

# Structural Model of International Competence and Diplomacy of Sports Managers in the Country

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Shapoor Jafabeigi<sup>1</sup>Mohammad Saivan Nouri <sup>2\*</sup> Mehrdad Moharramzadeh<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Student in Sports Management, Islamic Azad University, Sanandaj Branch

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor of Sports Management, Marivan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marivan, Iran

<sup>3</sup> Professor of Sport Management, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili. Ardabil, Iran

\*Correspondence:

Mohammad Saivan Nouri,  
Assistant Professor of Sports Management, Marivan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marivan, Iran

Email: [saiwannouri@gmail.com](mailto:saiwannouri@gmail.com)ORCID : [0000-0002-7905-8525](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7905-8525)

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The development of professional, diplomatic and international competencies of sports managers has different dimensions, types and stages that the present study seeks to identify and their structural model.

**Methods:** The research method was quantitative and from the type of correlation and in terms of practical purpose with a heuristic approach using a questionnaire. The statistical population consisted experts in the field of research: managers of sports organizations and professors of sports management in universities. A statistical sample was selected in a sufficient number to test the model in a purposeful and accessible way (152 people). The qualitative phase researcher made questionnaire was used based on the results of interviews with experts The questionnaire included variables and determining factors and was set on a 5-point Likert scale. Through Cronbach's alpha method, its reliability or internal consistency was calculated and confirmed using SPSS20 software ( $\alpha=0.86$ ). Describing the findings and categorizing the information using descriptive statistics (SPSS20 software), structural modeling and measuring multiple relationships between variables (smartpls software version 2) and structural equation modeling method was used to analyze the findings.

**Results:** SRMR criterion was used to fit the overall model, according to the obtained value (SRMR = 0.08), the measurement and structural model has a good fit, that is, in general, the measurement and structural model has a good quality in explaining the endogenous variable of the research.

**Conclusion:** It is suggested that all kinds of functions and direct and indirect consequences related to the international competence and diplomacy of managers should be justified first for the sports managers themselves, then for sports organizations and finally for the country's sports and international communications and national diplomacy. Therefore, sports organizations need to use their internal and external capacities in addition to removing internal and external obstacles by using appropriate strategies and solutions.

**Keywords:** Diplomacy, International Management, Competence of Managers, Sports Organization, Sports Policy.

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## Introduction

The role of sports and sports activities, which are part of the socio-cultural context of countries, has now gone beyond a physical activity or a form of recreation and has found various social, cultural, economic and environmental, political and international functions. The increasing importance of soft power in relations between countries on the one hand and the internationalization of sport on the other hand has led to the emergence of sport as a source and tool for the exercise of soft power of countries (Willig, 2017). One of the reasons for paying attention to the category of capability and competence is the comparison of successful and unsuccessful managers in today's world. On the other hand, many changes and complex developments of the current world in the work environment of today's organizations have caused the capabilities of managers to be more than ever in the spotlight and the concept of professional managers and diplomats to be introduced as one of the newest rings of the manager training paradigm. Training and empowering professional managers is a strategic necessity even for government organizations (Mohebi and et al, 2017). In the public mind, social environments, media spaces, and administrative and industrial systems, the question always arises as to why some managers are more successful and effective than others. Many answers are given to this question during different periods and based on scientific efforts. Among these, one of the main reasons for the difference between successful and unsuccessful managers is the amount of attention paid to job and professional competence. In fact, the most important source and advantage to achieve proper performance in managers are competence. Having professional knowledge, attitude and skills, regardless of political affiliation, is the most important tool and assets of managers to achieve goals and proper performance (Bajani and et al, 2019). Peter Drucker states that you train a manager, the rest

will come by itself. This sentence shows the importance of having efficient and professional managers. Eric's findings (2013) indicate that an important issue in the selection and appointment of managers is having general and professional competencies; Because the more general and professional competencies managers have, the more they can lead to the productivity of their organization (Quoted from Tolouian, 2019).

A review of the conceptual literature reveals different definitions of competency, but there is no general consensus on this. The definition of competency is highly dependent on the context in question (Traicoff and et al, 2019). For example, the Oxford Dictionary defines competence as the power, ability, and capacity to perform a task. Asheghi, Ghahramani and Ghaderchian (2017) believes that competence is a set of components and characteristics such as knowledge, skills, insights, motivation, capacity, credibility, experience, value, etc. that lead to a superior and desirable performance of a manager in the organization. In other words, competence refers to a special kind of superiority and distinction that is rooted in knowledge, skills, insights, attitudes, characteristics of ability, credibility and experience, and pure and appropriate motivation. Competence is generally considered as a type of ability for a job or job position (Chen & Jiang, 2019). Therefore, the selection and appointment of managers in order to improve job effectiveness requires attention to various dimensions, components and indicators that can vary from organization to organization (Sha'abani and et al, 2019). In various studies, for selecting and appointing suitable managers, dimensions, components and indicators are proposed that include personal characteristics, professional knowledge and information, skills (intellectual and behavioral), personality and attitudinal characteristics, professional and public credibility, social and political skills, managerial roles to the nature of the

organization and organizational factors (Asheghi, 2016). For example, in a model introduced by Schroeder in 1989, dimensions such as knowledge, ability, motivation, value, and management style are introduced to suit managers' competencies and ultimately effectiveness. One of the most important and professional competencies in today's world is the diplomatic competencies in the profession and job. Diplomatic competencies are addressed as a set of implicit characteristics such as general and specialized knowledge, motivations, characteristics, self-concept, social roles, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, abilities, personality, wisdom, expertise (social, technical, managerial), mindset, and behavioral orientation which emerge as a result of diplomatic activities (Bonyadi and et al, 2018) and give managers the ability to work at the diplomatic level for their organization (Kin & Kareem, 2019). Diplomatic competencies are defined as a set of competencies needed to understand the global environment at a satisfactory or privileged level. Managers' diplomatic competencies are directly related to key job responsibilities and clusters of general competencies and specific competencies in each area (Samian and et al, 2017). Individuals have the diplomatic competencies to transform organizations into globally active systems and to create international value for the organization by organizing international partnerships and opportunities (Bonyadi and et al, 2018). Managers, as the main decision-makers in the face of organizational issues and problems, play an important and decisive role in the success or even failure of their organization.

