

Designing a Model for Creating Hope among Iranian Students through Participation in Extracurricular Sports Activities

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to design a conceptual model for fostering hope among Iranian students through participation in extracurricular sports activities at universities.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative research design using thematic analysis. The statistical sample consisted of 15 key informants, including university sports managers, sports management professors, and experts in university extracurricular sports programs. Participants were selected through purposive and theoretical sampling. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with specialists in sports management and university sports activities. Data analysis followed a three-stage coding process—open, axial, and selective coding—to identify key themes and develop the proposed model.

Results: The findings led to the development of a model comprising 11 categories organized into six dimensions: (1) Causal factors (sports research and support), (2) Main phenomenon (development and improvement of health and personal excellence), (3) Strategies (promotion and social participation), (4) Contextual factors (facilitator), (5) Intervening conditions (sports deficiencies and non-sport obstacles), and (6) Consequences (individual and social outcomes). The results indicate that structured extracurricular sports participation can contribute significantly to enhancing students' sense of hope through both personal growth and social engagement.

Conclusions: The proposed model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how extracurricular sports activities can promote hope among Iranian students. Policymakers and officials at the Ministry of Science and university administrators can utilize this model to design supportive strategies and improve extracurricular sports programs to enhance students' psychological and social well-being.

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Introduction

This essay examines how participation in extracurricular sports activities can foster hope among students, particularly in the context of Iranian universities. Hope is a fundamental human requirement, rooted in human nature. According to Zarei and Khoshvaght (2021), the primary factor in the advancement of human civilization and the evolution of human society is hope. Hope is the foundation of every person's life and, when compared to other educational matters, it is of special importance. Hope for a desired goal in the future causes human dynamism and creates joy and vitality in human nature (Shabani et al., 2019). According to Marx et al. (2023), the pursuit of hope requires an awareness and receptivity towards potential future outcomes, the capacity to respond imaginatively to them, adaptability, and the capacity to discern significance and values and take action on them. Generally, hope is often conceptualized as a future-oriented belief, desire, and mental imagining surrounding a valued outcome that is uncertain but possible (Howell & Larsen, 2015).

Hope is a positive emotion that focuses on the future. The notion that favorable outcomes are likely to be achieved motivates individuals to exert effort. Hopeful people believe that they can overcome obstacles and demonstrate realistic and positive behaviors during times of crisis. This process requires that the person is active (Yalniska Yıldırım & Sençon Onder, 2022). Any kind of conceptualization of hope must reflect its multidimensional, dynamic, forward-looking and process-oriented features (McClement & Chochinov, 2008). According to some studies, people who are hopeful and happy have stronger social relationships with their friends, neighbors, spouses and relatives (Frederickson, 2009; Fowler & Christakis, 2008). However, depression, which is the most common mental illness, can be one of the causes and consequences of despair, which can affect people's lives. According to Sadouqi et al. (2017), one of the most important characteristics of depressed people is that they are very disappointed. Hope, as a positive psychological construct, protects people from sadness, suicidal tendencies, low energy, indifference, slow movement, sleep disorder and poor concentration, in the face of difficulties (Aspinwall & Tedeschi, 2010).

The existence of various problems can lead to people not wanting to help each other and feeling hopeless. Life events such as unemployment, economic problems, illness, etc. may contribute to the development of hopelessness. Within the university environment, with the spread of psychological problems or pressures, frustration among students has increased. Therefore, it is predicted that

today's students will report greater stress than students of previous years (Rezani et al., 2020). A series of unfavorable circumstances have resulted in numerous students lacking a distinct and favorable perspective on the future. They are ensnared in their own aspirations, as they are not seeking a lofty and predetermined objective, but rather engaging in constant fantasizing, confusion, and perplexity. This has resulted in them becoming unplanned and easy-going people who always express dissatisfaction. As a result of their inability to achieve their life objectives, such individuals experience a decline in their optimism for the future. Given that the future of society hinges on the prepared human capital of students, the degree of hope and despair among them holds significant significance for the advancement of society. Hopeful students are capable of identifying resourceful solutions throughout life and are often willing to try new approaches. It is imperative to note that among students possessing similar aptitudes, what distinguishes them in terms of academic accomplishment is their optimism for the future (Mohammadpour et al., 2022). Despite the expectation that students constitute a lively and enthusiastic segment of society and that the university setting is dynamic, active, and creative, is this actually the case? One of the current issues facing Iranian universities is that the input is motivated and energetic people, and the output is ineffective and unmotivated people (Ebrahimi et al., 2011). Therefore, one of the most important objectives of higher education systems should be to increase hope for the future and ensure the mental and physical health of students.

