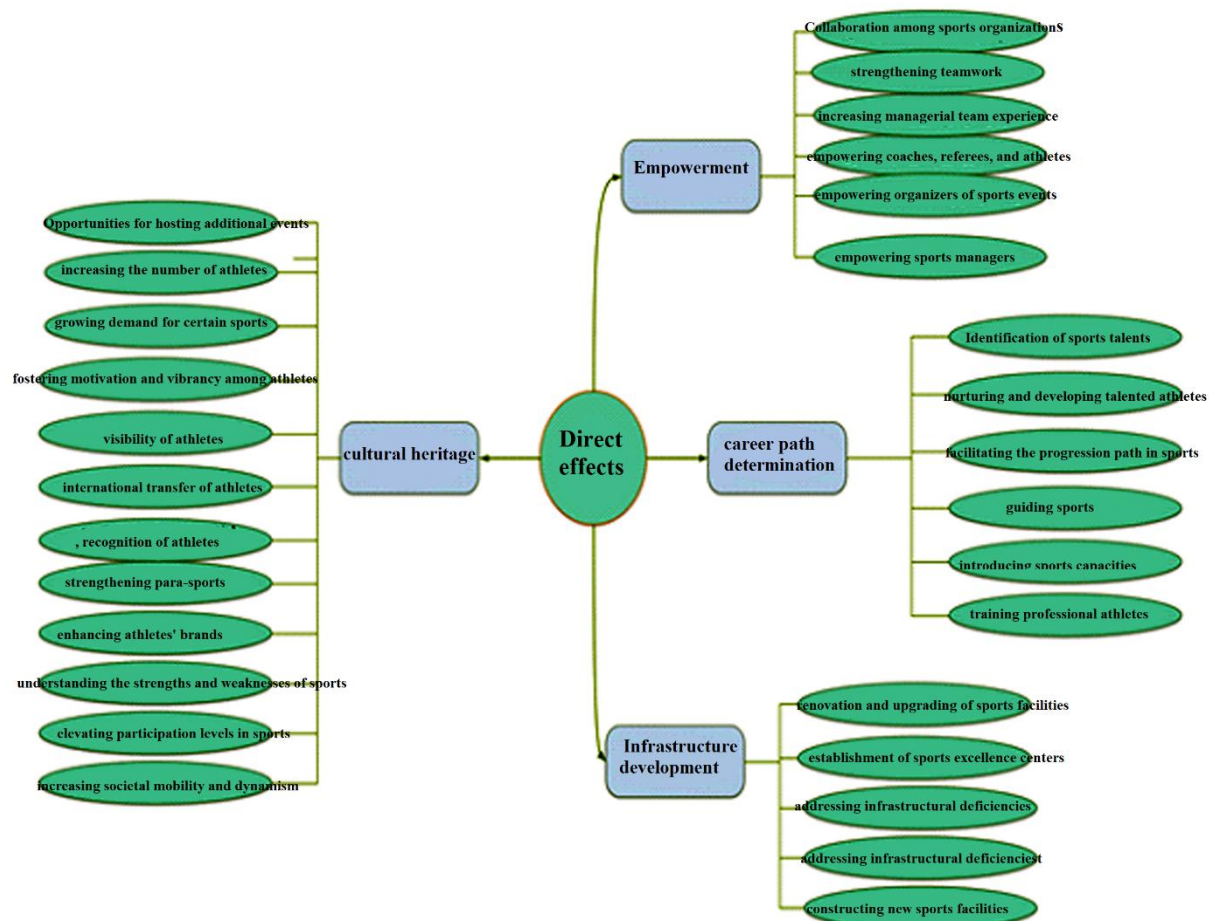


Figure 1. Direct Effects of Holding the Olympiad of Top Talents on Advancing

Cluster 2: Indirect Effects Based on this cluster, the organization of the Olympiad of Top Talents leads to economic development, social development, cultural development, and political development, which indirectly contribute to the advancement of sports. It's worth noting that economic development in this study is a combination of 9 main concepts, and one of the concepts that most participants emphasized in this context is that there is an increase in financial circulation in the province's sports. Additionally, cultural development is a combination of three main concepts: the expansion of sports culture in the province, the promotion of cultural exchanges, and the strengthening of intercultural interaction. In parallel, political development consists of 7 main concepts, and social development is composed of a combination of 6 main concepts. Notably, two of the most common concepts within political development were the increase in diplomatic power through sports and the reduction of social damages (Figure 2).

