

Corporate Social Responsibility in Sports: A Case Study of Initiatives and Impact in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The sports industry in Saudi Arabia is rapidly evolving, presenting significant potential for growth. This article underscores the crucial role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices within the sector, emphasizing their impact on societal development, environmental conservation, and economic advancement. CSR involves sustainable practices that address environmental concerns and contribute positively to societal issues. Business organizations, as part of CSR, identify and address societal problems by providing support and resources (Nurunnabi, Alfakhri & Alfakhri, 2020).

In the context of sports, integrating CSR activities becomes instrumental in fostering and promoting sports initiatives. Analysis by Alshaikh, Hamas & Khan (2021) highlights how companies in Saudi Arabia engage in CSR through sponsorship and funding for sports events and individual athletes. This support enhances training quality, provides better equipment, and facilitates global sports participation. Furthermore, CSR initiatives contribute to grassroots development by targeting schools and colleges, promoting sports, encouraging local team participation, and elevating coaching and tournament organization standards (Touny, Qamar & Alayis, 2021). Effective CSR policies are crucial for advancing sports in a country like Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility, athletes, sports industry.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The sports industry in Saudi Arabia is an emerging field with vast potential. The incorporation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices in this sector is essential for societal development, environmental conservation, and economic growth. The term CSR refers to consideration and implementation of the sustainable practices that have a positive impact on the environment and help to minimize the issues of the society. The identification of the problems and needs of the population by the business organization and offering of the support and resources is also part of the CSR activities of the organisation and entities (Nurunnabi, Alfakhri & Alfakhri, 2020). The organisations are using different types of activities and actions to manage CSR and developing attachment with the people and communities. The major activities of CSR involve reduction of carbon, promoting recycle energy, sustainable sourcing, effective supply chain management, and contribution in managing the funds and resources to meet the business and customer objectives.

The consideration of CSR activities in the sports help in developing and promoting the sports activities and offering funding for the development of infrastructure

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for the athletes. According to the analysis of Alshaikh, Hamas & Khan (2021), CSR activities of the companies in Saudi Arabia involve sponsorship and funding for the sport events and individual athletes which can be useful for the improvement in the quality of training, quality of equipment, and helping them to take participation in the sports activities at world level (Alshaikh, Hamas & Khan, 2021). In addition to this, CSR support for the sports teams and individual in this country is helping the players to develop the skills and gain proper understanding of practices and modules that can be helpful for enhancing the level of skills and understanding about the actions needed to achieve the certain goals. Apart from this, the initiatives of CSR in the sports also focus on the grassroots development by targeting the schools and colleges to promote the sports and encouraging the participants in the local sports teams and improving the level of coaching, training, and organising the tournaments. Therefore, there is a need for effective CSR policies and initiatives for promoting the sports in country like Saudi Arabia (Touny, Qamar & Alayis, 2021).

1.2. Statement of Purpose

This proposal aims to examine and implement CSR strategies within the Saudi Arabian sports sector, highlighting its potential impact on societal development and environmental sustainability. There are many rules and policies within the Islamic nations that influence the implementation of changes in the existing activities and approaches for managing the sport activities. The changes in approach of the leaders of the country and analysis of the contribution of sports events on the local economy and business development opportunities for the organisation through the sponsorship and CSR is also influencing the national governments to promote the sports in nation. This kind of initiatives can be beneficial for the local players and organisation to improve the performance. The effective management of resources and proper planning of CSR is also helping to influence the young athletes and players to take part in the activities and achieving the higher position in sports activities. This kind of improvement in the thinking and implementation of the CSR policies and activities in sports can be helpful for the games authority of Saudi Arabia to engage the talent and mark position in world sport activities.

1.3 Research Problem

The absence of a structured CSR framework within the Saudi sports sector hinders its potential to contribute significantly to societal welfare and environmental sustainability. This research highlights the specific issue of financial capacity not translating into CSR practices among sports clubs in Saudi Arabia. Under-scores the paradox of wealthy sports clubs in Saudi Arabia lacking substantial engagement in CSR activities despite their financial prosperity. It proposes a thorough investigation into the specific obstacles hindering CSR implementation in these clubs. It calls for an investigation into the existing barriers preventing these clubs from engaging in CSR and emphasizes the potential positive impact on both society and the environment that could be realized through the establishment of a formalized CSR framework within the Saudi sports sector. This research emphasizes the absence of a structured CSR framework and encourages an exploration of how developing and implementing such a framework could unlock the full potential of the Saudi sports sector in positively impacting both societal welfare and environmental sustainability. It provides a clear focus on the organisational and societal aspects that can be investigated, making it a strong foundation for research in the given context.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Do Clubs in Saudi Arabia engage in CSR?
2. What are the most common forms of CSR that Saudi Clubs implement within Saudi Arabia?

3. How does CSR impact societal development and environmental sustainability in the sports sector?
4. What are the most effective strategies for integrating CSR practices within Saudi sports organisation?

1.5 Research Objectives

- To examine the current CSR landscape in Saudi Arabian sports.
- To identify the social and environmental impact of CSR in the sports sector.
- To propose and implement strategies for integrating CSR practices within sports organisation.

1.6 Default Research Focuses

A fundamental building block of the existence of humans is their involvement in business and economics. Economics currently determines the type of livelihood that individuals live including impacting decisions on where, how and who to live their lives with. Individuals who can engage in business and significantly make profits become rich and enjoy high standards of living (Khan et al., 2013). However, due to the responsibility they owe their fellow humans, giving back to society is a term popularly used to refer to their endeavours of helping others succeed.