In a study entitled *Modeling the Competencies of Sports Marketing Managers* (Using Foundation Data Theory), Shirvani and et al (2021) obtained a total of 682 initial codes from the analysis of 17 interviews. They performed the analysis of the interview data in three stages of open, axial and selective coding. After extracting similar codes, 109 distinct open

codes were identified. They placed 109 open codes extracted from the interviews in 23 cod-focused groups including personality, behavioral, value, organizational intelligence, emotional intelligence, strategic intelligence, competitive intelligence, business intelligence, moral intelligence, cultural intelligence, political intelligence, social intelligence, management, knowledge, sports, Skills, integrated marketing management, customer management, sales management, brand management, market segmentation, global marketing, marketing research and Islamic-ethical marketing. Core codes were categorized into 4 selected code groups including basic, intelligence, professional, and operational competencies. In their research, Naderian and Soltan Hosseini (2011) has also examined the skills and abilities required for sports managers. The results showed that sports managers are capable of technical skills including the ability to attract financial aid, knowledge of sports equipment and supplies, organizing competitions and camps, monitoring the execution of calendars, skills in administrative correspondence, ability to counsel and lead the forces, familiarity with the goals and mission of the organization, having a sports background and familiarity with the principles of budgeting are needed to be effective. Bejani, Shahlaei, Keshkar and Ghafouri's research (2019) was conducted with the ultimate goal of developing a competency model for managers of sports organizations in the country using a systematic design of data theory. In this study, by conducting open interviews with 17 specialists and officials of sports management, a set of basic themes were recovered during the coding process and categories were extracted from them. In the pivotal coding stage, the links between these categories were determined under the headings of causal conditions (Including productivity and administrative factors), pivotal phenomenon or competence of sports managers (Includes hard competency, soft competency, competitive competence),

strategy factors (Including training and control and supervision), contextual factors (Including behavioral contexts and formal contexts), intervening conditions (Including motivational, environmental and organizational) and consequences (Including growth and development and organizational stagnation of managers) in the form of coding paradigm. Given the key importance of the issue of competency in the selection of managers and the role of diplomacy models in doing this important issue for several years, this issue has been considered by policymakers and managers in the field of sports and in some documents and policies of cross-sectoral communication in general (including the 20-year vision document of the Islamic Republic, five-year plans for socio-economic and cultural development of the country, civil service management law and general policies of the administrative system, etc.), considering the importance of selecting and appointing sports managers is emphasized. One of the areas in which the professionalism and international nature of jobs and organizational positions are located is sports and sports organizations. Undoubtedly, sport in Iranian society is an inseparable element of the people, and at any time, sections of society are not indifferent to sporting events, and the bittersweet moments of sporting events are tied to people's lives. Sport in the international arena also has its own attractions; Athletes compete against each other in a sport, regardless of skin color or race, just to win the field and make the hearts of the people of their country happy. In addition to the importance of sports in the domestic and international arena, sports diplomacy is also one of the important and influential factors that can have a significant impact on the rights of athletes during a competition and thus protect the national interests of sports in each country. Today, sport is closely related to politics and has become a topic of international relations. In this regard, Hosseini Asgarabadi's research (2021) has been conducted with the aim of

identifying effective strategies on Iranian public diplomacy through sport and its consequences. Based on the findings of the semi-structured interview, the most important strategies affecting the role of sport in explaining Iran's public diplomacy are: empowerment, communication networks and public incentives. Finally, the implications of the role of sport in explaining Iran's public diplomacy include economic function, cultural function, political function, and social development. Managers are therefore advised to use sport as a key and strategic tool to increase relationships and gain power, economic prosperity, strengthen development, and promote cultural policies internationally. But a bitter truth that Iranian sport is facing these days is the weakness in sports diplomacy. One of the main reasons for this problem is the lack of necessary coordination between the areas and institutions involved, and most importantly, the neglect and insensitivity and inattention of the field of sports agencies to the importance of recognizing, policy-making, setting strategic goals and securing executive mechanisms among the medium and long-term operational priorities (Javadipoor and Rasekh, 2020). Hence, primitive identification, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, sports diplomacy, their distinguishing features, and the possibility of combining it with the goals of the system and current policies of the government and responsible agencies in terms of strategic policy-making and implementation of the resulting solutions, in addition to explaining the principles and policies governing cultural and sports diplomacy, explaining the role and position of sports diplomacy in strengthening the country's public diplomacy, determining the conditions and characteristics and competencies of sports managers of the Islamic Republic of Iran can be realized as the issue considered by the researcher. The results of Bakhshi Chenari and et al (2019) research showed that introducing the rich and civilized culture of Iran, introducing the country's tourist



attractions and then attracting tourists and creating a better environment for conversation between different ethnic groups and nations, facing less resistance in communities and destination countries in political negotiations, the possibility of reducing military conflict between countries and reducing the importance of military issues, the absence of sports diplomacy from a hostile tone, along with the greater attractiveness of this type of diplomacy than other diplomats are among the most important roles of sports diplomacy in foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the viewpoint of the elite. Like professional and international athletes and coaches, professional and international managers have received a great deal of attention in sports today. In the meantime, according to sectors such as professional sports, many parts of the field of sports in nature need professional management. In this regard, Peymanfar and et al (2019) in a study entitled *Strategies and Implications for the Development of Sports Diplomacy in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, concluded that there are ten strategies in three categories: branding and accreditation strategies, interaction with the world and empowerment of capacities, as well as ten consequences in three categories of the consequences of the development of political sociology, the development of foreign policy, and the development of sport. Fullerton and et al (2018) also in a study entitled as the *Transformation of Sports Diplomacy into Diplomatic Outputs*; By presenting a model of sports diplomacy, they came to the conclusion that if the sources of sports diplomacy are purposefully, creatively and correctly selected and these resources are in line with the political strategies of each country (state), its outputs can be in line with politics and goals of the country. A review of past research shows that despite the benefits of competence of managers and sports diplomacy, its use in our country faces challenges and shortcomings that this, leads to further importance of conducting a research to improve and empower these novel

components more than ever.

Summary of past research shows that most of the country's sports problems are in professional sports (Mohammadi, Badami, Meshkati and Nazari, 2018). In any case, it is necessary to formulate and implement professional training programs for professional managers and professional development of current managers to become one of the main foundations of professionalism in the country's sports. The main reference in the development of a professional development plan for sports managers can be human resource management guidelines in government. Then the specialized aspects of sports management should be dealt with. But first it is necessary to define the professional development of managers and then to conceptualize and operationalize for sports managers. Summary of research shows that the development of professional and diplomatic competence of managers has two approaches "Top down" and "bottom up", and the source of this division is the question of who should start the professional development program; Top managers or the people themselves. In the top-down approach, it is the managers and superiors who prepare and organize training programs such as workshops, meetings, seminars, conferences, short-term courses, and produce training content to develop the human resources profession under their auspices. A top-down approach to professional development usually has only formal results and cannot make profound or significant changes. The bottom-up approach is the opposite of the one mentioned above, and in contrast, career development programs are started not by top managers and officials but by individuals themselves. Career development programs started by individuals themselves can empower them to make changes in their careers, as well as their own voluntary and sustainable development. Formal education does not necessarily lead to change, growth, progress and development, but when the development process is started voluntarily by

the individual and with his own responsibility and effort, it undoubtedly leads to the development and excellence of his profession (Min and Choi, 2019).

