

Evaluation of Effective Factors on Succession Management in Human Resources of the Iranian Football

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Heersh Khalid Ameen¹
Behzad Izadi^{2*}
Salah Dastoom³

¹PhD student in sports management, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran.

²Department of physical education, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran

³PhD in Sports Management, Gilan University, Rasht, Iran.

***Correspondence:**

Behzad Izadi, Department of physical education, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran

Email: b.izadi@uok.ac.ir

Orcid: 0000-0002-1881-6185

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the factors affecting succession management in human resources in Iranian football.

Method: The present research is quantitative in terms of applied purpose. The statistical population included coaches working in Iranian football leagues, managers of football clubs, and teachers of clubs and universities. 121 instructors participating in two training courses of the Football Federation were selected as a statistical sample, which was an available non-probabilistic sampling. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. Also, the first and second-order confirmatory factor analysis method by AMOS software was used to analyze data.

Results: Research findings showed that organizational, individual, and process factors are among the factors affecting succession in various organizations related to football in the country. Organizational factors, respectively: organizational commitment, strategy, motivation, structure, technology, in individual factor; Training, interaction and collaboration, and adaptability and finally in process factor, time management, planning, and organizational transparency had the most impact, respectively.

Conclusion: As a result, it can be said that if football-related organizations consider human resource succession management and formulate and implement proper succession management planning with a focus on organization, it can play an effective role in national and international success.

Keywords: Football Federation, Human Resources, Organizational Factors, Succession.

Introduction

Today, it's becoming increasingly clear that human resources play a crucial role in overcoming obstacles, developing technology, and manufacturing a wide range of goods. As the cornerstone of every organization, efficient and intelligent management of human resources is essential in order to achieve sustainable productivity, creativity, innovation, and quality of life. In fact, among all factors of production, human resources truly differentiate organizations (Geib & Boenigk, 2022). The transfer of knowledge and experiences between generations is also important in organizational growth. However, the absence of personnel in key positions, resulting from voluntary or involuntary departures, poses a significant threat to organizations (Alamdari, 2018). Therefore, in today's world, organizations must attract, retain, and develop human capital to survive. This requires a systematic recruitment process that combines scientific methods with strategic management. Sports organizations and federations also recognize the need for a skilled and influential workforce (Karimi et al., 2020). They determine technical indicators, competencies, and qualities such as skills, personality, behavior, and ethics to attract efficient human resources. It's considerable to note that research on big football clubs has shown that implementing this process leads to significant profits and enhances the club's societal status (Galdino et al., 2022). The success and competitiveness of football clubs and other institutions, both in sports and non-sports sectors, heavily rely on the quality of their human resources. While many organizations lack a proactive approach to address their future managerial needs, forward-thinking organizations have implemented programs focused on identifying and nurturing managerial talents (Adabi et al., 2016).

"Succession Management" has emerged as an effective concept within talent management, aiming to groom elite personnel for key positions within the organization; Succession management is the process of identifying potential talents within an organization and preparing them for future roles through various educational programs. With employees playing a crucial role in modern organizations, new succession systems have been adopted to ensure that the right people are in the right positions at the right time (Farhangian et al., 2023).

In the current dynamic and rapidly changing environment, succession planning has gained significant importance due to new work methods and immediate challenges in the human capital market. The increasing pressures of globalization have further emphasized the need for organizations to identify, nurture, and effectively utilize individuals with leadership potential (Elbad et al, 2020). Succession planning is viewed as a continuous and dynamic process rather than a static one. Having competent and efficient leadership is indeed crucial for any organization to achieve sustainable success and continuous growth. To meet the demands of the future organizational world, more managers and leaders are needed. Successful organizations recognize the importance of developing managerial talents internally and prioritize this by identifying and cultivating talented individuals within the organization. This ensures that they have the necessary skills and capabilities to lead the organization towards success in the future (Naderian, 2017). The football federation, as a prominent authority in sports disciplines, recognizes the necessity of succession management as one of its key strategies. However, it is worth noting that research on the concept of succession management in sports organizations in the country is limited in number. For further investigation, several previous research studies can be considered. Musakuro, R. (2022) presented a

