

Understanding Social Responsibility in Iran Sports for All Federation from a Qualitative Perspective: Dimensions and Consequences

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Abstract

Purpose : Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the dimensions and consequences of Social Responsibility (SR) of the Iran Sports for All Federation (ISF).

Methods: This research was conducted by adopting a qualitative approach based on the thematic analysis method. The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews with experts and specialists in the field of SR and Sports for all in Iran. The interview's participants included 13 managers, trainers, and staffs, officials of the ISF, and university faculty members who were selected by purposive sampling. Thematic analysis method was used to extract basic, organizing and global themes.

Results: Based on the analysis, 102 basic themes, 17 organizing themes, and eight global themes were extracted. Global theme included "humanitarian responsibility", "environmental responsibility", "legal responsibility", "moral responsibility", "economic responsibility", "loyalty", "quality of services", and "behavioral intentions". This research shows the consequences of SR that can affect the behaviors and attitudes of customers in the ISF.

Conclusion: The research emphasizes the importance of the environmental aspect in SR, emphasizing the promotion of environmental education, sustainable development, and green management.

Keywords: CSR in Sports, Sustainable development, Sports customers, Sports federations, Thematic analysis.

Introduction

Organizations are accountable for serving the requirements of local and international stakeholders and minimizing the negative repercussions of their actions on society and the environment (Jonker et al., 2008). Additionally, organizations have used social responsibility (SR) strategies more than ever to create and advertise competitive advantage in today's competitive business climate. Although the foundation for focusing on social responsibilities is the inherent human tendency to value and enforce ethical ideals, in the last ten years, the concept of SR has become a hot topic in organizational management, and significant, prestigious global organizations now incorporate SR into their organizational strategy (Lin et al., 2017). In this regard, the most critical activities for today's leading and innovative firms are the supply of new social services and product development (Erhemjamts et al., 2019).

Following the growth of industries and social requirements, SR emerged in the middle of the 1950s. It concentrated on external challenges and sought solutions to enhance organizational activities (Wong et al., 2021). Following social laws and expectations, which convey social and cultural norms and demonstrate the degree of a person's commitment to other members of society, is the definition of SR. SR is the attitude that one is accountable for one's choices and actions, trusting others, and they are in charge of something they can influence (Xu et al., 2020). Currently, sporting institutions are making SR a priority (federations, leagues, and clubs, athletes, and sports businesses). As a result, much like business managers in other industries, sports organizations, and managers should be aware of the evolution of SR and its strategic value in sports (Filizoz et al., 2011). Therefore, SR is a crucial component for many organizations in the sports industry, and programs and behaviors can be developed accordingly. For instance,

professional sports leagues can adopt substantial programs to identify and address social concerns, and sports clubs can also take part in a variety of SR initiatives. Sports federations can also establish SR plans. Athletes can also find philanthropic organizations and foundations (Walters, 2009). There are several advantages and benefits that sports institutions can achieve through SR, including maintaining organizational reputation, being distinguished from competitors, enhancing fan loyalty, creating a competitive advantage, improving financial performance, being recognized, establishing a better image of the organization, enhancing relations with society, and engaging in humanitarian behaviors (Kim et al., 2023; Harrison & Erlichman, 2022; Montazeri et al., 2019; Filizoz et al., 2011; Walker & Kent, 2009). Additionally, according to Walters and Richard (2010), players, sports organizations, and events place a high priority on SR in the sports sector.

Walker (2010) states that SR may influence how customers feel about a business and can be used as a motivator to build a reputation and increase customers' sustainable loyalty. Consequently, based on the cases above, it is possible to minimize an organization's detrimental impacts on society through SR and to affect changes in customer attitudes and behavior (Walker et al., 2010). A person's attitude reflects his thoughts, feelings, and responses to his environment. By analyzing all stimuli, attitudes enable an individual to think of the organization as a unified pattern and enable proper response (Solomon et al., 2011). Customer behavior, according to Bhattacharya et al. (2009), is described as "all physical, emotional, and mental behaviors that individuals engage in while choosing, purchasing, utilizing, and discarding goods and services to meet their needs and desires."

According to Khuong et al. (2021), who conducted research on the stakeholders and the

SR program as the main sustainable development strategies, the four components of legal, ethical, environmental, and humanitarian responsibility had a significant impact on sustainable development. However, the role of the economic responsibility component was not significant. In different research, Sadeghi Boroujerdi et al. (2023) looked at the mediating role of team trust and identity variables in the relationship between the corporate SR of the team and attitudinal loyalty among Iranian Premier League football fans. Three hundred fifty-seven football fans completed an online survey. According to their findings, team SR positively affects team trust, team identity, and fan attitudinal loyalty. This study empirically demonstrates the critical role of SR to football fans in observing their team. The results of this study provide compelling evidence of the significant contribution that SR makes to football fans' perceptions of the images of their teams. Another study on collegiate sports found that awareness of SR had a positive effect on sports involvement and commitment. However, neither awareness of SR nor sports involvement had a significant effect on conative loyalty (Kim, 2017).

