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National Talent Management in Sports: A SWOT Analysis Study

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of national talent management systems in sports in order to provide insights for policy and practice. This research employed a qualitative design with a library-based approach. A total of 23 scholarly articles published between 2012 and 2025 were systematically selected based on inclusion criteria focused on national talent management in sports. Data were collected through academic databases and analyzed using NVivo 14 software. Thematic analysis was conducted in three phases—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding—until theoretical saturation was reached. A SWOT framework was applied to categorize the findings into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The analysis identified five core strengths, including structured talent pathways, governmental support, access to professional expertise, infrastructure development, and collaborative governance. Weaknesses centered on inconsistent policies, limited resources, talent migration, inequitable access, and weak monitoring systems. Opportunities emerged in the form of technological advancements, global partnerships, rising public interest, policy reforms, and diversity and inclusion agendas. Major threats included political and economic instability, commercialization pressures, athlete burnout and dropout, global competition, and corruption or mismanagement. Collectively, the findings highlight that while strong foundations exist in national talent management systems, unresolved structural weaknesses and external threats could undermine long-term sustainability. National talent management in sports is a multidimensional process requiring stable policy frameworks, adequate resources, inclusivity, and global adaptability. The SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of internal and external factors influencing talent management systems, offering actionable insights for policymakers and sports managers to design strategies that enhance national competitiveness and athlete development.

Keywords: Talent management, SWOT analysis, sports policy, athlete development, national sports systems, qualitative research

Introduction

Talent management has emerged as a crucial component in shaping sustainable development across industries, and sports is no exception. In contemporary sport systems, where competitiveness, globalization, and commercialization are increasingly intense, effective talent management has become indispensable to achieving both national and organizational objectives [1]. Nations with structured talent pipelines, strategic planning, and sustainable policies are more likely to develop elite athletes, expand grassroots participation, and ensure continuity in medal-winning disciplines [2]. Therefore, the study of national talent management in sports requires not only a managerial perspective but also a strategic and policy-oriented lens.

Talent management was initially discussed in business and organizational contexts but has progressively expanded to sports, where the management of athletes, coaches, and support staff is central to national success [3]. The concept involves

a set of practices designed to identify, attract, retain, and develop individuals with high potential to ensure performance sustainability [4]. In sports, talent management refers to structured efforts for talent identification, nurturing through systematic programs, and retaining skilled athletes for national and international competitions [5]. Research indicates that talent transfer and development pathways significantly contribute to athlete success when aligned with strategic governance models [5, 6].

In Iran and similar contexts, the emergence of talent management studies has underscored the importance of designing comprehensive models that integrate social, cultural, and economic realities [7, 8]. Early works linked talent management with concepts such as social capital, indicating that community networks and trust structures play a significant role in shaping opportunities for talent development [9]. Over time, research evolved to focus on managerial and policy frameworks, recognizing that talent management is not merely an organizational practice but also a national strategic necessity [10].

Governments are central actors in shaping talent management strategies in sports. Evidence from various contexts shows that policy frameworks and government interventions influence both the design and implementation of talent identification systems [11]. In Iran, policy-making processes often involve multiple stakeholders, which can complicate coordination but also present opportunities for inclusive models [12]. Studies highlight that when governmental organizations invest in structured pathways, it increases the probability of nurturing athletes from grassroots to elite levels [13]. Similarly, comparative research in Iraq emphasizes that talent management in sports organizations is shaped by the quality of management systems and their alignment with broader educational and social policies [14, 15].

However, inconsistencies in national policy, limited resources, and fragmented decision-making continue to be significant challenges [16]. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the vulnerability of sports organizations when adaptive talent management frameworks were lacking [16]. At the same time, government reforms and rising budgets create opportunities for developing more comprehensive systems that prioritize inclusivity, equity, and sustainability [17].

From an organizational standpoint, talent management encompasses recruitment, training, retention, and performance evaluation systems tailored for athletes and coaches [18]. Football, as one of the most resource-intensive sports, provides clear examples of how knowledge management and talent management synergize to enhance coaching performance [18]. Similarly, research on volleyball and racket sports demonstrates that structured models can improve stakeholder satisfaction and align athlete development with national goals [15, 19].

At the managerial level, diversity-oriented human resource models highlight the importance of recognizing and utilizing the varied potential of young elites in national systems [20, 21]. Such approaches emphasize that talent management should not be limited to technical ability but must also consider diversity, inclusivity, and long-term retention strategies. Furthermore, talent management has been linked with innovation and resilience in organizational performance, showing that investment in talent contributes not only to athlete success but also to the adaptability of institutions [22].

