

# Management Guideline for Public Sports and Recreation in an Urban Setting: Case of Bangkok, Thailand

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to develop the sports management model of organization in an urban setting. This study is an investigation of the decreasing interest and participation in sports and recreation in Bangkok, Thailand. The investigation included an assessment on the capacity of sports resources and sports management to meet the organization's goals. Mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection was used to accumulate data from different sample groups. 948 service users were surveyed regarding their behaviors and service needs, and 45 sport staffs were assessed on their perception of the current sports management. Additionally in-depth interviewing of nine managers involved examining sports resources capacity and management guidelines of governmental sports and recreation organizations. The results of the model showed the components of public sports management. Given limited resources, networking and public relations are significant factors in gaining stakeholder and community support and collaboration. The emerging crucial managerial functions are prioritizing, connecting, monitoring and restructuring, which will complete the process of POLE systematic sports management for achieving the organization's goal. This model from this research could be used as management guideline for Bangkok and other sports and recreational organizations.

**Keywords:** Sports Management, Public Sports Services, Recreational Sports

## Introduction

Sports and recreation play a great significant role in any culture, society or local community. Participation in sports and active recreation activities has direct benefits in improving physical health and wellbeing; such as increased life expectancy and reduced burdens of chronic diseases (Reimers, Knapp and Reimers, 2012). The benefits of participation in sport and recreational activities have valued outcomes for individuals and their communities, increasing social inclusion, decreasing exclusion (Tonts 2005; Cairnduff, 2001). These activities fosters economic development through direct training in specific job skills or directly by encouraging increased tourism (Higgins and Burchill, 2005).

There are different kinds of sports providers following different goals and employing different processes to achieve their goal within the organizational contexts (Chelladurai, 2009). They can be characterized by different roles of three main types of providers: 1. voluntary club or civic sector, 2. public or state sector and 3. commercial or market sector

(Gratton and Taylor, 2000). Each of these sectors has specific type providers: sports clubs as a type of voluntary sports provision, fitness and health clubs as a type of commercial sports provider and local sports authorities as a type of public sports provider. Community sport organizations are important providers of sport opportunities in local communities and it is compulsory to understand their functions which impacts goal achievement (Cuskelly, Hoyer and Auld, 2006). At the community level, sport organizations are under pressure due to insufficient sports staff, minimal government support, inadequate facilities and people trending toward inactivity (Jurbala, 2006). Public sports organizations have less financial resources than other types of nonprofit organizations which translates to a variety of problems related to finances and obtaining external funding (Gumulka, Bar, Lasby and Brownlee, 2005). This is in harmony with Wicker's (2009) idea that the nonprofit sport clubs currently face challenges such as increasing competition through commercial sport providers, decreased public subsidies and increased role of the non-organized sport sector. With these identified challenges, public sport clubs are often struggling to survive.

The trend in today's global health interest is transitioning towards an aging society (United Nations, 2017). People worldwide are not only participating in sports but also exercising for health benefits. Despite these trends, the general Thai public is still not very interested in exercising or playing sports (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017). Part this lack of interest is due to a number of persisting problems: sub-standard or insufficient sports facilities and equipment, lack of knowledge in sport science and technologies, and limited accessibility of services provided by governmental organizations (Bangkok of Strategy and Evaluation Department, 2015). This problem is reflected in the evaluation results of the implementation of The National Sports Development Plan No.6 (2017-2021), which show that people still do not see the value of playing sports and exercising because public campaigns to motivate people to participate are still sparse and not well managed. Many problems still persist, such as shortage of responsible staff, lack of coordination and integration between organizations, lack of systematic sports management, limited organizational resources, and limited stakeholder participation (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

The above mentioned problems of Bangkok sports management call for an in-depth investigation of the current situation and a much needed practical management model for the development of sports and recreation management in the Bangkok Metropolis.