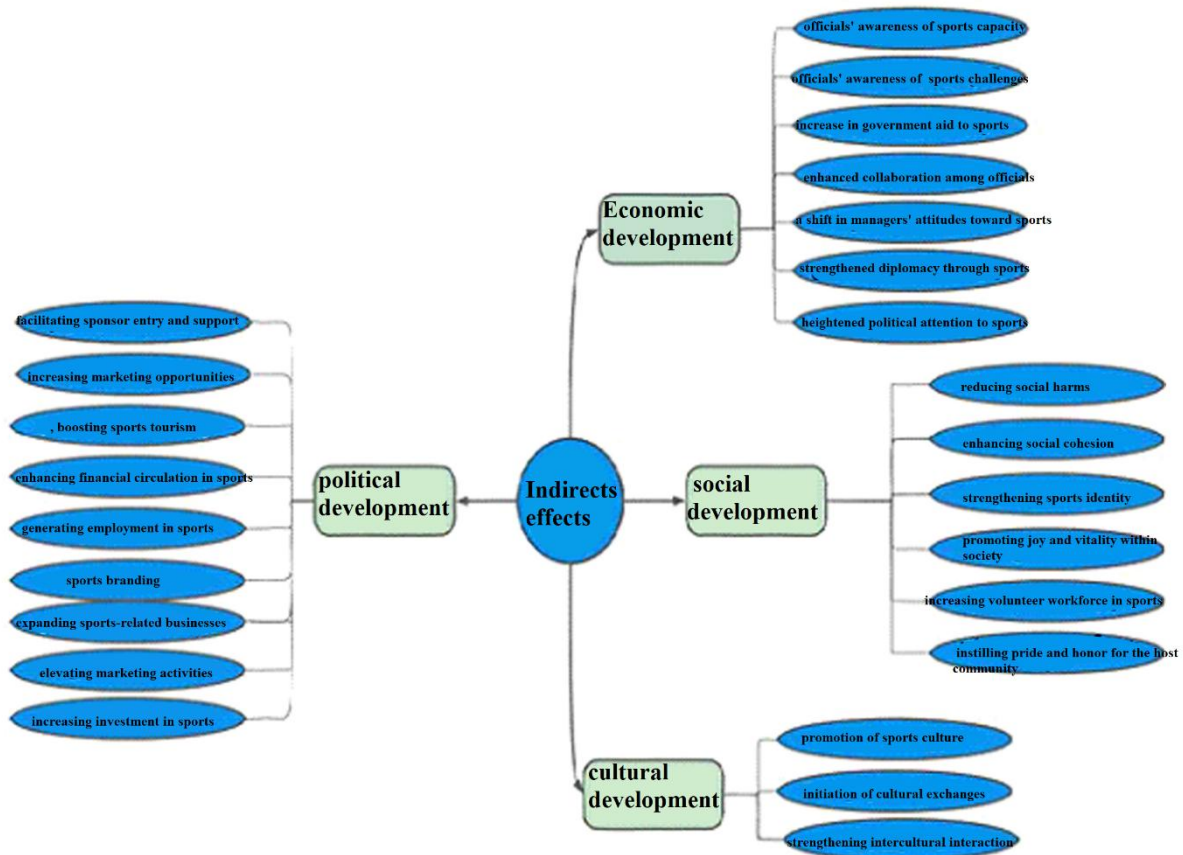


Figure 2. Indirect Effects of Holding the Olympiad of Top Talents on Advancing Sports

