



Foresight in Disability Sport and Strategies for Inclusive Health Policies



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ABSTRACT

Aims Sport and physical activity are essential for maintaining physical health, improving mental well-being, and fostering social participation among persons with disabilities. In Iran, despite growing policy attention, challenges, such as limited infrastructure, a lack of adaptive equipment, weak coordination among institutions, and unstable funding restrict equitable access to sport. These constraints reduce opportunities for physical activity and increase the risk of non-communicable diseases and social isolation. This study aimed to identify strategic drivers shaping the future of disability sport in Iran by 2034.

Materials & Methods This foresight study used a three-round Delphi process and was conducted on 14 national experts in disability sport. The analysis utilized MICMAC software for cross-impact evaluation and the Scenario Wizard for scenario development. Identified drivers were classified under six domains, including political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTEL), and prioritized based on expert consensus.

Findings A total of 21 key drivers were identified, with four emerging as critical, including integrating disability sport into national policy, providing financial incentives for disability-focused clubs, ensuring currency stability for importing equipment, and offering specialized insurance for athletes with disabilities. Scenario analysis produced eight plausible futures, ranging from “peak prosperity,” characterized by full institutional support and health-oriented infrastructure, to “systemic decline,” marked by fragmented services and limited access.

Conclusion Positioning disability sport as a public health priority in Iran requires strong political commitment, stable financing, access to adaptive technologies, and inclusive environmental design.

Keywords Sports; Public Health; Health; Policy; Scenario Planning

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Introduction

In the evolving global discourse on health equity and inclusive development, sports participation among persons with disabilities (PwD) is increasingly recognized as a critical dimension of sustainable social policy [1]. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 16% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, a figure that rises significantly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where access to services and infrastructure remains limited. These populations frequently encounter systemic obstacles that constrain their autonomy, social inclusion, and access to physical and mental health resources [2, 3].

Empirical research consistently shows that PwD engage far less in recreational, physical, and cultural activities than the general population. This disparity is shaped by environmental inaccessibility, social stigmatization, and inadequate policy frameworks [4-6]. In Iran, many PwD remain confined to sedentary lifestyles due to a lack of infrastructure and community engagement, spending their leisure time passively [7, 8]. These patterns are associated with an increased risk of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, and cancer [9, 10]. Beyond physical health, inclusive sport plays a vital role in supporting identity development, social participation, and psychological resilience. Participation in structured programs has been linked to greater self-esteem, reduced depression, improved mood, and stronger community integration [11-13]. Adaptive sports, like wheelchair basketball serve as arenas for self-expression and collective belonging [6, 14].

Yet, major obstacles remain. Urban environments in LMICs often lack accessible design, adaptive equipment, and qualified instructors [1, 15]. Policies frequently adopt segregated models, perpetuating exclusion [16, 17]. Despite growing awareness, sports participation among PwD remains hindered by structural and attitudinal barriers, particularly in settings like Iran, where there is an uneven distribution of sports resources [18, 19].

Much of Iran's recent disability sport policy has focused on short-term initiatives, such as the donation of adaptive equipment or isolated community events [14, 20]. These fragmented interventions rarely reflect the lived experiences of PwD or long-term strategic priorities. In this context, foresight methodology offers a proactive tool for envisioning inclusive futures, identifying drivers of change, and anticipating policy challenges [21, 22].

Despite the existence of studies examining barriers to sports participation [23, 24], few have applied systems-level foresight analysis to the field of disability sport, especially in Iran. The lack of a long-term roadmap hinders national efforts to integrate assistive technologies, train human capital, and align urban planning with inclusion goals [7, 25]. As Iran undergoes

demographic shifts and technological changes, reactive and fragmented strategies are no longer sufficient [8, 26].

Although research on disability sport has grown in recent years, much of it remains limited to descriptive analyses or examinations of isolated barriers. Few studies address forward-looking strategies that integrate demographic changes, technological advances, and policy reforms with measurable health outcomes. In Iran, this gap is particularly evident, as initiatives for people with disabilities in sport are still largely short-term and event-focused, rather than embedded in long-term, health-oriented strategic planning. Despite rising public and institutional awareness, the use of foresight methodology to guide disability sport development and its role in promoting physical and mental health remains critically underutilized.

