

# **Identification and Ranking of Factors Related to the Quality of Services Provided in Departments of Youth and Sports of Golestan Province with the Approach of Hierarchical Analysis (AHP)**

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**ABSTRACT:** Identification and ranking of factors related to the quality of services provided in departments of youth and sports of Golestan province with the approach of hierarchical analysis (AHP). The present study was conducted through exploratory blend and two phases, quantitatively and sequentially. The research community included all managers of sports and youth departments in Golestan province with 30 people and sports management specialists (people holding a Ph.D.), of which there are 20 people. Regarding the limited statistical population, the sample includes all managers of sports and youth departments in Golestan province and sports management specialists. In the first stage, with the purpose of targeted sampling and snowball technique, 12 experts and experienced in the field of management of sport organizations were referred and through deep interview, we identified the main indicators of the quality of service delivery in sports and youth departments of Golestan province. Then, these indicators were placed in a hierarchical analysis questionnaire and the indicators identified by Choice11 Expert software were analyzed based on the AHP method. The results of the calculated analysis show that the expected service agent with a relative weight of 0.513 is ranked first and then the relationship with customers with a relative weight of 0.298 in the second rank and perceptions of the quality with a relative weight of 0.186 is in the third rank.

**Keywords:** Quality of Service, Sports and Youth Departments, AHP.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Paying attention to the quality of goods and the sensitivity to more desirable services is one of the most important points that the international community attaches to them in this age. Today, the quality is defined by the customer's demand, and they perceive customers' perceptions and expectations as the main determinant of the quality (Lim & Tang, 2000). Customers or service recipients evaluate the quality of service by comparing their

perceptions and expectations of received service (Aldlaigan, 2002). The quality of service is a concept that has caused many controversies due to the lack of consensus on how to define it and how to measure it. Several definitions of service the quality are outlined. One of the widely used definitions defines the quality of service as part of satisfying customers' needs and expectations through service. Therefore, the quality of service can be defined as the difference between customer expectations of received services and services (Azar et al., 2010). Due to the diversity of services, the definition of services has always been difficult. What makes this complicated is the fact that it is not easy to understand and identify service delivery and service because of the incomprehensibility of most data and outputs. Cutler (2003) argues that service is an intangible asset that an organization offers and property does not pursue anything, that is to say, service generation may or may not depend on physical commodity. Inexpensive goods and services below expectations will always make customers and consumers of services less likely to receive credit and trust than the suppliers of those goods and providers (Crosby, 2004).

Despite the long overdue of the topic of the quality services and its measurement and evaluation methods, not only has this important focus not diminished, but because of the growing importance of services in the economies of countries, its role has become increasingly important (Farid, 2014) Services are widely expanded and no business can survive without services; therefore, managers need to focus on customer needs, comments and objections in order to maintain customers and provide better services and by examining problems and considering comments and awareness of customer satisfaction, by improving the quality and speed of services, they can be very helpful to maintain them (Fiegenbaum, 1991). In recent years, paying attention to the needs of customers and responding to their demands, both in the production and service sector, is one of the most important and essential tasks or goals of organizations, since more than half of gross domestic product is most often in countries of the world from the service sector, due to its specific characteristics (such as direct customer relationship), attention to this sector is very important (Hamzhepour Kheradmardi, 2013). The quality does not have any meaning other than what the customer really wants. In other words, it is a quality product or service that meets the demands and needs of the customer. The quality must be defined as compliance with customer requirements (Hamzhepour Kheradmardi, 2013). In recent years, much attention has been paid to the needs of customers in relation to the quality levels of services, and the provision of services with high levels of the quality to customers is used as a tool to achieve competitive advantage (Hamzhepour Kheradmardi, 2013). Among these advantages can be the creation of competitive barriers, customer loyalty, the production and supply of distinct products, reduced marketing costs, and the ability to determine higher prices (Howat et al., 1999).