Numerous factors, such as the media (Mozhdehifar et al., 2020; Shabani et al., 2019), socio-economic base, religiosity, feeling of deprivation and feeling of anomie (Qari Qurani, 2014) and social capital (Mardanifar et al., 2019; Afshani & Jafari, 2016), have a significant impact on creating hope in society and have been analyzed in numerous studies. Nonetheless, one factor that appears to exert an influence on the generation of optimism is the provision of sports and physical education, particularly extracurricular sports activities in universities. Sports, as an integral component of educational and extracurricular activities, have been identified as a potent medium for fostering hope among students (Blythe et al., 2025). Participation in sports enhances hope through various psychological mechanisms. Firstly, sports provide structured opportunities for goal-setting, which are essential for developing agency thinking—the belief in one's capacity to achieve objectives (Rand & Cheavens, 2009). Research indicates that students engaged in regular physical activity exhibit elevated levels of hope-agency, which correlate with improved academic

performance and personal aspirations (Blythe et al., 2025). Secondly, sports cultivate resilience by exposing students to challenges and setbacks, thereby fostering adaptive coping strategies. Studies have demonstrated that student-athletes develop stronger perseverance and optimism, which are critical components of hope (Fortuna et al., 2024). The ability to overcome obstacles in sports translates into academic and life challenges, thereby reinforcing a hopeful outlook.

Various studies have examined the effects of sports and physical activity on creating hope. For example, the findings of Nasiri's research (2022) indicate that the selected physical program has a positive effect on the life expectancy of active nursing students. According to Nasiri (2022), the effects of sports activity on the physical (body composition and strength), psychological (self-confidence and self-esteem), and social (sociability and social adaptation) dimensions of an individual lead to an improvement in the quality of life of individuals and, through it, the individual expresses her talents well. Zhang et al. (2022), by investigating the relationship between physical activity and mental well-being, as well as the parallel mediating effect of social networks and feelings of hope, demonstrated that physical activity has a positive and significant predictive effect on participants' mental well-being. Furthermore, the interaction between physical activity and mental well-being was mediated by social networks and feelings of optimism. Physical activity indirectly promotes mental well-being by strengthening social networks and feelings of hope. However, the indirect effect of feeling hopeful on the relationship between physical activity and mental well-being was greater than the indirect effect of social networks. Zar et al. (2020) investigated the impact of exercise on job burnout and life expectancy among employees of the Pars Economic Energy Special Zone Organization. Their findings revealed that active employees of the Pars Economic Energy Special Zone Organization have a higher life expectancy than inactive employees. Sanai et al. (2013) examined the effects of physical activity on the quality of life and life expectancy of the elderly in Mazandaran province and reported that physical activity has an effect on the physical dimension of quality of life and on the mental dimension of quality of life. Also, sports physical activity affects both the physical and mental dimensions of quality of life. Physical activity during leisure time also affects the physical dimension of quality of life and the mental dimension of quality of life. Furthermore, physical activity at work, sports physical activity and leisure time also have an impact on life expectancy. According to Salesi & Jowkar (2011), exercise helps to reduce body mass index, heart rate and blood pressure, and on the other

hand, it helps to socialize a person, increase happiness, improve job burnout and increase life expectancy.

