
Human Capabilities in Sports and its Development Levels

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Abstract: *The aim of this study was to identify human capabilities in sports and determine their development level which was conducted through qualitative research method with the fundamental-exploratory nature. Research data were collected through snowball sampling method and based on in-depth interviews and focus groups composed of experts. According to grounded theory data were analyzed after coding. The results showed that human capabilities in sports were divided into three levels of fundamental, support and operational capabilities. The results also indicated the requirement for taking necessary measures at the individual, underlying, and structural levels for the development of human capabilities in sports so that it would lead to the development of human capabilities in all aspects of the sport.*

Keywords: *Human capabilities, sports, qualitative method*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, environments have created a variable and dynamic nature. In fact, today's environments are no longer static and predictable. Therefore, one requires to acquire necessary capabilities and competences in line with the changes and dynamics of the environment to survive and thrive in today's world. Fundamental changes in the activities and procedures of human resources management over the past decades have brought human capability approach to the attention of pioneering organizations (Mc Lgan, 1989). To better understand the notion of capability, one should analyze its meaning. The American Heritage Dictionary defines capability as "The quality of being capable or suitable". This definition gives a good and general description, but does not state clearly what the organization evaluates (Iversen, 2000). Cave (1993) defines capability as the result of properly applying knowledge and skills (Cave, 1993: 123). Thompson and Harrison (2000) view capability as a combination of knowledge, skills and, abilities in a particular job which allows a person to achieve success in his/ her tasks. As it is observed, this definition has also added ability to the components of capability. Hantstin (2000) generally defines capability as a set of behaviors with relevant activities, types of knowledge, and skills and incentives that are regarded as behavioral, technical, and motivational prerequisites for successful performance in a specific job or role (cited in Ruth, 2006: 226-206). Based on such definitions, Rodriguez et al. (2002) have described an approach that specifically combines knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to effectively perform a role (Ruth, 2006). Increasing evidence shows that human capabilities plays an important role in the promotion of organizational performance (kuklys, 2005: 12). Evidence relating to positive and significant returns on investment in human capital consists of the range of individual skills to organizational results and outcomes such as increased levels of service-giving, impressive productivity, profitability, organizational performance in the community, and the improvement of products' service quality. These outputs are vital for sports organizations since the final product in sports mostly carries a service-based nature and the promotion of service-giving in sports plays a vital role in the survival and development of the organization (Smith, 2008: 104).

Advanced states are well aware of the effective role of human capital and human capabilities in their economic growth. Thus, they create some departments and organizations in government body to develop and improve human capital. For example, regarding the improvement of human capital, government of Great Britain has established the local council of skills in some vocational areas

wherein Skills Active has been held responsible for skill upgrading in sports and leisure pursuits. The identification and evaluation of the skills required for sports and leisure pursuits and also the development of such skills to upgrade active workforce constitute the main responsibility of Skills Active (Wolsey, Minten, and Abram, 2011). Kruse (2006: 8) investigated the available capitals in sports and stated that direction and prospects of the development of human capability in sports organizations are differently interpreted due to the existence of vague and ambiguous issues and multiple interpretations for development in sports. Similarly, the assessment of the development of human capabilities encounters difficulty due to the lack of clearly defined goals in sports (cited in Nicholson and Hoye, 2008: 41). In this regard, Hognestad (2005) established an approach for the development of human capabilities in which development policy tended to shift away from economic emphasis and onto cultural role in development processes. In this approach, development was introduced as an expansion and growth of individuals' selection capabilities with emphasis on the effective role of cultural issues for the specification of the main direction of reflection and developmental measures. In this approach, the emphasis is not only on the development of the prevailing economic paradigm, but also culture and related issues have been used for the consolidation and completion of developmental infrastructure in sports. Woolcock and Narayan (2000), in their study entitled "Social capital: Implications for development theory, research, and policy", stated that the paradigm dominant over the theories of development in social and human capitals is a political-economic one. They argued that one of the most important factors effective in sports-related development is social media and networks and relationships that are paid less attention; rather, emphasis has been placed upon potential resources and political issues. Abraham, Harris & Auerbach (2013), in their study entitled "Human Capital Valuation in Professional Sport" suggest that the turnover rate, broadcasting rights, sponsors, ticket sales, concessions, and stadium turnover should be assigned credit in professional sports to determine the available human capital. They also stated that the growth degree of team's performance should be considered as a central indicator for the determination of the exact level of human capital in professional sports teams. Ferkins, Shilbury, & McDonald (2009) reached the conclusion that relationships within sports organizations affect the development of strategic capabilities. In this way, sports non-profit organizations can improve their strategic capabilities through collaborative partnerships with local organizations and the application of power-sharing approach which can lead to the development of capabilities in the area. Munro (2005) in his study entitled "Role Models: Is Anything More Important for Future Development?" acknowledges that it is required to develop strong ties between sports and social services for the development of human capabilities in sports (with an emphasis on soccer as a collective social structure). He also laid a strong emphasis on participatory decision-making, collective learning, and experiential learning, opportunities to pursue academic education and to enhance the knowledge of administrative procedures for the realization of the development of human capabilities in sports.