The research will primarily focus on:

- Identification of Existing CSR Initiatives: Analysing current CSR practices within Saudi sports organisation.
- Assessment of Social and Environmental Impact: Evaluating the societal and environmental influence of CSR in the sports sector.
- Implementation Strategies: Developing effective strategies for integrating CSR into the Saudi sports industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section will encompass a comprehensive review of scholarly articles, reports, and case studies focusing on CSR in the global sports industry, emphasizing its impact and best practices. It will also include studies specific to Saudi Arabian social and economic landscapes. The analysis and critical evolution of theories and models, approaches and initiatives of the organisation and legal body to promote the CSR in sport will be helpful for gaining the knowledge and understanding about the new trends and actions that can be helpful for improving the actions. Moreover, the literature will provide critical analysis of the existing policies and strategies of country for managing and promoting CSR in sport. It will be useful for identification of the potential barriers and implementation of the changes that could enhance the outcome. In addition to this, analysis of activities of the organisations and their impact on the sports and social environment also essential for gaining the knowledge about the importance of CSR within Saudi Arabia can be beneficial for study.

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is utilized by commercial firms as a means of making voluntary contributions to different communities and societies within their operational areas, without being required to do so by law. The World Bank Group (2004) acknowledged corporate social responsibility, a concept that is gaining popularity among business organisation worldwide, as proof that corporations are essential to society and have a positive impact on societal goals. Several studies' main

focal areas include different sectors of Corporate Social Responsibility. The research on Saudi sports clubs' effects on CSR, their function in promoting CSR, athletes' training, and mental health, however, is conspicuously lacking (di Fronso et al., 2020; McGuine et al., 2021). Furthermore, the pedagogy of sports management (Rayner and Webb, 2021) and people's participation in sports (Mutz and Gerke, 2021; McIntosh et al., 2021) have received less attention than the impact of sporting events and the industry (Miles and Shipway, 2020; Ziakas et al., 2021).

Studies on the management and governance of sports (Byers et al., 2021; Grix et al., 2021) are notable outliers. For example, Pedersen et al.'s edited book (2021) has six chapters on sports governance. Research on CSR practices and policies in the sports industry, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia, is noticeably lacking, nonetheless. Given the critical role that national governments play in responding to health crises, it is imperative that we comprehend the policy measures that are put in place to support sports and the benefits that sports make to society. According to Fukuyama (2020, p. 26), "It is not a matter of regime type; autocracies and democracies have both performed well and poorly." The objective of this research is to conduct a critical analysis of the approach that Saudi sports clubs should follow in order to advance CSR and Vision 2030 implementation, and to provide them with a roadmap.

According to Mahmud et al. (2020), CSR is a great instrument for implementing a win-win approach that leads to sustainable development. The UK government stands out as a pioneer in boosting government's participation in CSR, positively affecting the economy, society, and environment by learning from the experiences of Western countries (DTI, 2004). Tang et al. claim that the government actively encourages the application of CSR. A increasing body of research, as highlighted by Zueva and Fairbrass (2021), shows that national governments around the world are promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) through a variety of measures (Albareda et al., 2007, 2008; González & Martínez, 2004; Podsiadlowski & Reichel, 2014; Rossouw, 2005; Vallentin, 2015; Waagstein, 2011). According to Zueva and Fairbrass (2021), governments are viewed by scholars, industry professionals, and the general public as important social actors who have the power to push companies to engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Despite the fact that CSR initiatives are entirely voluntary, the European Commission (2006) highlights the crucial role that governments play in promoting accountability and responsibility in the field of corporate social responsibility. According to Idemudia (2009), businesses and communities are linked and that a company's ideal neighbour is the community, creating win-win cooperation. According to Boadi et al. (2019), communities grant businesses social licenses to function in society. Droppert and Bennett (2015) contend that corporations have expanded and reformed their CSR strategies to better suit the changing global landscape due to pressure from civil society on a worldwide scale.

The initiatives related to improvement in sports and training functions in country is attracting the organizations of Saudi Arabia and from international market to offer support for improving the facilities. The major activities of companies in Saudi Arabia for promoting the sports are involving the sponsorship, funding for individual events and franchise. In addition to this, the organizations are focusing on the training and development of athletes, equipments and coaching of the players. This kind of initiatives are helping to improve the performance of the players and teams and encouraging them to take participation in the international tournaments and representing the country.

2.3 Theory and models of CSR

CSR is seen as a management concept that enables businesses to effectively address social and environmental issues through ongoing stakeholder interactions and management of the issues at hand. However, CSR is not having any specific goals and actions to manage the issues and improving the situation of society and environment. It is

based on the current and long-term activities and issues that have direct or indirect impact on the people and communities. Moreover, the organisation tries to stand for something bigger for the bottom-line people in the society (Thottoli & Thomas, 2023). There are different types of theories and models used for managing CSR functions. According to theory of Carroll, organisations operate in social environment in which they respect the people, society, and ecosystem.

The fair approach in managing these responsibilities has a significant impact on the suppliers and customers. However, it is essential for the organisation to treat the suppliers and customers with a fair approach and maintain a constructive relationship with the staff members to improve their contribution. The major objectives of CSR in management approach are to improve the quality of the products by applying the green approach and minimizing the health issues (Almahraj, 2023). However, with time the focus of companies has been changed from social and environmental perspectives and now they are focusing on the needs of the people of the society. The consideration of sports and improvement in the brand image of the organisation is new in the industry as companies are looking to gain the attention of the people by offering the funds and resources to the players and teams of the country.