Currently, sports activities in Iranian universities are implemented through the provision of two units of physical education courses, which are intended for non-physical education students. Considering that many of Iran's population is composed of students, it is very important to pay attention to the physical health, sports and championship sports of this group (Kalhori & Akbari Yazdi, 2019). Other optional extracurricular activities include sports training, intra-university and inter-university sports competitions, sports festivals, and sports camps, which can increase hope among students. Although the existing literature provides compelling evidence linking sports participation to enhanced quality of life and mental well-being, a significant gap remains regarding the direct role of sports in cultivating hope among student populations, particularly within culturally specific contexts such as Iran. Most extant studies have predominantly concentrated on adult or elderly cohorts, or have considered hope only as one of several mediating factors influencing mental well-being. For example, while Zhang et al. (2022) underscore hope as an important mediator, their research does not sufficiently isolate hope as a primary outcome variable, nor does it examine how educational environments and extracurricular sports specifically contribute to its development. In contrast, the present study endeavors to address this gap by employing a qualitative research approach informed by the Strauss and Corbin method. By focusing exclusively on Iranian students and their participation in extracurricular sports activities, this study aims to develop a conceptual model that elucidates the nuanced pathways through which sports participation fosters hope. In the present research, attention has been paid to the issue of creating hope in students through extracurricular sports activities and it seeks to answer the question, what is the model for creating hope in students through participation in extracurricular sports activities? This research will determine what the causal, contextual, intervening factors, strategies, and consequences are for developing hope through participation in extracurricular sports activities.

Material and Methods

In the present study, a thematic analysis was used. Research data were obtained through in-depth interviews with experts. Hence, the statistical sample of this research comprised of 15 sports

managers from universities, sports management professors and extracurricular experts from universities. Judgmental sampling was employed to select the initial three participants, followed by the application of the snowball sampling method to recruit additional participants. The criteria for selecting the initial three participants included having at least two published articles or books in the field of extracurricular sports activity. Subsequently, the remaining participants were chosen based on the recommendations of the initial three participants until theoretical saturation was achieved. The concept of theoretical saturation entails that the researcher persists in collecting data until the new data is merely a reiteration of the previous data, and no novel concept emerges that necessitates the creation of new codes or the expansion of existing codes and classes. In the present study, the researcher reached theoretical saturation during the 13th interview, but the interview continued until the 15th person. To collect data, in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts and specialists in the field of sports management and sports extracurricular at universities. The research question was distributed to the interviewees one week prior to the commencement of the interview to ensure that they arrived to the interview with complete preparation on the day of the interview. The interviews were recorded and analyzed immediately subsequent to the interview.

Since thematic analysis was used for data analysis; three-stage coding, including open, axial and selective coding was employed for data analysis. In this three-step coding process, the data was continuously reviewed and monitored. Open coding is divided into two stages: primary coding and focused coding. During the open coding stage, the coding process commenced with an emphasis on the paragraphs derived from the interviews. Initially, primary concepts were extracted from the codes utilizing this methodology. In the subsequent stage, secondary concepts were developed from these primary concepts. In the focused coding stage, secondary codes were employed to identify principal categories and to categorize concepts. Focused coding entails the selection of the most significant or frequently utilized codes from the primary codes generated in the first-level open coding stage, thereby facilitating the filtering and reduction of the extensive array of codes produced during this phase. In axial coding, a specific coding category is chosen to serve as the axial category. This category becomes the focal point of the analysis and is treated as the central phenomenon. The connections between the axial category and other coding categories are explored and established. These relationships are typically categorized into five distinct sections: causal

factors, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences associated with the axial phenomenon. In selective coding, a thorough analysis of the data is undertaken, subsequently situating the findings within the framework of a specific and comprehensive theoretical construct. This theoretical framework is grounded theory, which serves as the central objective of the research aimed at elucidating and analyzing the phenomenon under investigation. At this stage, all data, codes, and categories are interrelated, culminating in a comprehensive and integrated representation of the research topic.

The criteria of trust, confirmation and authenticity were observed in this research. In qualitative research, the concept of trust is defined as the equivalent of reliability in quantitative research, which means the level of stability of the results obtained in different time and place conditions. To comply with this criterion, three common methods in grounded theory were used as follows:

- Control or validation: This process was conducted by the participants involved in the research.
- Analytical comparisons: Raw data were referenced to facilitate comparisons and evaluations of the theoretical construction against the original data.
- Utilization of the audit method: Several experts in grounded theory supervised the different stages of coding, conceptualization, and category extraction. Given that this research is part of a doctoral dissertation, it was overseen and guided by academic supervisors and advisors throughout all stages. Additionally, a sports management expert, knowledgeable in the concept of fostering hope through participation in extracurricular sports activities and grounded theory, was also consulted.