Today, sports functions and plays a vital role in the economic, social, and cultural aspects of each society. Without efficient and dynamic sports organizations, the objectives set out in the documents will not come true. In sports organizations, there are valuable resources, each of which plays an important part in the organization's success, but the role of "man" as the most important asset of any organization is most strongly felt compared to other sources (Coleman (1988). Thus, the management and efficient use of this valuable asset is one of the most important tasks that should be done in any sports organization. Since human resources are the most valuable of production and the main source of competitive advantage and creator of key capabilities in each organization, human capital management is the infrastructure of success of any organization (Nicholson & Hoye, 2008: 43). Given that there is not an accepted solution that can meet the needs of organizations in all conditions, sports organizations should practice several approaches to primarily guarantee their survival and progress based on their conditions and status. Considering these circumstances, the development of human capital in sports is one of reasonable methods of survival and progress at international levels. Since sports environments are very dynamic wherein people play a crucial role, the development of capabilities and resultant human capital can lead to the improvement of performance indicators at national and international levels.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is an exploratory one with an attempt to develop the existing knowledge and understanding in relation to human capabilities in sports. It should be noted that the purpose of exploratory research is to bring into existence insightful concepts, definitions, and correction of issues

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and ideas. This study is qualitative in nature based on data mining. In qualitative research method; emerging techniques, open-ended questions, and content analysis are used and final results are obtained based on the already-established findings. Grounded Theory was used in this study. Using this method, researchers are allowed to systematically extract commonalities from among a massive amounts of data and, accordingly, theorize in the research scope. This strategy enjoys some sort of inductive approach. In other words, theory development takes a part-to-whole approach. The main objective of this approach is to explain a phenomenon via the specification of its key elements (concepts, categories, and propositions) and, then, the classification of the relations of these elements within the context and process of that phenomenon. Creation of concepts, categories, and propositions is a cyclical and repetitive process. In this method, research questions should be completely open and general rather than clearly hypothetical; and the resulting theory should explain the phenomenon under study. Three overlapping processes are at play in the analysis of grounded theory, i.e. initial coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding. In conducting this research, data collection and analysis were performed knowingly at the same time. Initial data collection was done for the formation of continuous data collection. This provided the researcher with opportunities to increase the competence level of appropriate categories. A summary of the study is as follows (table-1):

Table 1. *Research process elements*

| Elements | Type |
|------------------------|---|
| Research nature | Exploratory-basic |
| Research type | Qualitative |
| Research paradigm | Constitutional- interpretative |
| Research approach | Inductive |
| Research strategy | grounded theory |
| Data collection source | Interviews/ focus groups/ studies relating to program documents/ existing theoretical studies |
| Data Analysis Method | Grounded theory -Constructivist |

To select the sample for in-depth interviews, the researcher attempted to use both academic subjects (faculty members) and those with managerial experience in athletic organizations. Faculty members of the academic majors of sport management, sociology, and Development Economics; all high-ranking, middle-ranking and executive managers of Ministry of Youth and Sports and National Federations; and all the people experienced in the field of sports organizations constituted the study population.