Furthermore, Robertson (2016) explored how SR was perceived within three archetypal sports organizations: a community sports organization (CSO), a national sports organization (NSO), and an elite sports organization (ESO). The findings of this study demonstrated that each archetype was perceived to have identifiable and multiple responsibilities to society, with the national sports organization having the highest perceived social responsibility, followed by the community sports organization and the elite sports organization. Financial and legal responsibilities were essential in all organizations. In contrast, other responsibilities such as anti-corruption and staff training (ESO, NSO) and inclusive participation (NSO) were only identified as necessary in specific organizational types. The research suggests that

the sports industry, with its diverse organizational types ranging from non-profit to profit-driven, offers a context that broadens our understanding of social responsibility beyond the limited focus on corporate entities. Also, The Tokyo Olympics (2020) has paid attention to the importance of SR and various measures of sustainable development with the participation and cooperation of stakeholders and citizens. As well as Adidas has committed to recycled packaging by 2021 and to reduce the amount of carbon in its production by 30% by 2030. In addition, Walter 2009 has represented the importance of the social task force by the Society of Charton and the trust of the Athletic Club at Brentford High, showing that the Athletic Club is capable of exceptional resources and, rightly, of various initiatives. It is a Starbucks that has the social function of most of its shareholders. This company often provides the concern of the group members, the staff, the people, the co-workers, the environment, and the investors.

Taking into account the instances above, the significance of customers and their views on the Iran Sports for All Federation (ISF), and the fact that Iran is home to a large number of organizations and agencies, each of which sees itself as having some responsibility for the ISF, it is evident that the ISF does not have as many participants as other nations and have received less attention from sports management and the media as a result of their propensity to focus on championship sports. Moreover, most studies have focused more on championship sports, clubs, spectators, and supporters and less on customers. Therefore, it is vital to make further efforts to encourage people to participate in sports for all, in addition to highlighting the value of physical exercise for all age groups. Given that the body of the ISF encompasses a variety of sports in society, the authorities may positively influence societal attitudes toward moral, cultural, and environmental concerns, as well as increase the likelihood that more people will engage in sports by exercising SR in

different facets of the ISF. Besides, research has found that more work needs to be done to determine how SR affects customers in the Sports Federation. Managers and employees must thus exhibit the traits above for the business to be successful, and to enhance the features mentioned above, its constituent parts must first be recognized before being implemented and enhanced. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the critical question: What are the main elements and consequences of the SR on customers in the ISF? How can these factors be put together in the form of a coherent conceptual framework?

The innovation of the current research lies in its focused exploration of sports federations, especially the ISF and its customers. While the mentioned text provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution and importance of SR in various sports organizations' contexts, it needs more specificity regarding the sports federations and their customer base. The proposed research addresses this gap by delving into the SR practices of the ISF and their direct impact on customers. By concentrating on a less-explored area within sports management literature, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how SR initiatives influence customer attitudes and behaviors, specifically within the ISF, shedding light on the unique dynamics of sports for all in Iran. This targeted approach enhances the applicability of the research findings to the sports federations' operational context, offering insights that can inform tailored SR strategies for this particular sports federation.

SR is not a new topic, but it appears that managers and organizational policymakers have been more interested in it recently because of the advantages it provides for business, society, and the environment (Bosch et al., 2013). Managers of firms think that success in this competition in the contemporary environment, when organizations are extensively engaged in competition, is more

than just making a financial profit. Organizations, therefore, strive to achieve equilibrium between their objectives, strategies, and social and economic activities to properly fulfill their social obligation and enhance their level of competitiveness (Chang et al., 2017). Furthermore, organizations should consider societal concerns about the environment, social issues, and philanthropy to be socially accountable to their beneficiaries and other members. Organizations should develop SR-related organizational policies depending on their particular organizational cultures. Students' lived experiences of SR in the university were analyzed by Kakapour et al. (2020), who concluded that this structure had 71 sub-categories in 7 main categories, including the social structure of the university, the value orientation, the role-playing and participation, the underlying factors of SR, and the atmosphere governing higher education. Anagnostopoulos (2020) examined how SR is implemented in professional football through charity foundations (the role of trust). The results demonstrated that employees of professional team sports organizations believe their foundation peers to be trustworthy and that their SR efforts help the professional team sports company perform well. The notion that the execution of SR initiatives by foundations helps the perceived performance of the professional team sports organization is strongly influenced by foundations' credibility. In addition, to foster trusting behavior between employees of professional team sports organizations and their counterparts at the foundations, managers should facilitate trust. Also, Chang et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between customers' views of corporate SR and their sustainable social participation. By incorporating the mediating roles of company brand pride and connection with one's brand from the perspective of enhancing relationship quality, this study illustrates previous research on corporate SR. The findings are as follows: 1) the level of

social engagement among customers is significantly influenced by their perceptions of the company's SR. 2) The positive correlation between customers' perceptions of the company's SR and their social behavior is moderated by brand pride. 3) The relationship between a customer's impression of a company's SR and social behavior is positively mediated by their connection to the brand. 4) There are several mediators, including firm brand pride and identification with one's brand, that affect how customers perceive corporate SR and behave as good citizens (Jung, 2022). Johning Lee (2022) also examined how Chinese professional basketball organizations' SR initiatives affected the sustainable growth of their teams. The findings supported consumers' positive reactions to SR in their favorite teams, which increased their identification with their teams, loyalty to them, and intention to purchase tickets to games. The identification of teams and the sustainable development of clubs are strongly correlated. The findings also demonstrated that while supporters usually regarded a Chinese Basketball Association team's SR effort as essential, their significance did not directly correlate with the clubs' sustainability or SR identity. Also, Lee (2021) investigated the SR activities of sports organizations of professional teams (company image and the influence of selected communication media on consumer reactions). The research aimed to check the effect of two factors - organizational image and the choice of communication means on people's responses, perceived motivation, and change of attitude towards social responsibility activities. The findings of the study showed that the corporate image had a significant impact on the perceived motivations and attitudes towards the team due to the company's social responsibility activities. Chen (2021) compared different measures of social responsibility based on the attitude of the spectators and their intention to attend professional baseball competitions. In this research, spectators' attitudes towards the sports