In qualitative research, the concept of validation is analogous to the notion of objectivity in quantitative research, which emphasizes the reduction of the researcher's personal biases on the findings. The validation of grounded theory is intrinsically realized during the processes of data coding and analysis, as these procedures must be conducted impartially and with meticulous attention to ensure that the results and interpretations are not contingent upon individual perspectives. Originality in research entails the fair presentation of diverse perspectives, values, and beliefs, ensuring that they are reflected without bias or partiality. In this study, an effort has been made to achieve originality through member review strategies and the documentation of changes in the mental constructs of the research participants. By rigorously documenting the

extracted concepts and monitoring the research participants, this study aims to demonstrate that its findings are represented impartially and equitably, and that the analyses and results have been articulated without bias toward any particular viewpoint.

Results

Table 1 contains descriptive findings related to the statistical samples of the current research. As evidenced by the data, 73% of the participants hold a PhD, while 27% possess a master's degree. Additionally, 27% of the participants held the position of assistant professor, 27% were associate professors, 7% were professors and the remaining participants were engaged in executive roles related to extracurricular sports activities.

Table 1. Lists the code of the interviewees and their position

Row	No	Organizational post	Degree
1	Q1	Assistant Professor of Sports Management	Ph.D.
2	Q2	Assistant Professor of Sports Management	Ph.D.
3	Q3	Assistant Professor of Sports Management	Ph.D.
4	Q4	professor of sports management	Ph.D.
5	Q5	Assistant Professor of Sports Management	Ph.D.
6	Q6	Assistant Professor of Sociology	Ph.D.
7	Q7	Associate Professor of Sociology	Ph.D.
8	Q8	Assistant Professor of Sociology	Ph.D.
9	Q9	Associate Professor of Sociology	Ph.D.
10	Q10	The director of physical education and extracurricular of the university	Masters of art
11	Q11	The director of physical education and extracurricular of the university	Masters of art
12	Q12	The director of physical education and extracurricular of the university	Ph.D.
13	Q13	The director of physical education and extracurricular of the university	Ph.D.
14	Q14	University physical education expert	Masters of art
15	Q15	University physical education expert	Masters of art

By coding based on paragraphs, 105 primary concepts were extracted. In the first stage, the interviewees' key points were extracted. A closer examination of the identified codes revealed that, although many codes had different terms and interpretations, they all had the same meaning in explaining the questions and interviews. Consequently, these codes were amalgamated and amalgamated, resulting in a total of 90 codes remaining. Following the concept of scattered codes being extracted, the second stage of coding was completed and 24 sub-themes were re-coded based on the request for open coding. The secondary themes that were extracted during the primary coding stage were subsequently analyzed to generate the primary themes in the central or secondary coding stage. This analysis produced eleven main themes. These items, along with each

of the sub-themes and associated concepts, were presented in Table 2. The present investigation focuses on the phenomenon of instilling hope in the students of the country through the participation in extracurricular sports activities. Accordingly, it was regarded as a central class.

Table 2. The primary concepts and secondary and main themes are identified during the open and central coding stage of the foundational data theory

	Main themes	Sub themes	concepts
Causal conditions	sports research	cultural	Promoting sports culture through the media
			Promoting sports culture in the family and peer group
			Deepening the culture of sports and physical activity
			Explaining sports as a way of spending leisure time
		Official	Compilation of rules and regulations
			Follow-up and implementation of relevant regulations
			Evaluation, feedback and improvement of rules and regulations
			Compilation of programs and timetables based on the priority of sports participation
		Support	Access to various sports
			Access to sports facilities
			Access to financial and economic resources to participate in sports
The phenomenon under study	Development and improvement of health	access	Social and cultural support of sports
			Legal and official support of sports
			Financial and economic support for sports
			Facility support for sports
		Support and support	Social and cultural support of sports
			Legal and official support of sports
			Financial and economic support for sports
			Facility support for sports
	Individual excellence	physical	Prevention of disease and physical disorder
			Maintaining health and wellness
			Health promotion
			Improve sports skills
		Sports performance	Sports competitiveness
			Improving and promoting sports performance
			Stress and anxiety management
			Strengthen and promote self-confidence
Background conditions	Facilitator	psychological	proper motivation
			Life satisfaction
			Goal setting and planning
			Achieving goals
		Executive and managerial	Ability to evaluate performance results
			Management of communication with cohorts
			Managing communication with competitors
			Social networking
	Facilitator	social skills	Social responsibility
			Increasing the activity of sports media
			Variety of international, national and local sports competitions and events
			Variety of sports and covering all kinds of tastes
		knowledge	Better access to sports nutrition knowledge
			Better access to exercise science
			More awareness of sports rules and regulations
			Getting to know more about how to organize sports competitions and events
	Facilitator	hardware	Increase in sports per capita in the society
			Increase in sports graduates
			Gradually increasing access to sports and sports facilities