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to perform in-depth interviews. In this technique, an initial group was selected for interview and, then, the subsequent groups were introduced by the initial group. Thereafter, sampling continued (16 in-depth interviews and one focus group) until the research reached sufficient theoretical saturation. Since this study has no hypothesis and just research questions are available; therefore after reading the programming documents and studying the theoretical foundations, raw data were inductively obtained out of in-depth interviews with elites and through the establishment of focus groups, and were constructively analyzed. An example of the method of data analysis is as follows:

Table-2. *An example of data coding*

| Interview text | Initial coding | Focused coding | Axial coding | Theoretical coding |
|---|--|--|---|--------------------|
| Human capabilities and development reflect the progress and development of communities. This is due to the fact that power of choice increases when development occurs in sports. It should be pointed out that | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human capability and development shows the progress and development in societies. Choice power is stronger in more advanced situations. People should exert | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having multiple choice Assistance in solving problems One's willingness to develop capabilities Availability of appropriate structures Availability of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate organization in dynamic environments Creation of opportunities for multiple choice | Structural level |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p>the enjoyment of numerous capabilities leads to extricating from many problems. For the development of human capabilities in sports, individuals should exert self-determination and also suitable structures should be available so that their capabilities can be developed. Sports environments are variable and dynamic wherein individuals should be equipped with multiple capabilities to reach success.</p> | <p>self-determination in developing capabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate structures are needed for the development of capabilities. • Sports environments are variable and dynamic. | <p>changing and dynamic environments</p> | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Coding and analysis of the results showed that human capabilities in sports lie at three fundamental, supportive, and operational levels. As well, three levels including individual, structural, and contextual ones are required for the development of human capabilities. Overall, model of human capability development in sports is schematically shown as follows after initial, focused, and axial coding:

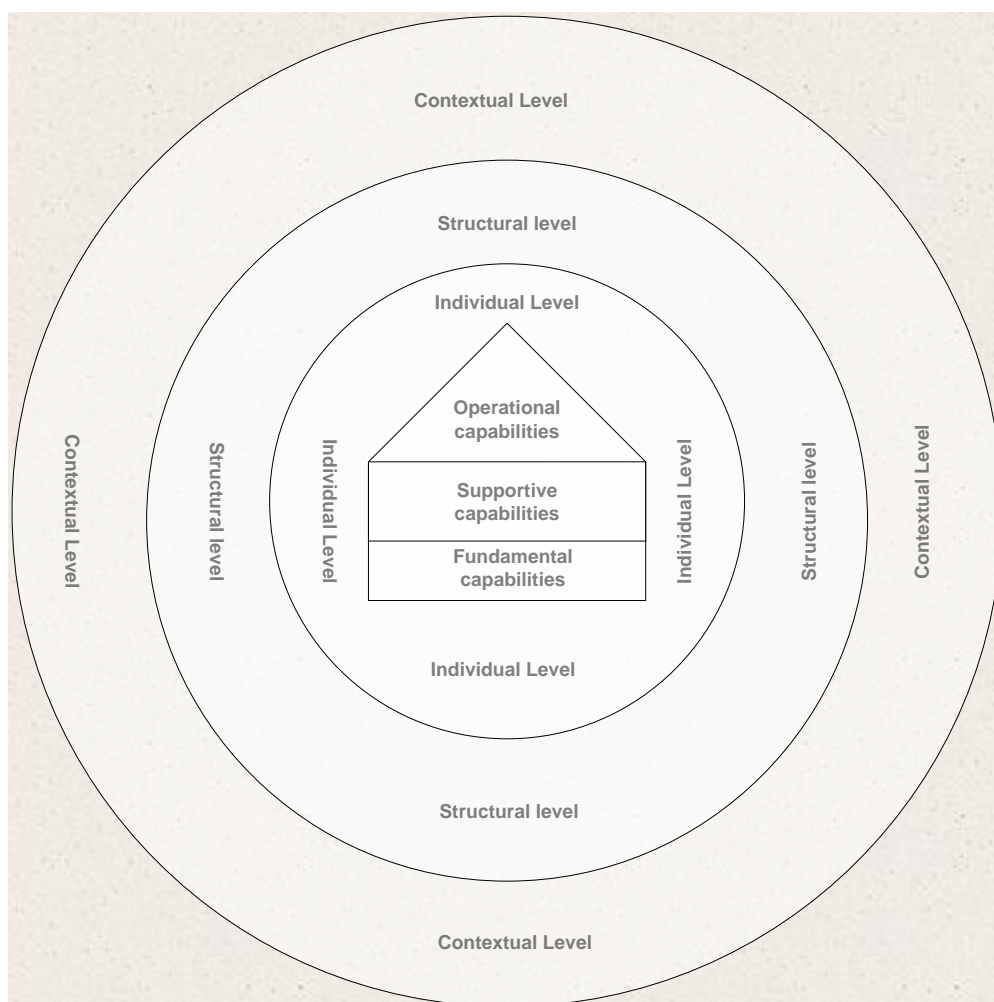


Figure-1. model of human capability development in sport

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to identify and classify human capabilities in sports of their development. Some data were collected through interviews and focus groups and by qualitative method and, then, were analyzed by initial, focused, axial coding. In general, it can be stated that human capabilities in sports enjoy three fundamental, supportive, and operational levels. Fundamental human capabilities are referred to the capabilities whose existence is necessary for optimal performance in sports. Such capabilities as intelligence and its multiple types are categorized as fundamental ones. Supportive human capabilities are believed to be helpful along with fundamental capabilities through which the opportunities in sports can be taken advantage of. Such capabilities as education and experiential learning lie within supportive capabilities. Finally, operational capabilities are the last type of human capabilities in sports that are fewer in number than the two previous categories (fundamental and supportive ones). These capabilities can be used in sporting practical applications. For example, having the opportunity of participating in a particular type of sport is associated with a family history of sport. It is noteworthy that there are levels in terms of development levels of human capabilities in sports. The first level is individual in which people should have enough self-determination for development. As well, friend, peer, interpersonal, and intrapersonal relationships lie at this level. Peers as key patterns in sports can play an important role in the development of capabilities. The availability of values and sporting role models, and gain of respect and identity at individual level can be contributor to the development of human capabilities. The next level in the development of human capabilities is structural level. At this level, the existence of such factors as economic and financial resources, equipment items and infrastructures, rules and regulations, and relevant organizations and the media is indispensable. Finally, environmental factors are placed at the contextual level, which indirectly influence the development of human capabilities. These factors can be referred to as cultural, social, political, legal, international, and environmental ones. Cultural and economic factors can play a stronger role in the development of human capabilities. In fact, when there is an appropriate cultural environment existing in society based on respect for athletes, models, and sporting values along with economic facilities placed in a desirable position; it can be hoped that human capabilities in sports can be developed and grown. Since the development of human capabilities in sports plays an important role in the efflorescence of sporting talents, the improvement of performance and income level, increase of knowledge and skills, rise in functional capacities in sports, economic growth, and the reduction of socio-cultural deprivation; it is highly required to pay great attention to the identification of human capacities in sports and levels of development is of utmost importance. Therefore, it is recommended that the development of human capabilities in sports is assigned importance in the early years of childhood, through the employment of policies and determination of appropriate structures and substrates as well as providing favorable environments so that talents can be identified and nurtured. In this regard, the main responsibility of Ministry of Education is to identify these capabilities and provide appropriate contexts and structures to develop them.

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