Little attention has been paid to the interconnected structural, economic, and policy drivers that can shape equitable participation and reduce health disparities over the next decade. This study addressed this gap by systematically identifying and analyzing the key factors likely to influence the future of disability sport in Iran by 2034. Using a foresight-based approach, it aimed to guide the creation of proactive, inclusive, and context-specific policies that not only expand access but also position sport as an integral component of national health promotion strategies, empowering people with disabilities to be active participants and decision-makers in shaping their health and well-being.

Instrument and Methods

Study design and sample

The foresight-driven study based on scenario planning methodology employed a theoretical applied design. From the theoretical perspective, it aimed to enrich the academic discourse on disability sport by providing conceptual depth and explanatory insights. From the applied perspective, the findings were intended to form a strategic basis for evidence-based planning to enhance sports participation among PwD in Iran.

Participants were selected from a national pool of experts in disability sport. The group included senior managers and officials from disability-related sport federations, elite coaches, referees, athletes from different disciplines, and university faculty members with expertise in physical education, sport management, or adapted physical activity. Selection criteria included experience in athletic or administrative roles within disability sport and an academic or research background in foresight studies or disability sport development. Due to the absence of an official database, purposive and criterion-based sampling was used. Recruitment continued until theoretical saturation was reached, resulting in 14 participants.

This study adhered to the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki for research involving human participants. As the research design relied on expert interviews and Delphi rounds with professionals in disability sport, no clinical or medical interventions were conducted.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty was explicitly respected.

Study tools

An in-depth literature review and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The PESTEL framework, covering political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal domains, was applied to categorize drivers of change. Drivers that achieved a consensus percentage above 70% [27], along with their statistical summaries on a 5-point Likert scale, were provided to the experts in the third Delphi round.

Triangulation of the literature review and interviews was employed to strengthen credibility. Member checking was performed by sharing preliminary findings with participants for confirmation. Transferability was ensured by providing detailed descriptions of the research context. Confirmability was established through a documented audit trail and external review. Inter-coder reliability was calculated at 81%, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 60% (Table 1).

Data collection

In the first Delphi round, open-ended interviews explored participants' views on the main drivers shaping the future of disability sport in Iran. Follow-up questions probed for additional detail. Identified drivers were compiled into a structured questionnaire for the second round, where participants rated the importance and influence of

each item. Drivers with less than 70% consensus were excluded. The third round provided the revised list for final validation, resulting in 21 agreed-upon drivers.

Statistical analysis

Cross-impact analysis was conducted using MICMAC software to assess the relationships among drivers. The scenario planning stage applied the cross-impact matrix to identify possible future configurations, with Scenario Wizard software generating the final set of probable scenarios.

Table 1. Inter-coder reliability

Interview number	Total codes	Agreements	Disagreements	Inter-coder reliability (%)
P2	28	11	6	78
P7	21	9	3	85
P11	25	10	5	80
Total	74	30	14	81

Findings

To answer the main research question, "What driving forces can shape the future of sports for PwD in Iran?", a review of existing research in the field of disability sports and foresight in sports was conducted. The lowest experience level was 7 years, and the highest was 25 years and the lowest age was 30 years, and the highest age was 50 years. Additionally, the Delphi method was used to refine and determine the importance of these driving forces (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency of demographic characteristics of Delphi group experts

Parameter	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male 8 (57.1)
	Female 6 (42.7)
Education level	Master's degree 5 (35.7)
	PhD 9 (64.3)
Field of study	Physical education 13 (92.8)
	Non-physical education 1 (7.1)

