



Providing a Model of the Consequence of Digital Leadership in the Iranian Sports Industry: A Meta-Synthesis Approach

Ahsan Mohammadi Ongut¹  Mehrdad Moharramzadeh²  Nasrin Azizian Kohan³ 
Farzad Nobakht⁴ 

1. Phd Candidate, Department of Sport Management, university of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran. Email: mohammadi.ahsan@yahoo.com
2. Corresponding author, Professor Department of Sport Management, university of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran. Email: mmoharramzadeh@uma.ac.ir
3. Professor, Department of Sport Management, university of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran. Email: n.azizianuma.ac.ir
4. Professor, Department of Sport Management, university of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran. Email: nobakht.farzad@uma.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to providing the consequence model of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry using a qualitative meta- synthesis approach. This research was conducted in the framework of a qualitative approach and using the meta-combination method with the seven-step approach of Sandelovski and Barroso. The statistical population under study includes all Persian researches and studies published in the field of digital leadership between 2011 and 2024 In this regard, keywords related to the research objective were searched and the articles and documents obtained were examined using a purposive sampling method and considering the consistency of the title, abstract, and year of the research conducted. Finally, 27 articles that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed using the three-stage coding method (open, central, selective) through Maxqda 2020 software. The reliability of the coding was confirmed using the Kappa coefficient of agreement in the SPSS software with a value of 0.85, and it was provided to 3 qualitative research experts to check the validity of the research findings. Based on the results of data analysis, 98 open codes were identified for data collection, which were categorized into 23 subcategories and 3 main categories, which include individual outcome, organizational outcome, and environmental outcome. The results showed that the presence of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry will improve the process of adaptation and response to the developments of the digital in the Iranian sports industry and will have good internal and external consequences.

Introduction

Without a doubt, the present era is the digital era, and success in individual and organizational domains requires alignment with digital transformations (Asri & Dharma, 2020). Any action aligned with digitalization requires preparing the needed mechanisms for utilizing technologies in organizations, and achieving this depends on organizational management and leadership perspectives (Baglama et al., 2022). The digital leadership style has emerged with the aim to address the inefficiency of leadership styles and models in the digital age (Baglama et al., 2022). The ability to work in high-pressure and stressful situations, as well as managing and leading large teams, is among the capabilities deemed necessary for the role of digital leadership. A digital leader,

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in addition to having a long-term and forward-looking vision, must direct the realization method of goals, transform into an agent and a cause of change, and stay ahead of any changes and transformations related to their organization or industry (Yasemi et al., 2024).

Digital leadership refers to the ability to guide organizations through the complexities of the digital age with emphasis on innovation and adaptability, which contrasts with traditional leadership and requires leaders to possess a unique set of technological skills and a forward-thinking mindset (Ghosh et al., 2022). Generally, a digital leader can be defined as an individual who, due to their role shaped by environments centered on transformative technologies, seeks to create alignment between IT strategy (online dimension) and business strategy (offline dimension) by utilizing an optimal combination of leadership skills and resources, media, and digital capabilities; hence aiming to turn the uncertainty arising from technology into opportunities and digital opportunities into reality (Rani et al., 2023). The sports industry is a market where services required by customers are in all shapes related to sports (Vial, 2019). Therefore, the sports industry goes beyond the sports goods sector and, contrary to some beliefs, does not solely include professional sports.

Nowadays, the sports industry has gained significant importance for all countries, as sports are used to achieve various goals aimed at improving economic, political, cultural, welfare, and health conditions, and with proper management and organization, these goals can be realized. In other words, the expansion of the sports industry is now considered a tool for development in political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, therefore, the need for identifying the factors that influence its growth and development can be effective in achieving countries' strategic objectives and policies (Sajjadi et al., 2017). On the other hand, with the development of the sports industry, its management has also become more complex, and human resource managers must actively consider how to use digital management for operations, counting, and analyzing human capital (Villany et al., 2022). Digital leadership in the sports industry is increasingly recognized as a critical factor for achieving competitive advantage and boosting organizational performance. This leadership style adapts to the unique challenges emerging from the digital landscape, enabling sports organizations to use technology effectively (Basnet, 2024). The digital world is rapidly evolving, so sports leaders must always adapt to new technologies and utilize them optimally, meaning, employees must continuously learn and update their knowledge (Zaborskyi et al., 2024). Previous studies, instead of focusing on specific problems and practical solutions, have often examined generalities theoretically and with quantitative methods, also, they were written for other markets, which do not align with the culture and specific conditions of Iranian sports organizations. Many articles focus solely on new technologies without giving sufficient attention to the human aspects of digital leadership. However, success in this field requires a mix of technology and human-centric leadership. Additionally, studies must identify the real problems faced by sports organizations and provide practical solutions for them.

