

The Role of Sports Academies in Developing Saudi Sports from Society's Perspective

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Abstract

In the last decade, sports academies increase dramatically in Saudi Arabia. However, the lack of information about the role of the sports academies in developing sports in Saudi Arabia from society's perspective alerts the importance of investigating this gap. **Aim:** The main aim of the present study was to investigate the role of sports academies in developing Saudi sports from society's perspective. **Methods:** This cross-sectional study used descriptive design. One hundred eighty-three responds from random public people (age, 22 - 63 years old) including males and female participated in the present study using a developed electronic questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of six dimensions with total of 23 items. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92). Data of the present study was analyzed using SPSS program version 26. Mean, standard deviation, frequencies, percentages and relative importance were used. **Results:** Generally, the responds of the participants demonstrated that the society tends to be mature enough to understand the role of the sports academies especially in development of the spread of stadiums and sports facility (mean = 2.41), developing the technical aspects and the level of performance (mean = 2.48), and developing a sports and physical activities participation (mean = 2.61). **Conclusion:** The present study demonstrated that the responds of the participants showed well awareness of the importance of the role of sports academies in developing Saudi sports. Further studies are recommended to understand the role of sports academies from specific population such as coaches from different sports.

Keywords

Sports Academy, Young Athletes, Sports Centers, Sports Talents

1. Introduction

Sports academies are one of the keys strategies for sports development. In Saudi Arabia, sports academies are growing dramatically. Saudi Sports Ministry launched Mahd Academy in 2020 as a national initiative supported by the Saudi Vision 2030 focusing on young athlete. Saudi Vision 2030 includes main objectives in sports for both recreational and professional domains for both genders males and females (Fakehy, Alfadhil, Hassan, & Alotaibi, 2021). Therefore, the demand for children to join these academies increased, especially in the late childhood stage. However, family of the children plays a major role in whether or not children enroll in sports academies. Some parents agree to send their children to the sports academy if there are professional criteria and clear ecosystem. For instance, the results of a recent study showed that the location of the academy, the focus of sports programs, and aspects of social and personal development are among the main criteria that determine the academy in which parents will enroll their children (Bonal, León-Quismondo, Burillo, Pérez-González, & Fernández-Luna, 2020). On the other hand, in other countries such as Spain, parents agree to enroll their children in recreational sport centers not only for professional training, but for health purposes as well (Nuviala, Fajardo, Martínez, Pérez-Turpin, & Nuviala, 2011). However, there are lack of studies in Saudi population investigated the role of sports academies in developing young athletes from society's perspective.

Parents are different in understanding the role of sports centers and academy in developing their children health and sports skills (Inasaridze, 2020; Neely & Holt, 2014). Therefore, sharing the point of view of the society including parents, coaches, teachers regarding the role of sports academies in developing sports is a critical step for further development in sports performance and achievements. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the role of sports academies in developing Saudi sports from society's perspective.

2. Methods

The present study is a cross-sectional study using descriptive design approach. Total sample of 183 (age, 22 - 63 years old) including parents, coaches, teachers and administrators were random selected from general public. Of the study, about 27% of the participants aged between 27 to 32 years compared to others age groups. Middle province was the most common area of living (60%). Data were collected using an electronic questionnaire designed to 226 participants including academies children and youths' parents, coaches and physical education researchers and administrators. Total of 183 (81%) the sent questionnaires completed and returned.

Questionnaire validation

Data were collected using an electronic questionnaire design. The questionnaire consisted of six dimensions with total of 23 items (Table 1) as follows:

Table 1. Questionnaire dimensions and items.

Dimension	Number of items
Developing of sports participation	3
Development of the spread of stadiums and sports facility.	6
Development of methods of selection athletes and competition	3
Development of institutional and administrative aspects	4
Focus of developing the technical aspects and the level of performance	4
Focus of developing a culture of physical activities and sports	3

The reliability of each dimension was measured using Cronbach's alpha to ensure the internal consistency among the items included in each dimension. The preliminary results showed that the questionnaire was reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92). The questionnaire used the lengths of the triple Likert cells to determine the level of the role of sports academies in developing Saudi sports from society's perspective by calculating the range ($3 - 1 = 2$) and dividing by the largest value in the scale (Table 2).

Statistical analysis

Data of the present study was analyzed using SPSS program version 26. Mean, standard deviation, frequencies, percentages and relative importance were used.

3. Results

The mean and standard deviation ($M, \pm SD$) of the questionnaire items are shown in Table 3. The results showed that items related to the role of sport academies in helping spread out specific sports (item = 3, $M = 2.66$), positive effect on family attitudes towards practicing sports (item = 21, $M = 2.66$), and the contribution in the development of the skillful performance of their players (item = 17, $M = 2.64$) were considered high based on community point of view. In contrast, the results showed that items related to the role of sport academies in offering membership fee that are suitable with the with the income of the participants (item = 8, $M = 1.88$), the presence of administrative structure and financial regulation in the sports academies (item = 7, $M = 2.13$), and the presence of Highly qualified coaches work in sports academies (item = 20, $M = 2.14$) were considered low based on community point of view.

4. Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the role of sports academies in developing Saudi sports from society's perspective. In general, findings of the present study demonstrate that most of the participants believe in the vital role of the sports academies in developing sports in Saudi Arabia. Most of the items of the survey reported relatively high average (mean = 2.48). These findings are consistent with the findings of a previous study (Elferink-Gemser, 2005). Elferink-Gemser

Table 2. Cronbach alpha coefficient value.