Table 3. Future drivers of sports for people with disabilities in Iran

Domain	Drivers	Interviewees	Consensus (Delphi Round 2) (%)	Consensus (Delphi Round 3) (%)
Political	1- Shifting from a government-centric approach to participatory governance in disability sports	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11	95.6	88.8
	2- Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans	P1, P2, P7, P14	73.9	94.4
	3- Instrumental use of athletes with disabilities in performative policies	P3, P5, P11	86.9	83.3
	4- Structural interaction among the Ministry of Sports, Welfare Organization, and Municipalities	P2, P7, P11, P12	82.6	94.4
	5- Government oversight for transparent organization of sports events for people with disabilities	P5, P9, P11	34.7	-
	6- Attention to sports diplomacy based on the rights of people with disabilities at international levels	P1, P2, P7	60.8	-
Economic	7- Incentive financial system for disability-focused clubs	P5, P7, P11, P13	69.5	-
	8- Public and private investments in the development of disability sports	P2, P5, P7, P11, P14	78.2	100
	9- Exchange rate fluctuations and their direct impact on the import of international standard equipment	P2, P7, P9, P11	73.9	88.8

Continue of Table 3 from the last page.

	10- Special insurance support system for athletes with disabilities P3, P6	60.8	-
	11- Expansion of commercial leagues for disability sports P7, P10, P11	82.6	88.8
	12- Impact of television contracts and internet broadcasting on revenues from disability sports P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P11	69.5	-
	13- Increasing financial turnover through advertising and branding P2, P3, P8, P12	73.9	88.8
	14- Inclusion of people with disabilities in government economic packages for sports entrepreneurship development P3, P5, P7, P8, P11, P12	39.1	-
	15- Competition of disability sports with other sports in attracting sponsors and media attention P2, P7, P8, P14	56.5	-
Social	16- Presence of people with disabilities in mass media as sports role models P10, P11, P13	95.6	94.4
	17- Sports identity formation among disabled adolescents and youth P2, P3, P5, P7	52.1	-
	18- Creation of active support communities to pursue sports demands of people with disabilities P3, P3, P7, P11	43.4	-
	19- Social connection between the community of people with disabilities and able-bodied athletes P2, P6, P7, P8	59.5	-
	20- Public awareness about the psychological and social benefits of sports for people with disabilities P2, P11	86.9	88.8
	21- Access to sports between cities and villages for individuals with disabilities P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10	86.9	94.4
Technological	22- Development of indigenous digital platforms for remote training specifically for disabled athletes P2, P5, P7, P11	86.9	100
	23- Creation of infrastructure for domestic production of advanced equipment for disability sports P2, P7, P10, P11	65.2	-
	24- Use of performance monitoring systems for athletes with disabilities P2, P7, P14	82.6	83.3
	25- Technology-driven training in educating sports coaches and rehabilitation specialists P10, P11, P12	78.2	94.4
	26- Statistical and biometric data management system for athletes with disabilities in the country P2, P3	52.1	-
	27- Use of personalized technologies for athletes with specific disabilities P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P10, P11, P14	43.4	-
	28- Creation of assistive mobility technologies compatible with Iran's climate and infrastructure P1, P2, P6, P7, P11, P12	78.2	88.8
	29- Use of big data and talent identification software to discover new talents in disability sports P7, P11	86.1	88.8
	30- Access to research laboratories for optimizing the performance of athletes with disabilities P4, P7, P13	52.1	-
Environmental	31- Inclusive environmental design for safe participation of people with disabilities in outdoor spaces P2, P3, P5, P11	43.4	-
	32- Direct impact of air pollution on limiting disability sports in metropolises P7, P9	78.2	94.4
	33- Adaptation of current sports infrastructure to environmental sustainability principles P11, P13, P14	86.9	94.4
	34- Lack of green spaces and healthy, accessible sports environments for individuals with disabilities P2, P3, P7, P11	39.1	-
	35- Utilization of renewable energies in sports facilities for people with disabilities P2, P28	56.5	-
Legal	36- Mandatory laws for standardizing sports venues for people with disabilities P1, P4, P5, P7, P11	78.2	94.4
	37- Clear legal framework for post-retirement support for athletes with disabilities P1, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10	56.5	-
	38- Alignment of domestic regulations with the provisions of international conventions on disability sports P1, P2, P7	78.2	88.8
	39- Legal incentives for the development of clubs and academies for disability sports P2, P7, P11	60.8	-
	40- Transparency in granting licenses and allocating resources to non-governmental organizations in the disability sector P7, P13	69.5	-
	41- Development of legal standards for coaching and scientific personnel training in disability sports P2, P7, P9, P11	82.6	88.8