There are different types of responsibilities considered by the organisation for implementing CSR and managing the operations. According to Carroll theory, the major responsibilities of organisation involve economic, legal, and ethical actions. Economic responsibility focuses on the improvement in the profitability of company by wealth maximization and maintaining the higher performance (Al-Nsour, 2020). The legal responsibilities focus on maintaining a healthy growth and structural appreciation of the organisation. The proper identification of the issues and opportunities for the development of CSR functions can be beneficial for the organisation to improve the identity and brand image to meet the business objectives. In addition to this, ethical responsibilities of organisation for managing the CSR functions involve the consideration of moral path, following what is right and doing what is good. However, there are some dilemmas in managing the ethical responsibilities with legal framework but most of the companies try to manage the operations (Halwani, Gaber & Ahmed, 2023). In addition to this, the consideration of the stakeholder input and interest for managing CSR is beneficial for the organisation to manage the operations. Proper planning of the action based on the recommendations and interest of stakeholders can be helpful for developing an environment in which companies can contribute to the social activities and environmental development (Saleh, 2020).

According to the theory of triple bottom line for managing the operations of CSR, there are two keys to manage the responsibilities. The economic sustainability is valuing the long-term financial solidity over volatile, short-term profits and long-term sustainability. Triple-bottom-line model suggests that large companies have an obligation to create business plans that support consistent, long-term operations. Because of this duration bias, businesses should be cautious when investing in projects like dot-coms (Sabre & Ibrahim, 2022). It is true that companies may experience a temporary increase in earnings if they attempt to get away with doing unpleasant things like polluting the environment. There is a decrease in disposal costs. Looking ahead, though, there's a potential that the activity might come to light later and have catastrophic effects on the economy, leading personal injury attorneys to file enormous lawsuits. This prospect quickly leads one to the conclusion that the company's financial viability justifies a refusal to dump (Ezat et al., 2020).

In addition, the idea of a downward political revolution seemed unlikely, if not absurd, to Saudi Arabians used to a secure middle class and little hostility towards the wealthy. But throughout world history, these kinds of upheavals are not unusual. That does not mean that there will be a revolution in today's developed world. However, it can also imply that opportunity and money should be shared among as many people as

possible in order for a business to be stable over the long term (Alomran et al., 2022). According to the analysis of previous studies, the approach of organisation within Saudi Arabia for managing the CSR for sport is involving the regional communities and partnership with the NGOs is helping to promote the training and development of players. According to the study of Abujudeh, Fnjan & Matkó, (2022), the organisations in Saudi Arabia are looking to increase the position in the country. However, there are various options that can be used by the organisations for managing CSR functions using the traditional approach, but the managements and trend analyst have identified new ways of CSR focusing on the sports activities. There are many organisations that involved in CSR and offering support for managing the activities of society and community. To improve the identity and gaining the attention of the people, some of the organisations have identified the new way of promoting and funding the sports. It is a new concept in this field that could be beneficial for the companies to improve the brand image by shifting the concern of CSR from social and environmental perspectives to sports.

The sports sector has taken the form of CSR in an attempt to meet considering the community obligations. According to Basuliman & Devaraj, (2021), CSR in sport is “win-win-win” for sport, society, and business. The nature and role of CSR in sport majorly understood to be different from other as it is influenced by the factors like power of media, needs and approach of the new generation, and types of the gaming activities that have potential within the country to get the higher position. Moreover, for professional sports team and club in particular the growth and importance of CSR is based on the rules, policies, structure, processes, and culture that helps to manage the operations in a systematic manner. This involves the focus of fans on the particular gaming activity and environmental benefits derived from the CSR activities. For example, many leading sponsors of sports events and activities are donating the funds for improvement in the facilities for the players and coaching staff and providing them access of the resources to meet the international compatibility (Ahmed Saber & Ibrahim, 2022). The CSR functions in sports are influencing different activities like political scenario and stability, culture of the nation, values that belong to the particular sports, and empirical investigations for environment. It requires transformation of local management and structure to promote the action and planning of the activities to meet the personal and professional goals.

According to the research on corporate social responsibility generally and sports organisations specifically shows a marked underrepresentation of Islamic nations. Given the local effects of Islamic law and social perspectives on the adoption of CSR, this paradigm appears to be a potentially innovative way to investigate CSR in connection to professionalization, commercialization, policy development, and a wider political environment (Al-Nahari & Mofawaz, 2023). Iran is one such Islamic nation that has started to get more empirical attention in relation to CSR initiatives. Like in many other nations, a sizable portion of Iran's sport sector is made up of the country's local professional leagues. The Iranian Premier Leagues represent the pinnacle of club sports in the nation and are on par with several middle-class and affluent western nations in terms of scale and professionalism. Even though professional sports have been around in Iran for a number of decades, the CSR programmes run by the different Iranian Premier Leagues are still relatively new. The scant research conducted in the Iranian context has revealed a widespread deficiency in the coordination and integration of CSR into the corporate policies and practices of Iranian sports teams (Moyo, Knott & Duffett, 2022). Last but not least, the idea of generosity was stressed in relation to the significance of charitable endeavours and campaigns. The notions of education, health, communication, and "green" management were found to be important in the social category, which was predominantly tied to societal factors.