Presentation of Model: The effects of holding the Olympiad of Top Talents on advancing sports in Isfahan province consist of both direct and indirect effects and may not necessarily follow previous models. This means that the Olympiad of Top Talents contributes to advancing sports from two aspects. In the first aspect, it is achieved through infrastructure development, empowerment, sports heritage, and career path determination. In the second aspect, it is achieved through political development, economic development, social development, and cultural development. It is worth mentioning that the effects of the first aspect are directly related to the advancement of sports in the province, while the effects of the second aspect indirectly facilitate the advancement of sports (Figure 3).

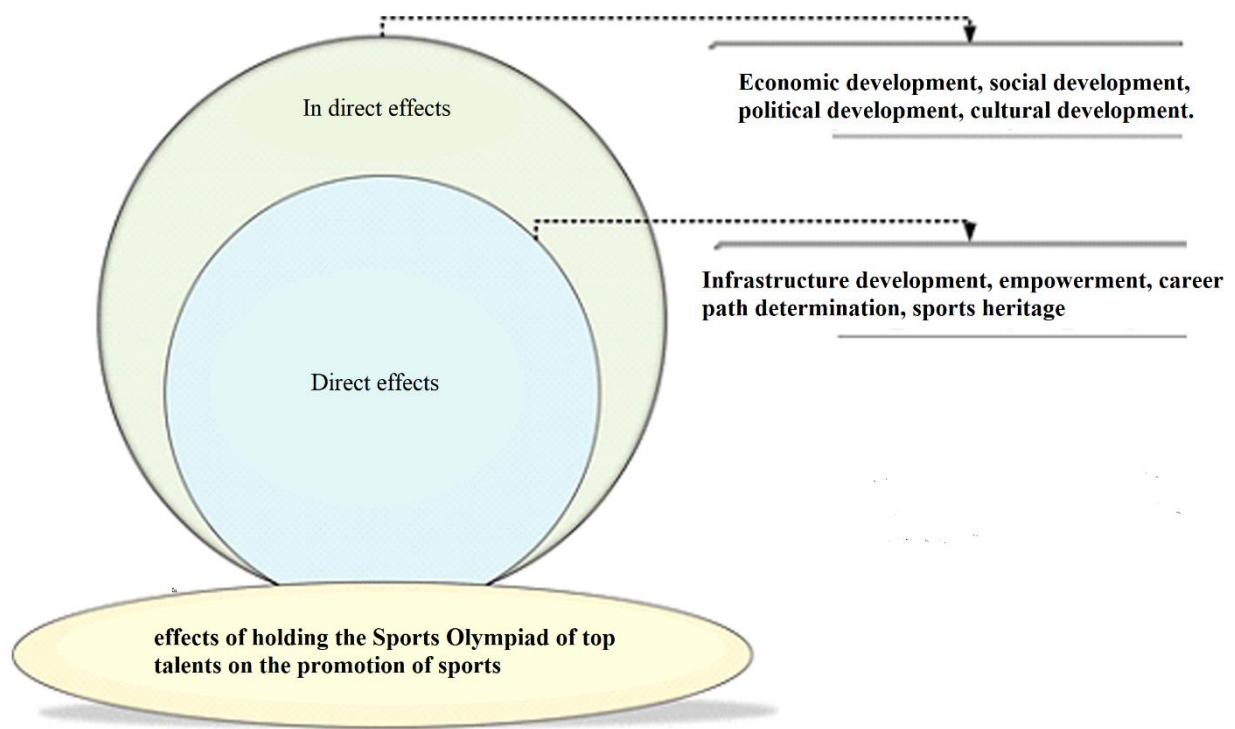


Figure 3. The Effects of Holding the Olympiad of Top Talents on Advancing Sports

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that hosting the Olympiad of Top Talents generates substantial direct and indirect effects on sports development in Iran. The direct outcomes—such as sports infrastructure enhancement, talent identification, empowerment of sports managers, and the creation of career pathways for young athletes—support the argument that national sports events function as catalysts for systemic improvement. These results closely align with international evidence showing that national and mega-sport events trigger multi-level development across participation, management capacity, and structural readiness. Research on city- and nation-level sports events confirms that such initiatives contribute to sustainable urban growth, institutional strengthening, and expanded public engagement (2, 3). As the present study shows, the Olympiad facilitated improvements in facilities, equipment, volunteer engagement, and managerial experience, echoing the frameworks proposed in sustainability-oriented event studies that emphasize legacy building, human capital formation, and long-term value creation. Similarly, the positive economic, social, cultural, and political externalities discovered in this research mirror the multi-dimensional benefits identified in comparative international analyses of sport event impacts (4, 5).

A central outcome of the study was the strong emphasis on talent identification and development. Participants consistently underscored how the Olympiad enhances the visibility of young athletes, supports the early detection of talent, and contributes to structured developmental pathways. The literature provides convergent support for these findings. Over the past two decades, talent development research has increasingly emphasized the need for complex, multi-stage, and ecologically grounded frameworks that support athletes through sampling, specialization, and investment phases (9). Earlier models of talent identification relied heavily on static assessments and fixed biological indicators. However, contemporary research shows that talent development is nonlinear, context-