Despite its importance, talent management in sports faces multiple challenges. Limited financial resources, lack of transparency, and inconsistent monitoring mechanisms undermine efficiency [7, 23]. Studies in the Iranian context emphasize that policy incoherence and regional disparities hinder the equitable development of athletes [24]. Moreover, cultural and social barriers, such as gender inequality and lack of opportunities in rural regions, exacerbate these challenges [25].

Global studies further reveal that athlete burnout, talent migration, and excessive commercialization pose additional threats [1, 26]. For example, excessive focus on elite athletes sometimes leads to the neglect of grassroots programs, creating

bottlenecks in the talent pipeline [6]. Furthermore, the absence of robust evaluation systems reduces accountability and prevents continuous improvement [16].

In recent years, new trends have provided opportunities to overcome traditional barriers. Technological advancements, such as digital scouting and performance analytics, have transformed talent identification and monitoring [27]. Global partnerships and exchange programs facilitate the transfer of knowledge and best practices across borders, enhancing the effectiveness of national talent systems [5]. Moreover, diversity and inclusion agendas encourage governments and organizations to broaden their talent base by integrating underrepresented groups [28].

In addition, the rising popularity of sports, driven by media exposure and grassroots movements, has expanded the athlete pool and created momentum for policy reforms [10, 29]. Research also demonstrates that integrating family and school support mechanisms significantly improves talent development, particularly in youth sports [24]. Furthermore, foresight-based approaches to policy design ensure that talent management systems are dynamic, future-oriented, and adaptable to changing environments [17].

Although the literature provides valuable insights, several gaps remain. Much of the research is context-specific and fragmented, focusing either on single sports or localized organizational settings [30, 31]. There is still a need for holistic frameworks that consider the interconnectedness of policy, organizational management, cultural factors, and technological innovations. For example, while grounded theory approaches have been useful in developing conceptual models [12, 19], these models often lack cross-sport applicability. Additionally, there is limited comparative research between different countries in the region, which restricts understanding of how contextual differences shape talent management outcomes [4, 14].

Given the opportunities and challenges, a systematic assessment of national talent management requires a framework that captures internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. The SWOT analysis approach is particularly suitable for this purpose. It allows researchers and policymakers to identify what national systems are doing well, where they are falling short, what opportunities they can leverage, and what external risks threaten sustainability [1]. Prior studies applying similar approaches in organizational contexts have demonstrated the utility of SWOT for developing actionable strategies [28].

In sum, talent management in sports is both a national priority and a global challenge, shaped by policy frameworks, organizational structures, and social dynamics. Previous studies in Iran and abroad have identified multiple models, practices, and barriers, yet there is still a need for comprehensive frameworks that integrate these insights. By applying a SWOT analysis, this study aims to provide a structured evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of national talent management in sports.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design with an emphasis on exploratory analysis to investigate national talent management in sports. The study adopted a library-based approach, as the focus was on synthesizing and interpreting existing scholarly knowledge rather than collecting primary data from individuals or organizations. In this context, the “participants” of the research were not human subjects but rather published academic sources—journal articles, conference papers, and policy documents—that addressed national-level talent management in sports.

The data collection process was carried out systematically through library and database searches. Multiple academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, were screened to identify relevant sources using keywords such as “talent management in sports,” “national talent management policies,” “athlete development systems,” and “sports governance and talent management.” The inclusion criteria required that studies: (a) directly address talent management in sports at the national or organizational level, (b) be published between 2000 and 2024 to ensure both historical and contemporary perspectives, and (c) be peer-reviewed or recognized as credible scholarly contributions.

Through a rigorous screening process, a total of 23 articles were selected as the final dataset for analysis. These articles represented diverse contexts, ranging from national sports systems in developed countries to emerging strategies in developing nations. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved—that is, no new conceptual insights or themes emerged from additional sources.

To analyze the data, a thematic analysis approach was employed, which is well-suited for identifying, categorizing, and interpreting recurring patterns in qualitative data. All 23 articles were imported into NVivo 14 software, which provided an organized framework for coding and analyzing qualitative content. An inductive coding strategy was applied, allowing themes and categories to emerge naturally from the literature rather than imposing pre-determined frameworks.