After the literature review, the Delphi technique was used to finalize the list of drivers for disability sports. In the first Delphi round, 14 semi-structured

interviews were conducted with experts in the field of disability sports, which helped complete the list of future drivers for disability sports in Iran. In the

second round, a semi-structured questionnaire was distributed to the Delphi group to determine the importance of 41 future drivers of disability sports using a 5-point Likert scale. Drivers that received a consensus below 70% from the Delphi group in the second round were marked in red. Experts were consulted at least twice on each component, allowing them to review their opinions at least once, considering the responses of the entire group presented in statistical summaries. Therefore, all drivers that achieved a consensus percentage above 70%, along with their statistical summaries on a 5-point Likert scale, were provided to the experts in the third Delphi round (Table 3).

Analysis of driving forces and interactions

After identifying 21 influential driving forces for the development of sports for PwD, a 21x21 matrix was designed. This matrix was provided to the expert group to determine the relationships and

interactions among these drivers using a scale from 0 to 3, where 0 indicated no influence, 1 represented weak influence, 2 signified moderate influence, 3 denoted strong influence, and P indicated potential influence. This process clarified the extent to which each driver influenced others and, conversely, how much each was influenced. The questionnaire results were then analyzed using MICMAC software.

The overall structure of the cross-impact matrix. The matrix had a size of 21 and was processed in two iterations. The distribution of values included 257 zeros, 64 ones, 50 twos, and 60 threes. In addition, 10 potential influences (P) were recorded. Altogether, the matrix contained 184 active entries, resulting in a fill rate of 41.72%.

The MICMAC software processes the input data and separates it into two flows and two matrices: the direct influence matrix (DIM) and the indirect influence matrix (IIM) (Table 4).

Table 4. Prioritization of direct and indirect influences of driving forces

Row	Driving force	Direct influence	Driving force	Direct dependence	Driving force	Indirect influence	Driving force	Indirect dependence
1	P1	1250	S3	930	P1	1157	S3	846
2	P2	988	E3	784	P2	1009	E1	781
3	P3	988	E4	784	E2	836	E4	715
4	P4	872	E1	726	E1	823	E3	701
5	E1	872	P2	610	E4	804	T4	699
6	E2	813	L3	610	E3	785	P2	612
7	E3	581	T4	581	P3	705	L3	612
8	E4	523	S1	465	P4	576	S1	503
9	S1	406	P4	406	T4	470	T2	473
10	S2	377	T2	406	S3	438	P3	422
11	S3	348	P1	377	T5	394	e1	407
12	T1	290	P3	377	e1	283	T3	405
13	T2	290	E2	377	T1	281	E2	389
14	T3	261	T3	377	T2	261	P1	373
15	T4	203	S2	348	S2	256	P4	355
16	T5	174	e1	348	L3	209	S2	304
17	e1	174	L2	348	T3	205	T5	298
18	e2	174	T5	319	S1	201	L2	295
19	L1	174	L1	319	L2	142	T1	284
20	L2	174	T1	261	e2	101	e2	257
21	L3	58	e2	232	L1	51	L1	257

MICMAC software results and system stability analysis

The stability or instability of the system was analyzed using the direct influence and dependence plane. According to the MICMAC output and expert opinions, the future of sports for PwD is predicted to be somewhat unstable, indicating a potential for current conditions to change. Considering the findings from the direct influence matrix (DIM) map, the driving forces for sports for PwD were categorized into four quadrants (Figures 1 and 2).

The drivers of sports for people with disabilities (PwD) in Iran are categorized into four types based on their position. Zone one drivers, classified as bipolar, include P2, E1, E3, and E4. Zone two drivers, considered influential, consist of P1 and P3. Zone three drivers, identified as independent, encompass P4, T1, T2, T3, T5, E1, E2, S1, S2, L1, and L2. Finally,

Zone four drivers, categorized as dependent, include T4, L3, and S3.