dependent, and sensitive to environmental supports (12). The direct mechanisms observed in this study—identifying talent, nurturing emerging athletes, building professional pathways, and facilitating upward mobility—are consistent with the enriched developmental frameworks advocated in recent scholarship.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with the global debate on whether talent is innate or cultivated. Studies increasingly argue that natural talent explanations oversimplify the complex interactions between psychological, biological, and environmental variables (13). The Olympiad's role in providing structured opportunities, competitive environments, and expert evaluation directly supports the argument that talent emerges through dynamic developmental processes shaped by exposure, training, and environmental affordances. This aligns with systematic reviews indicating that psychosocial factors, practice conditions, and motivational climates are critical in shaping developmental trajectories (10). Additionally, the present study's emphasis on talent pathways supports research that calls for integrated national systems capable of consolidating technical, cognitive, and psychological indicators into a unified identification framework (11, 17).

The participants' emphasis on social and cultural impacts, particularly increased social cohesion, enhanced sports identity, and invigorated public enthusiasm, also aligns with prior research. Studies examining the impacts of national sports festivals and Olympiad-style events have shown that these platforms foster social capital, collective pride, and community engagement (20). At a broader cultural level, national competitions have been shown to enhance global awareness, increase intercultural interaction, and provide citizens with opportunities for shared experiences that reinforce national identity (25). The finding that hosting the Olympiad fostered joy and enthusiasm within communities reflects similar conclusions in global research indicating that sports events contribute positively to community vitality and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the observed reduction in social issues and heightened social cohesion are supported by studies showing that sports participation and national events promote healthy lifestyles, reduce negative social behaviors, and enhance societal solidarity (3).

In terms of political and diplomatic outcomes, the study illustrates that the Olympiad contributed to increased government support, improved inter-organizational cooperation, and enhanced provincial diplomatic power. These findings align with broader discussions on sports diplomacy, which posit that sports events can strengthen institutional cooperation, elevate political visibility, and enhance a region's or nation's international profile (1). Such political effects are also consistent with research emphasizing that sports events build soft power, increase political attention to sports policy, and create opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration. Studies in urban and national event management similarly highlight how strategic event hosting contributes to governance capacity and inter-organizational coordination (4, 23). The increased awareness of sports capacities and issues among authorities observed in the present study directly echoes these themes, underscoring the broader policy relevance of sports event hosting.