comprehensive talent management and succession management model that can create a competitive advantage for organizations. Kattuman et al (2019) also found that there are significant obstacles to successful succession in sports organizations, with the managerial dimension having the most impact. Also, Akbari et al. (2021) identified variables such as evaluating individual, organizational, and process factors, as well as determining policies and evaluating successors, as predictors of successful succession in sports organizations. Labbaf and Naderian Jahormi (2023) emphasized the importance of actions such as planning, training, and talent management in creating conditions for successful succession. In addition to domestic research, foreign research also emphasizes the importance of succession planning in sports organizations. Kattuman & et al. (2019) also found that changing coaches after poor performance does not necessarily lead to better results in professional football. Galdino & et al. (2022) also highlighted the importance of evaluating coaches over time rather than solely based on immediate results in Brazilian football. Finally, Bano et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of leadership succession plans and identifying potential future leaders in organizations for continued success. Labbaf & naderian jahromi (2023) have demonstrated that various factors have a direct impact on succession in the General Directorate of Sports and Youth. These factors include the dimensions of growth and excellence of successors, monitoring programs and evaluation of capabilities, strategic communication and networking, strategic alignment, analysis of talent needs, and identification of strategic capabilities.

Organizations need to focus on their workforce as a source of competitive advantage. Skilled and talented employees are difficult to replicate, and organizations should prioritize attracting, retaining, training, and developing their talent at all levels. Unfortunately, skilled employees may leave for various reasons,

leaving organizations vulnerable. This is especially true in sports organizations, where turnover is common in key positions. To address this issue, sports organizations should consider succession planning to develop and empower existing talent rather than relying solely on hiring to fill gaps. Generally, previous research has shown the importance of succession management and training future managers for the development of organizations. However, there is a lack of attention and planning for succession management in sports federations, including the football federation in Iran. This lack of planning not only affects the development of sports at the national level but also hinders the potential for success in international forums. Sports organizations must prioritize succession planning and invest in training young, competent, and motivated individuals for future leadership positions. Further research is needed to address this issue in sports organizations in the country. Therefore, the current research aims to evaluate the factors affecting succession management in Iran's football federation, to provide a basis for future research in other sports organizations. The results of this research can benefit sports planners, managers of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, managers of sports federations, sports management professors, coaches, and athletes.

Materials and methods

The methodology of the current research is quantitative, applied in terms of purpose, and descriptive in terms of data collection. The statistical population of the research is knowledgeable people in the field of football coaching and management. Since the dispersion of the statistical population, 121 participants in the Iranian football teachers' assimilation and clarification course, including managers, coaches, and football teachers who have a football coaching degree, were selected as a statistical sample; This sampling was done based on non-probability convenience

sampling. The research tool is a questionnaire adapted from Magahi and Beheshtifar's (2010) succession questionnaire. The questionnaire has 41 questions in 3 components (organizational factors, individual factors, and process factors); organizational factors include 20 questions and 5 sub-components of organizational commitment, technology, structure, motivation, and strategy; Individual factors include 10 questions and 3 sub-components of interaction and cooperation, training and adaptability; and process factors include 11 questions and 3 sub-components of planning, clarification and time management. The construct validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by factor analysis (Table 2). Also, the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by 13 experts in this field, and Cronbach's alpha method was used to check the reliability, and the result of

Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire in the SPSS version 24 software was equal to 0.95. Considering that the figure obtained from Cronbach's alpha is at a high level, the reliability of the research questionnaire was confirmed. The data was analyzed using first and second-order confirmatory factor analysis with AMOS software version 24.