Shekarriz and Khadempour (2024) concluded in a research that digital leadership has a direct effect on the ethical decision-making of managers and employees. Additionally, digital leadership indirectly affects managers' ethical decision-making through the mediating role of professional ethics. Abbas Pour (2022) reported that a significant direct correlation exists between digital leadership and digital skills. Similarly, a meaningful direct relationship was found between digital skills and digital well-being, as well as between digital leadership and digital wellbeing. Moreover, digital skills indirectly yet significantly mediate the relationship between digital leadership and digital wellbeing. Yasemi et al. (2024) emphasized that the sports industry in the country requires the application of digital leadership to implement and manage digital technologies. Ghasemi Ghonchehnazy and Atashsooz (2024) found that the foundational dimensions of the concept of digital transformation leadership significantly influence the realization of digital transformation, with the leader's digital expertise and prioritizing customer experience being the most impactful factors. Zare and Pashazadeh (2023) confirmed the direct effect of digital leadership and strategic flexibility on digital transformation and exploratory innovation. Additionally, the effect of digital leadership on exploratory innovation through digital entrepreneurial orientation was also verified. Ahmadi et al. (2023) believe that digital leaders in the country's sports industry must focus on

institutionalizing digital organizational culture within sports organizations to move toward digitalization and achieve success in this area. Majooni and Rahimi (2024) highlighted that identifying opportunities with inspirational motivation is essential for preparing for digital leadership in the sports industry, and developing hardware infrastructures facilitates this goal.

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical perspective, it can be stated that no study has yet been conducted in the sports industry that comprehensively and thoroughly examines the outcomes of digital leadership, therefore this research is essential. Also from a practical standpoint, the results of this study can be used to strengthen digital leadership within the Ministry of Sports and Youth, federations, and provincial departments of Sports and Youth. Considering the rapid advancements in information and communication technology in the virtual world, along with the emergence of artificial intelligence, the metaverse, block chains, and advanced applications, it becomes necessary for employees to update their technological knowledge to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and organizational productivity. This necessitates digital empowerment through the application of a digital leadership style among employees in the Ministry of Sports and Youth. In fact, a review of the literature clearly indicates that a comprehensive and standardized model for digital leadership does not currently exist, and depending on the conditions under study, a new model can be proposed for this leadership style. Accordingly, the present study aims to providing the consequence model of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry.

Methodology

This research is applied in terms of its purpose and qualitative in nature regarding its data and analytical approach. The data collection method relies on documentary information, with historical documents and records serving as the primary tools for data collection. The statistical population includes 61 published studies (articles, theses, and dissertations) from reputable internal scientific databases (6 from the Scientific Information Database of Jahade Daneshgahi, 5 from the Specialized Journals Database, 20 from the National Research Database, 5 from Noor Specialized Journals Database, 5 from the Conference Papers Database of Iran, 4 from the Iranian Scientific Network, and 3 from the Comprehensive Portal of Humanities) and external databases (2 from Science Direct, 5 from Google Scholar, 3 from Scopus, 2 from Web of Science, and 1 from EBSCO). These studies include domestic research published in international journals and were analyzed using the keyword "digital leadership" to achieve a theoretical sample that ensures theoretical saturation. The keyword search focused on the timeframe from 2011 to 2024. For sampling, 27 related studies were purposefully selected and analyzed using a three-stage coding process (open, axial, selective) with Maxqda 2020 software. To ensure the validity of the research, descriptive validity was employed, encompassing all reports from related studies, and the data from each report were reviewed and described by qualitative research experts and specialists in the field. For coding reliability, the Cohen's kappa coefficient was used, yielding a value of 0.85. This research adopts a meta-synthesis approach, which is a qualitative meta-analytic method for synthesizing concepts and findings from previous studies using the standard coding procedures of qualitative research. The main advantage of the meta-synthesis approach for researchers lies in its ability to identify common themes and develop a conceptual framework based on related literature. Given these considerations, utilizing this technique for Providing the Consequence model of digital leadership in the sports industry through a meta-synthesis approach is a suitable method for achieving the objectives of the present study. The research employs the seven-step meta-synthesis process of Sandelowski and Barroso, as illustrated in Figure 1.