Therefore, the four drivers—"Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans," "Incentive financial system for disability-focused clubs," "Exchange rate fluctuations and their direct impact on the import of international standard equipment," and "Special insurance support system for athletes with disabilities"—were considered key drivers. The probable states encompass a spectrum from desirable to critical conditions, with three states considered for each driver (Table 5).

Based on the probable states for the four key drivers concerning the future of PwD, a total of 12 scenarios were designed, ranging from optimal to critical conditions. Scenario Wizard software then created a 12x12 matrix to evaluate the inter-impact of these different states.

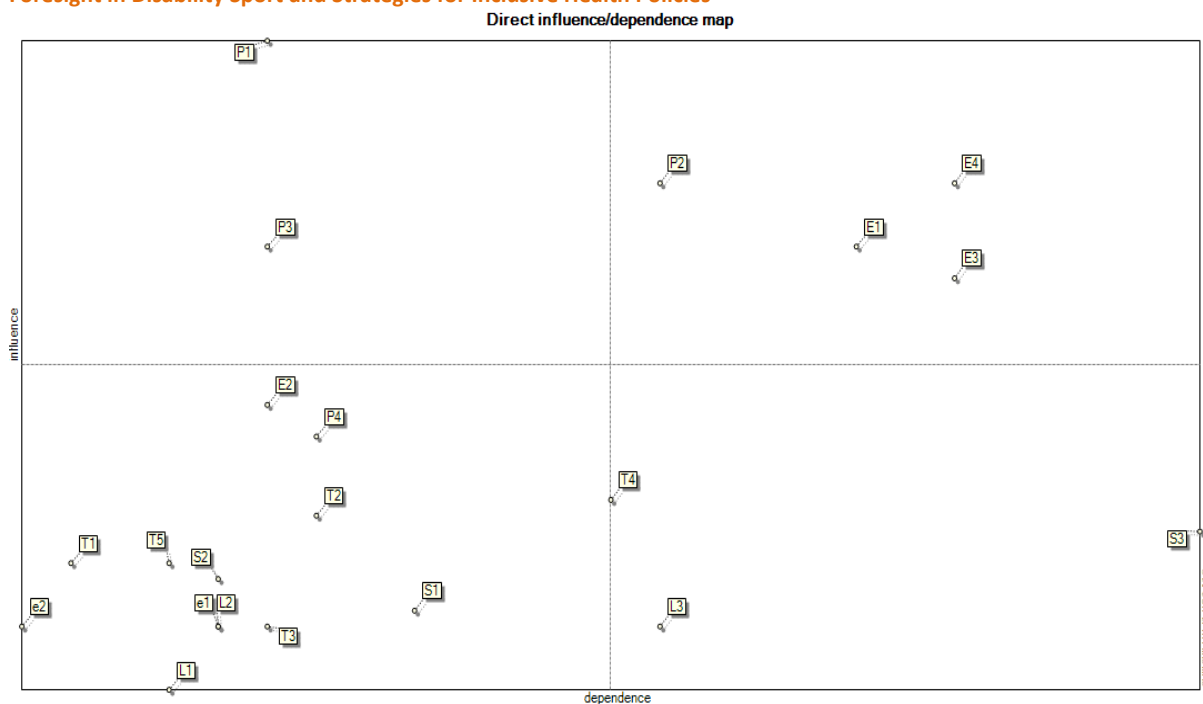


Figure 1. Influence and dependence status of drivers in the direct influence matrix (DIM)