score and the intention to attend the sports event were compared. The research results show that the spectators find the environmental protection initiative more persuasive than the child and family and health and wellness initiatives regarding the sports spectators' attitude towards sports points and the intention to attend the event. Additionally, community outreach initiatives are more effective than child and family initiatives in terms of consumer attitudes toward sports scores and event attendance intentions. Sanchez (2020) also investigated the importance of corporate social responsibility in achieving a high company reputation. The purpose of the research is to identify the dimensions that have the most credit on companies and can easily be used to achieve a positive result. The results of the research identified dimensions of services, novation, office, management, citizenship, and function that affect the reputation of the company.

Studies have generally revealed that the classification of the effects of SR on customers in the ISF in Iranian sports still needs to be completed. Therefore, determining how SR affects customers in the ISF may be helpful information and highlight the necessity of doing such research.

Materials and Methods

This study is exploratory - descriptive, and applied, which was performed qualitatively using the thematic analysis method. In this study, seeks to recognize, analyze, and convert scattered and diverse data on the subject of the consequences of sports for all Federation and recreational sports into rich and detailed data independent of a specific theoretical position or epistemology in order to identify and explain a local pattern in were of Iran sports for all Federation, thematic analysis method was used.

Braun & Clark (2006) believe theme analysis is one of the methods independent of a specific theoretical or epistemological position and can

be used in a wide range of theoretical and epistemological methods. Therefore, it is a flexible and valuable research tool that can analyze a large volume of complex and detailed data. Also, this method provided the researchers of this study with the possibility of usefully summarizing the key features of the text or providing a comprehensive description of the data set. In addition, the actions of social responsibility and its consequences are affected by the context and conditions of each society, and we need to consider these conditions to ensure an accurate and realistic analysis can be provided. Therefore, the method of content analysis can help researchers in this field. Because this method, at its minimum, organizes the data and describes it in detail. Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are divided, classified, summarized, and reconstructed. Thematic analysis is a descriptive strategy that facilitates finding important patterns and concepts from qualitative data sets.

The thematic analysis method was implemented using written sources (printed and electronic) and interviews with experts. The theme analysis method is flexible and allows quick access to identify, analyze, and explain the patterns in the data. By using this method, the collected data set can be organized. The thematic analysis method is based on the induction of an analysis in which the researcher achieves an analytical genealogy through data classification and patterns within the data. In other words, thematic analysis is the act of coding and analyzing data to find out what the data says. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a study to discover the consequences of the SR of the ISF by examining accurate data. It is possible to answer the research questions and theorize and provide a background model about the consequences of SR on customers in the ISF. The data pieces were analyzed based on Braun and Clarke's (2019) principles of reflexive thematic analysis, which have been used in other qualitative studies underpinned by critical

realism (Brown & Sarkar, 2020). Reflexive thematic analysis is a flexible, iterative process involving moving back and forth between stages of analysis and revisiting the raw data as often as needed to refine understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The critical steps of this process included data familiarization, open coding, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, and defining and naming themes before developing a final report containing a selection of data extracts. The data analysis was also characterized by a process of reproduction, which is a crucial feature of critical realism and involves integrating subjective and objective knowledge (Fletcher, 2017). Thus, transcribed interviews and data pieces from the articles were carefully studied and reviewed several times to identify and extract ideas and concepts hidden in the data. Then, all primary codes related to each fundamental theme were found and gathered as arranged themes from various codes.

The research participants were made up of experts, managers, and specialists who dealt with the subject of sports for all. Sampling was done purposefully. Sampling continued until reaching the limit of sufficiency and theoretical saturation. Saturation is a feature closely related to the sample size, and it means that by continuing to collect data, the new data will repeat the previous data, and no new information will be obtained; therefore, the repetition of salient points is a sign of sufficient sample size.

The main criteria for the selection of experts included having research experience in the field of recreation sports, sports for all, or social responsibility, being a member of the university's academic staff, and having experience in executive management in the field of sports for all (at least five years). The reason for choosing these people was that these members directly deal with the field of study and have the necessary motivation to explain the topic and evaluations of this field. It is

expected that due to having experience and going through various processes in the field of education and research in the field of Sports for all, have specialized knowledge and skills in this field and provide accurate and appropriate information. In this research, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts and specialists in the field of SR and Sports for all. The selection of experts continued with the purposeful sampling method until the theoretical saturation of the data. From the 12th interview, no new data was added to the previous data, but another interview (i.e., the 13th) was also conducted to ensure theoretical saturation. The duration of the research interviews was between 40 and 80 minutes. After conducting the interview, the pieces related to the topic were organized, categorized, and analyzed as basic themes. Considering the nature, two methods were used to collect data:

1. Library studies: The literature review, as well as the effects of SR on customers in the ISF, were explored for these studies using documents and online searches.
2. In-depth semi-structured interviews: The validity and accuracy of the research were assessed and validated using several techniques.