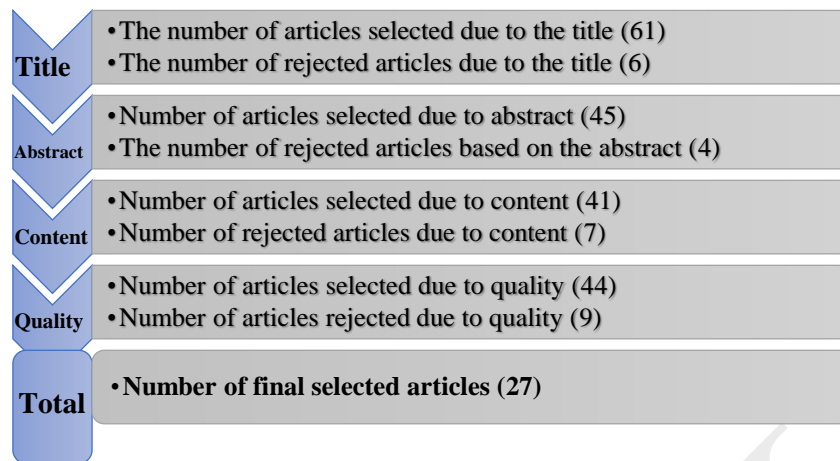


Figure 1. Review process and selection of relevant sources

Results

Presenting consistent findings in qualitative analysis and especially in the current research requires maintaining and presenting the process of generating findings based on the selected meta-synthesis method. In this section, the findings of each stage according to the Sandelowski and Barroso model are presented in the following seven stages (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2006).

The first step: Setting research questions: The first step in the Meta-synthesis research method is to formulate the questions that the researcher seeks to answer in his research process. Therefore, the questions of the current research are raised as follows:

What: According to the literature study, what are the consequences of digital in the Iranian sports industry?

What community (who): Which community is studied to achieve the results of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry?

Time limit (when): In what period of time have the above items been checked and searched?

How: What method was used to provide the studies?

Second stage: Systematic review of texts: In this research, using the databases Eric, Science Direct, Springer, Scopus, Elsevier, the scientific information database of Jihad University, the portal of the Research Center for Humanities and Cultural Studies, the database of Noor specialized journals and the Iran publications system, criteria Certain acceptance and non-acceptance have been considered, and various keywords were used to search for sources and research articles, and finally 61 articles were found.

The third step: Searching and selecting suitable articles: To select suitable articles, based on the process shown in Figure (1), different parameters such as title, abstract, access, content and quality of the research method have been evaluated. In order to evaluate the quality of researches, the tool of Critical Assessment Skills Program (CASP) has been used in this stage, this method helps to determine the accuracy, validity and importance of qualitative research study with ten questions. The logic of selecting the articles is in this order, by giving points to each of the indicators from weak (1) to excellent (5) in each of the ten indicators. Then the articles are categorized into 5 categories: excellent (41-50), very good (31-40), good (21-30), average (10-21), poor (0-10). The evaluation based on ten CASP criteria showed that 42% of the articles were at the excellent level, 21% at the very good level, 17% at the good level, 14% at the average level and 6% of the articles were at the poor level.

The fourth step: extraction of results: in the meta-synthesis process, the selected and finalized articles were continuously re-read several times in order to obtain the findings within the studies. In the current research, the information of the articles were classified based on the reference of each article, including the author's name and surname, the year of publication of the article, and the coordination components mentioned in each article.

Table 1. Selected documents and articles

Row	Year	Names of Authors	Title	Journal
1	2023	Mehdi Ta'vid , Mohsen Nazarzadeh Zare, Abbas Khakpour	The impact of digital leadership style on teachers' digital teaching with the mediating role of psychological empowerment	Educational innovations quarterly
2	2022	Seyed Hadi Seyed Alitabar	The Role of Digital Leadership in Shaping an Innovative Organizational Culture	Journal of technology in entrepreneurship and strategic management
3	2024	Hosein Mojouni & Hasan Rahimi	Investigating the Relationship between Digital Leadership and Creative Performance Mediated by Psychological Empowerment in Teachers	Quarterly research in educational systems
4	2022	Mohsen Ahmadi, Mohammad Reza Ardalan, Siros Ghanbari & Afshin Afzali	The Role of Digital Leadership in Intelligent Decision-Making with the Mediation of Team Reception	Quarterly research in educational systems
5	2024	Javad Shekarriz, Marzieh Khadimpour	The effect of knowledge management and organizational dynamics capabilities on organizational innovation considering the mediating role of digital leadership capabilities (a case study of knowledge-based companies)	Quarterly journal of new research approaches in management and accounting
6	2022	Asghar Zareh Benadkoki	Examining the role of digital leadership on the performance of Yazd Municipality	Journal of Applied Studies in Management and Development Sciences
7	2022	Hossein Norouzi , Rasul Nusrat Panah, Samad Barani	The Influence of Digital Leadership on Firm Performance in Dynamic Environments: The Role of Dynamic Capabilities, Business Model Innovation, and Sustainable Competitive Advantage	Business Management Quarterly
8	2023	Ruqieh Zare, Youssef Pashazadeh	The Impact of Strategic Flexibility and Digital Leadership on Digital Transformation and Exploratory Innovation with the Mediation Role of Digital Entrepreneurial Orientation	Journal of Innovation Management in Defense Organizations
9	2023	Ali Khalkhali, Maede Banafshei, Amir Heydari, Fatemeh Hamidifar, Bahare Kamani	Investigating the role of digital transformation leadership and digital strategy on urban economic development	Quarterly Journal of Economics and Urban Management
10	2023	Zahra Yasemi, Amer Khairi,	Digital leadership strategies in sports organizations and its impact on individual and	The second international