## **Organizational Framework**

Hall et al. (2003) noted that "the overall capacity of a nonprofit and voluntary organization to produce the outputs and outcomes it desires is a function of its ability to draw on or deploy a variety of types of organizational capital". The term "organizational capacity" is a multidimensional concept and can be defined "as a set of attributes that help or enable an organization to fulfil its mission" (Eisinger, 2002). Previous research on the concept of organizational capacity (Hall et al., 2003) has often been applied to analyze the structure and behavior of nonprofit organizations (Wicker and Breuer, 2011; Misener and Doherty, 2009; Gumulka et al., 2005). The focus was on human resources, finances, relationship and networks, infrastructure and process, and planning and development. These are factors which determine an organization's potential to determine achievement of organizational goals. Public sports organizations have different types of human resources; volunteers, paid staff, and non-members such as the parents of children who practice in sport centers and people living within the community. It is noted that non-members can also be volunteers of sport club (Nichols and Shepherd, 2006). Relationship and network capacity has been considered and shown to be significant to sport and leisure organizations at the community or municipal level for the purpose of acquiring needed resources, coordinating activities, increasing participation, and maintaining and enhancing service quality among others (Barnes, Cousens

and MacLean, 2007; Vail, 2007; Cousens, Barnes, Stevens, Mallen and Bradish, 2006). Network with other institution can result in additional financial resources, infrastructure resources, human resources, and also non-material resources such as knowledge and information (Wicker and Breuer, 2011).

## **Sport Management**

Chelladurai (1985) defined sport management as “management of those organizations whose major domain of operation is sport and physical activity”. In this paper planning and development has been reduced and with the addition of POLE (Planning, Organizing, Leading and Evaluating) four main functions of smart sport management from (Chelladurai, 2009) in order to coordinate factors to meet goals in public sports organizations. POLE were defined as follows: planning involves setting goals, identifying the constraints, and specifying the activities or programs to achieve those goals; organizing involves creating jobs, grouping them, establishing relationships among them and setting authorities; leading is the process of influencing members to achieve organizational goals; evaluating process involves measuring performance and comparing that performance to standards set (Chelladurai, 2009). Sport management is concerned with two concepts: effectiveness in achieving the goals and efficiency in maximizing the benefit for limited resources, minimizing the inputs and maximizing the outputs. (Robbins, Coulter and Langton, 2006)

## **System Theory**

This paper provides an empirical illustration of organizational capacity on public sports organizations to assess the ability of organizations to fulfill their goals (Hall et al., 2003), as well as to analyse the crucial factors and managerial functions of sports management towards the achievement of the organizational goal with limited resources (Chelladurai, 2009). Consideration for capacity is comprised of several organizational dimensions including managerial skills, customer demand and receptivity to external assistance to incorporate these dimensions within the context of public sports organizations. The development of public sports management model involves the following steps: surveying the participants’ needs, assessing the current situation and challenges, examining the management guidelines of governmental sports organizations. This concept was adapted from (Rossman and Schalter, 2000)’s the program development cycle. The concept presents crucial components and factors required in coordinating all involved sectors and stakeholders, providing a guideline for effectively integrating limited resources to meet public demands in order to achieve the desired outcomes of public sports and recreation organization.

## **Objective**

The purpose of this research is to develop the sports management model of organization in an urban setting, Bangkok, Thailand.

## **Methodology**

**Participants:** Participants were 1,200 service users in three different governmental sports organizations comprising three sports centers, three youth centers and three public sports arenas of different sizes: large, medium and small. They were divided into three types of groups of 400 people using proportional-to-size sampling. A total of 45 staff members were sampled purposively, with the selection criteria being male or female with more than one year work experience. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used for purposive selection of key informants. Six managers and three administrators were selected, with the criteria of male or female with at least three years work experience. The participants

chosen for the six focus group sessions were researchers, university lecturers and administrators who had at least five years of experience in organizational sports management and a master's degree or higher. These experts were the ones to assess the appropriateness and feasibility of the model.

**Data Collection:** The instrument of data collection consisted of questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. First, structured questionnaires were given to sports service users to determine what services they needed for participation in recreational sports or exercise and the reasons, types, frequency, duration, and intensity of those activities. A second set of structured questionnaires was given to the service staff to find out their thoughts about the current situation of the management of their sports organizations. Third, managers and administrators were interviewed in person. These were semi-structured open interviews to gather more in-depth data about factors in sports management. The interviewees were informed that the interview would last approximately one hour with audio-taping and consent form signing. In addition, six focus group sessions were arranged to distill the important components and factors of the draft model through a group discussions about relevant questions.