The coding process progressed in three stages: (1) open coding, in which significant statements and passages related to talent management were highlighted and labeled; (2) axial coding, in which these initial codes were grouped into broader categories based on conceptual similarities; and (3) selective coding, in which the core themes were refined to reflect the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) associated with national talent management in sports. The iterative nature of this process ensured the reliability of findings and allowed for a robust interpretation of the literature.

Findings and Results

The qualitative content analysis of the 23 selected articles provided a comprehensive view of national talent management in sports. Using NVivo 14 software, data were coded through an iterative process that involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This process enabled the identification of recurring patterns and core themes related to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of national talent management systems. The findings in this section are organized around these four dimensions, beginning with strengths.

Table 1

Strengths of National Talent Management in Sports

Axial Code	Open Codes	Sample Quote
Structured Talent Pathways	Clear athlete progression, defined stages, standardized development programs	“National systems have established transparent pathways from grassroots to elite levels.”
Governmental Support	Funding, policy backing, institutional frameworks	“Government investment in sport has ensured the continuity of talent identification initiatives.”
Access to Expertise	Professional coaches, sports scientists, specialized academies	“Expert-driven training environments accelerate athlete performance at the national scale.”
Infrastructure Development	Training centers, academies, sport-specific facilities	“Well-developed infrastructure provides athletes with modern facilities to maximize potential.”
Collaborative Governance	Partnerships with federations, clubs, and universities	“Cross-sectoral collaboration has strengthened national talent pipelines across multiple sports.”

Structured Talent Pathways

One of the most prominent strengths identified in national talent management systems is the presence of structured and standardized pathways for athlete development. These pathways create clarity regarding how athletes can progress from

grassroots participation to elite competition. The articles highlighted that such pathways ensure transparency, reduce dropout rates, and provide consistency in athlete preparation. By offering well-defined stages, national systems create a sense of direction for athletes and coaches alike, aligning long-term development goals with international performance benchmarks.

Governmental Support

A second strength lies in robust governmental support for talent management initiatives. Across different contexts, the literature emphasized that national governments often play a central role in providing financial resources, policy direction, and institutional frameworks. This support has enabled sustainable talent identification and development programs, ensuring that sports systems are not left entirely to market forces or private institutions. Government involvement was especially noted in the creation of national academies and the integration of sport into national development strategies.

Access to Expertise

Another recurring strength is the access to a pool of professional expertise, including highly qualified coaches, sport scientists, and technical specialists. National systems that have invested in human capital at the coaching and science levels are better equipped to refine athlete development strategies and adopt evidence-based practices. Expert involvement also facilitates innovation in training methodologies, contributing to competitive advantages on the global stage.

Infrastructure Development

The development of modern infrastructure and training facilities is a further strength of many national sports systems. Investment in sport-specific academies, training centers, and high-performance institutes provides athletes with access to state-of-the-art resources. The availability of such facilities not only enhances physical preparation but also improves athlete morale, offering an environment conducive to long-term success.

Collaborative Governance

Finally, the findings highlight the role of collaborative governance in strengthening national talent pipelines. Partnerships between government agencies, sports federations, universities, and private clubs create synergies that extend beyond what any single institution could achieve. Such cross-sectoral collaboration helps align policies, share resources, and promote inclusivity in talent management. Ultimately, collaborative governance contributes to a more resilient and adaptive talent ecosystem.

Table 2

Weaknesses of National Talent Management in Sports

Axial Code	Open Codes	Sample Quote
Inconsistent Policies	Frequent policy changes, lack of long-term planning, fragmented decision-making	"Talent development suffers from shifting policies that disrupt continuity and long-term goals."
Limited Financial Resources	Budget constraints, unequal distribution, dependency on short-term funding	"Programs are often underfunded, resulting in disparities between elite and grassroots levels."
Talent Drain and Migration	Athletes moving abroad, lack of incentives to stay, weak retention strategies	"Many promising athletes leave their countries due to inadequate support systems and better offers abroad."
Inequitable Access	Regional disparities, gender inequality, exclusion of marginalized groups	"Opportunities are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural athletes with fewer chances to progress."
Weak Monitoring and Evaluation	Lack of performance indicators, weak feedback systems, poor accountability	"There is little systematic evaluation of national talent programs, leading to inefficiencies and waste."

Inconsistent Policies

A major weakness observed in national talent management systems is the presence of inconsistent and fragmented policies. Frequent changes in government priorities or leadership often result in the discontinuation of ongoing initiatives.

This lack of stability undermines the ability to plan long-term strategies for athlete development. The literature emphasizes that without sustained policy commitment, national programs lose coherence, and athletes experience uncertainty in their development pathways.