		Shamsuddin Rezaei	organizational arenas	conference of sports science and physical education students
11	2024	Mehsa Alizadeh Rahmanlou, Sajjad Imamviridi	Investigating the effect of digital leadership on the educational effectiveness of teachers with the mediating role of organizational commitment and professional ethics in primary schools in Urmia city	International Conference on Interdisciplinary Studies in Management and Engineering
12	2023	Zahra Yasemi	The pattern of factors affecting digital leadership in the Iranian Sports Industry	Master's thesis
13	2023	Pegah Ghasemi Ghonchenazi	Explaining the role of digital leadership and its impact on creating digital transformation in the organization (case study: infrastructure communication company)	Master's thesis
14	2024	Ali Akbar Etihadhinia	Structural model of the effect of digital leadership on the digital well-being of Shiraz and Yazd university employees: the mediating role of digital skills	Master's thesis
15	2024	Hossein Azbarahram	Investigating the impact of digital leadership on organizational performance through the mediation of digital culture and employees' digital capabilities	Master's thesis
16	2023	Ahmad Reza Habadi	Investigating the effect of digital leadership on digital transformation with the mediation of organizational agility and the moderating role of digital strategy in the companies of Razi Shahreza Industrial City.	Master's thesis
17	2023	Ruqiya Zare	Evaluating the impact of strategic flexibility and digital leadership on digital transformation and exploratory innovation with the mediating role of digital entrepreneurship orientation	Master's thesis
18	2023	Mahsa NaghiLu	Investigating the role of digital leadership in organizational efficiency with the mediating role of employees' digital literacy skills	Master's thesis
19	2022	Arslan Niazi	The effect of digital leadership on organizational performance with the mediating role of digital culture and employees' digital capabilities	Master's thesis
20	2023	Yunus Khodashahi	Investigating the impact of digital transformational leadership on organizational agility and digital transformation with the role of digital strategy moderator (case study: Mashhad Hasheminejad Airport)	Master's thesis
21	2023	Maryam Brojali	Investigating the impact of digital leadership on sustainable organizational performance with the mediating role of information technology capabilities and organizational learning	Master's thesis
22	2023	Ramin Sharifi	Investigating the impact of digital leadership	Master's thesis

			on the performance of government organizations with an emphasis on organizational learning from the perspective of employees of the Kurdistan Province Agricultural Jihad Organization	
23	2024	Asad Fatahi	Studying the role of digital leadership on the ethical decision-making of managers and employees with the mediating role of professional ethics from the perspective of the employees of Baneh city	Master's thesis
24	2023	Narjes Khatun Foulavand	The impact of digital transformation leadership on organizational agility considering the mediating role of digital strategy in food companies (case study: Behrouz Food Company)	Master's thesis
25	2023	Muntaser Mohsen Ebrahim	Investigating the effect of digital leadership on value co-creation with the mediating role of learning culture and strategic agility (case study: Asiacell Communications Company)	Master's thesis
26	2023	Fatima Benazir	Investigating the impact of digital transformational leadership and company digital transformation on export performance with the mediating role of company digital capabilities and exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation	Master's thesis
27	2024	Hamidreza Bakhtiari Dastgardi	Investigating the impact of digital leadership, information technology and digital competence on employee performance with the mediating role of job satisfaction and the moderating role of the safety management system (case study: Isfahan District Railway)	Master's thesis

Finally, after the process of reviewing and selecting relevant sources, 27 articles were used as the final selected articles.

The fifth stage: analysis and synthesis of qualitative findings: the purpose of meta-synthesis is to create integrated and new interpretations of the findings. During the analysis, the researcher looks for themes or themes that have become stable among the studies in the meta-synthesis. At this stage of the research, first all the factors extracted from the previous studies are considered as codes, and then by considering the concept of each of these codes, they are categorized in a similar concept. In this way, the researcher forms themes or topics (concepts) and creates a classification and puts a similar and related classification in the topic that describes it in the best way. Themes provide a basis for developing explanations and working models, theories, or hypotheses. This step, which is the most sensitive step of hybridization, must be done with special care. The findings of this step are the basis for the final model of the research, and special care should be taken in their combination. In the current research, first all the factors extracted from the studies were considered as codes, then considering the concept of each of these codes, they were categorized in a similar concept. In this way, the concepts (themes) of the research were formed. In table (2), the categorization of the findings is presented.