The results of the research of Saeedi et al. (2015) showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of service quality in sport clubs with satisfaction level and customer loyalty (Julia et al., 2015). Also, the results of the research of Farid (2014) have been identified as identifying and prioritizing the effective factors on improving the quality of health services using multi-difficult decision-making techniques (MADM) (Case Study: Health Centers in Yazd). The fact that employees have enough knowledge and skills to respond to other factors is of paramount importance (Kebriyaei, 2003). Hamzhepour (2012) also concluded that the quality of service was a good predictor of satisfaction, the loyalty to the future intention of the club's customers to be bodybuilders (Rousta et al., 2004). The results of the study of Saatchiyan et al, (2011) showed that the quality of the services provided by the programs was highly correlated with overall satisfaction and customer loyalty in swimming pools (Saatchiyan et al., 2012). Zhang (2016) has explored the relationship between the dimensions of the quality of service and the satisfaction and trust of the customers of organizations. Findings showed that there was a significant relationship between the quality of service dimensions and customer satisfaction and trust (Saeedi et al., 2015). Also, the results of the research Julia (2015) has shown human resource management practices on employee service quality. Human resource management practices are effective on the quality of employee performance (Seyyed Javadin et al., 2003).

Although many studies have been done over the years about the quality of services in the industry, the concepts of the quality of service have recently been taken into consideration by the sports and leisure sector (Venus & Safaian, 2005). Sports organizations have special service features that separate them from other service organizations such as banks or insurance companies. The first feature is that the cost of recreational and sports activities is optional. Secondly, the customer usually attracts sports organizations during his or her leisure time; and thirdly, often in sports activities, emotional investment such as supporting a team, belonging to a sports club or improving health (West, 2001). These factors are likely to result in much greater expectations from sports organizations than other service providers. Therefore, the different nature of service to the goods and the specific characteristics of the sports industry service make it possible to reflect on the expectations of the sports organization's customers and the distance between their expectations and their perceptions (Zhang et al., 2010).

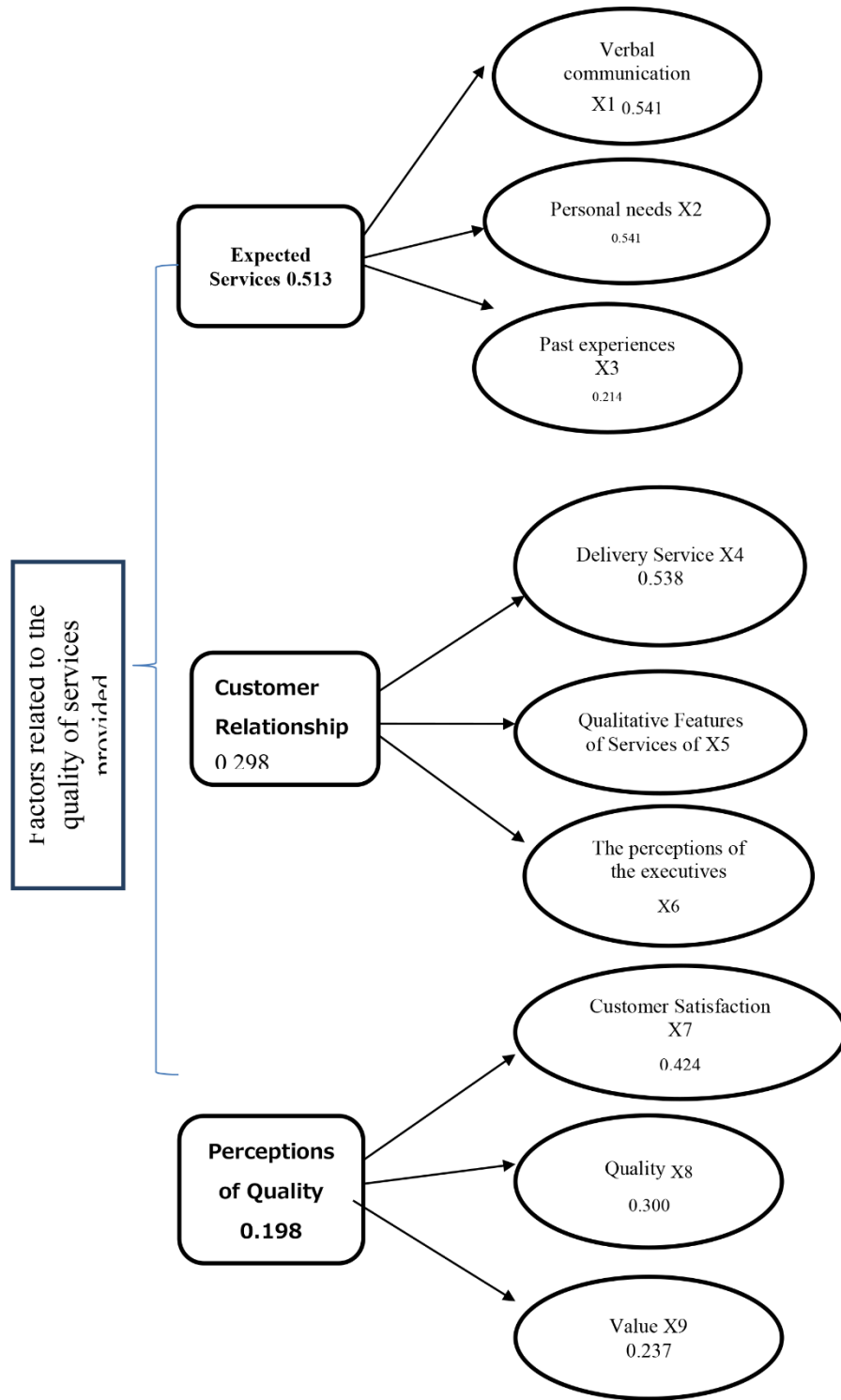
Therefore, considering the importance of human resources management practices and its consequences for the research organization in this research, the researcher attempts to answer how identification and ranking of factors is related to the quality of services provided in departments of youth and sports of Golestan province with the approach of hierarchical analysis (AHP).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The purpose of this study was to identify and prioritize the selection of managers of sport organizations by Hierarchical Analytic Method (AHP). The present study was carried out with exploratory blend in two qualitative and quantitative phases. The research community included all managers of sport and youth departments in Golestan province with 30 people. Sports management specialists (who have a Ph.D. in sports management) are 20 people. Regarding the limited statistical population, the sample includes all managers of sports and youth departments in Golestan province and sports management specialists. In the first stage, with the purpose of targeted sampling and snowball technique, 12 experts with experience in the field of management of sport organizations were referred and through deep interview to identify the main indicators of factors related to the quality of services provided in sports and youth departments. Then, these indicators were placed in a hierarchical analysis questionnaire and the indicators were analyzed by Choice Expert11 software based on the AHP method.