The content of the developed questionnaires were validated by five experts using the IOC (Index of Item Objective Congruence) method. IOC values of less than 0.50 were cut off and the questions were improved following the experts' suggestions (Gunnasud, 1999). The total index of two questionnaires were 0.80 and 0.90. The questionnaires' reliability were further evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). The improved questionnaires were tried out with 30 people of groups similar to the sample groups. The reliability criteria of alpha coefficient value was 0.50 or higher (Kanjawasee, 2007). The results of the questionnaires' total reliability value using Cronbach's alpha coefficient were 0.87 and 0.98.

**Data Analysis:** The data collected from the service users and the sports staff of the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation (SD)). The average evaluation of opinions of service users and staff members were used Best & Kahn's (1986) method. For the analysis of qualitative data, all the audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim and revised. The data was sorted through question by question in order to identify consistencies and differences in the interviewees' answers. To summarize and bring meaning to the text, data was categorized through deductive coding by identifying themes or patterns of the sports management from the research literature, and the data was searched for text that matched the themes. Sometimes new categories emerged from the data as well. In order to interpret the data clearly, new categories or subcategories were set up until all the relevant themes were covered. The qualitative content analysis was used for interpreting the data. The result of categorizing and sorting data showed similarities and differences of the respondents. The frequency of the themes which appeared in the interview results roughly indicated the degree of their importance. The most frequently recurring or most revealing themes were selected, and meaningful information was drawn from associations and connections within those themes (Podthisita, 2006). The triangulation of difference method was used to check the reliability and validity of data. The data collection of this study made use of different instruments such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, with different samples such as service user, sports staff, managers, administrators and academics (Denzin, 1970).

## Results

### Participant characteristics

Out of a total of 948 participants, 51.79% were male and 48.21% were female. The largest age group of participants (46.20%) ranged from 18-34 years of age, and at least 7.91% of participants were younger than 18 years of age. Participants were more likely to be

employees (27%) or business owners (21.12%), and least likely to be students (7.70%). A total of 445 participants (46.94%) had an average income of 5,000-20,000 Baht per month, and 121 (12.76%) earned more than 35,001 Baht. The participants' behavior in recreational sports participation were presented in table 1 and table 2, and their service needs in table 3.

**Table 1** Recreational sport behavior of participants

Frequency	Time	Duration
1-2 days per week 30.70%	Before noon 12.87%	Less than 15 minutes 2.53%
3-4 days per week 40.19%	12:01-15:00 10.76%	15-30 minutes 17.09%
5-6 days per week 16.03%	15:01-18:00 34.18%	31-60minutes 32.49%
Everyday 13.08%	After 18:00 42.19%	More than 1 hour 47.89%

**Table 2** Most frequent 5 types of reasons for recreational sports participation

Type	Reason
1. Fitness 39.45%	1. Inexpensive service fee 50.84%
2. Running 39.02%	2. Staff friendliness 49.37%
3. Walking 28.58%	3. Variety of recreational sport activities 46.41%
4. Badminton 27.53%	4. Easily access 44.94 %
5. Swimming 24.89%	5. Location near home or workplace 40.51%

**Table 3** Service needs of participants

Service need	Mean	SD	Opinion level
Staff knowledgeable in sports	4.02	0.79	High
Staff friendliness	4.05	0.82	High
Adequate staff members	3.84	0.74	High
More support from government	4.15	0.79	High
Service fees worth paying	3.78	0.80	High
Information availability	3.97	0.77	High
Online social media use	3.96	0.79	High
Coordination with community	3.99	0.77	High
Support from private sector	4.05	0.81	High
Facilities up to standard	4.21	0.75	High
Adequate facilities	4.06	0.81	High
Accessibility of facilities	4.06	0.79	High
Availability of facilities	4.08	0.79	High
Safe environment	4.12	0.79	High

According to participants, needs for service are high for all categories. The participants put a high priority on facilities up to standard. They suggest that there could be more government support, safe environment, and availability of facilities,

### Findings from the perceptions of sports staff at the managerial level

For this study, 45 sports staff examined what factors were needed to be coordinated and what functions were necessary to perform. The reported perceptions of sports staff are presented below: Table 4 shows the perceived level managerial of resources available, while Table 5 shows their perception of the 4 functions of management.

**Table 4** Sports resources management

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Managerial level</b>
Personnel	3.68	0.71	High
Budgeting	3.36	0.89	Moderate
Public relations	3.37	0.82	Moderate
Networking	3.40	1.09	Moderate
Facilities	3.67	0.72	High

From the point of view of sports staff, the factors with the highest opinion are personnel and facilities, while factors with moderate opinions are budgeting, public relations and networking.

