

Modeling Solutions for the Development of Sports Entrepreneurship Opportunities at the Middle Level

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Purpose: Considering the importance of sports entrepreneurship opportunities, the present study was conducted with the aim of modeling strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the Middle level.

Methodology: The current research was applied-developmental in terms of its purpose and exploratory-quantitative in terms of implementation method. The research community was sports entrepreneurs and postgraduate students of sports management, 164 of whom were selected as a sample based on Cochran's formula and random sampling method. The research tool was a researcher-made questionnaire on strategies for developing sports entrepreneurship opportunities (74 items), whose face validity was confirmed by the opinion of experts, and its reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.74. Data were analyzed with exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling methods in SmartPLS-3 software.

Findings: The findings of the exploratory factor analysis showed that the solutions for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level had 74 items in 7 situational and regional factors, market and business environment, media, education, support, management and technological infrastructure, which factor loading, convergent validity with The method of average variance extracted and reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha method for all of them above 0.70. Also, the model of strategies for developing sports entrepreneurship opportunities had a good fit at the middle level and the model had a significant effect on each of the seven factors ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion: According to the factors identified for the model of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level and the effect of the model on each of the factors to improve the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities, the conditions can be provided for the improvement of each of the factors.

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1. Introduction

Today, in the complex and competitive world, organizations make continuous and increasing efforts for their growth and survival and use new tools, and these organizations and their businesses have always faced economic, political, social and environmental crises (Soluk, Kammerlander and Darwin, 2021). New ideas and the creation of innovations are the main basis of economic development, and entrepreneurship is the most obvious means of bringing society to this goal, and another important point is that entrepreneurship and opportunity are two intertwined concepts that it is impossible to imagine one without the other (Bamshad, Talbi, Yazdani and Arasti, 2021). Entrepreneurship is a complex, long-term and comprehensive process that plays an important role in the economic growth and development of countries and is known as the most important and strategic tool for the economic development of societies, especially advanced societies (Arnold and Zelzner, 2022). In another definition, entrepreneurship means creating value by forming a unique set of resources to take advantage of opportunities. According to this definition, an entrepreneur with new ideas and creation and identification of new opportunities introduces a new product or service or improves the production structure along with accepting financial, psychological and social risks and receiving financial resources, personal satisfaction and independence (Da Fonseca and Campos, 2021). In defining the concept of entrepreneurship, each of the experts have looked at it according to their specialized field; So that economists emphasized the practical roles of entrepreneurship and sociologists and psychologists emphasized the impact of the environment on the individual and the personal characteristics of entrepreneurs (Pradhan, Arvin, Nair and Bennett, 2020).

One of the important areas in the field of creating employment and entrepreneurship is sports and sports jobs, which, due to its high potential, can be useful in achieving employment policies and reducing the unemployment rate. Sports in developed countries is highly regarded as an important industry and an effective factor in the growth of the national economy, and it is considered one of the largest and most profitable industries (Kauppinen, 2022). In today's turbulent world, applying innovative thinking and using it in industries and organizations is inevitable, and in this context, sports as the sixth income-generating industry in developed countries has attracted the attention of many experts, managers and investors (Jedel and Zietarski, 2018). Although the extensive knowledge of sports science in its current form is very young, it has a long history, and every society has tried to expand and develop it according to its ability, and many researches have been done about sports science as a scientific field (Constantin, Stanescu and Stanescu, 2020). Sports provide the necessary ground for the development of entrepreneurship by creating demand for sports services and goods and creating attractiveness for communities, and entrepreneurship helps the development of sports by creating a sports business in the production of sports equipment and supplies and providing sports services and developing sports businesses (Nauright and Wiggins, 2020). Entrepreneurship is an integral part of sports management and can create many competitive advantages for individuals and sports organizations, and entrepreneurial approaches in sports can even provide mechanisms to withstand economic, social, political and cultural crises (Cardella, Hernandez-Sanchez and Sanchez-Garcia, 2021).