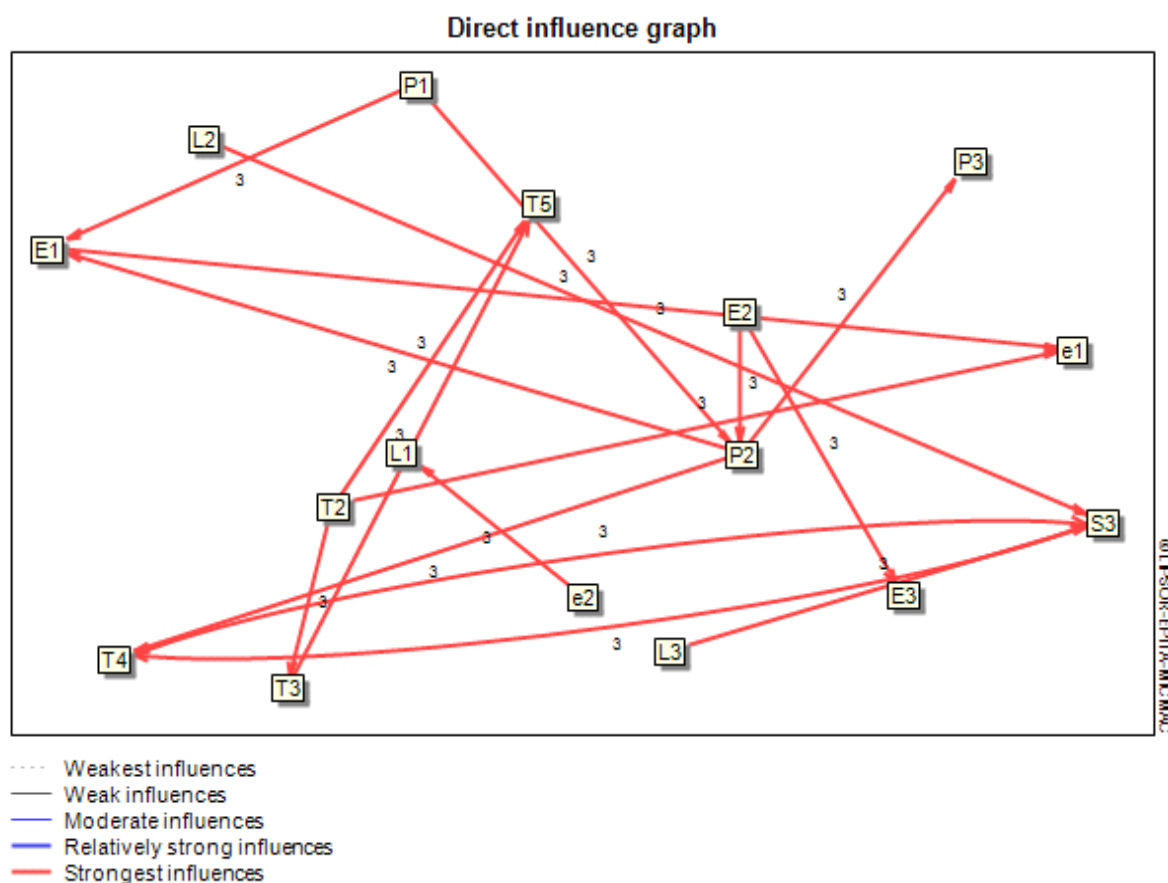


Figure 2. Direct influence graph of drivers in the direct influence matrix (DIM).

This matrix was presented to the Delphi group, where the experts were required to specify what effect the occurrence of each of the 12 states would have on the occurrence or non-occurrence of the other states. The questionnaire was scored on a range from positive 3

to negative 3, representing a continuum from reinforcing to weakening characteristics.

Eight high-scoring scenarios with a greater likelihood of occurrence were identified for the future of disability sports in Iran (Figure 3).