Through an emphasis on experience and contextual factors, the emphasis in education was very much focused towards concepts of "talent" and "performance."

Within the policy area, there was a strong emphasis on legal matters such as ownership and governance and the idea of politics was presented in both a positive like club empowerment and negative such as the influence of punishments light. CSR is an excellent tool for putting into practice a win-win strategy that promotes sustainable development (Al-Huwaish, 2023). The UK government is notable for being a trailblazer in increasing government involvement in corporate social responsibility, leveraging the experiences of Western nations to improve the economy, society, and environment. Understanding the policies that are implemented to support sports and the positive effects that sports have on society is crucial, especially considering the crucial role that national governments play in reacting to health emergencies.

2.4 CSR and sports

There are many organisations and institutions using the CSR functions and activities to manage the social and ethical image of the organisation that help to improve the brand value and acceptance among the people and society. According to previous study outcome the improvement in sports activities and events at global and local level is increasing the opportunities for the companies to develop the activities and strategies to promote and support the sports. According to previous studies, Al-Nassr Club has achieved the first place in CSR award in 2021-22 sports season for the “Your Joy is Our Victory” initiative. The club has received amount of 500000 riyals during the ceremony of Social Responsibility Committee on the side-line of general assembly of Saudi Arabia Football Federation in the 15th session. In addition to this, Al-Fateh Club had second place award which amounts 400000 riyal for reconciled initiatives for the children with diabetes. Apart from this, Ettifaq Club won the third place and received the 300000 riyals for initiative of developing the centre of Medical Rehabilitation for children and sports injuries and accidents to members of community (Ekren & Anagnostopoulos, 2023). The criterion of offering award is based on the 5 factors such as inclusion of mass audience, public discipline and ethical consideration of the organisation, implementation and contribution of the local public for developing the sports facilities considering the environment and offering the voluntary support to the people as well as it involving the vote of the fans for choosing the best sports club for managing the CSR. Additionally, 5th criteria were audience council and their organisational link with club. This kind of activities and trend setting has a significant impact on the development of CSR in the sports and offering the benefits to the young people and potential players to improve the skills and understanding (Mukhtar & Bahormoz, 2022).

CSR activities in sports sector of Saudi Arabia involve the attitude of business and its relationship with the society based on the popularity and can demonstrate the problems of the society. Moreover, these activities may not have the negative impact on the business and practices of the organisation. Therefore, consideration of the input of the experts who has the vision for sustainable development of the business and sports events is essential for managing the operations and activities (El-Bassiouny et al., 2020). Proper understanding of core purpose and business models is beneficial for the organisations to meet the business objectives and planning of the actions to improve the brand value. CSR both within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and around the region is not possible without legally classifying these projects under a single CSR umbrella. Numerous organisations in the region have been engaged in CSR-related activities that have improved financial performance, increased consumer trust, community enhancement, and staff recruitment and retention. Sport is a sector that adapt to changing environment and professional requirements. The improvement in CSR activities within the Saudi is having a significant impact on improvement in the performance of the players and managing the resources that needed for offering the quality coaching and support to the clubs and players.

The changes in political scenario and improvement of the understanding related to the role of sports in engaging the people are having a positive impact on the

professional approach of the people. The sports industry wants to establish a connection between development and sustainable policies in developing nations, since society itself is evolving. In the upcoming years, fulfilling corporate social responsibility will also be difficult (Vinodkumar & Alarifi, 2022). The unwavering emphasis on sports' social function will be highlighted, and management-led initiatives will look at whether they have a beneficial social impact. Making a difference will be necessary to succeed in an increasingly competitive environment, placing businesses and projects that are unable to prove their social utility at a disadvantage versus those who rise to this challenge.

In the current scenario, CSR functions and activities have become an integral part of the organisational working as it influences the level of competition and help the organisation to attract the potential customers and stakeholders to contribute to the social actions. For example, CSR activities of organisation has influenced the customer attitude and buying behaviour. The improvement in popularity of sports activities and events is attracting the organisation to contribute to the development of infrastructure and offer the resources to meet the personal and professional objectives of both (Toukabri & Toukabri, 2023). However, for planning such activities and offering the support, proper investigation and research is needed to manage the function and meeting the goals.

The major feature of sport and CSR focuses on the improvement in the international reach of sports that guarantee mass media distribution and communication with stakeholders. In addition to this, CSR in sports is setting an emotional youth appeal that influencing the decisions of children and parents to improve the facilities and infrastructure. Apart from this, sports can help to convey a healthy development of people and encourage them to take initiatives for improving the physical development of the people. The initiatives of Saudi Arabian clubs and organisations for managing CSR in sports sector is influencing the social communication and changing the cultural activities by including the global trends and activities to meet the objectives. The consideration of sports activities that help to improve sustainability and offer instantaneous gratifications benefits is helpful for achieving the desired goals (Binsawad, 2020). Perceived corporate social responsibility affects individual donations to non-profit organisation funded by the company as well as purchase behaviour through identification. According to Woodcraft, Banerjee & Rong, (2024), a company's corporate social responsibility initiatives can heighten consumers' views of congruity. Furthermore, consumers' responses to CSR are contingent upon the degree of congruity they perceive between the company's character and their own.