**Table 5** Managerial function of sports management

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Managerial level</b>
Planning	3.44	0.97	Moderate
Organizing	3.93	0.66	High
Leading	3.49	0.92	Moderate
Evaluating	3.72	0.80	High

According to sports staff, the most effective areas in current sports management are organizing and evaluating, while areas with moderate opinions are planning and leading.

### **Findings for a guideline for sports management**

In the in-depth interviews of people who had managerial responsibilities, nine key informants from nine sports organizations were asked about policy, organizational analysis, development of resource factors and guidelines for managerial functions presented in Table 6.

**Table 6** Examples of category development from the data are demonstrated by these quotes selected from respondents.

<b>Category and Subcategories</b>	<b>Similar themes and frequencies</b>	<b>Illustrative quotes</b>
Organizational goal	Facilitator of various activities and facilities for all age groups (9), following policies (3), collaboration with community (3) and social awareness (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "The sports facilities are for people of all age groups, so they have to be designed to service a wide variety of recreational needs."</li> <li>- "We try our best to follow the policies set by The Bureau of Culture, Sports and Tourism."</li> <li>- "We go to the people in community to ask them to join in sports activities at our sports facility and plan events together."</li> <li>- "Sports are good tools for solving social problems such as drug and alcohol addiction and violence."</li> </ul>
Internal strengths	Support from participants (6) and from same organization (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "When people come often for recreational sports participation, we get used to each other and they begin to offer us their help in anything they can. Sometimes we also get help from the instructors from other sports facilities. We support each other."</li> </ul>

**Table 6 (Con.)**

<b>Category and Subcategories</b>	<b>Similar themes and frequencies</b>	<b>Illustrative quotes</b>
Internal weakness	Inadequate personnel, budgeting and equipment (9)	- “Sometimes when the treadmill or exercise equipment is out of order and we don’t know how to fix it, it stays broken until the long process of filing for the budget is complete.”
Resources management	Recruiting (6), selecting (2), job description (7), training and development (9)	- “I set up a meeting at least once a month to explain the task and responsibilities of the job.” - “The Sports Division will set up training courses related to sports or exercise and invite the staff to join in and learn from them.” - “We are searching for staff who are knowledgeable in physical education, sport science or related fields. If they have no educational degree, we will consider the previous job experience.” - “The application form, interview, employment test and fitness test are used in the process of employee selection.”
Function of management	Plan (9), plan operation (9), community participation (4), flexibility (4)	- “Sports and exercise activities are annually planned under the policy framework of the Bangkok Metropolis Sports Development. We plan them in balance with budgeting and try to adjust them to meet people’s needs. Sometimes we go to meet people in the community to ask them about their needs and invite them to participate in activities that we provide for them.”

### **Finding the construct of sports management model**

In the focus group discussion, the experts assessed the validity of the sports management draft model by jointly analyzing the data. They discussed the themes and gave suggestions about the critical and appropriate factors of management that would fulfill the organization’s goal. These experts’ recommendations for improvements were summarized, and the researcher adjusted the model by following the constructs and factors presented in Table 7.