Table 2. Codes extracted from the research

Basic concepts or open codes	Axial codes	Selection codes
Healthy and useful use of digital technologies		
Better mental health among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Preservation of privacy among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Conscious use of social networks among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
More job opportunities in the sports industry		
Better communication with the colleagues of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Better learning of employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
The use of various digital tools among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Protection of personal data of athletes and employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Complying with copyright laws in creating content		
Correct and responsible use of social networks in the field of sports		
Correct use of artificial intelligence in the sports industry		
Encouraging innovation and creating new ideas among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Acceptance of new responsibilities among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Increasing teamwork among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Proposing innovative solutions for the problems of athletes and colleagues of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Creating new connections with other organizations		
Increasing job satisfaction among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Encouragement to learn new skills among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Providing necessary training to employees in the field of digital technologies		
Providing suitable tools for sports field employees		
Job promotion opportunity with digital skills for the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Availability of information for employees and reduction of corruption and abuse		
More responsibility among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Fair and transparent assessment systems using digital tools in the field of sports		
Reducing conflicts between employees by creating a fair and efficient work environment among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Delegation of authority and participation in decision-making among the employees of the Ministry of Sports		

Digital Well-Being**Digital Capability****Digital Ethics****Extra-Role Behavior****Digital Skills****Individual Consequence****Improving Professional Ethics**

and Youth		
Access to information and informed decision-making among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth	Psychological Empowerment	
Access to educational resources for employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Creating an atmosphere of cooperation and inter-team cooperation among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
The use of management dashboards among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Decision-making based on evidence and documentation	Smart Decision Making	
Increasing productivity among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Achieving long-term goals in the field of sports		
Using online platforms as a collaboration tool among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Communicating and participating in meetings through video conferences among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Strengthening the culture of cooperation and training effective cooperation to the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Encouraging the expression of ideas and solving complex problems among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth	Teamwork	
Creating agile and flexible organizational structures in the field of Sports and Youth		
Innovation through creating a sustainable competitive advantage among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Recruiting and retaining efficient personnel in the Ministry of Sports and Youth	Organization Dynamics	
Increasing productivity and customer satisfaction in the field of sports		
Using content management systems for regular knowledge management		
Strengthening the culture of learning in the organization among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Reducing research and development costs through knowledge management	Knowledge Management	Organizational Consequence
Increasing innovation by sharing knowledge and new ideas among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
Increasing interactive learning among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth		
The use of educational social networks among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth	Educational Effectiveness	
Using online learning platforms to access online courses		
Easy access to information and learning at any time and place		
Increasing productivity in the Ministry of Sports and		

<p>Youth</p> <hr/> <p>Improving communication between the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth</p> <hr/> <p>More innovation among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth</p> <hr/> <p>Training employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth</p>	Organizational Performance
<p>Creating a clear and comprehensive code of ethics as a guide for ethical decisions among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth</p> <hr/> <p>Training Ministry of Sports and Youth employees about digital ethics</p>	
<p>Consultation with ethics experts to understand complex decisions</p> <hr/> <p>Interaction with the community and feedback from sports users</p>	
<p>Avoid repetitive tasks using automation</p> <hr/> <p>Access to up-to-date information for better decision making</p> <hr/> <p>Knowledge of project tasks and progress using project management and collaboration tools</p>	Job Performance
<p>Feeling more satisfied because of the dynamic digital work environment</p> <hr/> <p>Sharing new ideas for continuous innovation</p>	
<p>Quick response to market changes through agility and flexibility</p> <hr/> <p>Improving the customer experience in the field of sports</p> <hr/> <p>Optimizing the business process and reducing costs in the sports industry</p>	Strengthening Competitive Advantage
<p>Encouraging innovation and learning new things among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth</p> <hr/> <p>Cooperation and knowledge sharing and benefiting from each other's experiences among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth</p>	
<p>Improving employee skills through online training</p> <hr/> <p>Identifying the strengths and weaknesses among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth</p>	Organizational Learning
<p>Development of new markets in the sports industry</p> <hr/> <p>Access to global markets in the field of sports</p> <hr/> <p>Creating social networks in the sports industry</p>	
<p>Development of block chain technologies in the sports industry</p> <hr/> <p>Development of mobile applications in the field of Sports and Youth</p>	Digital Entrepreneurship
<p>Save time and reduce errors through process automation</p> <hr/> <p>Cost reduction in the sports industry</p>	
<p>Eliminate repetitive tasks and increase productivity among employees</p> <hr/> <p>Using online collaboration tools in the sports industry</p>	Organizational Efficiency
<p>Using customer relationship management systems</p> <hr/> <p>Expansion of flexibility in changing processes</p>	
<p>Quick and timely decisions</p> <hr/> <p>Production of new products and services</p>	Organization Agility