The sport and CSR require analysis of various activities and functions to manage the coordination and management of the resources to meet the objectives. According to Laghouag, Farhi & Bin Zafrah, (2021), consumer commitment is major function for developing the plan and policies. In this process variety of commitment is needed for managing the actions such as affective, calculative, and normative. These components have a significant impact on motivation and keeping the relationship with the partner organisation. Further, it has been considered that CSR activities of an organisation help to develop favourable consumer attitude and intention towards the company. In addition to this, identification of consumer and trust of them plays an important role to manage the activities and maintaining the values that influence their decisions. The consideration of moral rule, belief of consumer, proficiency, honesty, and benevolence can be beneficial for the individual to maintain the constructive relationship. From the perspective of the customer, trust is the conviction that a business will operate in a manner that aligns with expectations regarding its competence, integrity, and kindness. Customers view a firm as responsible when they are aware that it operates according to moral principles.

According to Khouj (2020), a company's ethical commitment can win over customers' trust. Furthermore, society expects a company that upholds moral standards and makes morally sound decisions to be trustworthy. In an effort to fulfil its societal responsibilities, the sports industry has also adopted corporate social responsibility

practices. CSR in the sports of Saudi Arabia is largely influenced from the factors like media, demand of the young generation and infrastructure development. The economic development in the nation is playing a critical role to improve the financial condition of the organization in the country to offer funds and support for encouraging the sports. However, the sports activities and events are becoming popular in Saudi Arabia and attracting young players and professionals around the world. This kind of situation is also beneficial for the organizations to involve in CSR to gain a competitive advantage and influencing the buying decision of the customers.

The major objectives of using CSR policies and activities in Saudi Arabia are involving the improvement in the health of the people. Moreover, organizations are looking for further improvement in the quality of products and services using the green approach to contribute to the environmental conditions. In the current scenario, organizations are focusing on the social CSR activities rather than environmental conditions. Therefore, a significant improvement is identified in CSR activities related to sports. The organizations belong to Saudi Arabia and international market is offering the support to sports authorities by developing the infrastructure and providing the quality equipment. However, lack of coordination with the government officials and local clubs is influencing the outcome but effective monitoring can be useful for the further improvement in CSR planning and implementation (Al-Khalifa, 2021).

Lastly, the significance of charitable endeavours and efforts was discussed in relation to the notion of generosity. The ideas of education, health, communication, and "green" management were discovered to be included in the social category, which was primarily concerned with societal issues. Education placed a strong emphasis on ideas of talent and performance, emphasizing experience and contextual factors.

2.5 CSR strategies and sports in Saudi Arabia

There is a vast network of professionals in the sports industry because there is a growing amount of formal education in this subject. These individuals ought to take the lead in transforming the industry by creating targeted initiatives that have the power to influence regional policies. One of the projects was assisting in the development of a strategic plan for school sports in Saudi Arabia, which enabled Saudi females to finish their physical education coursework in the classroom. According to the views of Lysa, (2020), enhancing local communities' values, customs, and educational possibilities is crucial in raising their profile because this is the way to help them amass more resources, knowledge, and opportunities for prosperity. Keeping in mind the human feelings of empathy, unity, coherence, and consciousness that have emerged during these trying times, we can see that this process is not utopian and emphasize the significance of exercise and sports as essential components of human existence. From the economic point of view, CSR functions in sports have a significant influence on the consumers as it helps to increase the popularity of the particular sports and attract the talent and views of the events. This kind of approach is beneficial for both organisation and sport event to improve the brand value and planning of the actions to maintain the constructive relationship with the communities (Basuliman & Devaraj, 2021).

In Saudi Arabia, the numbers of viewer for football are high and increasing day-by-day after the event of world cup in Qatar. The improvement in numbers of franchise leagues and sports activities within country is having a significant impact on the approach of local and international brands to offer funds and resources to the teams and management authority to promote the game. The major components of sport and CSR in Saudi Arabia involve social interaction, cultural understanding, and networking. The position of franchise in the sporting event is helping the organisation to maintain the effectiveness in the CSR as high numbers of fans for the particular league or team can be beneficial for the organisation to increase the numbers of potential customers. Professional sports teams and traditional commercial corporations now see corporate

social responsibility as a crucial component of company strategy rather than as a duty (Alomran et al., 2022). Sports are in a unique position in contemporary culture to effectively implement CSR, and communities all around the world can benefit from these kinds of initiatives. Corporate and sports teams have become more involved in CSR lately, and this trend should continue for the foreseeable future.

Participating in CSR-related initiatives has helped a number of local businesses achieve better financial results, boost customer trust, improve the community, and attract and retain employees. It is impossible to carry out CSR in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the surrounding areas without legally categorizing these initiatives under a single CSR heading (Moyo, Knott & Duffett, 2022). Due to media influences, the needs and attitudes of the younger generation, and the kinds of gaming activities that have the potential to gain national popularity, the nature and purpose of CSR in sports are widely acknowledged to be different from other sectors of the economy. Businesses are taking a fresh approach to sports and brand enhancement as a means of drawing in customers by supporting national teams and athletes with cash and resources (Al-Nahari & Mofawaz, 2023). The several Iranian Premier Leagues have been involved in professional sports for several decades, but their corporate social responsibility programmers are still relatively new. The scant research conducted in this area indicates that CSR is generally not coordinated or integrated into the corporate policies and practices of Iranian sports teams.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

