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### The reasons of Iranian football clubs failure in the Asian football champions' league

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#### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this research was to study the reasons of Iranian football clubs failure in the Asian football champions' league. The research was descriptive and its population included managers and coaches that were familiar with football. A research-made questionnaire was used to collect data; its content and face validity was confirmed by 10 sport management and football experts and tool reliability was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha=0.84$ ). The information of 105 distributed questionnaires was analyzed by Friedman test. The results showed that among 5 components (management and organizing, coach and technical staff, the external components, players, economic and financial), the management and organizing component have the greatest roles in the success of football clubs. It is suggested that aware and experienced managers and coaches in sports, spend most of their attention for grassroots football and setting long-term plan for teams.*

**Key Words:** Failure, Football, Champions league, Iran, Asia

#### INTRODUCTION

Existent evidences show that football is the most popular sport internationally to the extent that many countries consider it as their national sport. Full stadiums and the competitions with millions of viewers; have introduced football as the most popular sport in the world [1, 2]. With professionalization of the football and increase of the races' excitement, the spectator of the football, has enhanced gradually [3].

Nowadays sport is an industry with multiple economic and social effects internationally and professional football has been the most popular sport among Europeans and it has extraordinary economic growth over the past 20 years [4-6].

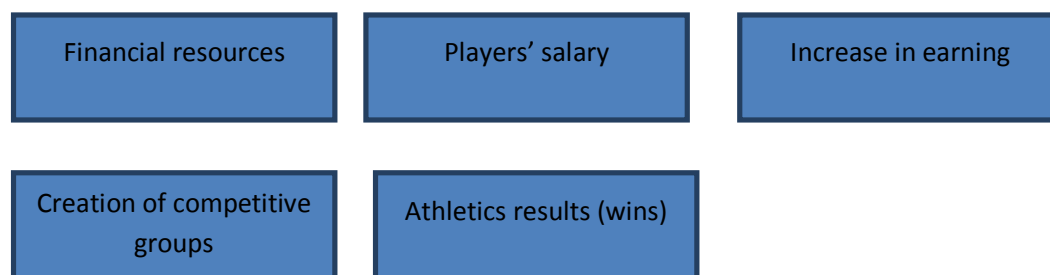
Along with the increase in tendencies toward football, many changes have been made in it, to the extent that football in many countries has become an occupation and a perfect industry [7]. Development and growth of professional football clubs is not merely and expanded trade but it has turned into one of the most prolific industries in the world and it practically has been intertwined with all the economic aspects from the media to clothing, food and equipment. The sport scope has captured everywhere and has rooted in the far places of the world and millions of people benefit from it somehow [8]. The Union of European Football Association (UEFA) suggests 6 major goals for all the clubs which want to participate in European Championship league, which are: 1- development of youth pedagogy 2- development of financial abilities 3-development of facilities 4- development of management and human resources 5- development of children 6- development the behaviors of athletes, referees, managers and fans [9].

Among the three factors of athlete, coach and spectator, the coach factor is the main axis of the sport team. The coaches try to reach different goals. They help the athletes to prepare themselves mentally in best form for the matches and create the essential motivation in athlete to struggle for reaching the maximum of their potential capacity [10-12].

As in industry a meticulous planning should be done and the type of investment, type of product, evaluation of profit and loss, costs, the expert human resource and etc. should be clear and regulated.

The professional leagues in the world are also going toward this direction. Not only the regional and continental leagues but also nowadays the internal leagues (inside the countries) have their own specific values and price and present their own product which is the game or the match, to the spectators inside the stadium or the audience of television [13].

FC Barcelona used the healthy Cycle in planning as a process that different decisions can affect its team's matches. Paying attention to the specific features of the club (internal and external factor), changes in the club's structure (such as smaller management board, smaller work groups in different sectors (marketing, finance, athletic, transfers, communicating and political activities of the club and interrelationship between these factors) are useful from the management board's point of view, when the lead into the club's success [14-15].