The participants were chosen to be as diverse

and unique as possible, and specific details on the interviews, including how they were chosen, the selection criteria, the setting of the interview, and their characteristics, were supplied. The researcher in this study thoroughly became familiar with the data (first stage), then established the initial conceptual codes by rereading and revising the interview text (second stage). He/She investigated the categories (selected codes) in the third step, and when they were created, he/she went back and updated them (fourth stage). It is worth noting that these processes have been evaluated and repeated several times before a comprehensive interpretation and explanation of the effects of SR on customers of the ISF has been attained. The validity and accuracy of the research were assessed and validated using several techniques. Three respondents were given access to the final models and coding to examine and incorporate their input as part of the member control and review approach used to assess verifiability (Braun V et al., 2013).

Results

In this research, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts and specialists in the field of SR and Sports for all. The demographic data have shown that Most of the participants were male, over 40 years old, and had a PhD degree. (Table 1).

Table1. Demographic characteristics of the research experts

Code	Education	Job position	Field of Study	Age	Gender
P1	Ph.D.	Vice President of the Federation	Sports Management	48	Male
P2	Ph.D.	Federation employee	Sports Management	36	Male
P3	M.A.	Federation employee	Sports Management	52	Female
P4	Ph.D.	Faculty member / researcher in the field of social responsibility	Sports Management	53	Male
P5	Ph.D.	Faculty member / researcher in the field of social responsibility	Sports Management	55	Male
P6	Ph.D.	Faculty member / researcher in the field of social responsibility	Sports Management	40	Male
P7	Ph.D. Student	Federation employee	Physical Education	54	Female
P8	Ph.D.	Federation advisor	Physical Education	45	Male
P9	Ph.D.	Faculty member /	Sports Management	41	Male

P10	Ph.D.	researcher in the field of social responsibility Faculty member / researcher in the field of social responsibility	Physical Education	35	Male
P11	Ph.D. Student	Employee of the Ministry of Sports and Youth / researcher in the field of social responsibility	Marketing Management	44	Female
P12	M. A.	Employee of the Ministry of Sports and Youth / researcher in the field of social responsibility	Marketing Management	25	Female
P13	Ph.D.	Faculty member / researcher in the field of social responsibility	Industrial Management	49	Male

Table 2 shows a sample of the interviews and the extracted primary codes and concepts. The result of the analysis of interviews and written sources was the extraction of 102 basic themes, 17 organizing themes, and eight global themes (Table 3).

Table 2. Summary of the interviews and extracted primary codes

Extracted concepts	Interview	Code or ID
Respecting the values and norms of society	One of the responsibilities of the Federation is to respect the opinions of customers. Because the people of society are of different classes, it is necessary to respect the opinions of different customers.	P2, P3, P9
Respect for freedom of speech	Customers and employees should request their rights freely, and the organization should respect their requests and criticism.	P2, P4, P8, P11
Respecting the rights of customers	The Federation should behave honestly, fairly, and lawfully with customers and treat them with courtesy, respect, and sobriety. Also, customers can choose Federation services and products based on their needs.	P1, P7, P10
Energy saving	Choosing patterns and adopting methods and policies in energy consumption, including the use of suitable infrastructure for building sports venues in order to save energy, including the use of suitable insulation and double-glazed windows	P2, P3, P5, P9, P10, P13
Increasing the intention to buy green products	Customers are concerned about the environment and prefer to buy environmentally friendly products and services, so customers are more inclined to choose and buy green products to protect the environment. Using green products reduces waste and increases consumption efficiency.	P1, P4, P5, P7, P12

Table 3. The basic, organizing, and global themes of SR of the ISF

Basic themes	References	Organizing theme	Global themes
Participation in social and charitable affairs	P1, P4, P8, P6 / Gwin, 2010; Afrozeh, 2014; Shet & Babik, 2010; Extijet, 2004; Stold, 2012; Hwang, 2019	Participation in charitable activities	Humanitarian responsibilities

Basic themes	References	Organizing theme	Global themes
Encouraging Federation customers to do humanitarian activities	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P10 / Chen, 2015; Lantos, 2004; Carroll, 2000; Weisz, 2006; Baden, 2016; Xu & Babiak, 2010; Wook & Jung 2012		
Help to solve the social problems of society	P1, P4, P5, P7, P9		
Committing to improving the social welfare of different sections of the society	P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P11, P13		
Supporting activities related to health and well-being in the community	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10, P13		
Supporting various cultural and social programs in society	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P12, P3, P11		
Support voluntary actions of Federation employees and customers	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9		
Constructive interaction with Federation customers	P2, P3, P4, P8, P11, P13	Interaction with the community	
Attention to the public interests of society	P1, P3, P6, P8, P10, P12		
Improving the image of the Federation in the eyes of customers	P2, P3, P6, P8, P11		
Interaction with non-profit civil organizations	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P9		
Creating a discussion about the benefits of SR for customers	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P11		
Participation in environmental programs	P1, P4, P5, P7, P12 / Wook-Jung, 2012; Sheth & Babik, 2010; Stold, 2012; Trandafi Leva & Babiak, 2013; Gradinaro & Ignat, 2008; Windle, 2007; Carroll, 1998	Contribute to sustainable development	Environmental responsibility
Help to reduce environmental pollution	P2, P4, P5, P8 / Miller, 2011; Hashemi et al. 2016		
Efforts to protect the environment	P3, P4, P5 / Stold, 2012; Rasouli, 2010		
Support during environmental crises	P2, P4, P5, P7, P11, P12		
Supporting the minimization of adverse environmental effects	P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12 / Sonmezoglu, 2016		
Federation's preventive measures against environmental damage	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P12		
Conserving resources for future generations	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P13 / Wook-Jung, 2012; Rasouli, 2010; Miller, 2010		
Attention to sustainable development for future generations	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P9, P10, P11, P13 / Afroozeh, 2016; Danaifar, 2016		
Investing in environmental technologies, environmental products, and services	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Green management of physical resources	P2, P5, P8, P9, P13	Green management	
energy saving	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P13 / Miller, 2010; Stoldt, 2012; Niazi Tabar, 2018		
Use of green products and clean energies	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P12, P13		
Recycling and waste reduction	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13		
Efforts to validate and use renewable resources	P1, P2, P6, P8, P10, P11		
Research in the field of green management	P1, P4, P5, P6, P8, P11, P13		
Increasing the intention to buy green products	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12		
Providing and supporting environmental education to customers	P2, P4, P7, P8, P11 / Pil lee, 2012; Montazeri, 2016	Teaching environmental culture	
Institutionalizing environmental behavior	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Familiarity with environmental standards	P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P13		
Providing accurate information to customers and employees	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13	Moralism	Moral responsibility
Honoring customers	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11		
To follow the moral principles of society	P1, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11		