Results

Among the 121 participants of the research, 21 (17.4%) were club managers, 42 (34.7%) were club instructors, and 29 (24%) were club instructors and university lecturer. Also, 55% of the statistical sample had 1-5 years of experience. Other descriptive results related to demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the statistical sample

	Variable	Frequency	Frequency percentage
Gender	Man	106	87.6
	Female	15	12.4
Education	Bachelor's degree	11	9.1
	Master's degree	55	45.5
	PhD	55	45.5
Organizational position	Club managers	21	17.4
	Club instructor	42	34.7
	Club coaches	29	24
	University lecturers	29	24
Coaching degree	AFC C Diploma	5	4.1
	AFC B Diploma	40	33.1
	AFC A Diploma	41	33.9
	AFC D Diploma	18	14.9
Experience	no answer	17	14.0
	no answer	17	14.0
	1 to 5 years	67	55.3

6 to 10 years	42	34.7
More than 10 years	12	10.0

First-order confirmatory Factor Analysis

The validity of constructs related to succession management in football human resource management was investigated through first and

second-order confirmatory factor analysis. The results showed that the factor loadings for questions related to organizational, individual, and process dimensions were in a favorable condition.

Table 2. Measurement equations of succession management questionnaire in football human resource management (organizational factors, individual factors, process factors)

Factor	Components	Question	Factor loading	Critical value	Variance explained	Significance level
Organizational factors	Organizational Commitment	1) Creating a culture of stability and job security among football coaches	0.66	-	0.43	0.001
		2) Organizational culture that encourages professional training and improving the skills of football coaches	0.63	6.085	0.39	0.001
		3) Guaranteeing the implementation of the succession program at all levels of football coaches	0.80	6.808	65/0	0.001
		4) High rate of the resignation of key football coaches	0.41	2.701	0.41	0.001
	Technology	5) Using appropriate and efficient information technology to improve the skills and abilities of football coaches	0.61	-	0.37	0.001
		6) The existence of information and communication systems in the football federation	0.42	4.934	0.18	0.001
		7) The existence of a database of competent football coaches for promotion	0.62	5.221	0.38	0.001
	Structural	8) The existence of a written and transparent organizational structure at all levels of football	0.49	-	0.24	0.001
		9) Having a specific trustee to implement and advance succession programs	0.72	7.714	0.51	0.001

Factor	Components	Question	Factor loading	Critical value	Variance explained	Significance level
		10) Intra-organizational transfer of coaches to improve the capabilities and skills needed by the football federation	0.46	5.729	0.21	0.001
		11) Integrating and aligning the succession system with the strategy of the Football Federation	0.45	5.803	0.21	0.001
		12) Existence of vacant positions and no coaching tenure for a long time	0.31	4.212	0.10	0.001
		13) Perfect fit between the job characteristics of trainers and employees	0.46	5.779	0.21	0.001
	Motivational	14) Support and encouragement of senior football managers	0.78	-	0.60	0.001
		15) The desire of the football federation to attract talented personnel to be appointed to management jobs outside the organization	0.61	6.376	0.27	0.001
		16) Motivating the internal talents of football coaches through the system of compensation and rewards	0.61	6.562	0.27	0.001
		17) Emphasis and importance of the organization on improving the skills of football coaches	0.58	6.019	0.23	0.001
	Strategy	18) Allocation of sufficient funds for the implementation of the succession program	0.89	-	0.79	0.001
		19) Identifying the gap between the needs and talents of football coaches	0.39	4.258	0.15	0.001
		20) The presence of at least two candidates for trainers required for foreign positions	0.50	5.031	0.50	0.001
Individual factors	Interaction and cooperation	1) acceptability of fostering by the football federation	0.65	-	0.42	0.001
		2) Educators' willingness to transfer experiences and working	0.70	7.401	0.49	0.001