For conducting and completing the study, the role of research methodology is important as it helps in managing the data and outcome in a systematic manner. The understanding and implementation of tools and techniques considering the nature and desired outcome of the study can be beneficial for improving the validity and effectiveness of the study. The consideration of proper methodology is helpful for readers to understand the manner in which the study will be going to conduct. The current methodology will provide information related to design, approach, philosophy, data collection, sampling and analysis methods that will be used for completing the study about corporate social responsibility in sports: a case study of initiatives and impact in Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Philosophy

To maintain the study and following the right track the consideration of the research philosophy is important. Majorly three types of philosophies are used such as interpretive, positivism and realism. The selection of philosophy is based on goals and objectives of the research and helps to develop the ground to manage the study. By considering the aim and objectives of current study about CSR and sport in Saudi Arabia, the researcher has applied interpretive philosophy. According to this philosophy, the researcher has focused on the data that will be biased free and having the input of the human based on the experience and understanding about the CSR functions of the organisation and role of it in managing the sports. Moreover, it will help to gain knowledge and understanding of the current approaches and actions that could be beneficial for companies and society of Saudi Arabia.

3.3 Research Techniques

The research will apply a qualitative research technique that endeavours to collect information regarding the engagement of Sports clubs within Saudi Arabia in CSR practices and the implications it has had for Saudi Arabia. The study aims to highlight which forms of CSR Sports clubs are involved in as well as the implication of these practices to the City of Jeddah. The research further applies the induction respectively

which as outlined by Corley and Gioia (2011) are most suitable for research studies supported by the collection of first-hand data.

3.4 Target Population

The aim of the study is to evaluate the implications of Corporate Social Responsibility in Saudi Arabia through highlighting whether or not companies are involved with CSR practices as well as the forms of CSR practices they are involved in and their implications. As such the target population for this research was company strategists of different Sports clubs based in Saudi Arabia.

3.5 Research Methods

Being a qualitative study that aims to evaluate the implications of CSR in Saudi Arabia, a lot of descriptive information from which analysis of patterns and contrasting issues is expected. The most suitable form of data collection and the one that was used therefore semi structured short interviews. This is also appropriate given the research was conducted within an organisation workplace, only a short period of time can be taken up by the participants to answer the interview questions after which they can resume their daily endeavours at their workplaces.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

Being aware of the range with which one's sample can be picked from is integral in the decision of which type of sampling to be adopted for use (Blaikie, 2010). While there exists a wide range of companies within Saudi Arabia, there are chances that they may not all be involved in or implement CSR. The researcher has identified different database and analysed various studies that can be useful for gaining the knowledge and comparing the issues and actions that can be beneficial for CSR activities in sports. Moreover, the researcher has selected the sample of 5 employees of an organization to conduct the interview.

3.7 Data collection

For the collection of data, the researcher has applied both primary and secondary methods. By using the primary method of conducting interviews, the researcher has collected the views of participants. Moreover, using the secondary data method, the researcher has developed literature that was used for comparing the findings and developing a valid and strong conclusion focusing of the desired outcome of the current study.

3.8 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis structure and method will be taken up in the analysis of the collected data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method of analysis that takes into account the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns, themes and connections available within raw data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis should be able to establish the different patterns regarding the forms of CSR practiced within Saudi Arabia and the consequent implications.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues about relevant courtesy to be given to the participants by the nature of them being humans arise in the context of this study. The British Psychological Association (2013) highlights that ethical issues in this context involve the invasion of individual's privacy in the employee's workplace as well as taking up their work time. However, this issue is adequately taken care of through appropriate acquisition of permissions from the relevant organisation chosen for the study. Further the names of all respondents will be kept anonymous to enhance their confidentiality. The dependability and authenticity of the research are greatly impacted by the understanding and observance of the ethical principles and standards when conducting the study. The primary guidelines

that the researcher adheres to in order to uphold standards are the prohibition against plagiarism, the confidentiality of respondent data, and the acquisition of data from reliable sources. Additionally, the responders' previous consent was obtained by the researcher, which improved the methodical approach and data processing.

4. Results

To analyse the input of the participants selected for the interview and data collected from the secondary sources like journals, books, and research articles, following themes were developed.

4.1 Current landscape of CSR in Saudi Arabia

CSR is one of major activities in current scenario as many organizations from different sectors are taking initiatives for minimizing the issues of society and developing the plan and policies to improve the standards of the communities. According to the input of participants involved in the interview, it has been carried out that Saudi organizations are considering many aspects for developing and implementing the CSR activities. The major aim of these initiatives of the organization in context of Saudi involves encompassing ethical business practices, environmental sustainability, and community and employee engagement. The organizations are focusing on global policies and framework of developing and implementing the CSR operations. These are having a significant impact on the approach of companies to maintain the accountability and transparency considering the standardize practices and metrics.

According to the views of participants, the Saudi organizations are using different types of theories and models for managing the CSR functions. In addition to this, the triple bottom line, there are two elements to handling responsibilities when it comes to managing CSR activities. Prioritizing long-term financial stability over erratic, short-term profitability and sustainability is what is meant by economic sustainability. The triple-bottom-line model argues that big businesses should develop business strategies that enable stable, long-term operations. Due to this duration bias, companies who invest in sports projects ought to exercise caution. It is true that if businesses try to get away with doing bad things like harming the environment, their earnings may temporarily rise. The expense of disposal is down.