Basic themes	References	Organizing theme	Global themes
Avoiding any unethical behavior	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P12, P13		
Help to solve ethical challenges	P1, P5, P8, P10, P11		
Being responsive to customers' criticisms and requests	P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12		
Creating equal opportunities and avoiding discrimination	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13		
Non-acceptance of gifts and bribes by federation employees	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P11, P12		
Respectful treatment of Federation employees and customers	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13		
Adherence to the rules of fair play in all competitions	P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Respect for freedom of speech	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12	Respect for society's values	
Respecting social values, observing moral principles and standards	P1, P4, P5, P6, P8, P11 / Jain, 2017; Rasouli, 2010; Caroll, 2016; Wook Jung, 2012		
Compliance with equality and social justice	P3, P5, P6, P7, P9		
Considering the different cultures of Federation customers, such as ethnic values	P5, P6, P8, P9		
Respecting the difference of values in the Federation	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6		
Efforts and support for the full implementation of laws and regulations in the Federation	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P12, P13 / Wook-Jung, 2012; Montazeri, 2016; McGady, 2018; Chen et al, 2015; Brown, 2012; Bachhandeh et al., 2016	The rule of law	legal responsibility
Always respect the rules and regulations	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10 / Brown, 2012; Idowu, 2009		
Administrative corruption control in the Federation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P13		
Respecting the rights of customers	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Respecting the rights of customers based on legal requirements	P2, P3, P7, P12		
Compliance with legal requirements	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8 / Stewart & Smith, 1999; Danaiefard, 2014		
To act legally in all actions taken in the Federation	P1, P2, P3, P8, P9, P10		
Respecting contractual obligations in between	P1, P4, P8, P10		
Transparency of processes and rules	P1, P5, P8, P9, P10, P13	Legal transparency	
Transparency of all laws and regulations related to the Federation	P1, P5, P8, P9, P10, p11, P13		
Clarification and disclosure of corruption in the Federation	P1, P2, P4, P5, P8, P10 / McGuddy, 2018; Brown, 2012; Breitbarth, 2008		
Transparency in financial reports and other reports	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Improving the productivity of the Federation	P1, P4, P5, P6, P10, P12	Economic Development	Economic responsibility
Supporting the reduction of the Federation's expenses	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Support the general interests of the Federation	P1, P3, P9, P11		
Attention to the profitability of the Federation	Friedman,1962; Rossi, 2015		
Supporting economic development	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P13 / Brown, 2006; Baden, 2016; Nenia, 2010; Chen, 2015; Martinez, 2013; Massoud et al. 2017		
Trying to increase the profits of the Federation and customers	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Funding and financial resources	P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P10, P13		
Trying to achieve long-term and sustainable success	P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, P13		
Trying to increase customers	P3, P7, P9, P11		

Basic themes	References	Organizing theme	Global themes
Encouraging the private sector to invest in the Federation	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13		
Attracting material and spiritual aid (through the media)	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8		
Creating a platform for the presence of various sponsors (proper advertisements of sponsors' products and services)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P13		
Return of investment to the Federation	P1, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12		
Healthy and transparent financial activities	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P9	Economic clarification	
Transparency of the budget and the performance of the Federation	P2, P5, P9		
Financial transparency	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8		
Strict and accurate control of the Federation's expenses	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10		
Helping the government by paying taxes	P2, P7, P11		
Repeat use of federation services by customers	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, p10, P11	Behavioral loyalty	Loyalty
Use and intention to repurchase Federation services and products by customers.	P1, P4, P5, P8, P11, P12, P13		
Paying more for federation services than other federations	P6, P8, P10		
Feeling satisfied when using Federation services and products	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13		
Customers' preferences for Federation products and services	P2, P4, P9	Attitudinal loyalty	
Commitment of customers to the Federation to reuse the services and products of the Federation	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13		
Having a sense of belonging to the ISF	P2, P4, P6, P8, P12		
The importance of the future and conditions of the Federation for customers	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P10, P12		
Customers tend to use the Federation's services and products throughout the year.	P2, P5, P8		
Customers will always love the ISF, even if the quality of its service decreases.	P1, P3, P9, P10		
innovation in providing services and producing Federation products to customers	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13 / Su, 2011; Chen et al. 2013	Service innovation	The quality of service
Providing more and more specialized services to customers	P1, P2, P7, P9		
Development of new products and services of the Federation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13		
Investing in the quality of services and strategies	P2, P4, P5, P9		
Innovation in management and marketing	P3, P8, P10, P11, P13		
Attention to quality and sensitivity to the most desirable services in the Federation	P1, P4, P5, P6, P8		
Increasing the quality of services and creating favorable conditions for customers	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P12, P13		
Investing in the quality of services and developing strategies for the Federation	P1, P3, P13		
Diversity in providing Federation services to customers	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10, P12 / Novak,1996; Kinder et al.1999	Diversity in services	
Management and necessary activities to introduce various services of the Federation	P4, P5, P6, P8, P10		
Satisfying the needs and taking measures to improve the efficiency of services and the quality of the Federation's output	P1, P3, P5, P10		