Table 5. Probable states of key drivers

Key drivers	Optimal state	Semi-critical state	Critical state
Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans	Disability sports are fully integrated and prioritized in all national development plans, with dedicated, clear, and enforceable policies and substantial budgetary allocations.	Disability sports are nominally included in national plans, but implementation is inconsistent, and funding is insufficient, and policies lack specific, measurable objectives or strong enforcement.	Disability sports are largely absent from national development plans, or their inclusion is superficial and symbolic, resulting in a lack of institutional support and systemic neglect.
Incentive financial system for disability-focused clubs	A comprehensive and robust system of financial incentives (e.g., grants, tax breaks, subsidies) is actively in place, encouraging the establishment, growth, and sustained operation of disability sports clubs.	Financial incentives exist but are limited, difficult to access, or insufficient to significantly impact the sustainability and development of disability sports clubs.	No effective financial incentive system is available, leading to widespread financial instability or closure of disability sports clubs, hindering participation and development.
Exchange rate fluctuations and their direct impact on the import of international standard equipment	Stable exchange rates and robust domestic production or procurement mechanisms ensure consistent and affordable access to high-quality international standard equipment, minimizing import reliance.	Moderate exchange rate fluctuations occasionally affect the cost and availability of imported equipment, causing some delays or increased expenses, but alternatives can sometimes be found.	Severe and unpredictable exchange rate fluctuations make the import of essential international standard equipment prohibitively expensive, but or impossible, leading to a critical shortage and compromised athlete performance/safety.
Special insurance support system for athletes with disabilities	A dedicated, comprehensive, and affordable insurance system covers the unique medical, rehabilitation, and injury-related needs of athletes with disabilities, promoting peace of mind and participation.	An insurance system for athletes fully with disabilities exists but is incomplete in its coverage, difficult to claim from, or carries high premiums, leaving significant gaps in essential support.	No specialized or adequate insurance system is available for athletes with disabilities, exposing them to high financial risks for injuries or medical needs, deterring participation and potentially ending careers.

Scenario No 1	Scenario No 2	Scenario No 3	Scenario No 4	Scenario No 5	Scenario No 6	Scenario No 7	Scenario No 8
Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans High		Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans Medium		Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans High	Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans Medium	Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans High	Elevating the status of disability sports in national development master plans Medium
Incentive financial system for disability-focused clubs High		Incentive financial system for disability-focused clubs Medium		Incentive financial system for disability-focused clubs High		Incentive financial system for disability-focused clubs Medium	
Exchange rate fluctuations and their direct impact on the import of international standard equipment High		Exchange rate fluctuations and their direct impact on the import of international standard equipment Medium		Exchange rate fluctuations and their direct impact on the import of international standard equipment Low			
Special insurance support system for athletes with disabilities High				Special insurance support system for athletes with disabilities Medium			

Figure 3. Compatible future scenarios for disability sport in Iran

The foresight analysis of disability sport in Iran outlined eight possible future scenarios, ranging from optimal conditions to critical decline. In the most favorable scenario, all key drivers performed at their highest potential. Disability sport was fully institutionalized within national health and development agendas, stable and coordinated financial support is in place, currency fluctuations had no negative impact on the import of standard

equipment, and specialized insurance provided comprehensive medical, rehabilitation, and injury coverage for athletes.

In a relatively optimistic outlook, three of the main drivers remained strong, but currency volatility moderately affected the supply of essential equipment, creating some barriers to access. The third scenario reflected partial progress, where certain support structures, such as financial

incentives and insurance, remained robust; however, currency instability and weak policymaking disrupted program continuity and coherence.

In the fourth scenario, most drivers were at a moderate level, with only insurance rated high, while economic and operational challenges hindered sustained health and participation outcomes. The fifth scenario showed strong political and financial backing, but inadequate infrastructure and currency-related constraints limited the delivery of appropriate services and equipment.

In the sixth scenario, a severe shortage of equipment and institutional weakness created major obstacles, with only financial support showing relative stability. The seventh scenario combined high political commitment with operational barriers, including limited funding, inadequate insurance, and restricted access to equipment.

The most adverse scenario reflected complete stagnation and structural decline, where all key drivers were at moderate or low levels. Severe economic instability, insufficient financial support, poor infrastructure, and inadequate insurance collectively threatened the continuity of sport and rehabilitation services. Thus, the future of disability sport in Iran depends on aligning health policy, economic stability, infrastructure development, and comprehensive insurance coverage.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify strategic drivers shaping the future of disability sport in Iran by 2034. It provides one of the first foresight-based examinations of the strategic determinants shaping disability sport in a Global South context, specifically within Iran. By employing a structured multi-round Delphi methodology in conjunction with cross-impact analysis and scenario planning, the research advances beyond descriptive inventories of barriers or facilitators and instead interrogates the dynamic, interdependent relationships among political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal drivers. Such an approach is particularly relevant to the medical sciences, where complex systems thinking is increasingly recognized as essential for addressing multifactorial determinants of health, equity, and social participation.