Intervening conditions	Sports deficiencies	Knowledge	Ignorance of the results of exercise	
			Ignorance of sports knowledge	
			Ignorance of sports skills	
		Facilities	Lack of sports facilities	
			Insufficient access to various sports	
			Lack of sports professionals	
	Non-sporting obstacles	Intangible	cultural issues	
			Incompatibility of personal goals with sports	
			Lack of proper motivation	
			Inadequate sports branding	
		Tangible	Incompatibility of job with sports and physical activity	
			Financial and economic problems	
Lack of non-sports facilities related to participation in sports				
unemployment				
Strategies	Promotion	Education	Formal training of sports in the curriculum	
			Teaching sports in extracurricular	
			Teaching sports in the media	
			Sports training in informal settings	
		motivation	Organizing sports competitions and events	
			Appreciation for sports participation	
			Praise and celebration of sports performances and performances	
			Determination of benefits and facilities for participation	
	social participation	Digitization of sports	Using technology and virtual platforms	
			Using the capacity of social networks and virtual space	
			Facilitating access to sports facilities	
			Facilitating access to sports knowledge	
		Social groups	Partnership with people with similar cultural roots	
			Partnership with family members	
			Partnerships with peers and peers	
			Partnerships to facilitate integration into new communities	
consequences	Individual	educational	Educational accomplishment	
			academic motivation	
			Rich educational experiences	
			Increase physical ability	
		behavioral	Increase motivation	
			Productivity and time management	
			Managing negative emotions	
			Reducing treatment costs	
	social	Social productivity	Reduction of deviations and mischief	
			Increase efficiency and performance	
			Increased life expectancy	
			Increasing social trust	
		Joy and happiness	Reducing despair and depression in society	
			Vibrant society	
			Satisfaction with life	
			Active participation	
Deepening foresight and strategic look at the future				

After several back-and-forth stages of coding, the model of creating hope in the country's students through participation in extracurricular sports activities was presented as the outcome of the research. Figure 1 provides a conceptual framework for this study.