Today, sports are one of the most valuable and widespread forms of entertainment in today's lucrative international market. Therefore, sport is recognized as an industry in the world and the products that customers order are sports, physical fitness, recreation or leisure-related activities, indicating that the sports industry has created a wide variety of products and customers (Hammerschmidt, Kraus and Jones, 2022). Considering the wide dimensions of sports science, it can be considered as one of the fastest growing sectors in economic, social and political fields and create many achievements and job opportunities in a huge part of sports events. In other words, increasing the entrepreneurial processes of sports and events is creating a variety of new job opportunities, and sports through creating demand for sports services and goods and creating attractiveness for communities provide the necessary ground for the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship through the creation of sports businesses. Exercise helps (Pellegrini, Rialti, Marzi and Caputo, 2020). Sports entrepreneurship is an innovative, opportunity-oriented activity that is competitive, aggressive and requires that the entrepreneur can take advantage of opportunities (Yarahmadi,

AlmasiFard and Abdul Maliki, 2021). In the field of sports management, a sports entrepreneur is a person who can organize, manage and take risks of sports-related jobs (Gonzalez-Serrano, Jones and Lianos-Contrera, 2019). Sports entrepreneurs provide a framework for new and innovative activities, and through sports, new ideas grow and the fields of entrepreneurship are provided. Therefore, sports entrepreneurship is a dynamic activity that affects many areas such as business strategy, crisis management, new sports development, performance management, production innovation, social issues and technology development (Ratten, Braga and Marques, 2021). By playing an effective role in business development, employment, well-being and mental and physical health, sports entrepreneurship can play a very important and outstanding role in the development of the country and be a tool for individual growth and solving social issues and problems (Nite, McLeod, Beldon and Nauright, 2020).

In the following, the results of the most important research related to the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities will be reported.

- Ghorbani, Esmaeili and Zareian (2022) came to the conclusion during a research that the solutions for the development of employment in sports include: explaining the place of sports development in achieving resistance economy policies, training and trying to change people's attitudes towards sports, developing a system Development of sports tourism in the province, holding training courses on entrepreneurship and investment in sports, expansion of career guidance services using expert consultants, material and spiritual support for sports entrepreneurs with an emphasis on indicators of resistance economy, reduction of administrative bureaucracy for issuing sports business licenses, providing a platform for attendance The private sector in sports and entrusting sports-related matters in a competitive environment, coordinating and dividing the work of provincial government institutions regarding the development of employment in sports, expanding the holding of sports events with an emphasis on hosting large events, trying to stabilize the scientific position of sports in the health system of society. Supporting the establishment of sports talent centers, locating and supporting the establishment of sports health assessment and management bases, establishing desert climbing camps in cooperation with the tourism organization, and granting loans and tax exemptions to Sports entrepreneurs in the province.

- AzimiDelarestaghi, Razavi and Boroumand (2019) concluded in a research that the background factors affecting the establishment of strategic entrepreneurship in sports businesses include six main components: government support policies, legal and legal factors, business policies, governance factors, educational system and cultural factors.

- Hadavi, Saatchian, Azizi and Mohammadi (2018) concluded in a research that the development of entrepreneurship through sports includes: platforms in the field of advertising (the most important component of radio and television, newspapers and general or sports magazines), the field of manufacturing and producing sports equipment (the most important component of establishing clubs of various sports fields), the field of sports planning and management (the most important component of managing sports facilities and equipment), the educational and research field (the most important component of training in various sports fields), the field of cultural and sports affairs (the most important component of granting loans to young people) with sports job creation plans), the field of public, championship and professional sports (the most important component of training sports coaches for professional and championship sports), the field of sports services (the most important component of sports tourism and the creation of sports tourist places) and the field of information and communication technology (the most important component of establishing sports websites).

- Hemme, Morais, Bowers and Todd (2017) concluded in a research that effective factors for developing sports through entrepreneurship include entrepreneurial processes, leadership training, controlled interactions and social aspects.

- Mondalizadeh, Ehsani, Kozechian and Honari (2014) concluded in a research that indicators of sustainable entrepreneurship in sports include human capital, social capital and cultural capital from the social dimension, from the economic dimension including financial and physical capital, from the environmental dimension

including capital relationship and organizational capital, and from the output result, including social productivity, economic productivity, and justice in economic-social dimensions.