Human resources in general and managers in particular have a significant role in the development of organizations and institutions, and the development of sports diplomacy in the country is no exception to this rule. Human resource development has several indicators that are addressed by various international organizations every year; Indicators that also show the level of development of the country. But what is at stake here is the employment and empowerment of qualified managers and manpower in attracting international seats, hosting international events, and so on. Experts presented the weaknesses of the country's sports diplomacy apparatus, which they considered to be more than its strengths, as follows: Sports managers' weakness in familiarity with international formalities and protocols, the lack of a unique sports diplomacy strategy in the country's sports organizations, inability and inactivity of female sports managers in international sports organizations, successive changes of managers at the highest level of sports in the country, lack of sports policies in the country's public policy, weak financial and human resources in the field of sports diplomacy, the state structure of the country's sports, the inability of many sports managers to international activities, gaining seats, etc., the lack of evaluation and performance management system in the field of sports diplomacy, weak and low attention to the interaction and cooperation of the diplomatic apparatus and the sports system of the country, as well as the existence of different political approaches between some government institutions and the government (Peymanfar, 2016).

Reviewing the existing research, it can be seen that: so far, international competence and diplomacy in the field of sports management

have been less discussed and less research has been done on the scientific model in the field of developing the diplomatic competence of sports managers. Therefore, it is necessary to define the concept of developing the competence and international competence of managers in sports and provide a suitable framework for it. On the other hand, considering that the international competence of sports managers is one of the main needs for the promotion of sports management in the country, it should be done professionally and systematically, so it is necessary to first provide a scientific framework in this field. In this regard, the main purpose of this study is to design a model to promote the international competence of managers in sports in the country. In this research, an attempt is made to analyze the elements and relationships of professional development of sports managers in a coordinated manner. Accordingly, the development of professional, diplomatic and international competencies of sports managers has different dimensions, types and stages that the present study seeks to identify and model them.

## Materials and Methods

The research method was descriptive-correlational. The statistical population consisted of all the experts in the field of sports research: managers of sports organizations and professors of sports management in universities. A statistical sample was selected in a sufficient number to test the model in a purposeful and accessible way (152 people). The number of samples was selected based on a sufficient number for modeling in PLS software as 10 to 20 times the number of questions related to the variable with the highest questions in the model (Dawari and Rezazade, 2016). Therefore, 10 times the number of variable questions with the highest number of questions (13 questions in the specialized and pivotal competency variable) was estimated at 130 people. To ensure the number of

appropriate answers, 140 questionnaires were distributed, of which 124 out of 133 received questionnaires were fully answered and entered the analysis process.

The research tool was a questionnaire. The

questionnaire included variables and determining factors and was on a 5-point Likert scale (From very low = 1 to very high = 5). Table 1 lists the main research variables and their dimensions (sub-variables) along with the number of questions.

Table (1). Characteristics of research variables

Model level	Number of questions	Variable	Number of questions
Types of international competence and diplomacy of sports managers	33	General and Basic Competence	6
		Specialized and central competence	8
		Professional and advanced competence	7
		Key and special competence	5
		Excellent competence	7
Competency development  International and Diplomacy  Sports Managers	24	Background Finding and Needs Assessment	6
		Capacity building and bedding	5
		Policy Making and Planning	6
		Empowerment and competency development	7
Factors affecting competence  International and Diplomacy  Sports Managers	18	Individual Factors	6
		Occupational factors	4
		Organizational factors	4
		Environmental factors	4
Competency functions  International and Diplomacy  Sports Managers	16	Functions for Managers	5
		Functions for the organization	5
		Functions for sports	6
Total = 91			

A questionnaire was developed to assess the content or face validity of 6 professors of sports management and 6 managers of the executive field of sports. After confirming the content validity, the tool was first distributed among 30 people in the statistical population in a pilot study. Through Cronbach's alpha method, its

internal reliability or stability was calculated and confirmed using software SPSS<sub>20</sub> (α = 0.86). Then the questionnaires were collected in the main stage. And Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this stage (final) was calculated. Cronbach's alpha coefficient showed that most of the structures and their related variables have very

good internal stability. Then, the reliability and validity of the structure, as stages reported in the findings section, were confirmed using the software. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the findings. Due to the abnormal distribution of most research variables (the degree of skewness of most research variables was outside the range of -1 to 1) and the need to testing mediating hypotheses, the software smart PLS was used.

A small sample size was the best reason to use

PLS. The first generation methods of structural equation modeling, which were performed with software such as EQS, LISREL and AMOS require a large number of samples, while PLS has the ability to run a model with a very small number of samples.

## Result

In this section, research indicators are based on their mean and standard deviation are described in Table 2.

**Table (2). Comparison and priority of research items**

Questions (items)	Mean	SD
1. Inclusion of national programs for empowering managers on sports organizations	3.89	0.99
2. The need to have professional managers in sports according to the conditions of the country's economic crisis	3.47	1.07
3. Development of human capital with sports management expertise in the country	3.40	1.09
4. The difficulty and complexity of managerial activity in international sports for managers	3.86	0.99
5. The need for relative mastery of the international language and literature of sport	4.07	0.74
6. The need to work in the media and social spaces of international sports	3.96	0.83
7. National requirements for managers to become professionals	3.28	1.01
8. The process of professionalization and internationalization of sports management in the world	3.39	1.22
9. Different perceptions of international competence in the field of sports	3.91	1.01
10. The complexity and competitiveness of the sports environment and the need for professional managers	4.24	0.68
11. Many institutional emphases to promote international power in the country's organizations	4.48	0.60
12. There are many benefits to the organization in international activities and sports diplomacy	3.80	0.91
13. Domestic political conflicts for diplomacy	4.28	0.76
14. Restrictions on sports diplomacy, especially with Europe and the United States and countries in conflict with Iran	4.35	0.68
15. Scientific and executive developments of sports management in Iran and the world	3.59	1.02
16. Institutional promotion of the country's sports organizations such as the Ministry of Sports, the National Olympic Committee and federations	4.16	0.78