Limited Financial Resources

Another recurring weakness is insufficient and uneven allocation of financial resources. Many countries face budget constraints that limit the expansion and sustainability of talent management programs. In some cases, funding is concentrated at the elite level, leaving grassroots development programs under-supported. This imbalance creates bottlenecks in the athlete pipeline, as not all promising talents receive the resources they need to advance.

Talent Drain and Migration

The analysis also reveals the challenge of talent drain, where skilled athletes migrate to other countries with stronger support systems or better career prospects. The lack of incentives, inadequate professional opportunities, and weak retention mechanisms in some national contexts contribute to this outflow. This trend undermines the investment made in athlete development and highlights systemic weaknesses in creating sustainable career pathways for athletes at home.

Inequitable Access

Equity issues were consistently noted as a weakness in national systems. Inequitable access manifests in several forms, including regional disparities between urban and rural areas, gender inequality, and limited opportunities for marginalized groups. Concentrating resources in a few metropolitan areas excludes large segments of potential talent, leading to inefficiency and loss of diversity in the talent pool.

Weak Monitoring and Evaluation

Finally, the findings point to weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as a significant weakness. Many national programs lack clear performance indicators, systematic feedback loops, or mechanisms for accountability. Without robust evaluation, it is difficult to measure progress, identify shortcomings, or redesign strategies effectively. This absence of structured oversight reduces efficiency and can result in wasted resources or poorly targeted programs.

Table 3

Opportunities of National Talent Management in Sports

Axial Code	Open Codes	Sample Quote
Technological Advancements	Digital scouting tools, performance analytics, online training platforms	"The integration of digital scouting and analytics provides new ways to identify and nurture athletic talent."
Global Partnerships	International collaborations, exchange programs, joint training camps	"Partnerships with international federations create opportunities for knowledge transfer and capacity building."
Rising Public Interest in Sports	Media exposure, youth engagement, grassroots participation	"Growing enthusiasm for sports at the community level expands the potential talent pool nationwide."
Policy Reforms and Investment	National reforms, increased budgets, focus on elite sport development	"Recent reforms and enhanced funding create an enabling environment for sustainable talent management."
Diversity and Inclusion Agendas	Gender equity initiatives, regional outreach, integration of marginalized groups	"Inclusive policies ensure that national systems tap into a broader and more diverse pool of athletes."

Technological Advancements

One of the most promising opportunities for national talent management systems is the rapid expansion of technological innovations in sport. Digital scouting tools, big data analytics, and online training platforms allow for more accurate identification of emerging athletes and efficient monitoring of their progress. These technologies can help overcome geographical limitations and create more objective and evidence-based talent selection systems, ensuring that no potential athlete is overlooked.

Global Partnerships

Another opportunity lies in international collaboration and partnerships. Exchange programs, joint training camps, and strategic cooperation with international sports federations provide avenues for knowledge transfer and exposure to global best practices. Such partnerships not only enhance athlete performance but also allow national systems to learn from successful talent management models worldwide.

Rising Public Interest in Sports

The growing popularity of sports among youth and the general public presents an important opportunity for national talent management. Increased media coverage and grassroots participation help expand the athlete pipeline, making it easier to identify and cultivate talent from a wider base. Rising public enthusiasm also contributes to broader community support and advocacy for government investment in sport.

Policy Reforms and Investment

The findings further highlight the role of policy reforms and increased investment as opportunities. In many contexts, governments are prioritizing sports development by allocating larger budgets, strengthening governance structures, and enacting policies that emphasize athlete development. These reforms can provide a more enabling environment for systematic talent identification and retention.

Diversity and Inclusion Agendas

Finally, diversity and inclusion policies represent a significant opportunity for broadening the talent base. Gender equity initiatives, regional outreach programs, and the integration of marginalized groups into national systems increase both fairness and efficiency. By embracing inclusivity, national talent management systems can access untapped potential and enhance their overall performance at the international level.

Table 4

Threats of National Talent Management in Sports

Axial Code	Open Codes	Sample Quote
Political and Economic Instability	Policy fluctuations, budget cuts, shifting national priorities	"Economic downturns and political instability jeopardize consistent funding for athlete development programs."
Commercialization Pressures	Overemphasis on profit, neglect of grassroots, sponsorship-driven priorities	"Excessive commercialization risks prioritizing short-term profit over long-term athlete development."
Athlete Burnout and Dropout	Overtraining, psychological stress, early specialization risks	"High demands placed on young athletes often lead to burnout and premature exit from the talent pipeline."
Global Competition	Stronger systems abroad, international recruitment wars, talent poaching	"Intense global competition lures athletes toward better-supported programs in other countries."
Corruption and Mismanagement	Nepotism, lack of transparency, misuse of resources	"Corruption and favoritism within national programs erode fairness and efficiency in talent identification."