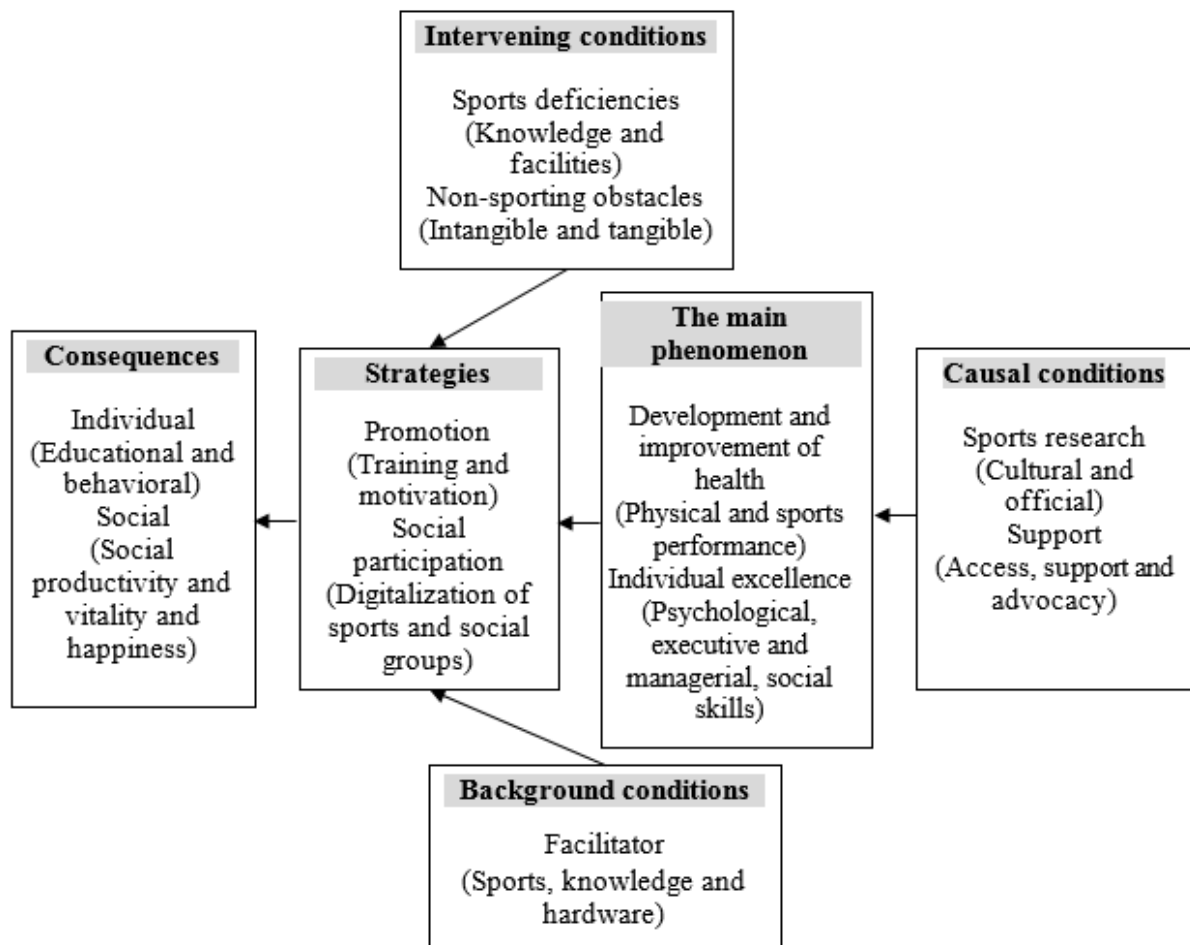


Fig. 1. A paradigmatic approach to instilling optimism among the nation's students by engaging in extracurricular sports activities

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to design a model for creating hope among Iranian students through participation in extracurricular sports activities. As a results, the presented model was derived from the coding processes resulting from interviews with experts, utilizing foundational data theory. Based on the results of qualitative data, the model for creating hope among Iranian students through participation in extracurricular sports activities contains 11 categories in the form of six dimensions including causal factors (two categories: sports research and support), the main phenomenon (two categories: development and improvement of health and personal excellence), strategy (two categories: promotion and social participation), contextual factors (one category:

facilitator), intervening conditions (two categories: sports deficiencies and non-sports obstacles) and consequence (two categories: individual and social).

In the model of creating hope among the country's students through participation in extracurricular sports activities, the cultural component is considered as one of the causal factors. The history of Iran and the religion of Islam have consistently endorsed sports, and athletes have consistently enjoyed a favorable social standing among the general populace. Sports culture is currently promoted through media, families, peer groups, etc., and families should pay attention to sports as a useful tool for spending free time. In this particular case, Sanai et al. (2013) have shown that physical leisure activities have an influence on the physical dimension of quality of life, the mental dimension of quality of life and life expectancy. Naturally, the formulation, monitoring, and implementation of laws and regulations can also have an impact on instilling optimism among the nation's students by engaging in extracurricular sports activities. If the rules do not match, then changes should be made to the rules to facilitate students' participation in extracurricular sports activities. Another contributing factor to the generation of hope among the students of the country students through their participation in extracurricular sports activities is the support component. By enhancing the accessibility of various sports, access to diverse and advanced sports facilities, access to financial and economic resources for sports participation, social, cultural, legal, official, financial, economic, and facility support for sports, among other measures, it is possible to enhance the participation of students in extracurricular sports activities.