17. The complexity of the conditions of the international sports environment for the diplomacy activities of managers	4.24	0.71
18. Challenges of virtual and media environment for politics and diplomacy in sports	4.41	0.55
19. Necessary fluency in Latin	4.11	0.72
20. Mastery of working with information technology and social networks	4.48	0.60
21. Appropriate managerial and executive background in the field related to international sports affairs	3.80	0.91
22. Having appropriate international sports information	4.13	0.67
23. Obvious interest and following the events of international sports	3.92	0.88
24. Interactions with sports environments abroad and close acquaintance with the global sports environment	4.05	0.85
25. International Strategic Analysis and Decision Making Skills	3.89	0.83
26. Ability to plan strategically and operationally for the international activities of the organization	3.70	0.78
27. Familiarity with international sports law and regulations	3.29	0.89
28. Familiarity with finance and business in international sports	3.64	0.84
29. Dynamic interaction with the sports community, especially in the media and social space	4.27	0.60
30. Professional interaction with prominent political parties in the field of foreign policy in the field of sports	4.05	0.67
31. Professional Behavior, Behavioral Prestige, and International Organizational Formalities	3.24	1.13
32. Recognizing as an active and interactive person at the international level	4.26	0.67
33. Ability to search and research internationally in their area of expertise	4.51	0.53
34. Creativity and problem-solving skills in international issues	2.32	0.93
35. Managerial intelligence and foresight at the international level of sport	4.18	0.64
36. International marketing and branding ability	3.65	0.96
37. Networking and systems communication skills at the international level	3.73	0.72
38. Verbal mastery and articulation in sports management	3.08	1.11
39. Active media participation related to international sports and diplomacy	4.30	0.91
40. Active negotiation and diplomacy skills in sports	3.74	1.05
41. Having important information in world sports policy and communication	4.32	0.79
42. Ability to promote the sport under his / her management in international rankings	2.88	1.02
43. High political and environmental intelligence and the mentality of modern diplomacy	2.51	1.02

44. Familiarity with and mastery of formalities and international relations in politics, management and sports	3.28	1.08
45. Earn international sports points for the country (hosting events, winning seats, etc.)	2.88	1.02
46. Attracting international resources, support and investment	4.20	0.88
47. Crisis management skills and international risks in sport such as sanctions	3.28	1.08
48. Ability and commitment to internationalization of the organization and sports	3.22	1.16
49. Ability to recognize the complexity and rules of the political and international environment of sport	3.75	0.98
50. Prevent government interference in the international affairs of sport	3.72	0.98
51. Having ethics and social and extra-organizational responsibility in sports	2.63	1.11
52. Understanding the methods of training and development of sports managers in the world	3.53	1.16
53. Pathology of previous job training programs for sports managers in the country	2.43	1.01
54. Monitoring and determining the skill level of international activity and diplomacy of sports directors of the country	2.35	1.13
55. Needs assessment of international capability and diplomacy of sports managers	3.74	0.81
56. Documenting the educational backgrounds and professional experiences of sports managers	3.37	1.00
57. Documenting the experiences of managers in sports organizations with their participation	2.73	0.96
58. Using the media space to streamline support for sports directors with diplomatic activities	4.35	0.83
59. Redefining sports management jobs based on advanced and professional job standards	2.93	1.20
60. Review the system of payment of salaries and bonuses for sports managers based on international standards	3.62	1.00
61. Encourage sports managers to plan personally to improve international and diplomatic capabilities	2.59	0.97
62. Determining the methods and tools of international capability and diplomacy by sports managers (training course, etc.)	3.16	1.13
63. Targeting the international capability and diplomacy of sports managers based on the type of sports organization and management category	3.71	0.87
64. Coordinating upstream authorities and providing political support for the International Program and Sports Diplomacy	2.59	0.97
65. Determining the method of monitoring and evaluating the program of international capability and diplomacy of sports managers	2.65	1.04
66. Alignment of personal and professional development programs with organizational	3.71	0.87