In football field, several clubs are trying to use the Healthy Cycle between the athletic results and economic benefits [16]. As Collins says, one of the key ways to obtain long terms achievement is to forming a set of values for the whole business and then to find peoples who have those values. The organizations always find great talent. This is also true in sport. Undoubtedly FC Barcelona has been the best football club of the world in recent years which have obtained awesome success in this period [17].

The research's results show that the success of the team depends on different factors. Although in the field of this research, no related research was founded, it can be referred to the results some other researches in this field.

In a research conducted on the Norway football super league, it was showed that the success of the Norway football does not depend on the span, size and population of the cities which have a football team in super league. For example the best football team in Norway league, belongs to the Norway's third big city. According to the developing procedure of football matches in championship and along with the expectation of the presence of different social classes in football, the need to educated managers for this sport can be felt more. Because of the expanse different subjects in football, educating specific managers for football must be from the most important tasks for those countries which have a professional outlook toward football [19].

Comparison between funding of professional football clubs in Iran and England shows that %65 of the football clubs in Iran professional league consists from governmental resources and depends on investment industry which most of the clubs in England are private and their and their financial resources consist from television copy right (%31) ticketing and earning on the day of the match and cash flow from investment business (%22). Some of the main obstacles for financial support of Iran super league football teams are like: government clubs, lack of financial clarity, and the fact that Iran's Broadcasting department does not pay for the broadcasting, failure in copy right in Iran, improper competitive programs, unsuccessful marketing management in club, club's manager, lack of managers awareness about the new methods of providing financial resources, limited utilization of sport creative managers who are expert in financial tasks and business in different levels in football industry [20].

Asian Championship is performed annually in a time that football clubs in the extensive continent, are approaching the first level of the world football with growing technical quality and macro investment. All the countries from those around the Persian Gulf to those in the Middle of Asia that newly have realized the importance of football industry and also the countries in the East of Asia which have grown themselves beyond Asia for a long time, are seeking to become successful in Asian Championship. Asia Championship league has been stated from the year 2003 and 10 round of it, has been held yet in which just the Sepahan Club and Zob Ahan club of Isfahan respectively on 2007 and 2010 could get the second place.

In this research we are seeking to identify the reasons of the Iran football teams' failure in Asian Championship.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Methodology

This research is descriptive and its goal was to identify and rank the influencing factors on Iran football clubs' failure in Asian Championship. Statistical population was managers and coaches that had complete knowledge about the issue and happenings of the football. Theoretical bases related to this subject were collected through documental studies and with researcher-made questionnaire with closed-answer questions. The data from the desired students about the research subject and its hypothesis were collected. The total number of the research samples was 105. The questionnaire of the research consisted of 5 components and 29 items. The samples were requested to show the amount of their agreeability according to Likert's 5 value scale from very little (1) to very much (5). Dimensions of the questionnaire include:

- 1) Component of coaches and technical team (7 items) for example the lack of recognition of the coaches and technical team from Asian teams.
- 2) Component of management and organizing (6 items) for example utilization of managers not familiar with football like executive manager of the clubs.
- 3) Component of finance (5 items) for example lack of powerful sponsors
- 4) Component of players (6 items) for example the decrease in partiality and motivation of the players who get billion salaries.
- 5) External components (5 items) such as Iran's presence in the West of Asia and possibility of collusion of the Arabs' team.

The questionnaire validity was confirmed with the opinion of 10 professors and experts in the related field. The internal reliability of the research's items was evaluated to be 0.84 for the whole questionnaire through Chronbach's Alpha. SPSS software (version 17 and confidence level of %95) was used to analyze the data. Friedman Statistical Test was used to rank the components.

## RESULTS

The result of the research in demographic parts showed that from 105 samples, 20 (11/4) of them were woman and 85 of them (88.6) were men.

**Table 1: the average of items related to the component of coaches and technical teams**

Items	average	standard deviation
The coaches and technical teams' lack of knowledge from Asian teams	3.32	1.006
lack of proper fitness and body building exercises before the season	3.91	0.934
improper of the teams at the beginning of the season	3.57	0.937
lack of expert psychologist beside the teams	3.88	0.942
lack of powerful analyzer teams with the football teams	4.03	0.780
lower knowledge of Iranian coaches from the modern football	4.03	0.833
lack of foreign coaches recognition from Iran and Asia football	3.30	1.024
Coaches and technical teams 'component	3.72	0.475

As the table 1 shows lack of powerful analyzer besides the teams and also the lower knowledge of Iranian coaches from the modern football with the average of (4.03) were the most prominent item between the items of the coaches and technical team.