This model focuses creating hope in the country's students through extracurricular sports activities, including the development and improvement of their health and personal excellence. The categories are organized around the paradigm model. This issue improves the students' progress in terms of physicality and sports performance, while preventing diseases and physical disorders, maintaining health and wellness and promoting health. Their sports skills and performance are improved. Naturally, the impact of the sports extracurricular program extends beyond the physical aspect, encompassing not only the psychological aspect (stress and anxiety management, enhancement of self- esteem, satisfaction with life), executive and managerial skills (setting and planning goals, achieving goals, and evaluating performance results) and social skills (managing communication with competitors, social networking, social responsibility, and managing communication with peers), thereby fostering a sense of hope among students. In accordance with

the research findings of Sanai et al. (2013), they reported that work, sports and leisure physical activity have a significant impact on the physical dimension of quality of life, the mental dimension of quality of life and life expectancy. The present study and that of Sanaei et al. (2013) share a common acknowledgment of the positive impacts of physical activity; however, they diverge significantly in scope and focus. Both studies underscore the value of physical activity, yet they differ in their conceptual frameworks. Sanaei et al. provide evidence for the traditional health benefits associated with physical activity, whereas the present study innovatively links sports participation directly to the psychological empowerment and hope of students. This perspective is particularly relevant for educators and policymakers who are seeking holistic interventions that support not only the physical well-being of students but also their mental health and social capabilities. According to the research model, education can be an important strategy for in creating hope among the country's students through participation in extracurricular sports activities. Every undergraduate student is required to pass several units of physical education in the official university program. Although it is important to promote and institutionalize sports in life, formal education should be included in the curriculum of universities. However, due to the inadequacy of the compulsory course content and the issue of grades, students may not show much enthusiasm for physical education units. This concern is distinct in the context of sports training in extracurricular activities, as each student selects their preferred sports field based on their inclination. In general, both formal and informal trainings are advantageous for sports training and serve as complementary tools. Obviously, the media, especially the new media, can play a role in sports education (Knoke et al., 2024) and can be used to create hope in students through extracurricular sports activities. Motivation is a crucial strategy for instilling hope in the students of the country through the participation in extracurricular sports activities. Different people participate in sports activities because of different motives, including health, fitness, becoming famous, etc. (Moradi et al., 2020). To enhance the participation of students in extracurricular sports activities, various tools and techniques can be employed, such as organizing sports competitions and events, lauding and praising sports performances and performance, determining the benefits and facilities for participation, expressing appreciation and appreciation for sports participation, among others. Another strategy for creating hope in the country's students through participation in extracurricular sports activities is the use of social groups; in such a way that people usually enjoy

sports more in a group and if the group is of the same age and homogeneity, this pleasure will be. Therefore, if people experience participating in sports activities with their family, people with similar cultural roots, peers and homogeneous people, etc., sports activity will be more attractive for them. Ultimately, the final strategy pertains to the digitalization of sports, wherein the utilization of virtual technologies and infrastructures, the utilization of the capacity of social networks and virtual space, the facilitation of access to sports facilities, and the facilitation of sports knowledge will contribute to the creation of hope among the students of the country through extracurricular sports activities.

Based on the presented model, it is necessary to create hope in the country's students through extracurricular sports activities through some background factors, including the sports component. The diversity of various international, national and local sports competitions and events, as well as the diversity of sports and coverage of all kinds of tastes can help students participate more in extracurricular sports activities. Additionally, increasing the activity of sports media could increase the importance of student sports, which would increase the desire of students to participate in extracurricular sports activities. The knowledge component is also a fundamental prerequisite for instilling hope in the nation's students through extracurricular sports activities. To enable students to progress in the field of sports, it is imperative that they are equipped with knowledge of sports nutrition and exercise science, as well as familiarity with sports rules and regulations, and how sports competitions and events are conducted. Furthermore, sports and academic component, sports require a series of hardware facilities. Initially, it is imperative to consider the promotion of sports per capita to ensure that students are not discouraged from engaging in extracurricular sports activities due to diverse factors, such as crowded halls, lengthy journeys, and so forth. By constructing new sports halls, enhancing their capacity, and renovating existing ones, as well as constructing low- cost facilities such as open fields and beaches, it is possible to enhance the sports participation rate of students. Furthermore, it is imperative that the access to the halls is facilitated and that students are not required to travel a considerable distance. In this particular setting, it is feasible to enhance accessibility by constructing sports facilities adjacent to educational institutions and dormitories, as well as implementing a comprehensive transportation system. Furthermore, different sports fields should be active with the presence of educated and elite coaches so that students have a greater desire to participate in extracurricular sports activities in