Like in the rest of the world, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a rapidly evolving issue that affects social interactions, corporate strategy, and governmental laws. The Saudi Arabian Responsible Competitiveness Index (SARCI), a tool utilized by many CSR stakeholders working together to make the impact of CSR as practical and helpful as possible, is the consequence of significant advancements in the concept of CSR in the Kingdom. In this process, the role of corporate governance is critical that develop the plan and monitor the approach of the organization to maintain the quality and standards in CSR project considering the different aspects. As per the views of participants, there is plan for 2030 for managing the CSR and advocating the higher sustainability and social indicators. Moreover, these have stated the major pillars of CSR in Saudi Arabia. These are involving national contribution, strong governance, improvement in economic performance, responsible customer relations, environmental protection and sustainable insurance and community care.

4.2 Benefits and impact of CSR in sports of Saudi Arabia

According to the literature analysis and input of the participants involved in the interview, it has been considered that CSR is having significant impact and contribution in development and improvement of different part of the community and society. The organizations are activity contributing in sport activities and events that helping them to create win-win-win situation for sport, business and communities. The initiatives of

organization for promoting sports like football, basketball, volleyball and other is helping the youngsters to develop career in these fields and representing the nation at global level. The companies are also organizing sports events at workplace and identifying the players in employees to develop their own team to take part in the local sports events. In addition to this, the leading organization are contributing in franchise leagues and offering funds and resources to promote the games and encouraging the players to improve their skills and understanding about the games.

As per the views of one of the participants, the CSR activities and initiatives by the organizations are having significant influence on the stability of political scenarios, culture of the nation, values and emotions that belong to the sports and improvement in the infrastructure. However, it requires the transformation of the local management structure and sport complexes for offering the better facilities to the players. According to views of other participant, the role of media and government is also important for promoting the CSR in sport as country like Saudi is not known for any sport event or gaming activity. The local population is also not taking interest in any sport activity as the lack of knowledge and events that could attract the people is influencing the approach of companies. However, in last two decades, the improvement in CSR for promoting sport is having positive impact on the professional gaming activities as many local football and basketball clubs are taking initiatives to improve the skills of players and offering them better coaching facilities.

According to the analysis of the views of all participants who have taken part in the interviews, it has been carried out that, CSR in sport is having a significant impact on the sponsorship and funding for the sport events. The individual players are also getting the financial and other support from the local companies of Saudi Arabia for taking higher level training and equipment that helping them to prepare for the global competitions. The improvement in facilities is having direct impact on the skills of the players from Saudi Arabia which is good for the nation. In addition to this, the CSR in sport of Saudi is helping to promote the diversity and inclusion as companies are providing opportunities and support for the under-represented groups such as women and people with disabilities. The improvement in the infrastructure and quality of sport science is helping the young people to develop their career in sports and following the dream of representing the nation at global level.

4.3 Strategies and practices of CSR for sport in Saudi Arabia

Every organization aims to craft improvement in the economic and operational efficiency and effectiveness to meet the business goals but this kind of approach of companies have been changed and management are looking forward to manage the brand value by using different CSR functions. The analysis of inputs of participant in interview has suggested that CSR activities of Saudi companies is having new look as they are investing and offering funds for sports activities and development of infrastructure. The major strategies and practices in sport CSR of country are involving collaboration with the government and authorities of sports to manage and improve the facilities, equipment, coaching, training and skills of the potential players and teams in different sports. The companies are identifying the areas of concern and developing the plan and policies for offering the support that could help to promote the sport in nation.

However, there are some issues and challenges for the companies to maintaining the progress in sport CSR due to environmental conditions and high investment of companies to contribute to the sustainable development. The CSR in sport is having a great appeal for the young generation as lack of employment and career development opportunities in the local market is influencing them to leave the country. The initiatives of companies for promoting and supporting the sport is helping them to believe in their ability and take proper training and coaching to improve the skills to take part in the local and international sport activities. This kind of approach and initiatives of Saudi

companies is beneficial for encouraging and engaging the talent and back them to stay positive and focused. The proper availability of equipment, coaching staff and infrastructure is increasing the trust of player and motivating them to take part in sports activities meet their personal and professional goals.

According to analysis of input from the participants, it has been carried out that affiliation between sport and CSR is key feature as it also encouraging the customer perception towards the particular brand and helping the organization to maintain their economic growth. The changes in perception of customer and improvement in brand image of companies due to sport CSR has also changed the views of other companies about the sport CSR as they are also looking to develop strategies and plan for contribute in sport with proper sustainability to build the positive reputation. The global changes and improvement in CSR practices in the different sectors is also influencing the approach of the Saudi organization to diversify the action and strategies related to the sports CSR and maintaining the positive brand value. Therefore, belief and identification of consumer perception in sport CSR can be beneficial for the organizations to maintain the growth and actions to meet the environmental sustainability.

5. Discussion

CSR is a considered as one of the major activities in corporate level that helps to encourage and manage the brand value of the company. CSR can be done in different field considering the choice of the management and areas of interest focusing on the target customers and employees' input. At the initial stage, CSR was only restricted to environment and social causes but in last two decades, the perception and approach of the organizations have been changed as they are exploring different areas of CSR and maintaining their market and economic growth (PINTO and ALLUI, 2020). According to the outcome of the current analysis, Saudi businesses are thinking about a variety of factors while creating and carrying out their CSR initiatives. In the Saudi Arabian context, the organization's main goals for these projects are to promote sustainable environmental practices, community and employee participation, and ethical business practices. The organization's main priorities are international regulations and the framework for creating and carrying out CSR initiatives. These are significantly influencing how businesses maintain openness and accountability in light of established procedures and measurements.