Quick response to changes	
Institutionalizing the key values of digital culture among employees	
Creating an innovative organizational culture	
Determining the organization's approach in using new digital technologies	
Promoting digital thinking	Digital Culture
Creating an internal and external learning environment	
The use of new technologies among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth	
Expansion of online learning among the employees of the Ministry of Sports and Youth	
Useful use of social networks	
Changes in the educational methods of the Ministry of Sports and Youth	Digital Transformation
Use of digital technologies, such as online and virtual education	
Identifying new opportunities	Environmental Consequence
Promoting a culture of innovation and continuous strategy improvement	
Cooperation between different departments of the organization	Improve Digital Strategy
Using new technologies to surpass competitors	

The sixth step: maintaining quality control: in the meta-combination method, the researcher considers the following procedures to maintain and control the quality of his study:

1. In the entire research process, the researcher tries to take the steps taken by providing clear and detailed explanations for the options available in the research;
2. The researcher uses both online and manual search methods to find related research;
3. The researcher applies the quality control methods used in the original studies.

In this research, almost all the methods mentioned above were used to evaluate the quality of the research. According to Sandelowski and Barroso, in qualitative Meta-synthesis research, descriptive validity means identifying all the research reports related to the subject and identifying and describing the information of each of the reports in the study (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2006). Interpretive validity in qualitative Meta-synthesis research is related to secondary researchers who summarize and write the reports in the study. The theoretical validity in meta synthesis is primarily related to the validity of the method that has been taken to create the integrity of the results, and in the next step, it deals with the integrity of the results themselves, or in other words, the researcher's interpretation of the findings of previous researchers. In this research, for descriptive validity, it has been tried to identify and collect as many related articles as possible. To determine reliability, the method of agreement between two interpreters and qualitative coding was used in such a way that in addition to the researcher who did the initial coding, other researchers also coded the findings. The closeness of these six coding shows the agreement between researchers and indicates reliability. And in order to calculate the amount of agreement, kappa coefficient was used in SPSS 24 software, and its value was 0.85, which indicates acceptable reliability. Also, to check the validity of the research, the findings were provided to 4 experts and commentators of qualitative research. After reviewing the study process, they studied the qualitative results.

Seventh step: Presenting the findings: In the final step of the synthesis process, the findings from the previous steps are presented. In this step, the findings from the previous steps are presented in the form of a conceptual model. In this research, based on the analysis results, 23 key categories and 98 codes were identified and their quality test was confirmed. The conceptual model for the providing of the consequence model of digital leadership in the sports industry is presented in the Figure (2).