Basic themes	References	Organizing theme	Global themes
Customers' trust in the Federation to reuse the services and products of the Federation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10	Intent to repurchase	behavioral intentions
Feeling satisfied with the quality of services and products of the Federation	P3, P5, P9, P12		
Word of mouth and word-of-mouth advertising of the quality of the Federation's services and products by customers	P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, P10, P12, P13	Word-of-mouth advertising	
Persuasion of other customers by loyal customers	P3, P5, P9, P12		

Figure 1 shows a map of 8 themes from a thematic analysis of all interviews.

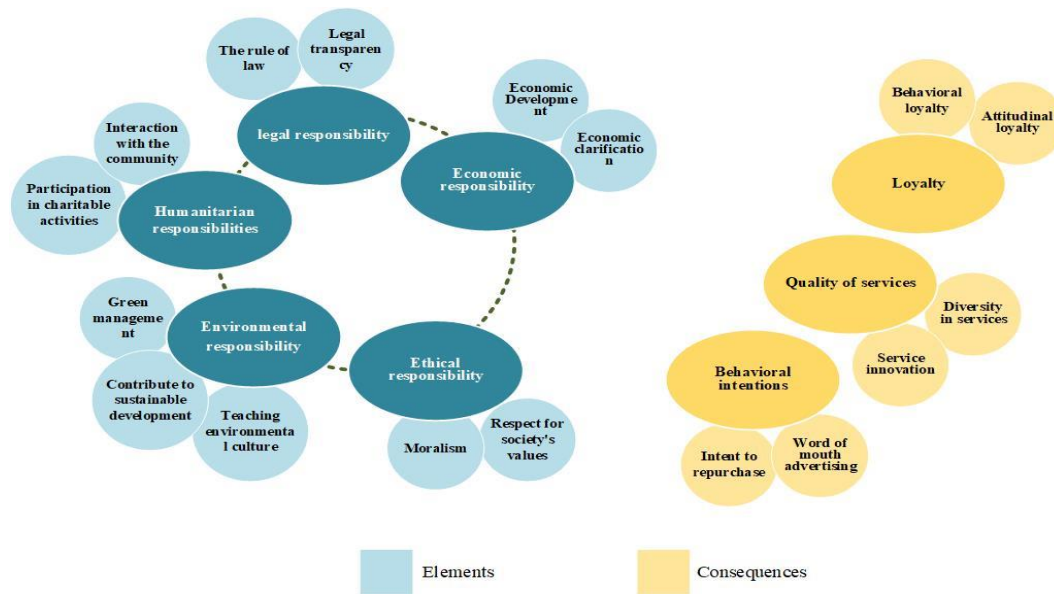


Figure 1. Thematic map of main themes found in qualitative interviews

Discussion

The topic of SR, which is currently evident in a broad spectrum of sports organizations, sports brands, and players, has been addressed in recent years in sports management. SR has grown in importance as a sociological topic due to the urbanized system's expansion and the multiplicity of positions' rising complexity. This issue merits consideration and research in different domains, such as politics, economics, culture, social issues, and environment. This study aimed to determine the effects of SR within the ISF. The results indicated 102 dimensions, 17 themes, and eight indicators of SR affecting the ISF. The components consisted of humanitarian responsibility, environmental responsibility, legal

responsibility, moral responsibility, economic responsibility, loyalty, quality of service, and behavioral intentions. One of the practical components of SR in the ISF is humanitarian responsibility. Participation in charitable and public benefit activities is an element of the philanthropic dimension. Organizations' social standing is improved by paying attention to their charitable activities. Chen (2015) defined the charitable activities of sports organizations as promoting sports and health programs, such as promoting academic sports, creating sports camps, supporting academic activities, promoting health programs, and helping charities and vulnerable groups of society by participating in charitable events and establishing charitable foundations. It is also possible to make better use of the ISF's

capabilities to increase the involvement of more disadvantaged and particular members of society in sporting events. More customers participate in the Federation's SR initiatives due to the planning and instruction of social activities, support of cultural and social programs, and assistance provided to the ISF associations in their volunteer work with local communities (Chen et al., 2015). Promoting volunteerism is congruent with the findings of Mokgadi's (2018) study. He regards volunteerism as the cornerstone of SR (Mokgadi, 2018).