**Table 2: The average of related items to the management and organizing component**

Items	Average	Standard deviation
-repeated transfers of the players and coaches during a season	4.06	0.939
-lack of attention to the infrastructure and basic teams	4.57	0.826
-lack of the second team as a support for the first team	3.69	0.902
Iranian teams just think about passing the first round of league	3.39	1.082
-utilization of managers not related to football as the executive manager Of the clubs	4.26	0.971
lack of comprehensive and long term planning for presence In Asian Championship	4.23	0.767
Management and organizing component	4.05	0.484

**Table 3: The average of the items Related to player component**

Items	Average	Standard deviation
Players injury	2.99	1.042
Most of the players set their highest ambitions in joining Persepolis and Esteghlal clubs	3.46	1.055
Nonprofessional behaviors in players	3.99	0.903
Lack of solidarity and empathy between players, technical team and club	3.88	0.930
Decrease in partiality and motivation of billions salary players'	4.19	0.961
Lack of presence of famous foreign players in teams	3.32	1.072
Players component	3.49	0.515

Table 2 is related to the management and organizing component. As it is showed lack of attention to the infrastructures and basic teams are the most prominent items between the other items off this component.

According to the finding of the table 3 which is about the component of players, decrease of partiality and motivation of players who have billiards salary is the most outstanding item with the average of 4.19.

**Table 4: The average of items related to the financial and economical component**

Items	Average	standard deviation
Lack of budget to attract powerful players and technical teams	2.89	1.293
Lack of modern stadiums according to AFC standards	3.59	1.115
Lack of competition for procurement and presence in friendly tournament	3.72	0.932
Lack of powerful sponsors	3.26	1.118
Buying expensive and famous players by Asian teams	3.02	1.172
Financial and economical component	3.29	0.708

**Table 5: average of the items related to external component**

Items	average	standard deviation
Match and coordination of the Asian championship with the East Asian leagues calendar	3.12	1.084
Low quality of Iran football in comparison with the modern football	4.38	0.755
Lack of spectators and medias support from the teams when they lose	3.05	1.198
compression and repeated recession of Iran's football super league	3.56	0.968
Iran's location in Asia's West region and the possibility of Arab team's Collusion	2.60	1.093
External component	3.52	0.508

Table 4 shows the findings related to the financial and economical component. Lack of competition for procurement and lack of presence in friendly international matches is the outstanding item in financial component with the average of 3.72.

Table 5 shows other influential items in a component as external component. As it can be seen the item of low quality of Iran football in comparison to the modern football of the world is the most important factor with the average of 4.38.

**Table 6: the result of Friedman Test for the items and components**

statistic number of samples	statistic Of Chi-squared	degree of free	significance level
Components	105	188.18	4
Items	105	1.059	28
			0.001

Table 6 shows the results of Friedman Test for the ranking of the items and components. With these results, the average of items and also the average of the components are different with each other and they can be ranked.

**Table 7: rating of the research components through Friedman Test**

Components	The average rank
Management and organizing	4.26
Coach and technical team	3.30
External components	2.65
Players	2.62
Financial and economical	2.17

Ranking of the components which was done through Friedman Test is shown in table 7. This table shows the importance of each component in the failure of Iran's football club in Asian Championship. As it can be seen the component of management and organizing has is the most important component between all the components of the research.