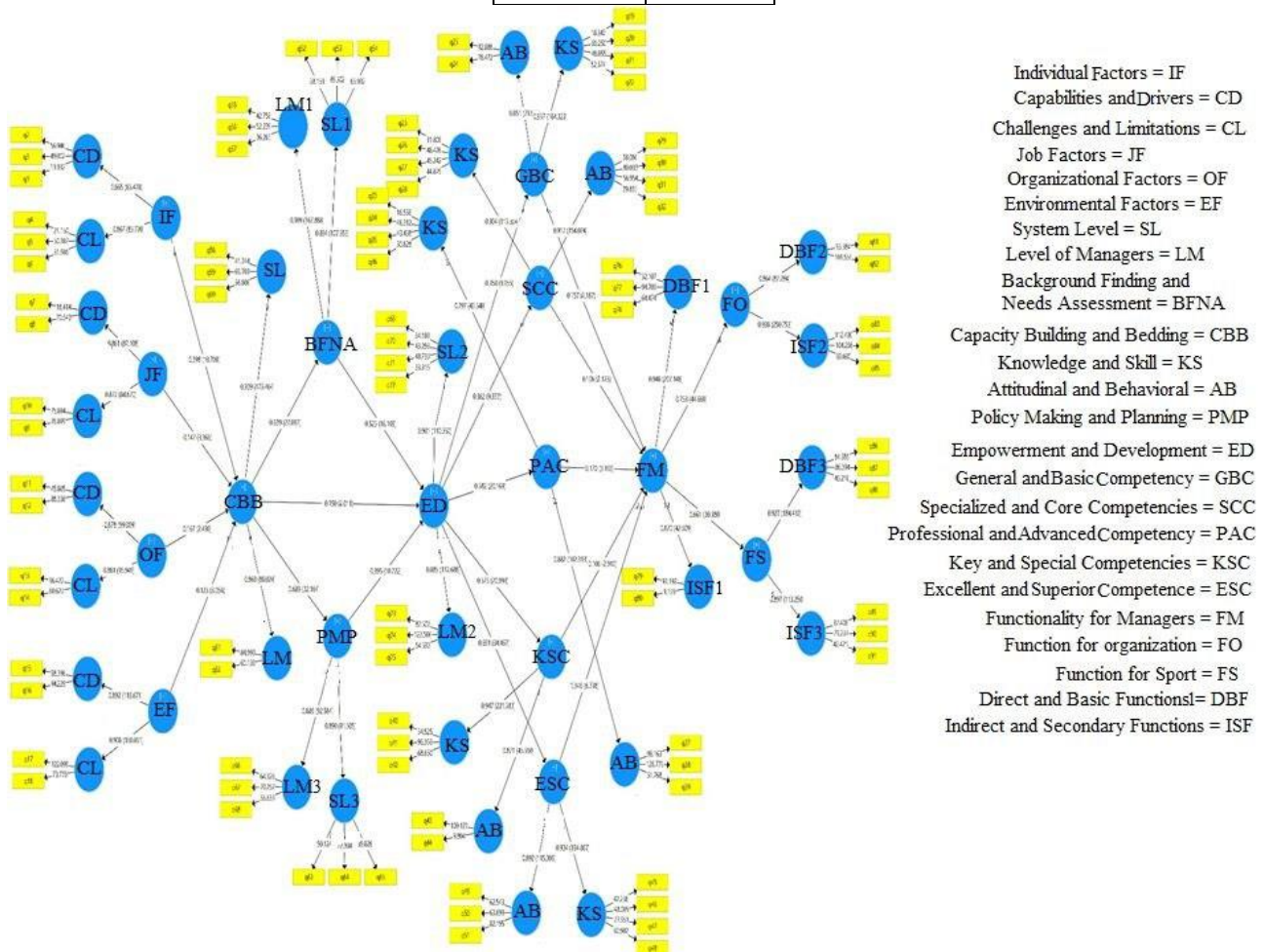
programs by sports managers		
67. Emphasis on managers to qualify for managerial positions in the field of sports with the field of international activity	3.47	0.88
68. Apply and implement professional standards for sports management jobs	2.97	1.02
69. Creating a professional learning community for sports managers	4.08	1.18
70. Advising and mentoring sports managers in the field of international activities	3.55	0.87
71. Implementation of methods of empowerment and international capability and diplomacy of sports managers	4.31	0.68
72. Creating a communication system and information flow between sports managers (such as the successful managers club model)	3.82	0.74
73. Targeted and systematic training of international and diplomacy skills to sports managers	3.77	0.75
74. Focus on international skills, innovation and change of approach in traditional managers	3.56	1.01
75. Encourage sports managers to take action research and use research to improve practice	2.91	1.09
76. Improving the ability of international management in sports managers	2.66	0.99
77. Establish effective extra-organizational interactions and diplomacy by sports managers	2.31	1.02
78. Centralization of standards international in the activities of sports managers	3.28	0.89
79. Establishing professional development procedures in sports managers	2.64	0.99
80. Instilling a culture of international participation in subordinates and colleagues in managers	3.37	1.04
81. Improving the performance level of the country's sports organizations	2.67	0.98
82. Development of the scope of international participation in the sports organization	3.86	0.99
83. Stabilizing the resources and structure of the sports organization	4.07	0.74
84. Promoting the international reputation of sports organizations	3.96	0.83
85. Agility of the sports organization in relation to environmental changes	3.28	1.01
86. Improving the international success of the country's sports	3.39	1.22
87. Promoting the position of Iranian sports in international rankings	3.91	1.02
88. Better meeting international expectations of the country's sport for stakeholders	4.24	0.68
89. Promoting the national sports brand of the country	4.48	0.60
90. Contribute to the interactions and international relations of the country's sports	3.80	0.91
91. Better protection of the international interests of the country's sports	4.28	0.76

The SRMR criterion was used to fit the overall model (both sections of the measurement and structural model). Where the value must be less than 0.1. According to the obtained value (SRMR=0.08), the measurement and structural

model has a good fit, that is, in general, the measurement and structural model has a good quality in explaining the endogenous variable of the research.

**Table (4). Overall fit amount**

Model Structure	
SRMR	0.08



**Figure (1). Results of path coefficients and level of significance of the main hypotheses of the research model**

**Table (4). Results of path coefficients and level of significance of the main hypotheses of the research model**

Significance of each factor over and under factors	Route coefficient	T-values	P Values
Individual factors -> Capabilities and drivers	0.86	85.48	0.001

Individual factors -> Challenges and limitations	0.87	83.72	0.001
Job factors -> Capabilities and motivations	0.86	87.11	0.001
Job factors -> Challenges and limitations	0.87	84.67	0.001
Organizational factors -> Capabilities and drivers	0.87	99.01	0.001
Organizational factors -> Challenges and limitations	0.88	95.95	0.001
Environmental factors -> Capabilities and drivers	0.89	116.67	0.001
Environmental factors -> Challenges and limitations	0.91	160.86	0.001
General and basic competence -> Knowledge and skill competence	0.94	184.32	0.001
General and basic competence -> Attitudinal and behavioral competence	0.85	79.86	0.001
Specialized and central competence -> Knowledge and skill competence	0.90	113.30	0.001
Specialized and central competence -> Attitudinal and behavioral competence	0.92	154.02	0.001
Professional and advanced competency -> Knowledge and skill competence	0.80	43.54	0.001
Professional and advanced competence -> Attitudinal and behavioral competence	0.88	102.31	0.001
Key and special competence -> Knowledge and skill competence	0.95	221.38	0.001
Key and special competence -> Attitudinal and behavioral competence	0.87	45.55	0.001
Excellent competence -> Knowledge and skill competence	0.93	194.87	0.001
Excellent competence -> Attitudinal and behavioral competence	0.89	115.30	0.001
Background and needs assessment -> system level	0.89	107.55	0.001
Background Finding and Needs Assessment -> Level of Managers	0.91	167.89	0.001
Capacity building and bedding -> system level	0.94	175.46	0.001
Capacity building and bedding -> Managers level	0.87	88.02	0.001
Policy and planning -> system level	0.89	92.58	0.001
Policy-making and planning -> Managers level	0.89	91.50	0.001
Empowerment and competency development -> system level	0.90	110.35	0.001
Empowerment and competency development -> Managers level	0.88	112.69	0.001
Functions for managers -> Direct and basic functions	0.95	207.15	0.001
Functions for managers -> Indirect and secondary functions	0.87	42.61	0.001