The results of the research indicated above demonstrated that the environmental aspect is another problem that is crucial to SR and involves promoting environmental education, sustainable development, and green management. Therefore, the Federation should be devoted to preserving the environment and biodiversity in all facets of its operations, including the utilization of products, services, and human resources and the assessment of its choices (Hashemi et al., 2016). Studies in the area of sports companies' SR have revealed that, similar to many organizational contexts, there are differences in the acceptability and approval of the SR of the environmental firm across professional sports organizations. For instance, some teams could engage in minor activities like planting trees and promoting public transit. In contrast, others might engage in extensive and integrated programs like forming alliances with environmentally conscious businesses and utilizing solar or wind energy (Trendafilova et al., 2013). As a result, the Federation needs to encourage ecologically friendly technology and practices more. For instance, in the equipment and infrastructure sector, they should use clean and renewable energy. For instance, they should change the halls' heating and lighting systems, employ renewable resources, and make the best use of all other resources.

The legal aspect is a further factor that

influences the Federation's SR. The rule of law and legal transparency are also parts of the legal dimension. Acting lawfully in every work, preventing administrative corruption in the Federation, and protecting customer rights above and beyond the law's demand are crucial to considering the proper application of laws in the Federation. Similarly, according to Brsown (2012), legal transparency is the primary social obligation in sports, which is in line with the findings of the present study (Brsown, 2012). Research experts acknowledged that lack of transparency is one of the signs of immoral behavior that can be observed in appointment and dismissal decisions and contracts. If it is noticed, this symbol will be transmitted to society. This finding relates to the SR category of transparency's impact on ethics. The ISF focuses on transparency because it fosters a positive social image of the Federation among the public, which aligns with the Federation's interest. Currently, many businesses spend up to 11% of their revenue on marketing to establish a positive perception of their brand and get consumer acceptance for their products. Organizations must set high ethical standards in the modern world, which is rife with corporate scandals, or else their ethical beliefs will frequently be called into doubt. One of the principles of moral responsibility is the appointment of knowledgeable, experienced, and qualified managers to the top levels of the Federation. Because of these individuals' proper attitudes toward abiding by the law and the open oversight of their operations, the laws are clarified, and laws supporting SR are approved accordingly. In addition, more suitable media and behavioral patterns, particularly in the context of competitions, might lessen the large number of disputes and tensions that result in lawsuits and other problems that harm society as a whole. In this case, the ISF is required to respect the values, norms, and beliefs of its supporters, as well as those of other members of the community, and to give ethical concerns more consideration in all of its work and

activities. The importance of these variables for the design and execution of SR programs should also be seriously considered by the ISF's managers.

Furthermore, they should put SR initiatives and programs that address ethical and economic obligations on their agenda, such as respecting the rules of fair play in competitions, abiding by societal morality, responding to customer and supporter complaints, and prioritizing their satisfaction. The findings of this research are in line with those of McGady (2018), who reported that ethical behavior is anticipated to be observed in enterprises. That SR also generates moral development in addition to economic development. Therefore, maintaining corporate ethics and financial transparency inside organizations will keep the Federation free of economic corruption in its constituent sections.

Economic development was used to identify a different set of factors influencing SR. Several indicate that social activities will enhance the organization's bottom line. Economic development seeks to achieve more than just profitability. The Federation's definition of economic development includes investments in infrastructure, job creation, and skill development. It also consists of involvement in the wealth creation process for shareholders, managers, and customers, as well as the promotion of macroeconomics. One of the things that will lead to economic development is increasing the number of customers and spectators, encouraging the private sector to invest in the ISF, facilitating access to facilities, considering the financial situation of families, providing budget and financial resources, lowering the expenses of the Federation, supporting employees' abilities and experiences, and considering the customers' profits.

Furthermore, the ISF has established other associations and job categories that employ hundreds of individuals globally. Only some

federations can produce as many job titles. In light of this, this is one of the signs that the ISF holds a unique place in the area of SR. In this regard, it is also crucial that the ISF has sound financial management when it comes to spending its funds and can effectively use the resources at its disposal to carry out various projects. According to Carol, economic responsibility includes finding new resources, fostering technical advancements and creativity, and developing new goods and services. It also includes generating investment returns for owners and shareholders. Business is the primary economic unit in society when taking this dimension into account, and all of its other responsibilities are anticipated in this fundamental presumption.

Customers' loyalty to the ISF, which has two types of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, is another factor that SR influences. Customers' reiterated use of federation services, their use of and intent to repurchase federation services and products, their willingness to pay more for federation services than other federations, and their satisfaction with federation services and products are examples of behavioral loyalty. Customers' preferences for the Federation's services, their commitment to the Federation to use its services and products again, their sense of belonging to the ISF, and their significance to the Federation's future and conditions are examples of attitudinal loyalty. These results were in line with the studies conducted by Martnez et al. in 2013 and Machado in 2022 (Martnez, 2013). According to Machado (2022), customer loyalty is positively impacted by SR and customer satisfaction since these factors increase customer trust (Leclercq et al., 2022). Since they repurchase their team memberships, buy more products, or attend the games, devoted fans are crucial to the sports industry. Sports organizations can utilize their devoted supporters as leverage to secure media attention, increasing the visibility of the sports team and the organization's capacity to attract additional funding from financial sponsors.

