



# Analysis of the Elite Sports Policy Framework in Iran

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1 Reviewer 1

Date: 11 August 2024

Reviewer:

The introduction should provide a clearer and more precise definition of "elite sports" early on. For instance, while elite sports refer to top-tier competitions, the criteria for athletes being classified as 'elite' are not thoroughly defined until later in the text.

In discussing soft and hard support systems, the term "soft support systems" is used vaguely. It would be useful to give concrete examples of these systems as they pertain to Iran's elite sports (e.g., mental health programs, mentorship initiatives).

In the methodology section, while you mention reaching theoretical saturation with 16 participants, provide more justification for why this number was sufficient, especially considering the complexity of elite sports policy.

The conceptual framework presented seems comprehensive, but the article could benefit from a visual representation of the framework. This would make the structure of elite sports policy in Iran easier to comprehend for the reader.

When discussing the coding process of interview data, more specific examples would strengthen this section. For example, in the sentence "The coding was conducted using previous studies and expert opinions," describe a concrete example of how certain codes emerged and evolved through the stages of analysis.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the updated document.

## 1.2 Reviewer 2

Date: 15 August 2024

Reviewer:

In the literature review, although you cite Houlihan (2009) and others, it would benefit from a critical analysis of gaps in the current research on Iran's specific elite sports policies. This would make it clearer how your research is filling these gaps.

The frequent mention of "sports success" needs more nuance. For example, in the sentence "two external factors financial support and competitive environments have a significant impact on sports success," are you referring to national-level success, athlete development, or international recognition? Clarify what "sports success" entails in each context.

The discussion of policy-making, governance, and societal development could benefit from more explicit links to elite sports in the Iranian context. For instance, the statement "Policy-making is a term intertwined with governance, government, society, and its public affairs" is general; it should be more grounded in the elite sports context.

The relationship between the conceptual framework and the data collected is not always clear. The link between theory and data should be strengthened, especially when transitioning from qualitative interviews to conceptual findings.

The concept of "strategic maturity" is introduced, but the article does not fully explain what this entails for the elite sports system in Iran. Adding more detail about how this maturity is measured or what it means in practical terms would enhance understanding.

In Table 1, the coding of identified components is useful but lacks clarity in terms of how these codes directly relate to the strategic development of elite sports in Iran. Could you add a more explicit explanation of how each dimension influences policy-making decisions?

While the study references international elite sports policies, such as in Belgium and the Netherlands, the discussion of how these comparisons apply to Iran's specific sociopolitical context is underdeveloped. More context-specific commentary is needed.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the updated document.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.