- Mondalizadeh and Honari (2010) concluded in a research that the most important opportunities affecting sports entrepreneurship include: the existence of sports specialists in the physical education organization, the existence of sports federations, the existence of sports boards, the existence of the physical education organization, the existence of the strategic document of the country's comprehensive sports system, holding seminars and national conferences of physical education and sports sciences, the existence of an entrepreneurship and employment office in the organization of physical education, the existence of educated forces in physical education and sports sciences, increasing the level of science and technology of sports in the country, media and satellite coverage of domestic and foreign sports events, etc. And the most important obstacles affecting sports entrepreneurship include: the lack of efficiency and frequent changes in the country's sports management in short periods of time, the lack of a performance-based reward and encouragement system for sports entrepreneurs, the lack of a meritocracy system in determining the country's sports managers, the mismatch of jobs and skills in the structure Physical education and sports organization of the country, weakness in attracting sports financial sponsors, the number of policies and conflicts between them in the country's sports management, the gap between policies and planning performance in public and private organizations in sports, the lack of a strategic plan for entrepreneurship in the country's sports, the lack of utilization of results Sports research and scientific research projects, ineffectiveness of traditional management methods in the country's sports, etc.

Knowing about the issues of entrepreneurship and employment in sports and providing solutions and programs for its development requires systematic and specialized studies. Also, in the topic of sports entrepreneurship, it is very important to examine its solutions and opportunities, and for this purpose, first of all, the solutions and opportunities of sports entrepreneurship should be identified and the conditions for their improvement and promotion should be provided as much as possible. Identifying solutions and opportunities helps individuals and organizations to guide more people to establish businesses and create employment in sports fields. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate and study sports entrepreneurship opportunities so that with the help of their results, the field for the development of entrepreneurship opportunities can be improved. As it is clear in the research background section, most of the previous researches qualitatively investigated the solutions for the development of sports entrepreneurship or the development of opportunities for sports entrepreneurship, and less quantitative research has been done about it. As a result, it is necessary to test the development model of sports entrepreneurship opportunities in quantitative researches and to identify the effective variables or components and use them to improve the development of sports entrepreneurship. According to the topics raised and the importance of sports entrepreneurship opportunities in improving sports, social, economic, political and cultural situations, the present study was conducted with the aim of modeling strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level.

2. Methodology

This applied-developmental research used a mixed-method (i.e., qualitative-quantitative) with a heuristic-sequential approach to gathering data. In the mixed design, the qualitative items were first identified and then turned into a quantitative 5-point Likert scale questionnaire for the survey.

Using the qualitative method, the researcher conducted semi-structured face-to-face, phone, and email interviews with 40 university professors, graduates, and graduate students in the field of physical education and sports sciences, entrepreneurial management, and managers in charge of employment and entrepreneurship in the Ministry of Sports and Youth based on theoretical (judgmental) sampling. The participants were selected based on the judgment of the research group, that is, those who had the best conditions to provide the required information. Sampling is called theoretical sampling whenever a sector of a statistical population is selected based on the judgment of specific individuals or the researcher.

To achieve the research objectives, a combination of findings and theoretical saturation were used out of interviews using five rounds of Delphi interviews with eight selected experts and professors of sports management. Then, a list of entrepreneurship development strategies and the theoretical consensus was prepared on open, axial, and selective coding of sports entrepreneurship development strategies at the middle-level, seven situational and regional categories (10 items), business environment category (8 items), competitive category (8 items), media category (8 items), educational category (10 items), support category (17 items), management category (8 items) and technological infrastructure category (12 items) were identified for it.

In the quantitative section, the researcher presented a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale extracted from the qualitative model to measure the model's goodness of fit. The quantitative section randomly selected 164 sports entrepreneurs, micro sports business owners, and graduate students in sports management. The instruments in the qualitative research included a semi-structured interview. Two sports management Ph.D. experts conducted the open and axial coding of the data. The coefficient of agreement between them was calculated using Scott's pi formula (92%). Since the intercoder agreement was higher than 70%, they could encode all the research data.

Then, eight university professors in sports management confirmed its validity. Divergent and convergent structural validity was determined. To approve its reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and combined reliability was used; the result was 0.736 for the seven categories. Descriptive and inferential statistical tests such as confirmatory factor analysis, t-test, correlation coefficients, effect size, and conceptual model of the goodness of fit were used to analyze the quantitative findings of the research. Correspondingly, structural equation modeling with the partial least square's method was employed using the variance-based approach with Smart PLS3. The reason for using the variance-based approach was the lack of covariance-based preconditions such as normal distribution data. Moreover, it can predict, reject, or confirm the relationship between constructs and categories.