The trajectory of disability sport was embedded within broader determinants of public health. The alignment of political commitment across key governance institutions—most notably the Ministry of Sport, the Welfare Organization, and municipal agencies—emerged as a fundamental enabling condition for policy coherence, resource stability, and program continuity. This governance integration is consistent with evidence in health policy research, where fragmented institutional frameworks have been shown to limit the scalability and sustainability

of health-promoting interventions for vulnerable populations [28, 29].

Economic stability likewise emerged as a critical determinant, with currency volatility and the absence of comprehensive insurance frameworks constraining access to standardized equipment and long-term athlete welfare. These findings parallel global public health evidence linking financial resilience and predictable funding streams to the sustained accessibility of essential health and rehabilitation services for PwD.

Technological innovation was identified as both a transformative catalyst and a potential amplifier of inequality. Adaptive sports equipment, digital training platforms, and AI-enabled performance monitoring align closely with the growing emphasis on technology-assisted rehabilitation and personalized health promotion. However, without intentional strategies to ensure equitable access, these advancements risk reinforcing existing disparities—a challenge similarly observed in the digital health domain [30]. Notably, high-consensus drivers in this study, such as the development of indigenous digital training applications and the application of big data for talent identification, offer scalable pathways for integrating technological equity into national sport and health agendas.

The environmental dimension, often marginalized in sport policy discourse, assumes heightened relevance when considered through a health equity lens. Exposure to urban air pollution, combined with limited availability of accessible green spaces, not only exacerbates chronic disease risk but also symbolically and physically excludes PwD from community participation. This aligns with the concept of spatial justice in public health, wherein urban design and environmental planning are integral to equitable health outcomes [31].

From a legal standpoint, the absence of enforceable accessibility standards for sport facilities, structured certification pathways for disability sport coaches, and the incorporation of rights-based international frameworks (e.g., UNCPRD) into domestic policy reflect structural gaps in the enabling environment for health-promoting sport participation. The proposed legal drivers identified here, such as post-retirement protections for athletes with disabilities and transparent NGO accreditation, demonstrate the potential to transition disability sport policy from a welfare-oriented paradigm to an empowerment-focused model.

Overall, advancing disability sport in Iran cannot rely on scattered actions or one-time events. Meaningful and lasting progress demands a unified, multi-sector approach that embeds sport within the core of public health strategy.

In this role, sport should be recognized not merely as a recreational option but as a powerful tool for improving health equity, enhancing psychological

well-being, and fostering the full social inclusion of PwD within their communities.

This study was designed and conducted with a focus on methodological rigor, expert engagement, and comprehensive data triangulation. While foresight analysis inherently involves exploring multiple possible futures, the scenarios developed here reflect the perspectives of a carefully selected group of national experts in disability sport and health policy. The sampling approach prioritized depth of expertise and sectoral representation rather than statistical generalization, which aligns with the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research. Additionally, the drivers and scenarios identified are intended to serve as a strategic framework that can be further enriched through continued dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and the integration of emerging evidence. These considerations do not diminish the validity or applicability of the findings; rather, they highlight opportunities for future research to build on the present work and expand its scope to additional contexts and participant groups.

Policymakers should establish a national foresight plan that links disability sport with health and development agendas. Such a plan requires investment in infrastructure, equal access to technology, and enforceable legal standards. At the societal level, disability sport must be viewed as a health intervention that reduces chronic disease risk, strengthens mental health, and builds social cohesion. Foresight methods provide decision-makers with a practical tool to anticipate change and design inclusive strategies for one of the most underrepresented groups in public health.

Conclusion

Positioning disability sport as a public health priority in Iran requires strong political commitment, stable financing, access to adaptive technologies, and inclusive environmental design.

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