Factor	Components	Question	Factor loading	Critical value	Variance explained	Significance level
		knowledge to others				
		3) Voluntary willingness of trainers to participate in educational programs	0.77	7.996	0.60	0.001
		4) Willingness of football coaches to share professional and personal records	0.64	6.821	0.41	0.001
	Education	5) High organizational commitment and the desire to maintain the trainers	0.84	-	0.71	0.001
		6) The existence of individual career development programs for football coaches	0.56	6.830	0.31	0.001
		7) The existence of a strong and suitable evaluation system for identifying the talents of coaches on behalf of the football federation	0.52	6.221	0.27	0.001
		8) Holding training classes to improve the abilities of trainers	0.58	7.161	0.34	0.001
	Adaptability	9) creating a common sense about the necessity of the succession system	0.68	-	0.46	0.001
		10) Preparation of football coaches for promotion to higher positions	0.86	7.552	0.74	0.001
Process factors	Planning	1) Identification of qualified trainers for promotion to higher positions	0.53	-	0.28	0.001
		2) aligning the skills of trainers with the current and future needs of the federation	0.59	5.395	0.35	0.001
		3) Regular planning to identify talents within the organization	0.67	5.812	0.45	0.001
		4) Comparing the strengths and skills of the trainers with the job opportunities available in the federation	0.74	6.156	0.55	0.001
		5) Evaluating the future needs of the federation for the skills and positions required by the federation	0.85	6.569	72/0	0.001

Factor	Components	Question	Factor loading	Critical value	Variance explained	Significance level
Organizational transparency		6) The goals and succession process are clear and specific	0.43	-	0.19	0.001
		7) Simplicity and stability of the process	0.79	5.092	0.63	0.001
		8) The simplicity and reliability of succession planning by the senior managers of the federation	0.85	5.206	0.72	0.001
Time Management		9) The stability of the management team for the continuous implementation of this program	0.86	-	0.74	0.001
		10) having a specific schedule for the implementation of the succession-parenting program (annual/seasonal)	0.61	8.273	0.37	0.001
		11) Introduction of the program in a small area to familiarize and trust the coaches and senior managers of the football federation	0.85	13.269	0.71	0.001

The significance of the relationship between observed variables and underlying variables cannot be determined solely based on the size of coefficients, but a critical value must be used. In this study, the critical value was found to be higher than 1.96 for all questions, indicating a significant relationship between the questions and related components. This information is detailed in Table 2.

Second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis was used to achieve a more accurate factor structure. This method assumes that the underlying variables are also constituents of the larger factor. In other words, the larger factor is made up of the extracted factors from the first-order factor analysis.

Table 3. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis indices for organizational, individual, and process components

Variable	Components	Path coefficient	Critical value	Variance explained (R ²)	Significance
Organizational Factors	Organizational Commitment	0.95	-	0.89	0.001
	Technology	0.72	5.089	0.52	0.001
	Structural	0.75	5.556	0.56	0.001
	motivational	0.82	6.529	0.68	0.001
	Strategy	0.88	7.471	0.77	0.001

Individual Factors	Interaction and cooperation	0.88	-	0.78	0.001
	Education	0.95	8.211	0.91	0.001
	Adaptability	0.80	5.828	0.64	0.001
Process Factors	planning	0.85	-	0.72	0.001
	Organizational transparency	0.79	4.310	0.63	0.001
	Time Management	0.88	6.828	0.77	0.001

According to Table 3, the second-order measurement model for organizational factors showed acceptable fit indices, indicating good construct validity. The factor loadings for variables related to organizational factors, individual factors, and process factors were all above 1.96, indicating a favorable condition. Also, the amount of total explained variance states that the independent variables of organizational factors include organizational commitment (0.95), technology (0.72), structural (0.75), motivational (0.82), and strategy (0.88), as well as independent variables of individual factors including interaction and cooperation (0.88), training (0.95) and adaptability and independent variables of process factors including planning (0.85), organizational transparency (0.79) and time management (0.88) can predict process factors. Also, in Figures 1, 2, and 3, the relationship between the observed items and the general components indicates the existence of a suitable factor structure.