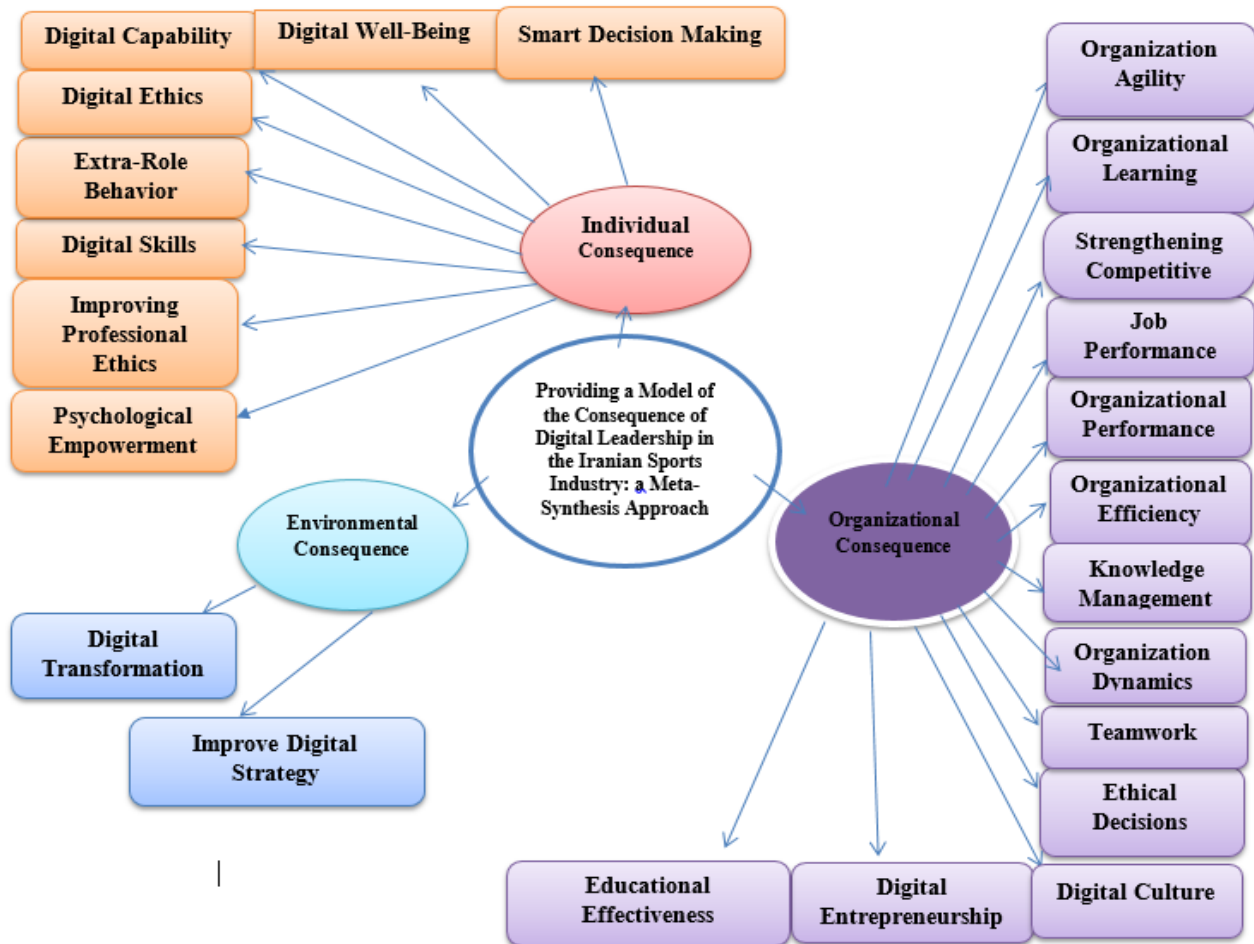


Figure 2. The final model of the consequences of digital leadership in the Iranian Sports Industry

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to providing the consequence model of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry with meta-synthesis approach. This research is one of the first researches that has comprehensively and widely identified the consequences of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry through the synthesis of studies and has provided a new, comprehensive, accurate and valuable insight in this field with a deep understanding of its nature. which can strengthen digital leadership in the Iranian sports business industry. The findings of the current research show that the consequences of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry consist of three key consequences: individual, organizational and environmental. Each of the implications of digital leadership is discussed below (De Araujo, Priadana, Paramarta, & Sunarsi, 2021).

The success of the sports industry in today's era requires monitoring, responding and coordinating with the digital developments governing all elements of individual and social life. Achieving this goal requires a new way of leadership called digital leadership (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2011).

The Minister of Sports and senior managers of the Ministry of Sports and Youth are at the center of the digital transformation phenomenon, and in their new role as digital leaders, they are expected to think differently, behave differently, and emotionally react differently. In explaining this, it can be said that digital leaders, in line with the effectiveness of their role, first of all, in creating the culture, infrastructure and positive attitude of digitalization of the Iranian sports industry, have the main task in order to be able to monitor and progress the Iranian sports industry by increasing literacy. Digital, systematic improvement, ecosystemic and collaborative thinking to face the changes and developments of the digital age in a suitable way.

The findings of this research are completely new in the country. According to the findings of the current research, using the basic components of digital leadership in the Iranian sports industry will

improve the process of adaptation and response to the developments of the digital era in the Iranian sports industry.

The findings of this research indicate that one of the main outcomes of digital leadership in the sports industry is its individual consequences. These findings align with those of previous studies by Ahmadi et al. (2023), Norouzi et al. (2022), Zareh Benadkoki (2022) and Seyed Alitabar (2022). These researchers also highlighted digital well-being, digital capability, digital ethics, boundaryless behavior, digital skills, professional ethics improvement, psychological empowerment, and smart decision-making. To explain these findings, it can be said that the digital leadership style in the ministry of Sports and Youth, by fostering a dynamic and knowledge-based work environment, can improve organizational performance, increase productivity, and attract and retain skilled human resources. Senior and staff managers in the ministry should promote the use of technology and digital tools for employees' benefit, developing digital capabilities among them. This will contribute to the responsible and efficient use of artificial intelligence in the sports industry and the ethical use of social networks within the sports sector, thus enhancing personal development among employees and fostering team collaboration. Moreover, by adopting a digital leadership style, senior managers in the Ministry of Sports and Youth can establish a fair and transparent evaluation network using digital tools, ensuring that employees with high digital skills are provided with career advancement opportunities based on evidence-based decision-making. Therefore, by applying digital leadership in the ministry of Sports and Youth, staff knowledge, insights, and abilities can be transformed. Sports organizations should continue to invest in new technologies to enhance employee engagement and operational efficiency. This includes exploring and organizing in-service training courses in emerging technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence to improve employees' experiences in the ministry. It is recommended that the ministry of Sports and Youth, while developing a digital vision, also define a digital mission with digital investment, ensuring that the appointees to senior positions possess digital insight and awareness. Additionally, since the relevant managers need hardware and software educational facilities to develop internet capabilities for implementing digital leadership in the sports sector, it is suggested that they create integration between training processes, ultimately leading to the establishment of a digital work environment, thus facilitating the achievement of digital leadership goals in the ministry.