Functions for the organization -> Direct and basic functions	0.86	87.28	0.001
Functions for the organization -> Indirect and secondary functions	0.94	250.75	0.001
Functions for sports -> Direct and basic functions	0.93	184.41	0.001
Functions for sports -> Indirect and secondary functions	0.90	113.25	0.001
Individual factors -> Capacity building and bedding	0.40	10.90	0.001
Job factors -> Capacity building and bedding	0.15	3.36	0.001
Organizational factors -> Capacity building and bedding	0.17	2.49	0.001
Environmental factors -> Capacity building and bedding	0.12	3.05	0.001
Capacity building and bedding -> Background and needs assessment	0.64	27.02	0.001
Capacity building and bedding -> Empowerment and competency development	0.15	2.01	0.001
Capacity building and context building -> policy making and planning	0.69	32.16	0.001
Context Finding and Needs Assessment -> Empowerment and Competency Development	0.52	16.11	0.001
Policy-making and planning -> Empowerment and competency development	0.39	10.72	0.001
Empowerment and competency development -> General and basic competency	0.36	9.95	0.001
Empowerment and competency development -> Specialized and core competencies	0.36	6.94	0.001
Empowerment and competency development -> Professional and advanced competency	0.58	20.17	0.001
Empowerment and competency development -> Key and special competencies	0.57	20.17	0.001
Empowerment and competency development -> Excellent and superior competence	0.57	20.99	0.001
General and basic competency -> Functionality for managers	0.69	34.47	0.001
Professional and central competence -> Functionality for managers	0.16	2.19	0.001
Professional and advanced competency -> Functionality for managers	0.10	2.12	0.001
Key and special competencies -> Functionality for managers	0.17	3.19	0.001
Excellent competence -> Performance for managers	0.10	2.91	0.001
Function for managers -> Function for organization	0.34	6.74	0.001
Function for managers -> Function for sport	0.75	4.66	0.001

Based on Table 4 and Figure 1, it is determined that first:

- ✓ In terms of individual factors, both dimensions, challenges and limitations (0.87) and capabilities and drivers (0.86) had a significant role in explaining individual factors, respectively.
- ✓ In terms of job factors, both dimensions, challenges and limitations (0.87) and capabilities and drivers (0.86) had a significant role in explaining job factors, respectively.
- ✓ In the organizational factors section, both dimensions, challenges and limitations (0.88) and capabilities and drivers (0.87) had a significant role in explaining organizational factors, respectively.
- ✓ In the field of environmental factors, both dimensions, challenges and limitations (0.91) and capabilities and drivers (0.89) had a significant role in explaining environmental factors, respectively.
- ✓ In general, and basic competence, both dimensions, knowledge and skill competence (0.94) and attitudinal and behavioral competence (0.85) had a significant role in explaining general and basic competence, respectively.
- ✓ In the section of specialized and pivotal competence, both dimensions, attitudinal and behavioral competence (0.92) and knowledge and skill competence (0.90) had a significant role in explaining specialized and pivotal competence, respectively.
- ✓ In the section of professional and advanced competence, both dimensions, attitudinal and behavioral competence (0.88) and knowledge and skill competence (0.80) had a significant role in explaining professional and advanced competence, respectively.
- ✓ In the key and special competence, both dimensions, knowledge and skill competence (0.95) and attitudinal and behavioral competence (0.87) had a significant role in explaining key and special competence, respectively.
- ✓ In the section of excellent and superior competence, both dimensions, knowledge and skill competence (0.93) and attitudinal and behavioral competence (0.89) had a significant role in explaining excellent and superior competence, respectively.
- ✓ In the field of field finding and needs assessment, both dimensions, level of managers (0.91) and system level (0.89) had a significant role in explaining field finding and needs assessment, respectively.
- ✓ In capacity building and bedding, both dimensions, system level (0.94) and managers level (0.87) had a significant role in explaining capacity building and bedding.
- ✓ In policy-making and planning, both dimensions, system level (0.89) and manager's level (0.89) had a significant role in explaining policy-making and planning.
- ✓ In empowerment and competency development, both dimensions, system level (0.88) and manager's level (0.90) had a significant role in explaining empowerment and competency development, respectively.
- ✓ In the functions section for managers, both direct and primary functions (0.95) and indirect and secondary functions (0.87) had a significant role in explaining the functions to managers, respectively.
- ✓ In the functions section for the organization, both dimensions, indirect and secondary functions (0.94) and direct and primary functions (0.86) had a significant role in explaining the functions for the organization, respectively.
- ✓ In the functions section for sports, both direct and primary functions (0.93) and indirect and secondary functions (0.90) had

a significant role in explaining the functions for sports, respectively.

Based on the route analysis, it was determined that:

- ✓ Individual factors with a coefficient of 0.40% have a positive and significant effect on capacity building and bedding.
- ✓ Occupational factors with a coefficient of 0.15% have a positive and significant effect on capacity building and bedding.
- ✓ Organizational factors with a coefficient of 0.17% have a positive and significant effect on capacity building and bedding.
- ✓ Environmental factors with a coefficient of 0.12% have a positive and significant effect on capacity building and bedding.
- ✓ Capacity building and bedding with a coefficient of 0.64% has a positive and significant effect on contextualization and needs assessment.
- ✓ Capacity building and bedding with a coefficient of 0.15 percent has a positive and significant effect on empowerment and merit development.
- ✓ Capacity building and bedding with a coefficient of 0.69 percent has a positive and significant effect on policy-making and planning.
- ✓ Background and needs assessment with a coefficient of 0.52% has a positive and significant effect on empowerment and competency development.
- ✓ Policy-making and planning with a coefficient of 0.39 percent has a positive and significant effect on empowerment and competency development.
- ✓ Empowerment and competency development with a coefficient of 0.36 percent has a positive and significant effect on general and basic competence.
- ✓ Empowerment and competency development with a coefficient of 0.36 percent has a positive and significant effect on professional and core competency.
- ✓ Empowerment and competency development with a coefficient of 0.58% has a positive and significant effect on professional and advanced competency.
- ✓ Empowerment and competency development with a coefficient of 0.57% has a positive and significant effect on key and special competence.
- ✓ Empowerment and competency development with a coefficient of 0.69% has a positive and significant effect on excellent and superior competence.
- ✓ General and basic competence with a coefficient of 0.16% has a positive and significant effect on performance for managers.
- ✓ Professional and pivotal competence with a coefficient of 0.10 percent has a positive and significant effect on performance for managers.
- ✓ Professional and advanced competency with a coefficient of 0.17% has a positive and significant effect on performance for managers.
- ✓ Key and special competence with a coefficient of 0.10% has a positive and significant effect on performance for managers.
- ✓ Excellent competence with a coefficient of 0.34% has a positive and significant effect on performance for managers.
- ✓ Function for managers with a coefficient of 0.75% has a positive and significant effect on performance for the organization.
- ✓ Function for managers with a coefficient of 0.66 percent has a positive and significant effect on performance for sports.