Therefore, the Federation's attention to SR issues, such as supporting socio-cultural programs and health-related activities, assisting in the resolution of ethical and moral problems, providing environmental education to fans, and receiving financial and spiritual support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can help to raise the level of attitudinal loyalty among fans. Therefore, it is advised that the Federation's managers and officials invest more in SR projects to improve the perception of the Federation in the minds of customers and have devoted customers with a strong sense of identity. SR plays a significant and positive role in the attitude of the Federation's customers.

The quality of the Federation's services, including their creativity and variety, is another area that SR influences. Service quality is one of the most crucial elements in retaining existing customers and attracting new ones in service organizations. Indeed, the level of service provided and the human resources used to deliver it are the sources of competitive advantage in service organizations. Therefore, the employees of the Federation should be devoted to the aims and aspirations of the Federation and exhibit customer-oriented behaviors to have more excellent service quality and, ultimately, customer satisfaction. Moreover, the issues and demands the customers have with the caliber of services should be identified, and new services based on the needs of customers be provided. Businesses that operate in volatile settings must quickly adapt to shifting customer preferences and needs as well as unexpected demands. As a result of changing customer demands and expectations, they must become more customer-focused. Current potential customers may become customers in the future, and what they desire today may also be desired in the future. Likewise, what they perceive today may also be fulfilled in the future (Narou et al., 1990). It has been established via various studies that companies that prioritize SR do better than their competitors and benefit from

more devoted employees. Because they can offer more effective public services, SR's impact on how well public services are delivered may help organizations perform better. Innovation in products and services is also crucial for retaining customer loyalty. Finding ways to foster innovation is essential because organizations live in a period referred to by various names, including the knowledge age, post-industrial age, information society age, speed age, and finally, the age of creativity and innovation. Organizations are managed to handle minor adjustments and profound global transformations in such a way that innovation has been acknowledged as one of the most crucial factors for the survival of organizations. Accordingly, the ISF should place a strong emphasis on creativity training and give thoughtful consideration to choosing creative, inventive, and forward-thinking individuals who can deliver creative and new ways to challenge issues.

Behavioral intentions are another aspect that SR influences. When making a purchasing decision, the idea of behavioral intentions expresses the actual purpose. The behavioral intention may take on several shapes, such as the tendency to purchase a product carrying a specific brand name for the first time or the resolve to do so in the future. In this study, three dimensions of behavioral intentions are proposed: the desire to pay more, repurchase intention, and oral advertising. Since behavioral intentions are predictors of actual behavior, addressing this factor should be considered by the managers and policymakers of the Federation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the theoretical implications derived from the research emphasize the need for sports organizations, particularly the ISF, to adopt a comprehensive approach to SR. These suggestions contribute to the ongoing discourse on the evolving role of sports organizations in society, providing insights for academics,

practitioners, and policymakers to enhance the impact of SR initiatives on customers and the broader community. The practical implications derived from this research underscore the need for the ISF to adopt a strategic and comprehensive approach to SR. By implementing these recommendations, the Federation can not only improve its societal impact but also strengthen its competitive advantage and enhance customer satisfaction. These practical insights contribute to the effective implementation of SR initiatives within sports organizations, facilitating positive societal change and reinforcing the role of sports in promoting social responsibility.

The ISF should, therefore, have a better knowledge about the significance of SR in their programs to have a more significant impact on the behavior and attitude of customers by identifying various aspects of SR, including environmental measures, and examining its effects on society. Since the managers and officials in the ISF, in order to create an active society in line with their missions, always seek to attract and retain customers, awareness of the consequences of SR initiatives in the ISF is helpful, so it is suggested to create a more substantial competitive advantage by formulating and properly implementing SR programs and as a result, provide better services according to the needs of customers; therefore it is suggested that managers in planning for the Federation, consider SR and plan accordingly. The managers and marketers of the Federation may learn valuable lessons from how customers in the sports sector and the Federation perceive various aspects of SR. Considering such attitudes and customer's sensitivity towards social issues, marketers and managers of the ISF can implement and improve SR plans and programs such as providing environmental training to customers, attempts to use renewable resources and protecting the environment, considering sustainable development for future generations, being responsive to customers' criticisms and

requests, helping with social and moral problems in society, supporting health and well-being-related programs and activities, contributing to improving the social welfare of different sections of the society and supporting social and cultural events and programs. The managers and directors of the ISF can also utilize the study's findings to pinpoint and prioritize social obligations that may have a more significant effect on customers' attitudes and behaviors, as well as to plan better programs relating to social obligations.

The study sheds light on the multifaceted dimensions of SR in the ISF, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in the research design and context. These limitations serve as opportunities for refinement and expansion in future studies, ensuring a more robust understanding of SR in sports organizations. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on SR in the sports management domain, but researchers and practitioners are encouraged to consider these limitations in interpreting and applying the results.

SR is a dynamic concept that evolves. The study captures a specific moment, and the research results might only partially encapsulate future developments or changes in the ISF's SR initiatives. Continuous monitoring and follow-up studies are recommended to track the evolution of SR practices in the organization. The study is rooted in the Iranian context, and cultural nuances play a substantial role in shaping perceptions of SR. The findings may not directly apply to sports organizations in different cultural or regional contexts. Future research should explore the cultural variations in understanding and implementing SR in sports management. The study adopts a qualitative approach, providing rich insights into SR dimensions. However, the lack of quantitative data limits the measurement precision for certain elements. Future research could complement the qualitative findings with

quantitative analyses to enhance the rigor and comprehensiveness of the research.

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