3. Findings

The samples of the current research were 164 sports entrepreneurs and graduate students of sports management, whose absolute frequency and percentage of absolute and cumulative frequency are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Absolute frequency and percentage of absolute and cumulative frequency of sports entrepreneurs and graduate students of sports management

Variable	level	absolute abundance	absolute abundance percentage	Condensation abundance percentage
gender	Male	95	57.93%	57.93%
	female	69	07/42%	100%
Age	21-30	51	10/31%	10/31%
	31-40	61	37.19%	29.68%
	41-50	42	25/61%	90/93%
	51-60	7	4.27%	98.17%
	Above 60	3	1.83%	100%

According to the results of the above table, most of the samples were male (57.93%) and aged 31-40 years (37.19%). Examining the assumptions of exploratory factor analysis indicated that there were conditions for analysis with this method. Because the KMO statistic with a value of 0.79 and Bartlett's sphericity statistic with a value of 967.01 were significant at a level smaller than 0.001, these findings indicated sufficient

correlation and adequacy of the samples. The exploratory factor analysis of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level was presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis of strategies for developing sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level

Factor	Number of items	factor load	Convergent validity (mean extracted variance)	Cronbach's reliability	Composite reliability	Result
Situational and regional	10	0/82	0/75	0/79	0/86	Appropriate
Market and business environment	8	0/87	0/71	0/76	0/84	Appropriate
Media	9	0/83	0/80	0/84	0/90	Appropriate
educational	10	0/77	0/79	0/86	0/89	Appropriate
Support	17	0/80	0/83	0/89	0/91	Appropriate
Management	8	0/89	0/86	0/91	0/93	Appropriate
Technological infrastructure	12	0/74	0/70	0/74	0/84	Appropriate

Based on the results of the above table, 7 items were removed from the researcher-made questionnaire of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level, and finally, the strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level have 74 items in 7 situational and regional factors, market and business environment, media, It was education, support, management and technological infrastructure, and the factor loading, convergent validity using average variance extracted method and reliability using Cronbach's alpha method were calculated for all of them above 0.70. It should be noted that the factor loading of each item was higher than 0.50. Examining the fit indices of the model indicated that the model of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities had a good fit at the middle level. Because the average shared reliability index was equal to 0.78, the coefficient of determination index was equal to 0.80, and the GOF goodness of fit index was equal to 0.79. The model of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level was presented in Figure 1 and the results of the mentioned model in Table 3.