The findings of this research indicate that one of the main outcomes of digital leadership in the sports industry is its organizational impact. These findings align with studies by Alizadeh et al. (2024), Majooni (2024), Ahmadi et al. (2023) and Zare and Pashazadeh (2022). These researchers also highlighted team collaboration, organizational dynamism, knowledge management, educational effectiveness, organizational performance, ethical decision-making, job performance, strengthening competitive advantage, organizational learning, digital entrepreneurship, organizational efficiency, organizational agility, and digital culture. To explain these findings, it can be said that the adoption of digital leadership in the Ministry of Sports and Youth can bring about extensive positive transformations within the organization. These transformations will not only affect the internal performance of the organization but also influence its interactions with society and stakeholders. By introducing a digital leadership style, many administrative and managerial processes can be automated using content management systems, leading to time savings, reducing human errors, and avoiding repetitive tasks through automation. Moreover, information technology allows processes to be monitored and made transparent. Additionally, by utilizing online platforms, communication with athletes, coaches, federations, and the general public becomes clearer, and organizational responsiveness increases. Senior managers in the ministry of Sports and Youth can also facilitate collaboration among employees, federations, and other organizations by creating internal and external networks and developing blockchain technologies and mobile applications in the Sports and Youth sector. They can also foster digital thinking and create virtual teamwork by utilizing online collaboration tools, enabling remote teamwork. However, all of these efforts depend on precise planning, appropriate investment in IT infrastructure, and staff training. This will not only improve organizational performance but also provide the organization with a sustainable competitive advantage in today's complex and competitive environment. Given the individual outcomes found in digital leadership, future research should focus on identifying and overcoming

barriers that hinder digital transformation. Understanding these challenges can help organizations implement more effective strategies. Additionally, there is a need for cultural transformation in sports organizations to fully embrace digital changes. This includes training employees and cultivating an environment that encourages innovation and adaptability. To achieve these objectives, it is recommended that the Ministry of Sports and Youth strengthen the digital educational structure and raise awareness about managing digital changes. Furthermore, integrating digital educational content management with digital IT management can improve efficiency and reduce costs. Additionally, the relevant managers should develop a digital strategy, accompanied by performance monitoring and evaluation, to overcome the challenges in implementing digital leadership in the Ministry. To empower the workforce, increasing digital literacy and enhancing digital skills should be prioritized. Therefore, implementing digital leadership in the Ministry of Sports and Youth depends on identifying digital talent and skills and providing digital training. If these steps are carried out effectively, achieving digital leadership goals will be obtainable.

The findings of this research reveal that one of the main outcomes of digital leadership in the sports industry is its environmental impact. These findings align with studies by Zare and Pashazadeh (2023), Yasemi et al. (2024), and Ta'yid et al. (2023). These researchers also highlighted the outcomes of digital transformation and improved digital strategies in their findings. To explain them, it can be stated that digital leadership in the ministry of Sports and Youth, in addition to individual and organizational impacts, has significant social outcomes that affect individuals and society. These impacts depend on factors such as implementation methods, the cultural context, and access to technology. Leaders in the Ministry can use digital platforms to host sports events, competitions, and engage with the audience, fostering social participation and strengthening the sense of community. By utilizing social media and other digital tools, they can promote sports and physical activities, contributing to the overall public health of the community. Thus, senior managers in the ministry of Sports and Youth can use digital strategies to enhance social cohesion, reduce disparities, and democratize sports by utilizing digital technologies to make sports more accessible to the general public, rather than a select group. Encouraging collaboration between sports organizations and technology companies can lead to innovative solutions and shared knowledge, advancing the overall digital vision in sports. The results indicate that in order to implement digital leadership in the ministry of Sports and Youth, there is a need for digital creativity, idea generation, and digital innovation execution. A key element in establishing digital leadership is digital empowerment and the development of IT strategies, which can be achieved through the development of digital strategies. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Sports and Youth develop policies and guidelines related to digital leadership and establish a digital technology team alongside organizing digital initiatives. To further develop digital services, it is important that the ministry allocates the necessary educational resources to facilitate achieving positive results.

Limitations and Further research

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is its flexibility, and most of the researcher's mentality plays a role in the research, and in practice, it is difficult to separate the researcher from the subject and analyze the data, and it requires the researcher's comprehensive and permanent attention. Another limitation of this study was the data collection tool was only review the documents and articles published in this study. Considering that this research has been conducted in the sports industry, it is recommended that it be conducted in non-sport organizations, and it is also better to conduct this research using interview tools.

Competing interests

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