The economic impacts identified—such as increased financial circulation, job creation, sports tourism, and expanded business opportunities—also mirror findings in the international sports economics literature. Previous studies examining the Iranian sports industry have shown that sports events stimulate investment, generate new income streams, and drive sectoral expansion (21). The current study's demonstration of increased financial activity, sponsorship opportunities, and business development aligns with global analyses emphasizing the economic multiplier effects of sports events. Moreover, the empowerment of human resources, including athletes, referees, managers, and event organizers, resonates with recent findings that national-level events contribute substantially

to workforce development and professionalization (22). This suggests that the Olympiad does not merely produce short-term economic boosts but contributes to long-term capacity building in the sports sector.

The study also highlights substantial indirect impacts on cultural development, including the promotion of sports culture and expanded cultural exchange. These outcomes are consistent with research portraying sports events as cultural platforms that shape societal values and promote intercultural learning (2). Findings also align with analyses of student sports Olympiads indicating that such events play a crucial role in improving school sports culture, increasing motivation, and enhancing organizational quality (18, 19). The alignment between the present results and these previous studies reinforces the idea that sports Olympiads serve both educational and cultural functions.

The integration of new technologies into sports event management and development frameworks represents another area of alignment between this study and contemporary scholarship. Technological innovations such as artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and digital monitoring systems are increasingly seen as essential components of modern sports ecosystems. The need for more efficient, data-driven, and technologically adaptive event systems highlighted in global literature supports the relevance of integrating AI and advanced technologies in national events (6-8). Although the present study did not focus primarily on technological applications, its findings regarding the empowerment of managers, improved operational experience, and enhanced event delivery capacity implicitly support the argument that national events serve as incubators for technological adoption and modernization.

Finally, the observed alignment between the Olympiad's outcomes and international research perspectives underscores the broader importance of designing, institutionalizing, and sustaining national talent systems in Iran. Studies consistently point to the need for cohesive, structured, and evidence-based talent identification systems that integrate education, sports federations, provincial sports departments, and national governance structures (15, 24, 26). The present findings, particularly relating to career path determination and the long-term nurturing of talent, reinforce these recommendations and highlight the Olympiad's pivotal role as a national mechanism for talent discovery and development.

Despite its comprehensive qualitative approach, this study faces several limitations. First, the sample size—although appropriate for grounded theory—was limited to 15 experts, which may not fully reflect the diversity of perspectives across all Iranian provinces or sports disciplines. Second, the reliance on self-reported perceptions may introduce subjective bias, as participants may emphasize positive outcomes due to professional involvement in sports administration. Third, the study did not incorporate longitudinal data, which would be necessary to measure actual long-term impacts of the Olympiad on athlete career trajectories, infrastructural durability, or economic outcomes. Fourth, although the study acknowledges technological and sustainability trends, it does not empirically examine how these dimensions interact with event implementation in Iran, leaving gaps for future empirical exploration. Additionally, structural and political challenges specific to provincial contexts may limit the generalizability of results across different regions.

Future studies should adopt mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to evaluate how the Olympiad influences athlete development across multiple years. Researchers could also investigate how technological tools—such as AI-driven talent identification platforms—enhance the accuracy and efficiency of identifying emerging athletes. Comparative studies between provinces or between Iran and other countries hosting similar events would provide broader insights into contextual influences. Examination of economic multipliers, environmental sustainability strategies, and governance models would enrich understanding of holistic event impacts. Further research should

also explore how gender, socioeconomic status, and geographical disparities influence participation and talent identification outcomes within national Olympiads.

Event planners and sports administrators should prioritize long-term capacity building by strengthening managerial training, volunteer development, and inter-organizational coordination. Investments should focus on creating sustainable infrastructures that support year-round athlete development, not only event-specific use. Enhanced communication between schools, federations, and provincial sport departments will ensure more cohesive talent pathways. Policymakers should institutionalize the Olympiad as a recurring national program with stable funding and standardized evaluation criteria. Finally, integrating technology-driven tools and inclusive participation strategies will maximize the developmental benefits of future Olympiads.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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