## Discussion

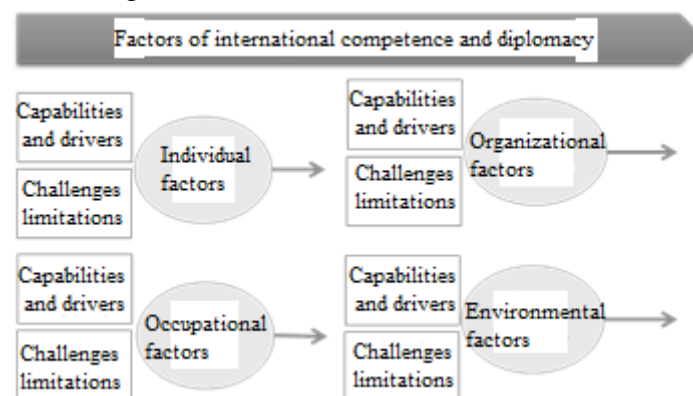
The results of the research are discussed separately at the levels of the conceptual model and the relationships between them.

### The first level of the model: factors of international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers

The results of quantitative modeling in the factor analysis of dimensions and components related to the main variables of the model showed that: the dimensions of challenges and constraints and capabilities and drivers, respectively, had a significant role in explaining individual factors. Challenges, limitations, capabilities and motivations played a significant role in explaining job factors, respectively. Challenges and limitations and capabilities and drivers had a significant role in

explaining organizational factors, respectively. Challenges, limitations, capabilities and drivers played a significant role in explaining environmental factors, respectively.

In fact, the factors affecting the international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers are the result of the simultaneous combination of two types of personal, professional, organizational and environmental factors with challenges (limitations) and capabilities (drivers). Therefore, it can be said that the outcome of individual challenges and capabilities, job challenges and capabilities, organizational challenges and capabilities, and environmental challenges and capabilities determine the extent and approach of International and diplomatic competency in sports managers.



**Figure (2). The first level of the conceptual model of research: factors of international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers**

The results of this study were consistent with Min and Choi (2019) research which reported the factors affecting the empowerment of managers including: individual, organizational and environmental factors, structural, behavioral, contextual, motivational, communication and cognitive. Jankovic (2014) sees the link between international sport and the general dimension of diplomacy as central to the ability of managers. In his study, Murray (2013) considers sports diplomacy to be the result of managers' attention to the domestic political environment and international sports.

Therefore, it is suggested that brokers and stakeholders in their decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation to train and empower sports managers consider the challenges and capabilities related to individual, professional, organizational and environmental aspects as the same time and do not limit their attention to just a few issues.

### The second level of the model: types of international competencies and diplomacy for sports managers

The results of quantitative modeling in the

factor analysis of dimensions and components related to the main variables of the model showed that: the dimensions of knowledge and skill competence and attitudinal and behavioral competence had a significant role in explaining general and basic competence, respectively. The dimensions of attitudinal and behavioral competence and knowledge and skill competence had a significant role in explaining specialized and pivotal competence, respectively. The dimensions of attitudinal and

behavioral competence and knowledge and skill competence had a significant role in explaining professional and advanced competence, respectively. Knowledge and skill competence and attitudinal and behavioral competence had a significant role in explaining key and special competence, respectively. Dimensions of knowledge and skill competence and attitudinal and behavioral competence had a significant role in explaining excellent and superior competence.



**Figure (3). Second level of the model: types of international competencies and diplomacy for sports managers**

Therefore, it can be said that in the second level, the model of general behavioral competencies, general, specialized, professional behavioral skills, special behavioral skills and excellent behavioral skills for sports managers can be defined and discussed and managers of sports organizations can be evaluated and compared in this regard. The results of this model level were in line with the results of Naderian and Soltan Hosseini (2011), Basiji and et al (2021) and Ekstin and et al (2015) research at the component level and with Ramezani-Nejad and et al (2016) research at the dimensional level, but was consistent with Asadi and et al (2016), Nazarian Madevani (2017) and Fattahpour Marandi and et al (2017) study in addition to the component level at the perspective and dimensions level. In this regard, it is suggested that judging the international competencies and diplomacy of

sports managers in organizational, academic, sports and media environments should not be limited to a few types of physical and routine competencies, but also types of behavioral competencies and skills should be evaluated and examined separately in general, specialized, professional, special competence and excellent competence.

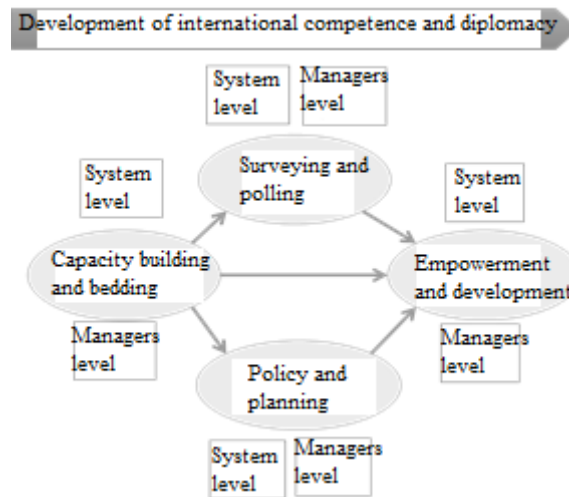
### **Level 3 of the model: The process of developing international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers**

The third level of the conceptual model includes the process of developing international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers, including perspectives on field evaluation and needs evaluation, capacity building and preparing the context, policy-making and planning, empowerment and development of competencies separated by



dimensions of individual territory (managers) and structural territory (system). The results of quantitative modeling in the factor analysis of dimensions and components related to the main variables of the model showed that: Dimensions of managers and system level had a significant role in explaining context-finding and needs evaluation, respectively. The dimensions of the system level and the level of

managers had a significant role in explaining capacity building and preparing the context. The dimensions of the system level and the level of managers played an important role in explaining policy-making and planning. Dimensions of system level and manager's level had a significant role in explaining empowerment and competency development, respectively.