**Table 7** The construct and key factors of sports organizational management model

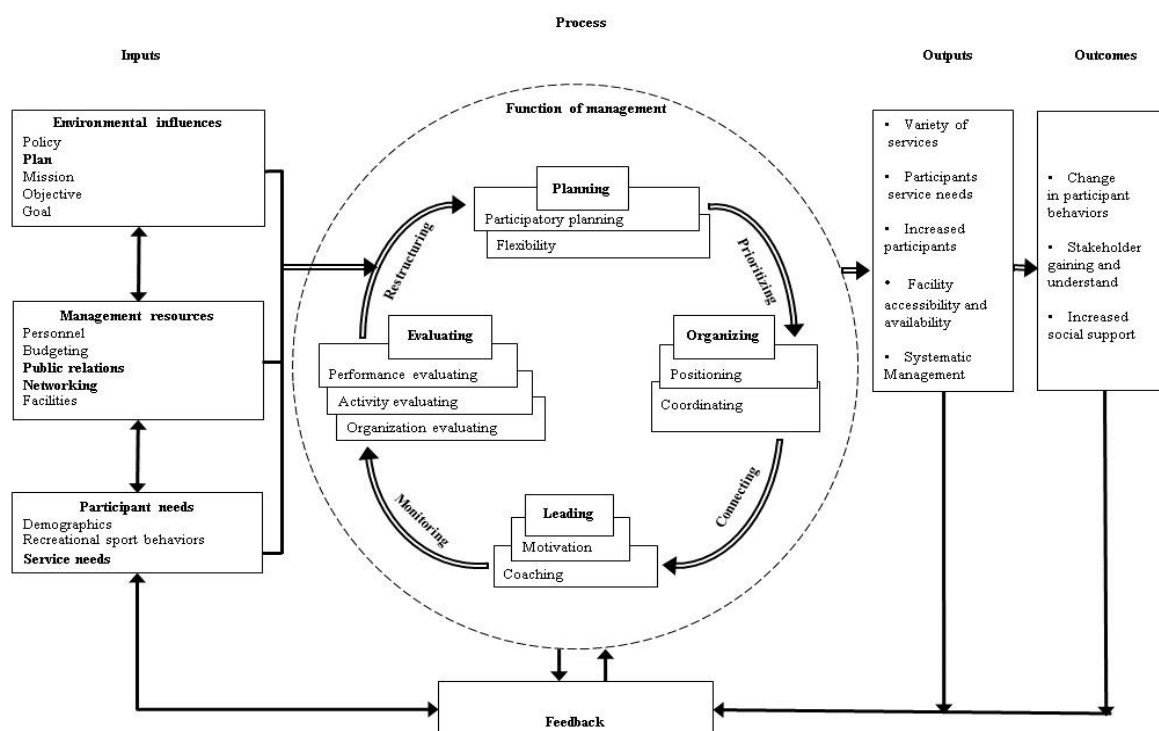
<b>Construct</b>	<b>Key factors</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Output</b>
Organizational context	Policies Plans	Defining missions and setting objectives and goals	Organizational development
Management resources	Personnel Budgeting Public relations Networking Facilities	Coordinating all existing resources efficiently in provision of sport services	Resource availability

**Table 7** The construct and key factors of sports organizational management model

Construct	Key factors	Activity	Output
Participants' needs	Demographics Recreational sports behaviors Service needs	Obtaining the participants' information for providing the recreational sport activities to meet the participants' needs	Increasing the number of participants
Functions of management	POLE and prioritizing, connecting, monitoring and restructuring.	-Planning process is used to achieve the organization's goal and setting list of tasks; -Creating jobs and hiring the right people to those jobs and linking with different sectors; -Providing motivation, coaching and checking job performance -After finishing the projects: evaluating the performance of individuals, activities and organization and adjusting for better output	Effective and efficient management

### Finding the development of sports management model in an urban setting

In the fifth step the experts assessed the appropriateness of the Bangkok sports management and found it to be feasible with the IOC method. This model result is shown the components and factors of public sports management.

**Figure 1** The developed model of sports management in an urban setting



It is designed to be used Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (MBA) and based on an open system of five components: input, process, output, outcome and feedback. Inputs are the sport policy (plan, vision, mission, objective and goal) used as a guideline for the operation plan to fulfill the organization's goal. Government rules the structure of local government and lays out how local authorities should be run. The sports service managers are guided and directed by both policies of the National Sports Development plan and the BMA. They are required to implement the policies and also provide the sports and recreation services that meet the social's needs. The significant management resources (personnel, budgeting, public relation, networking and facilities) were used to facilitate delivery of the recreational sport activities and services. For the last input participants' needs were used to guide their management and all categories of service needs such as staff program and facilities were high on participants' data.

In the component of the process involving the POLE function of management (planning, organizing, leading and evaluating) used to perform those resources and organization units into outputs. A missing crucial component from the management system was found in this research are the function of prioritizing, connecting, monitoring and restructuring. All of this functions will complete the process of POLE systematic sports management for achieving the organization's goal.

The outcomes show that more recreational sports participation brings numerous benefits. By being more active, people become both physically and mentally healthier and collectively, and they help promote a culture of healthy active lifestyles in the community. The more people participate in recreational sport activities, service providers, stakeholders, and the community become more stimulated to better meet the users' needs.

The feedback loop of this model indicates that the result of outputs and outcomes is influenced by the selection of inputs and process and vice versa. In order to achieve results consistent with a predetermined management goal, adjustments can be made in either the inputs or the process.