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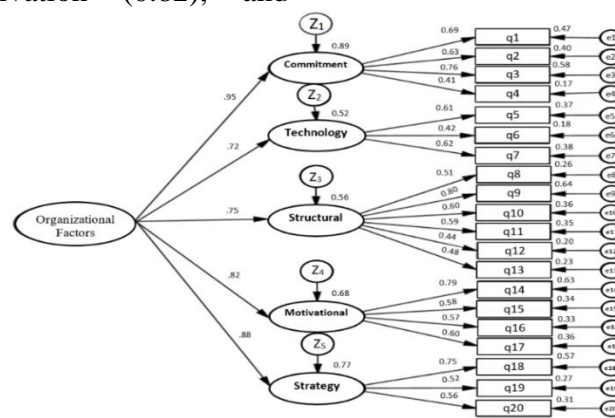


Figure 1. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis of organizational factors

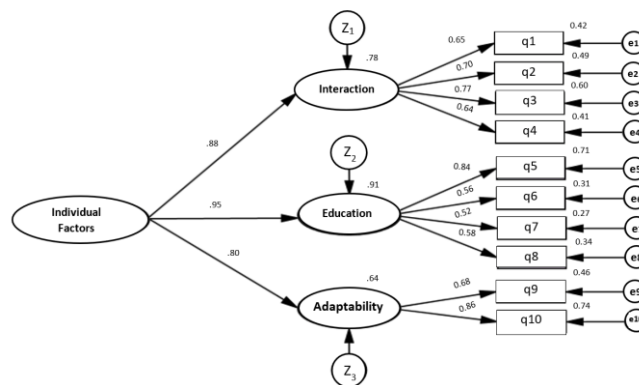


Figure 2. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis of individual factors

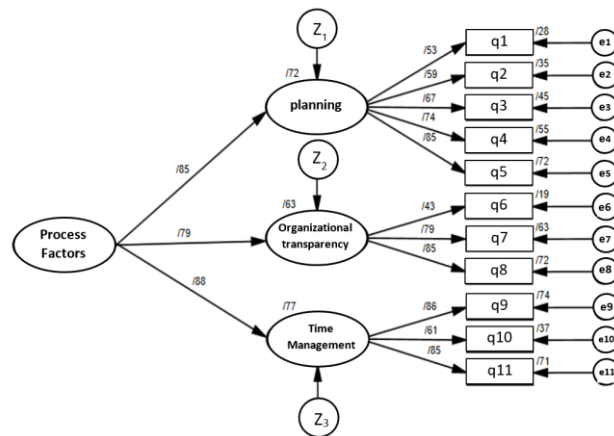


Figure 3. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis of process factors

Discussion

The research on succession management in Iranian football human resources found that all three factors -organizational, individual, and process - had a significant impact on succession management. Organizational factors such as organizational commitment, strategy, motivation, structure, and technology were the most influential, followed by individual factors like education, interaction and cooperation, and adaptability. The process factors with the most impact included time management, planning, and organization transparency.

The first-order factor analysis showed that all indices had a good fit and confirmed the relationship between the questions and their components. The questions with the highest factor loading included guaranteeing the implementation of succession programs for all levels of football coaches in the organizational commitment component, the readiness of coaches for higher positions in the adaptability component, and the stability of the management team for continuous implementation of the succession plan in the time management component.

The second-order factor analysis showed that organizational factors had the greatest impact, with organizational commitment, strategy, motivation, structure, and technology having the most influence in that order. Organizational commitment is crucial for success in sports

organizations, and it is closely monitored by federations. Proper planning and budget allocation are also important for cultivating young and talented individuals for future coaching and managerial positions. Coordination in the structure of a football federation is extremely important for effective human resource succession. It's also necessary to encourage and motivate domestic talents in both coaching and management roles so that they can contribute to the betterment of the organization. The study conducted by Sabzevari et al. (2023) revealed that factors such as "organizational duty requirements and incentives for succession planning" and "talent search system and database of talented individuals within the organization" are crucial in succession planning in sports organizations. Also hierarchy and delegation of authority in any organization are essential, and the football federation. Technology, particularly the use of the internet and educational software, is also crucial for success in sports. This aligns with previous research by Farhangian et al. (2021), Musakuro, R. (2022), Shand (2017), Naderian (2017), Alamdari (2018), Davoudi & Yaghoubi (2017), Karimi et al. (2020) and Sabzevari et al. (2023).