**Figure (4). Third level of the model: the process of developing international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers**

It can be said that the development of international competence and diplomacy of sports managers is not only possible from a structural and organizational perspective, but also all stages and processes of grounding and needs evaluation, capacity building and context building, policy-making and planning, empowering and developing should be the result of simultaneously adapting the career path plan of managers with organizational programs in the field of managerial empowerment. For example, training courses alone are not enough to promote the knowledge aspects of competency in these managers, and managers themselves must have learning and self-learning. Pourafkari and Ghanbari (2012) and Villegas (2015) have reported the empowerment mechanism in the management of sports organizations as effective. Sals and et al (2017) also sees managerial empowerment as a systematic process. Based on this level of the model, it is suggested that in order to promote

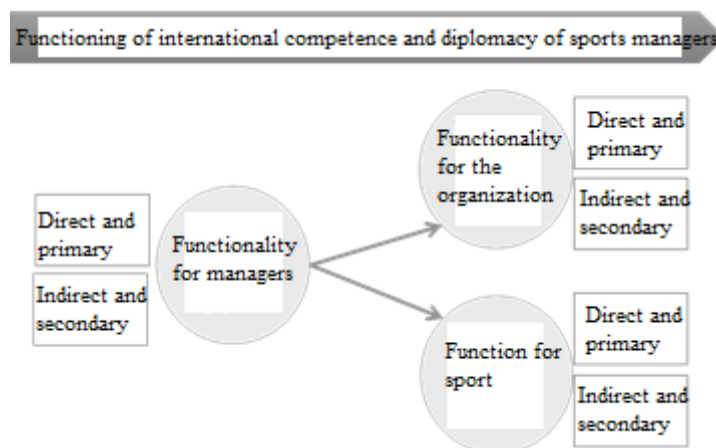
the international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers, it is not enough to have only occasional actions and programs such as training courses and executive opportunities for managers, but also as a systematic and purposeful process of needs assessment, capacity building, planning, empowerment and development should be considered in both individual (managers) and structural (system) approaches.

#### **Level 4 of the model: Functions of international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers**

The last level of the conceptual model includes the functions of international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers, which includes performance perspectives for managers, functions for organizations and functions for sports, and separately for the two dimensions of direct-primary functions and indirect-secondary

functions. The results of quantitative modeling in the factor analysis of dimensions and components related to the main variables of the model showed that: the dimensions of direct and primary functions and indirect and secondary functions had a significant role in explaining the functions to managers, respectively. The dimensions of indirect and

secondary functions and direct and primary functions had a significant role in explaining the functions for the organization, respectively. The dimensions of direct and primary functions and indirect and secondary functions played a significant role in explaining the functions for sport, respectively.



**Figure (5). Level 4 of the model: Functions of international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers**

In fact, the functions of international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers should be considered from the simultaneous combination of types of results and direct-indirect, primary-secondary and for managers-organization-sports. Honari and et al (2017), Bejani (2020) and Fred (2011) have reported similar functions at the component level for the competence of sports directors. Based on the results of this level, it is suggested that the results and consequences of promoting international competencies and diplomacy of sports managers should not be ignored, or it should not be limited to a few obvious and direct results and consequences, but a variety of direct and indirect functions and consequences related to international competence and managers' diplomacy should be paid attention to firstly to the sports managers themselves, then to the sports organizations, and finally to the country's sports and international relations and national diplomacy.

#### **Relationships between levels and their**

#### **variables**

In general, the extracted conceptual framework consisted of 4 levels, 16 perspectives, 32 dimensions and 91 components. Systematic structure between variables in the model is as a matrix combination of perspectives and dimensions in training between the four levels; the level of influencing factors is the level of competency development, the level of competency types and the level of competency functions. In fact, the model as a chain of causal relationships between variables is one of the influential factors towards the framework of competency development and then the types of competence to eventually lead to the identified functions.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on path analysis, it was found that: individual factors, occupational factors, organizational factors and environmental factors had a significant effect on capacity building and context preparation. Capacity

building and context preparation had a significant effect on contextualization and needs evaluation, empowerment and competency development, and policy-making and planning. Contextualization, needs evaluation, policy making and planning had a significant effect on the basic and general competency, specialized and pivotal competency, professional and advanced competency, key and special competency and excellent and superior competency. General and basic competencies, specialized and pivotal competencies, professional and advanced competencies, key and special competencies, and excellent and superior competencies had a significant effect on performance for managers. Function for managers has a significant effect on performance for the organization and on performance for sports.

In explaining the relationships between model levels and their variables, several basic points can be mentioned. First, recognizing the influential factors is the prelude to the internal analysis of the system (development of international competence and diplomacy of sports managers) and without knowing the variables, it is not possible to gain a proper understanding of the competency development mechanism. In addition, competency development requires capacity utilization, needs recognition, program formulation, and the ability to implement those (Level 2 of the model). By recognizing the factors and conditions and formulating the plan and path, all kinds of competencies can be improved and developed (third level of the model). Finally, the development of competencies brings with it various and important functions and consequences for managers and the management and sports system. The results of the path analysis section, which show significant relationships between the variables of the four levels of the model, actually confirm that the model and the relationships between their variables. In general, the extracted conceptual framework consisted of 4 levels, 16

perspectives, 32 dimensions and 91 components. Systematic structure between variables in the model is as a matrix combination of perspectives and dimensions in training between the four levels; the level of influencing factors is the level of competency development, the level of competency types and the level of competency functions. In fact, the model as a chain of causal relationships between variables is one of the influential factors towards the framework of competency development and then the types of competence eventually lead to the identified functions. The generalities of the model were consistent with the results of Ebrahimpour and et al (2011), Chen and Jiang (2019) and Bakhshi Chenari and et al (2019) in terms of the overall structure of the model. Finally, the development of competence brings different and important functions and consequences for managers and sports management system. The results of the path analysis section, which showed significant relationships between the variables of the four levels of the model, actually confirm the model and the relationships between their variables. In a general way, it is suggested that analysts and decision-makers look at the discussion of international competence and the diplomacy of sports managers not only on the type of competence and its results, but also on all the factors, dimensions, components and relationships between them. The form of an analysis chain and mental model should be considered so that it does not lead to limited and directed evaluation and decision making. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the cause-and-effect relationship between variables in practice. In fact, the conceptual model presented in this research should be used as a mental model for decision-making and an analysis framework for planning in the field of sports startups. Also, based on the presented framework of this research, there should be a proper division of work between the responsible and relevant organizations and centers in the development of international

competence and diplomacy of sports managers for the proper distribution of responsibilities and resources in order to avoid parallel work and inconsistency between Avoid parts and waste of resources. Also, they should not limit themselves to only some case measures in the field of using crowdsourcing and pay attention to all its aspects, and for this, the process described in this research should be at the center of decision-making.

Future researchers can use a comparative study to compare the perspectives analyzed in this research with selected countries from around the world, including neighboring countries and the Middle East region.

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