Moreover, the findings and analysis of the study has suggested that the financing and sponsorship of sporting events are significantly impacted by corporate social responsibility (CSR). Individual athletes receive financial and other support from Saudi Arabian local corporations to pursue advanced training and equipment to help them become ready for international contests. The nation benefits from the direct impact that the upgraded facilities are having on Saudi Arabian players' ability levels. Additionally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) in sports in Saudi Arabia promotes diversity and inclusion by providing chances and support to underrepresented groups, such as women and people with disabilities. In the similar way the Al-Ghazali and Sohail, (2021) has also stated that improvement in the CSR activities in sport is having and direct impact on the businesses and employee satisfaction as some of the staff members are also good players and support and encouragement from the organization is allowing them to follow their passion and represent the locality and nation. In addition to this, the changes in the approach and practices of the organization in Saudi Arabia is involving the involvement of communities to create the awareness about the sport activities and planning of the action to changing the cultural activities by focusing on the global functions.

According to the analysis of input of the participants of the study, it has been considered that ethical approach of the organizations and use of public private initiatives for promoting the sports through CSR activities is helping the sport authorities of Saudi

Arabia to attract the young people. The improvement in professional sport activities and action is also a major development in country that helping to maintain the effectiveness in offering coaching, training, and analysis of the performance to identify the areas of concern of potential player. The professional working and competition among the organizations to develop better franchise and teams through CSR activities is beneficial for the sport industry of Saudi Arabia as improvement in numbers of professional players and changes in the mindset of the local population about the gaming activities and career development will change the future of national sport standards.

The findings of the literature have also suggested that customers' trust can be gained by a corporation that is committed to ethics. Furthermore, a corporation that maintains moral standards and chooses morally correct actions is expected to be reliable by society. The sports sector has also embraced corporate social responsibility strategies in an attempt to achieve its obligations to society (Alshaikh, Hamas and Khan, 2021). The media, youth demand, and infrastructural development all have a big impact on corporate social responsibility in Saudi Arabian sports. A major factor in improving the financial standing of the national organization that provides funding and support for promoting sports is the country's economic development. Moreover, the study of Habbash and Haddad, (2020) has stated that the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the sports industry of Saudi Arabia shed light on the business community's attitudes and relationships with society, as well as highlight societal issues. Furthermore, these actions might not have a detrimental effect on the organization's operations and procedures. Thus, it is crucial to manage the operations and activities by taking into account the advice of professionals who have a vision for the long-term growth of businesses and sporting events.

The analysis of findings has also suggested that the organizational efforts to promote sports, including as basketball, volleyball, and football, are assisting young people in pursuing careers in these domains and representing their country internationally. Additionally, the corporations are planning sporting events within the office and recognizing employees as players for their own team to compete in regional sporting tournaments. Furthermore, the top organizations support franchise leagues, provide funding and resources to promote the games and motivate players to advance their abilities and knowledge of the genre. The proper planning and collective efforts of the organization from Saudi is needed for encouraging the CSR in the region and promoting the sport activities based on the culture and interest of the people (Al-Duais et al., 2021). The effective analysis of requirements and resources can be beneficial to develop the plan and funding for increasing the standards of the sport in country. Moreover, the findings have suggested that consideration of needs of the players and government policies for promoting the sport through CSR can be helpful for managing the activities and developing new policies based on public private ventures.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

From the study, it has been carried out that CSR is good for social, economic and community development as the initiatives of organization for managing the issues of locality and offering them support for further improvement in the living standards of the people. Saudi Arabia is country where people are not interested in sport and other events that could influence the perception of potential players to take part in the activities at local and global level. The companies are changing their approach and operational activities to raise the funds and support for the sport activities to meet the CSR objectives. It is important for the management to understand the needs of the sport authorities and standards what they are maintaining for offering the good facilities to the players. The changes in approach of leading organization in Saudi due to foreign investment and

consideration of the global trends is having positive impact on the CSR functions and allowing them to offer support for sports events and activities.

The outcome of study has also stated that the attitude of the Saudi organization to diversify the action and tactics linked to sports CSR and preserve the good brand value is also influenced by the worldwide changes and improvements in CSR practices in the many industries. Therefore, it can be advantageous for organizations to retain growth and take activities to fulfil environmental sustainability if they believe in and identify customer perception in sport corporate social responsibility (CSR). The improvement in investment and approach of Saudi organization about the sport and CSR will have long term impact on the sport activity and industry as it will influence the young people and potential players to work on their skills and provide the information about the areas of lacking to craft improvement and develop a good infrastructure for future.

6.2 Recommendations

By considering the approach of conducting and managing the study about the CSR and sport in Saudi Arabia, it has been considered that this topic is vast and requires more research and evaluation of the policies, practices and collaborative action by the government and leading organizations. For future research on this topic, it is recommended to focus on the secondary data to analyse the initiatives of the companies and government authorities to manage the CSR and sport. Moreover, the consideration of global trends and investment level of companies for CSR in sport will also help to gain knowledge about the level of commitment and approaches of companies to promote and support the sport in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendix

Interview questions.

1. What you understand by term Corporate Social Responsibility?
2. What are the major benefits of using CSR in sport in Saudi Arabia?
3. Is environmental sustainability impact on implementation of CSR in sport sector?
4. What is perception of public about the initiatives of companies in Saudi Arabia for managing CSR in sports?
5. Is CSR having any impact on employees and what strategies can be beneficial for promoting CSR in sport sector of Saudi Arabia?