## **RESULTS**

The distribution of the sample by age status showed that people over 40 years old had the highest frequency of 39.2%. Also, the distribution of the sample under study based on education showed that 33.7% had a bachelor's degree, 42.6% had a master's degree, and 23.7% (19 persons) had a doctorate. Finally, the distribution of the sample under study based on management history showed that individuals with a history of management of 6 to 15 years with 48.7 percent had the highest frequency. The interviews were conducted using theoretical saturation method to identify indicators and factors related to the quality of services provided in sports and youth departments. The results of the interviews were sorted according to the form (1). According to the questionnaires, 9 indicators and 3 components were identified. The results of the calculated analysis show that among the overall components, the expected service factor with a relative weight of 0.513 is ranked first and then the relationship with customers with a relative weight of 0.298 in the second rank and the factor of perceptions with a relative weight of 0.198 in the third rank is important (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Weight of indicators and factors related to the quality of services provided in sports and youth departments of Golestan province.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the service quality enables managers to reduce financial resources to areas that are of higher importance while preventing quality loss. Hence, in this study, the factors related to the quality of services provided in sports and youth departments in Golestan province were investigated to identify the existing gaps and the areas for their improvement. The most important result of the present study was that the expected services, customer relationship and quality perception factor were ranked first to third in the quality of services provided in sports and youth departments of Golestan province. The research findings are consistent with the research results of Zhang et al (2016) and Julia (2015).

According to the surveys, the service sector has become a dominant economic sector in many industrialized countries. On the other hand, some believe that the quality of the service will be the next in international competition. Increasing the share of services, increasing competition, increasing costs, reducing productivity in service providers, as well as consumer concerns in terms of lowering the quality of the service received are therefore required to pay attention to the quality of services. Since the quality of the services is one of the factors affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty and evaluates the quality of the services only by the customer, it is suggested to managers of sports and youth departments of Golestan province that by setting up a suggestion and criticism fund and monitoring and measuring the level of the quality of the service and customer satisfaction assessments will be continuously and periodically informed by their expectations and demands, and they will do their utmost to fulfill their expectations. What is important is that the officials and managers of sports and youth departments of Golestan province, acting on their promises and providing reliability services, including more objective (favorable service delivery), trust (reliability to quality claims), tangible physical factors (providing modern equipment), accountability (handling customer's questions and complaints), empathy (customer relationship and special attention to each individual) can serve the clients of sports and youth departments in providing better services in the province.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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