**Table 8: the ranking of the research items through Friedman Test**

Items	Average of rank
Lack of attention to the infrastructures and basic teams	22.36
Lack of coaches and technical teams' enough recognition from the Asian teams	20.57
Lack of managers' comprehensive and long term planning for presence in Asian Championship	20.41
Utilization of the non-football managers as the executive managers of the clubs	20.01
Lack of partiality and motivation in the players with billions salary	19.28
Repeated Relocation of the players and coaches of Iranian teams during a season	18.25
Lack of powerful analyzer teams' beside the Iranian coaches	18.01
The knowledge of Iranian coaches is behind the modern football	17.57
Nonprofessional behaviors in Iranian players and lack of control from the clubs (traffic, accommodation,...)	17.49
Lack of proper fitness and pre-season body building exercises	17.07
Lack of an expert psychologist besides the Iranian teams	16.81
Lack of solidarity and empathy between the technical team, club and players	16.72
Lack of competition for procurement and presence in international friendly competitions	15.36
Lack of a second team as a support for the first team to let the club use its players for participating in different matches	15.19
Lack of modern stadiums according to AFC's standards	14.75
Bad recruiting of teams at the beginning of the season	14.18
Compression and repeated recession of Iran football Super League	14.15
Low expectations of players (the highest desire of lots of the players is to join Persepolis and Esteghlal clubs)	13.47
Iranian teams' goal is just to ascend from the group round of Championship	13.02
Lack of famous foreign players in Iranian teams in comparison to the Asian teams	12.77
Foreign coaches' lack of recognition from Iran and Asia football	12.44
Lack of powerful sponsors	12.30
Match and coordination of Asian Championship calendar with the East Asia' leagues	11.07
Lack of spectators and medias support of the teams when they lose the match	10.92
Buying famous and expensive players from the opponent teams, especially the countries around Persian Gulf	10.65
Players injury	10.18
Lack of budget to attract and powerful players and technical team	10.03
Iran's location in the West Asia' region and the possibility of Arab teams collusion	7.64

The table 8 shows the ranking of the research items. In this table the importance and the rank of each factor in the failure of Iran's football teams in Asian Championship are shown.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the ranking of the component based on Friedman Test from the point of view of coaches and managers who are associated with football, management and organizing is the main factor of Iran football clubs' failure in

Asian Championship. It should be noted that football clubs can become successful just when their managers have essential knowledge and awareness about football or utilize those who are expert in football science besides themselves to become successful.

The finding of the research among components such as management and organizing, coaches and technical teams, players, external factors and financial component, considers management and organizing as the most important factor in Iran's football clubs in Asian Championship. All the football and non-football managers must have the necessary knowledge and proficiency and also have the essential proficiency about manager's responsibility and skills. These finding are in line with the results or researches of Saffari (2007), Kary (2008) and Chelloduria (1999). [21-23]

All the managers in sport must be mastered in issues such as technical and especial issues of sport like programming of the matches and exercises, the methods of management of sport facilities' and equipment, understanding the sport regulations and circulars, the ways of attracting the players and effective communication with them, attracting public support and increasing the servicing of volunteers, the methods of attending regular tournaments. These finding are in line with the findings of Naderain and Soltan Hosseini (2011), and Koontz and Weihrich (2004) [14, 15].

The managers should pay attention to special features of club (internal and external factors), changes in club's structure (such as smaller managing board, financial sport marketing, players' transfers, communicating and political activities of the club and etc...) because a club is known to have a powerful management just when all of these changes lead to the success of the club. This result is in line with Casals (2011) and Lago (2014) researches. [14, 15].

According to the growing trend of football matches in championship level and with the presence of different social classes in football, there is a growing need to educated managers for this field of sport more than before. Considering the extent of different subjects in football, educating managers specific to this sport, should be one of the most important tasks for the societies which have professional outlook toward football. This finding is in line with the researches of Sajjadi (2009) [19]. Selecting managers who are familiar with management and sport sciences can be the best choice for presidency of the clubs.

If this important matter cannot be achieved, it is better to utilize managers who are experienced and expert in management in order to fulfill the goals of the club with the help of sport consultants. Choosing Of the managers just on the basis of being sportive without any experience and management knowledge cannot lead to club's success. According to the non-football managers' role in the top of the clubs', it is expected that these managers prepare a comprehensive and long term plan besides facilities because one of the main reason of the Iranian football clubs' failure can be the result of lacking program and inefficiency of the managers especially those who are non-football. The non-football managers can just help in funding of the clubs but they cannot do football tasks and they face many problems in this aspect. Our managers must attend meeting with experienced experts, find solution and have the power to carry out the ideas.