Political and Economic Instability

One of the most pressing threats identified is the vulnerability of sports systems to political and economic instability. Changes in government leadership, fluctuating national priorities, or financial crises can disrupt funding streams and undermine the continuity of programs. This instability creates uncertainty for long-term planning and reduces the effectiveness of policies designed to sustain athlete development.

Commercialization Pressures

Another significant threat is the over-commercialization of sport, where financial interests overshadow the core objectives of talent development. Sponsorship-driven agendas often prioritize immediate returns rather than investing in grassroots or

long-term pathways. Such pressures can weaken the inclusiveness of programs, leading to unequal opportunities and the neglect of less profitable sports.

Athlete Burnout and Dropout

The analysis also reveals that athlete burnout and dropout pose critical risks to talent pipelines. Intense competition, early specialization, and heavy training loads contribute to physical and psychological stress, causing young athletes to withdraw prematurely. This undermines national investment in talent identification and reduces the pool of athletes who reach elite levels.

Global Competition

The globalized nature of sport creates a constant threat from stronger systems abroad. International competition not only challenges performance outcomes but also leads to “talent poaching,” where countries with superior facilities and financial incentives recruit athletes from weaker systems. This trend can exacerbate talent drain and diminish the competitiveness of national programs.

Corruption and Mismanagement

Finally, corruption and mismanagement were consistently identified as systemic threats. Practices such as nepotism, favoritism in selection, and misuse of funds reduce fairness, transparency, and efficiency. These governance failures discourage athlete motivation, erode public trust, and undermine the credibility of national talent management initiatives.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the dynamics of national talent management in sports through a qualitative SWOT analysis based on 23 selected articles. The results revealed key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that characterize talent management systems at the national level. This section interprets those findings in light of existing scholarship and provides theoretical and practical insights.

The analysis highlighted structured talent pathways, governmental support, access to expertise, infrastructure development, and collaborative governance as core strengths. These findings align with the growing recognition that systematic pathways from grassroots to elite levels are essential for national success [2]. In Iran, for instance, structured football talent identification models have emphasized the importance of transparent stages of development, confirming that organized systems improve progression efficiency [2].

Government support was another crucial strength. Prior studies have repeatedly emphasized that state investment in talent management plays a decisive role in sustaining athlete development programs [13, 17]. In Iraq, government-backed programs in volleyball demonstrated that time management and systemic quality significantly impact stakeholder satisfaction [15]. These examples confirm that institutional commitment enhances program continuity and helps nations withstand competitive pressures.

Access to professional expertise and infrastructure further emerged as critical strengths. Scholars have argued that the availability of qualified coaches and scientific staff fosters innovative practices in athlete development [3, 18]. Likewise, investment in modern facilities improves training quality, echoing earlier findings on the importance of physical resources for athlete progression [22]. Collaborative governance, involving federations, universities, and clubs, also reflects the multi-actor

approach to talent management. This finding resonates with grounded theory models that underscore the necessity of stakeholder cooperation in schools and student talent development [12, 30].

Despite these strengths, several weaknesses were evident, including inconsistent policies, limited resources, talent migration, inequitable access, and weak evaluation mechanisms. These challenges echo long-standing concerns about fragmented policy environments. Research on Iranian sports policy emphasizes that inconsistent decision-making across institutions leads to inefficiencies and diluted outcomes [11]. Similarly, the lack of alignment across educational and organizational actors undermines effective program delivery [24].

Financial constraints are another persistent barrier. Prior works have noted that underfunded programs tend to concentrate resources at elite levels, neglecting grassroots talent [7, 23]. Limited and uneven funding not only reduces inclusivity but also creates systemic bottlenecks. The issue of talent drain compounds this problem. Studies in Iraq and other emerging contexts report that inadequate retention policies encourage athletes to migrate abroad, diminishing the returns of domestic investment [4, 14].

Equity issues also stood out as systemic weaknesses. Several studies note that gender inequality and regional disparities restrict access to sports opportunities, with rural athletes and women particularly disadvantaged [25, 29]. This reflects the wider societal structures influencing sport participation. Finally, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms undermine accountability. Prior research on COVID-19-era talent management observed that organizations without adaptive evaluation systems suffered more severe disruptions [16]. Collectively, these weaknesses confirm that structural reforms remain necessary for sustainable talent development.