Mean	Respond's categories
1 - 1.66	Low
1.67 - 2.33	Moderate
2.34 - 3	High

Table 3. Mean, stander deviation, percentage, and frequencies of the development of engaging in different sports.

	Statements	Mean	SD
1	Sports academies are spread out different regions in Saudi Arabia for both genders	2.27	0.80
2	Sports academies increase practicing sports by both genders	2.53	0.65
3	Sports academies help the spread-out specific sports.	2.66	0.59
4	Sports academies contributed to providing stadiums and sports facilities	2.49	0.71
5	Sports academies have led to the development of the use of new devices and tools	2.38	0.74
6	Sport academies led to the development of modern techniques in measurements	2.29	0.71
7	There is an administrative structure and financial regulation in the sports academies	2.13	0.67
8	The fees for joining the academies are suitable with the income of the participants	1.88	0.74
9	Sports academies contributed to the development of sports performance techniques	2.42	0.73
10	Sports academies contributed to the development of selection methods	2.42	0.70
11	The methods of selecting players used in the academies contributed to the discovery of promising sports talents	2.47	0.72
12	Sports academies have contributed to enhancing the level of competition by establishing distinguished athletes	2.55	0.68
13	Sports academies are among the most successful administrative institutions	2.19	0.71
14	There is a governmental system and legislation regulating the work of sports academies	2.17	0.67
15	Sports academies have a database of their employees	2.19	0.66
16	There are competent administrators to manage and organize the work of the academies	2.21	0.73
17	Sports academies contributed to the development of the skillful performance of their players	2.64	0.59

Continued

18	Sports academies contributed to developing the performance and physical preparation of their players	2.61	0.63
19	Sports academies contributed to the development of the tactical performance of their players	2.55	0.62
20	Highly qualified coaches work in sports academies	2.14	0.70
21	Sports academies have positively affected the culture of the family towards the practice of sports	2.66	0.60
22	The culture of general sports has increased after the emergence of sports academies	2.63	0.61
23	In general, sports academies contributed to the development of Saudi sports	2.54	0.71
	Average mean \pm SD	2.48	0.48

(2005), raised up the importance of engaging children and young athletes in sports academies which can help to explore the talents that may become world-class athletes in competitive sports.

It is evident from **Table 3** that the role of sports academies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the development of technological aspects and the spread of stadiums and sports facilities was high with (mean = 2.41), which may help to increase the opportunities to develop motivation, collaboration, communication and social relationships (Keegan, Spray, Harwood, & Lavallee, 2010). Most of participants seem to be optimized because the recent Vision 2030 of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia include lunching different sports arenas, swimming pools and facilities and stadiums in different regions of Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, the development of the methods of selection and competition was average with (mean = 2.21). Some studies demonstrated that sports academies have further values in addition to the technical aspects such as raising loyalty and improve social competences and well-being (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). Since 2016, sports academies increased dramatically with focusing on sports performance and technical issues. However, Ministry of Sport in Saudi Arabia lunched an official sports academy “Mahd” in 2020 with focusing on children and youth from both genders. For instance, Mahd Academy apply one of the developed strategies to explore and select talents. The consequences development of the sports academies in Saudi Arabia may explain the responds of the participants to the present study’s questions.

Development of the institutional and administrative aspects in sports academies was average with (mean = 2.17). These results agree with the recent studies that reported that sports academies are the right place for children and youth to create the optimum context of managerial development by designing and structuring developmental tracks through which young athletes develop their talents, leading them to achieve high-level sports performance (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Champine & Johnson, 2017; Coutinho, Mesquita, Davids, Fonseca, & Côté,

2016; Sotiriadou & Shilbury, 2009). Therefore, young talents development is about providing the most conducive environments and well-organized ecosystem to accelerate athletes learning and performance. Moreover, most of the available evidences illustrated that sports academies seem to be the most suitable place to provide such environments for young athletes.

It is evident from **Table 3**, the development of technical aspects and the level of performance was high with (mean = 2.48). *Asmamaw et al. (2016)*, suggested that integrated strategies including sports sciences to develop the characteristics required to become successful athletes such as mental skills (e.g., focus, attitudes, emotions and motivation), life skills (e.g., ability to plan, monitor and self-evaluation), and physical skills such as physical fitness and technical skills (*Asmamaw et al., 2016*). Thus, sports academies should adapt and adopt new successful training strategies and approaches to develop the technical aspects and performers of the young athletes.

Participants belief that sports academies enhance youth and children to engage in sports and physical activities.

Table 3, demonstrated that the development of awareness and importance of practicing sports and physical activities was high (mean = 2.61). Some studies in developing countries reported that they are facing challenges in increase sports participation as there are some barriers due to the lack of equipment and appropriate sports facilities (*Alebachew, 2014*), and higher levels of engagement in sports or physical education may increase the opportunity of outcomes development above demographic and social contextual factors (*Senne, 2016; Tadesse, Asmamaw, Habtemariam, & Edo, 2020*). Moreover, sport participation lifetime beginning in youth age may lead to enhance physical and psychological well-being in adulthood stage (*Collins, Cromartie, Butler, & Bae, 2018*). As a result, providing the opportunity for the children and youth to participate and learn through enjoyable programs is recommended especially in society with aware of the importance of the role of sports academies. In general, sports academies are one of the keys strategies for sports development.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this cross-sectional study illustrated that the responds of the participants showed well understanding and awareness of the importance of the role of sports academies in developing Saudi sports. However, the results may help investigators to develop a comprehensive research tool and methods for better understanding of the role of sports academies from specific population point of view such as coaches from different sports.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest with the present study.

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