The individual factor was also found to be significant in evaluating succession management in football human resources, with education, interaction, cooperation, and adaptability being the key components.

Education is crucial for success in any organization, and it is important to determine the necessary competencies for different positions to train competent individuals. It is also essential for experienced individuals to pass on their knowledge and experiences to younger generations, and this can only be achieved through proper interaction and communication. The study conducted by Labbaf & Naderian jahromi (2023) have demonstrated that various factors have a direct impact on succession in the General Directorate of Sports and Youth. These factors include the dimensions of growth and excellence of successors, monitoring programs and evaluation of capabilities, strategic communication and networking, strategic alignment, analysis of talent needs, and identification of strategic capabilities. Adaptability is also important in creating a common understanding of the necessity of succession systems in sports organizations. This is supported by previous research by Pierce et al. (2017) and Labbaf and Naderian (2023). However, the findings of this research contradict those of Elol (2020), who does not consider the characteristics of management to be important for achieving the goals and success of sports teams and organizations. Because it is crucial to identify the necessary competencies, skills, and knowledge required for a job to train competent individuals for succession management. Having the right personality traits is also essential for success in a job.

Finally, In terms of process factors, time management, planning, and organizational transparency were found to be the most influential in succession management. Time management is crucial for success in football, as it involves effectively using resources to achieve goals. According to the research conducted by Faridniya et al., (2024), it is crucial for organizations to put extra effort into identifying and cultivating the talents of their workforce if they wish to thrive and improve in

a constantly changing and transforming environment. Planning is also important, as neglecting it can lead to challenges and decrease effectiveness in organizations; In this regard, Galdino et al., (2022) found that in elite football, there is no strategic and sustainable approach in human resources management in relation to recruitment, evaluation and replacement of head coaches. It is necessary for senior managers of the federation to have a clear and specific goal for succession management and to have a transparent and reliable succession program.

This aligns with previous research by Labbaf and Naderian Jahormi (2023), Davoudi et al. (2017), Alamdari (2018), Kattoman et al. (2019), Karimi et al., Akbari et al. (2021), Naderian (2017), Galdino et al., (2022), and Faridniya et al., (2024).

Succession planning is essential for the continuity and success of sports organizations. Here are some suggestions for effective succession planning:

1. Look for individuals within the organization who have the potential to take on leadership roles in the future. Provide them with opportunities for training, mentoring, and skill development.
2. Establish a formal program that focuses on grooming future leaders within the organization. This can include leadership training, management courses, and exposure to different aspects of running a sports organization.
3. Promote diversity in your leadership pipeline to bring fresh perspectives and ideas into the organization. Ensure that all employees have equal opportunities for advancement regardless of their background.
4. Develop a plan for unexpected departures or vacancies in key leadership positions. Having a contingency plan in place will ensure smooth transitions during times of

change.

5. Pair up experienced leaders with high-potential employees to provide guidance, support, and knowledge transfer.
6. Implement systems to capture and preserve institutional knowledge so that it can be passed on to future leaders effectively.

Conclusion

Succession in sports organizations is a crucial issue, as there is a shortage of capable and skilled managers, and the football industry is rapidly growing. Without proper succession planning, there may be a significant void in key positions and a lack of competent individuals to fill them. Finally, we believe that developing strategic plans and focusing on succession management can ensure the future success of the football federation. It's important to have a clear road map and to plan for the future, especially when it comes to leadership transitions. By having a solid succession plan in place, the organization can be better prepared for any changes that may occur and continue to thrive in the long run. All organizations related to football must have a written plan for training talented individuals and preparing them for succession in all aspects. It is also important to design specific training programs that consider the requirements of the relevant job and address any shortcomings of the individual in their role.

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