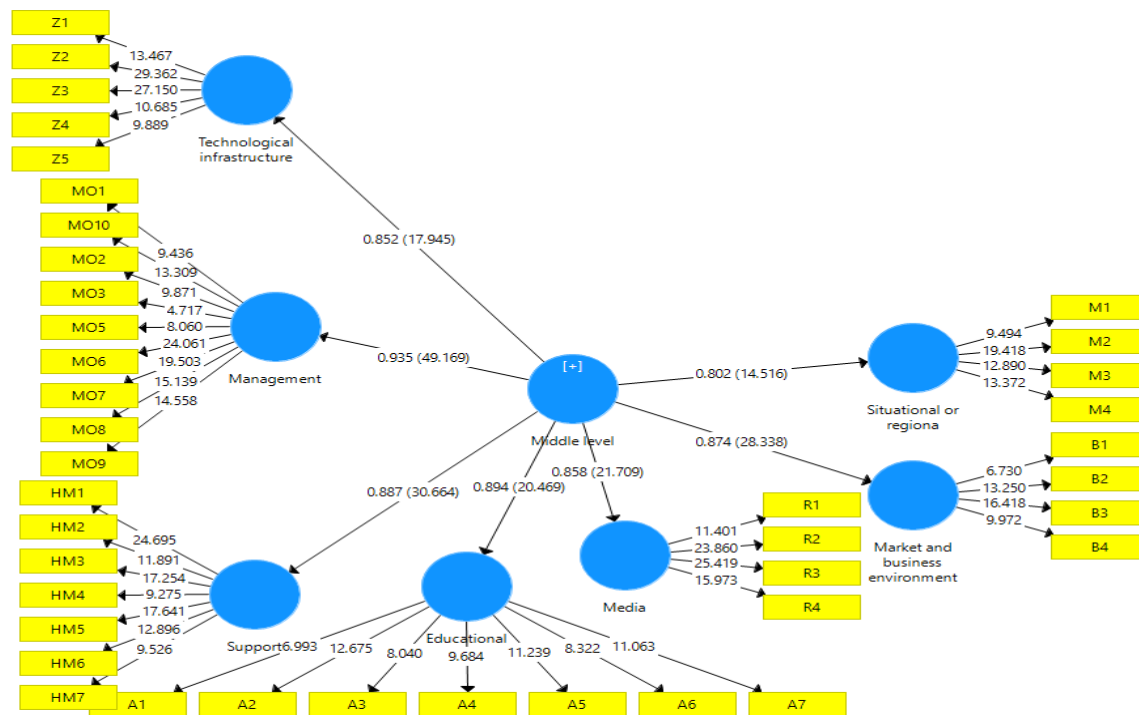


Figure 1. The model of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level

Table 3. The effects of the model of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level

Factor	The coefficient of determination	Path coefficient	The value of t	The degree of significance	Result
Situational and regional	0/001	14/52	0/80	0/80	confirmation
Market and business environment	0/001	28/34	0/87	0/86	confirmation
Media	0/001	21/71	0/86	0/84	confirmation
educational	0/001	20/47	0/89	0/76	confirmation
Support	0/001	30/66	0/89	0/78	confirmation
Management	0/001	49/17	0/94	0/88	confirmation
Technological infrastructure	0/001	17/94	0/85	0/71	confirmation

Based on the results of the above figure and table, the model of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level had a significant effect on each of the seven factors of situational and regional, market and business environment, media, education, support, management and technological infrastructure ($P < 0.001$).

4. Discussion

Sports entrepreneurship opportunities have an important role in development, and accordingly, the present study was conducted with the aim of modeling strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level.

The findings of the present study showed that the solutions for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level had seven situational and regional factors, market and business environment, media, education, support, management and technological infrastructure, which factor loading, convergent validity with the extracted mean variance method and reliability Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all of them above 0.70. Also, the model of strategies for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level had a good fit and the said model had a significant effect on each of the seven factors. These findings are in line with the findings of past studies including Ghorbani et al (2022), AzimiDelarestaghi et al (2019), Hadavi et al (2018), Hemme et al (2017), Mondalizadeh et al (2014) and Mondalizadeh and Honari (2010).

According to the situational and regional factors, the more popular the area is in terms of sports, the more likely it is to start and develop sports businesses in it due to the earlier return of capital. For this purpose, the sports talent of each region should be taken into consideration, and land preparation for sports and sports businesses is suggested. In addition, he entrusted the people of the same place to manage local affairs, especially the common resources. In other words, establishing rules and implementing them by local users makes them better able to use these resources. Therefore, the activity of sports businesses in the regional or situational market gives the opportunity to establish a new company and organization.

The market factor and business environment in the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities are at the middle level, and entrepreneurial opportunities are ideas that are identified based on market needs. Private, non-profit, etc. companies and organizations succeed in exploiting these opportunities if they can adapt to the environment. In order to achieve success in order to update and adapt their ideas to environmental changes, entrepreneurs must be able to understand and apply sensitivity to changes in different environments and increase the ability to analyze their environment. Also, an entrepreneur should know that his business idea is never perfect, and therefore he should evaluate his idea along with environmental changes and increase his awareness of the business issue.

The media factor indicates that social media have a great impact on the spread of a behavior and the repetition and habituation of a behavior. Today, mass media, including television, have unprecedented influence and expansion in societies and all aspects of social life, and have important functions such as informing, educating, entertaining, promoting behavioral patterns, and creating culture. In addition, media are important tools for the development of society due to their political, economic, social, commercial and cultural functions and play an important role in this field. The more media cover sports and sports entrepreneurship, the more attention investors and entrepreneurs draw towards sports, especially television coverage and environmental advertising of sports events. In Iran, the media coverage of sports fields other than football is very limited, which has caused the reluctance of commercial companies to enter sports. Television coverage has been stated as one of the reasons for financial support, and most of the sports programs in Iran are related to the broadcasting of matches, and some of them deal with the technical or news analysis of the events, and the lack of broadcasting economic sports programs is strongly felt, therefore, the change of attitude in the type of media programs and policies and The laws governing media coverage need fundamental reforms.