The findings also identified opportunities, including technological advancements, global partnerships, rising public interest, policy reforms, and diversity agendas. These results are consistent with international scholarship that highlights digital innovations as transformative tools in scouting and performance monitoring [27]. For instance, online platforms enable wider access to athlete identification, reducing geographic barriers and increasing objectivity [5].

Global partnerships are another expanding opportunity. Comparative studies emphasize that international collaborations create channels for knowledge transfer and benchmarking against best practices [1, 5]. Joint training programs and federation partnerships enrich domestic systems, as seen in racket sports and wrestling models developed with international input [6, 19].

Public enthusiasm and grassroots engagement were also identified as significant opportunities. Scholars have linked the expansion of sport participation with broader talent pools, indicating that social marketing and community-driven programs contribute to inclusivity [10, 27]. Policy reforms and investments further strengthen this momentum. Governments have recently prioritized sport in development strategies, ensuring increased funding and institutional reforms [17]. Additionally, diversity-oriented models present new avenues for inclusion. Recognizing gender equity and marginalized groups as priorities expands national talent reservoirs [20, 21]. These opportunities suggest that nations can significantly enhance their competitiveness by aligning with global trends.

The study also revealed external threats such as political and economic instability, commercialization pressures, athlete burnout, global competition, and corruption. Political and economic volatility remains a major concern, as shifting budgets and leadership priorities destabilize long-term planning [8, 11]. Similarly, excessive commercialization threatens to distort priorities, with financial goals sometimes outweighing developmental objectives [1].

Athlete burnout and dropout emerged as critical risks, particularly in contexts with early specialization and heavy training demands [29]. Studies show that excessive psychological and physical stress discourages young athletes, undermining talent pipelines [16]. Global competition also poses a growing threat. Nations with stronger systems attract athletes from weaker contexts, leading to talent poaching [5]. This aligns with evidence that athlete migration is a recurring issue in developing countries [4].

Finally, corruption and mismanagement are systemic risks. Nepotism, favoritism, and misallocation of resources have been documented as factors eroding fairness and efficiency [7, 23]. Comparative studies show that without transparent systems, trust in talent identification is undermined, and public confidence in sports governance diminishes [28]. Thus, addressing these threats requires institutional reforms and global benchmarking.

The overall findings of this study support the idea that talent management in sports is a multidimensional construct, shaped by national policy, organizational practices, social structures, and global dynamics. Strengths such as structured pathways and expertise mirror prior models emphasizing the role of systemic planning [2]. Weaknesses including inconsistent policy and inequitable access reinforce concerns raised in Iranian and international studies about fragmented approaches [7, 24]. Opportunities like technological innovation and partnerships extend earlier discussions of global talent management [26]. Threats such as burnout and commercialization parallel warnings from international scholars about sustainability challenges [1].

By situating the SWOT analysis within existing research, this study provides an integrative view that underscores the urgency of coherent strategies. It suggests that talent management cannot be reduced to technical processes alone but requires comprehensive policy frameworks, inclusivity, and global adaptability.

This study, while offering comprehensive insights, has certain limitations. First, it relied exclusively on secondary data from 23 articles, meaning that its findings reflect published perspectives rather than first-hand accounts from athletes, coaches, or policymakers. Second, the use of a qualitative approach through library sources and NVivo coding ensured depth of analysis but limited the ability to generalize findings across all contexts. Third, while theoretical saturation was achieved, the selection of sources may have been influenced by database availability and language restrictions, potentially excluding relevant non-English or non-Persian studies.

Future research could benefit from triangulating library-based findings with empirical data such as interviews or surveys involving athletes, coaches, and policymakers. Comparative studies across multiple countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia would enrich understanding of contextual similarities and differences in talent management systems. Moreover, longitudinal studies tracking the effectiveness of specific talent management policies could provide evidence on long-term sustainability. Future work should also explore the integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics in talent identification and development.

For practitioners, several implications emerge. Policymakers should prioritize stability and coherence in talent management policies to ensure continuity. Greater investment in grassroots and rural programs can address equity gaps. Establishing transparent monitoring and evaluation systems would enhance accountability. Collaboration with international partners should be leveraged to transfer knowledge and adopt best practices. Finally, organizations should implement diversity-oriented models that ensure inclusivity across gender, region, and socio-economic groups, thereby expanding the national talent pool and improving sustainability.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

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

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