## **Discussion**

The results of this research demonstrated that the development of public sports management in an urban setting requires effective management with smart resources capacity, personnel, budgeting, public relations, networking and facilities. Providing more information about sports organization and sports activities, and connecting to service users, stakeholders and the community is essential for better networking. Systematic management begins with planning, organizing, leading and evaluating which was highlighted as limitations in the study and identified as best practices for effective sports and recreation management.

The study's model was presented with system theory which is the classic system of management consisting of five components: inputs, process, outputs, outcome and feedback adapted the (Daft, 2010)'s. The theory from a management perspective requires for system managers to learn to think systemically to solve problems. The results from three sports organizations showed that personnel, budgeting and facilities were inadequate. The findings was in accordance with data results from sports staff who provided the highest opinion on the personnel and facilities capacity. In order to solve these problems, the managers need to have abilities to utilize limited resources effectively to achieve the task's objectives (Chelladurai, 2009). The results showed that it is the responsibility of the sports service manager to ensure an open and unbiased recruitment process so that the right people are matched with the right jobs. After recruitment, the manager must make sure that the staff members are given appropriate training and supervision. Mathis and Jackson (2002) present a similar idea that human resource management refers to the design and application of formal systems in an organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of human talent to accomplish

organizational goals. Furthermore, the manager has to manage the budget wisely, understanding options and limitations and being able to balance expenses and revenues. This is similar to the results of the Audit Commission (2002), which show that the funding sources of the public sport and leisure services are more complex than those of the commercial sector, so public managers need to be very knowledgeable in finance accounts. Another critical component of successful management is networking with different public and private organizations, stakeholders and service users. Linking with individuals and groups from different sectors of society helps to strengthen coordination in the community. All participating groups such as sports clubs, private companies, politicians, and different types of social or community groups have a role in supporting successful and sustainable sports management. This is in harmony with Birkinshaw's (2000) idea that organizational networks could be classified into internal and external networks. An internal network involves actors within the organization interacting with each other to solve problems or to innovate new techniques, while an external network involves one or more internal units interacting with units external to the organization to facilitate the work process within the organization. Good oversight must cover the adequate provision and proper care of facilities for service users. Facilities need to be up to standard and meet people's needs. Ideally, the sports staff should be knowledgeable enough about the proper maintenance of the facilities to be able to keep them in good condition. This reflects Chelladurai's (2009) principle of sports management, which says that all these support units must be efficiently coordinated in order to achieve effective sports services.

The analysis process was done through a comparison of the POLE function of management used to perform those resources and organization units into outputs Chelladurai's (2009). The planning process involves community planning and flexibility to make adjustments for achievement of common goals. In applying the guidelines to the current situation, it was found that a crucial factor was missing from the system: that is, prioritization of tasks should be included as an important function after planning. In order for the staff to successfully carry out services in harmony with plans and policies assigned to them, managers need to communicate to the staff not only what tasks need to be done, but also their order of importance. Prioritizing is then followed by taking action, which is organizing, positioning and coordinating to fulfill the set tasks. These processes were also highly effective on the sports staff's data. Coordination should involve connecting and networking with people from inside and outside the organization as well. Next, the function of leading involves motivating the staff and giving regular coaching for continuing job improvement. Motivation should be followed up with monitoring of job performance with evaluations. At any point in the process, restructuring can be applied when necessary to improve the management system for better output and outcomes. The evaluating function was also the most effective on the sports staff's opinion.

The various outputs illustrated the important factors of sports management that are needed in order to meet participants' needs. In order to promote participation in recreational sports activities, systematic management and accessibility to good quality facilities cannot be overlooked. When there is successful management, the outcome is that more and more people become interested and attracted to healthy activities. People receive numerous long-term benefits from being given opportunities to improve their physical and mental health. Increased awareness of healthy living, better community relationships and mutual support help create a positive influence in society.

The research was successful in achieving the desired purpose, which was to provide an empirical illustration of public sports management and to analyze the crucial factors of sports management towards the achievement of the organizational goal with limited resources and meet the participants' service needs.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings, the management process appears to require prioritizing, connecting, monitoring and restructuring in order to complete the necessary management tasks. This model could be used as a management guideline for sports management to encourage the public to participate more in sports and recreation for their active and healthy life, including advancing support from all social sectors and making the management process more systematic for sports and recreation organization.

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