The educational factor plays an important role in the development of entrepreneurial opportunities at the middle level, and the probability of failure of entrepreneurs who only have experience and did not receive the necessary training is very high, and on the contrary, entrepreneurs who have both experience and received training are quite successful or the probability of success is high. The purpose of the training courses is the same position or goals that the trainees are supposed to reach after the training. In fact, the reason for the existence of each training course is to realize the goals of that course, and it is based on the educational goals

that educational and lesson planning is formed in educational systems. In fact, the main goal of entrepreneurship education courses should be to train independent people who are aware of opportunities. People who are more willing to start an independent business and the graduates of this course should acquire the ability to deal with the risks and dangers caused by them in the real world.

The support factor is effective in the development of entrepreneurial opportunities at the middle level. The presence of financial sponsors in the sports industry and the inclusion of clubs in the stock market list play an effective role in the development of the sports industry. Entrepreneurship is a process that needs to be institutionalized like any other issue, and the creation of special support institutions for entrepreneurs such as venture capital funds, insurance coverage funds for venture businesses, communication networks between entrepreneurs, the creation of information networks and training organizations and counseling for entrepreneurs are other complementary axes of entrepreneurship development. Investing in sports is usually done on projects that are less profitable than commercial projects, and as a result, the risk of capital return is higher in these projects, and many investors prefer to invest in commercial projects instead of investing in sports projects. Therefore, financial support for sports entrepreneurship and sports businesses is suggested, and for this purpose, lowering the bank interest rate for sports clubs and activities can be effective.

The management factor plays an important role in the program for entrepreneurship and employment in the country's sports, and sports managers are an important part of the sports entrepreneurship process. Because they are involved in providing resources and organizing teams, organizations and people. Sports managers hire, encourage and train employees through creating an organizational solution. Therefore, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, as the guardian of sports affairs, which is decisive in the entrepreneurship of this field, can be responsible for entrepreneurship and employment by communicating with other organizations, and the greater the level of communication, the better the entrepreneurship process will be facilitated, and expert managers with knowledge of the process Sports entrepreneurship emphasizes the development and facilitation of investment in sports.

The factor of technological infrastructure plays an important role in entrepreneurial activities in the field of sports, and thus, with the advancement of technology, the methods of information distribution and the creation of new international markets are strengthened. The importance of the physical dimension for entrepreneurship has decreased with the increase and expansion of the digital economy, and despite the claim that the Internet has changed the way entrepreneurship is implemented, the physical location is still important in creating sports entrepreneurship. The technological infrastructure indicates that sports entrepreneurship is related to technological innovations and it is considered as the driver of entrepreneurship in the sports field. Information and communication technology affects employment and labor market in three ways. First, the production of information and communication technology products can employ a lot of labor. The second capacity of job creation is the impact of information and communication technology on the production of other industries. Information and communication technology can play a significant role in attracting skilled labor by facilitating production, distribution, sales and after-sales services, etc. The third job creation capacity of this technology is of special importance in the new economy and due to the high diversity of the products of the new markets, the creation of job opportunities in this way is very large and significant.

Every research has limitations. Limitations of this study include limiting the research community to sports entrepreneurs and graduate students of sports management, using self-reporting tools and not finding a tool for this purpose, and trying to create a researcher-made questionnaire for the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities. Therefore, it is suggested to carry out more research on the strategies for developing sports entrepreneurship opportunities on other groups and even other provinces. Another suggestion is to create other tools to examine the current situation of strategies for developing sports entrepreneurship opportunities and to try to evaluate the current situation of developing sports entrepreneurship opportunities based on the current research tool and even other tools, and according to the results of the research, strategies for developing sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level designed and executed. According to the factors identified for the model of strategies for the development of

sports entrepreneurship opportunities at the middle level and the effect of the model on each of the factors to improve the development of sports entrepreneurship opportunities, the conditions can be provided for the improvement of each of the factors. For this purpose, the application of situational and regional factors, market and business environment, media, education, support, management and technological infrastructure through the indicators of each one is necessary for the development of entrepreneurial opportunities.

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