the university and don't prefer sports clubs outside the university because of better facilities and coaches. Intervening conditions are also efficacious in generating optimism among the nation's students through sports activities. Unfortunately, a set of sports shortcomings including Ignorance of sports results, sports knowledge and sports skills, lack of sports facilities, inadequate access to various sports and lack of sports professionals, can lead to non-participation or low participation in extracurricular activities. Regrettably, a range of sports deficiencies, including a lack of knowledge and skills in sports, inadequate access to sports facilities, inadequate access to diverse sports, and a dearth of sports professionals, have led to a lack of participation or low participation in extracurricular activities.

The findings of this study indicate that fostering hope among Iranian students through extracurricular sports activities has significant implications for both individual (including students' academic progress and improving their physical condition.) and social (including reducing treatment costs and reducing deviations) dimensions. This study is not without its limitations. First, regarding the research instrument, the reliance on in-depth interviews may have introduced response bias and subjective interpretations. To address these concerns, the criteria of trust, confirmation, and authenticity were employed to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. Second, the qualitative research method employed to investigate the multifaceted construct of hope, while providing profound insights into individual experiences, inherently constrains the generalizability of the findings. In response, the study implemented rigorous coding procedures, iterative peer debriefing, and judgmental sampling to ensure that a diverse range of perspectives was adequately represented. Third, the existing research background in the area of fostering hope through sports activities is significantly limited, and it is recommended that scholars undertake further investigation in this domain. Lastly, the constraints of time and space (given that the study was conducted within a specific timeframe and within certain regions) may have limited the exploration of longitudinal and broader contextual variations. To mitigate these issues, the research design incorporated supplemental historical and contextual data, and it is recommended that future studies adopt a longitudinal, multi-site approach to further validate and extend the findings.

Considering that the current research model emphasizes sports research and support as significant causal factors, it would be advantageous for university sports officials to collaborate with academic

departments to engage in continuous research on sports programs and to develop specialized support systems, such as coaching programs and consulting services. Recognizing that both deficiencies in sports programs and non-sport-related obstacles can hinder progress, university sports officials should conduct regular assessments of existing facilities, resources, and program structures, and collaborate with stakeholders to secure necessary funding and enhance infrastructure.

Overall, considering that participation in sports activities can enhance hope among students, it is recommended that university officials prioritize extracurricular sports programs in both quantity and quality. Furthermore, they should develop diverse, innovative, and engaging sports offerings at the university level that align with students' interests. By using surveys, they will provide an environment that all students to participate in extracurricular sports activities. Furthermore, students who participant in sports activities while benefiting from tuition discounts and various facilities of the university should be honored in official ceremonies. Also, the implementation of diverse strategies, such as involving professors and parents of students in extracurricular sports activities, organizing inter-discipline, inter-faculty, and inter-university sports competitions, among others, can facilitate a broader engagement of student. Also, there are several recommendations for future researchers. First, future investigations could examine potential mediators, such as increased self-efficacy or enhanced social networks, as well as moderators, including gender, socioeconomic status, and institutional support, that may influence the relationship between extracurricular sports activities and improvements in health, personal excellence, and, subsequently, hope. This inquiry would enhance the understanding of the mechanisms underlying the proposed model. Second, considering that the development of hope is a dynamic process, adopting a longitudinal research design would enable scholars to track changes over time. This methodological approach can elucidate the long-term impact of extracurricular sports on individual health, personal excellence, and social outcomes, potentially identifying critical periods in a student's academic trajectory when sports interventions are particularly advantageous. Third, given that the present study focuses on Iranian students, future research should investigate whether similar models are applicable in diverse cultural contexts. Cross-cultural comparisons could help distinguish universal factors from culturally specific elements in

the creation of hope. Additionally, researchers could explore how cultural norms, traditions, and community engagement mediate the relationship between sports participation and hope.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

A.N, SH.B, M.F, and S.S contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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