According to the finding of the research, lack of the presence of a powerful analyzer group beside the teams and the lower knowledge of the Iranian coaches in comparison to the modern football, are the most prominent items in coaches and technical team's component. Nowadays the presence of a famous coach alone is not enough for the success of the team. In order to become successful, all the factors in a technical team must work together to achieve success. The finding show that these results are in line with the researches of the Koln University in Germany which shows that a coach team consisted of a head coach, several exercising coaches, a number of analyzer, a dietitian and a sport psychologist, has greater chance for reaching success in comparison to those coaches who do all the works individually. This is also in line with the research of Robin Frost (1987).

The main purpose of each club is to become successful and to reach this goal; they try to employ internal and foreign coaches who have both advantages and disadvantages. Employing foreign coaches is a fast way to reach expert and efficient individuals. Utilizing these coaches can lead to knowledge and experience transfer into the country. On the other hand employing foreign coaches for short terms can be from disadvantages of using foreign coaches because of their lack of complete recognition and awareness from the country's football. These findings are in line with the research of AfzalPour, Gharakhanloo, Khodadad (2004), Sarvestani (1995), Jackson and Palmer (2001) [26-28].

Undoubtedly the coaches are the main and important axis of the sport teams. To choose efficient coaches for football teams, different criteria and factors can be taken into consideration, like: great coaches emphasize on long term programs, they are both teacher and organizer, teach the players professionalism, they have access to the accurate and applied data, they induce team-oriented attitude in players, they can have an effective communication with players, assistants and others, they have the ability to guide the exercise sessions effectively for development of the team, they are able to program and providing of a table of the tasks for the team, they have credible coaching license, enough and proportionate experience for the players with different age groups which these are in line with Robin Frost's research (1987) [25].

The head coach is responsible of the management and leadership of the team just as a leader and the final decision about arrange of the players in the football field is his duty. Usually they attend the press interviews and ultimately they are the responsible for loses and failures of the teams which these findings are in line with Zardoshtian (2007) and Martens (2006) research [11, 12]. Coaching is consisted of a set of principles and beliefs that help individuals to cope with numerous situations in their life. Each coach must have a specific philosophy because he works in a different situation from others. While a coach is engaged in his work, his philosophy helps him more than his knowledge and awareness of a sport major and eliminate his hesitation about the formation of the exercise' rules, play style, team discipline, competition, short term and long term goals. Unlike in the past that any players, who finished his player hood, would become a coach immediately, nowadays FIFA has passed strict rules for becoming a coach. The coaches must participate in a 10-year period of education and take exam to be able to coach in the first level of international football. The coaches have some responsibilities beyond technical and tactical trainings (education). They must have different skills as the steersman of the team. So by choosing proper and effective managers, the clubs can act better to choose the coach better which is the main axis of the team and this will affect success or failure of the teams.

According to the gained results, the external factors such as low quality of the Iran's football in comparison to the modern international football can be one of the important reasons of the Iranian football teams' failure in Asian Championship. In external factors both the span of the cities or even the countries and their geographical situations can be investigated. Population, span and geographical situation cannot influence the teams' success and the failure of Iranian teams is not related to Iran location in West Asia. This is in line with the researchers conducted in Norway [18].

According to these findings, Lack of partiality and motivation in the players with billions salary and Lack of competition for procurement and presence in international friendly competitions are respectively other important reasons of the Iranian teams' failure in Asian Championship.

In general, it can be said that for promotion of football, those responsible in Iran's sport especially in football must take serious decisions and have comprehensive plans in order to base a system which sets its priority on basic teams. The results of this research present some findings that are efficient in better understanding of the reasons of Iranian football clubs' failure in Asian Championship. Since this the first research conducted to identify the reasons of Iranian football clubs' failure in Asian Championship and it have been done just between the male and female university students who are familiar with football, it is suggested that next researches would be conducted between the players, coaches and experts who have enough experience knowledge about Iran's football.

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