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The Impact of the Sports Industry on Sustainable Economic Development: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to analyze the role of the sports industry in promoting sustainable economic development and to provide a basis for future studies on sports industry development.

Methods and Materials: This systematic review followed the PRISMA guidelines. Articles were searched in the Scopus database using the keywords government, sport, industry, and impact. Of the 190 articles initially identified, screening based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria resulted in seven relevant articles for analysis. VOSviewer software was also used to identify keyword co-occurrence patterns among the included articles.

Findings: The reviewed studies indicate that the sports industry contributes to economic growth by increasing community income, creating employment opportunities, and supporting digital transformation in the health sector. Government policy support, financing models, governance strengthening, and sports entrepreneurship were identified as key contributing factors.

Conclusion: Human resource involvement across regions in sports industry development is consistent with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, particularly in strengthening community capacity for sustainable development. The sports industry may increase community income and requires government policy support to advance sustainable city and national development.

Keywords: *Sports industry; Digital transformation; Sports entrepreneurship; SDG 11; Economic growth*

1. Introduction

Global economic development currently faces challenges related not only to economic growth but also to social sustainability, public health, and environmental sustainability (1). Urban spatial planning plays a central role in shaping and developing cities amid social, economic, and technological changes that affect people's lives (2). This transformation not only determines

the physical form of cities but also influences economic structures, lifestyles, and the sustainable quality of life of residents. Sustainable economic development in urban areas is closely linked to the strategic integration of various industries. The success of urban economic development is largely determined by the capacity to manage urban resources, including land use, labor, infrastructure, technology, and social potential, which can be optimized and

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integrated to strengthen the economy and improve population welfare.

The urban economic structure is supported by several types of industries that develop according to city characteristics, resource availability, and broader social dynamics. In general, urban industries can be grouped into service, manufacturing, creative, and technology-based sectors (3). These sectors play complementary roles in urban industrial growth. One rapidly growing sector is health and sports (4). China has experienced substantial added value in the sports industry, with compound growth of approximately 23%, from 356.3 billion yuan in 2013 to 1,007.8 billion yuan in 2018. The health services industry also rose by 27%, from 1.62 trillion yuan to 5.4 trillion yuan. In 2020, the added value of the sports industry reached 1.1248 trillion yuan, representing an annual increase of 11.6% (5).

The sports industry is an emerging force in national economic growth. It may improve quality, strengthen national spirit, and support social progress. Sport has a significant effect on socioeconomic development and has become a growing point of social and economic development in China. The sports industry is also a global industry that generates substantial revenue for foreign, national, and local economies (6). This sector is widely recognized for its value, supported by the availability of recreational facilities that allow it to function as a strategic economic driver for technological advancement, job creation, and sustainable development goals. The sports industry also contributes to social welfare through health and training programs and provides a foundation for future national development. Figure 1 presents a classification of the sports industry.

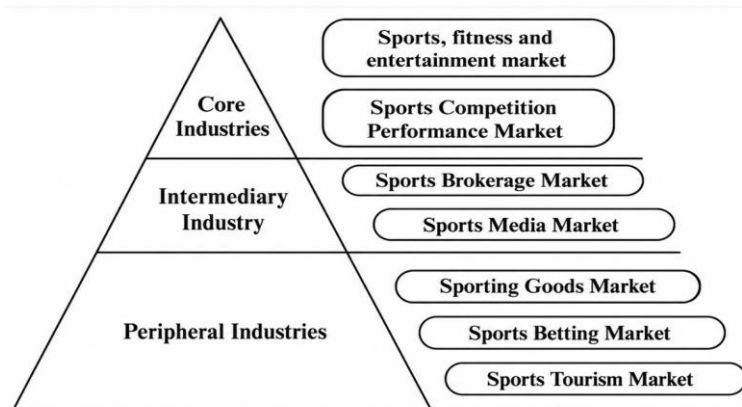


Figure 1. Classification of the Sports Industry. Source: Zhang and Mou (5).

The sports industry can support employment, income generation, and wider economic activity through the production and consumption of sport-related goods and services (6). Participation in sport and physical activity is also recognized as an important public-policy priority because of its social, health, and economic benefits (7). Public sporting events may further support local economic activity (8).

The sports industry can contribute to regional economic development through investment, employment, tourism, and urban regeneration (9). These effects may strengthen purchasing power, quality of life, and access to services. Therefore, examining the role of the sports industry in sustainable economic development is important because the sector may act as a catalyst for economic growth, welfare, and job creation. Liu (10) described the sports industry as a new economic opportunity because of its multiplier effect on urban economic growth.

Based on this background, this study conducted a systematic analysis of current articles on the impact of the sports industry. The purpose of this study was to examine the current impact of the sports industry as a basis for future sports industry development.

2. Methods and Materials

This study was designed as a systematic review and was reported in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines. Scopus was used as the main database to search for relevant articles using the keywords government AND sport AND industry AND impact. The literature search was conducted on January 20, 2025. The initial search identified 190 articles. The first screening was conducted in Scopus by selecting research articles written in English and available as open-access publications, resulting in 60 related articles. Mendeley software was then used for further screening to confirm that the selected articles were not systematic

reviews. The authors subsequently applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which resulted in seven eligible articles. Data extraction was conducted using a structured form covering article title, author, year of publication, country, research method, sample, and main findings. Because the included studies used heterogeneous designs, samples, and

outcome measures, a meta-analysis was not appropriate; therefore, the findings were synthesized narratively and thematically. A formal risk-of-bias assessment was not conducted; this limitation was considered when interpreting the findings. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Articles discussing the sports industry	Articles that did not discuss the sports industry
Research examining the role of government, the sports industry, and economic impact	Articles discussing only sport or only industry without an economic-impact focus
Articles with accessible full text	Articles without open-access full text
Articles written in English	Articles published in other languages
Original research articles other than systematic reviews	Systematic reviews

The complete screening process was summarized in a PRISMA flow diagram to ensure transparency in article selection. The PRISMA flowchart is presented in Figure 2.

Keyword co-occurrence patterns were examined using VOSviewer software.

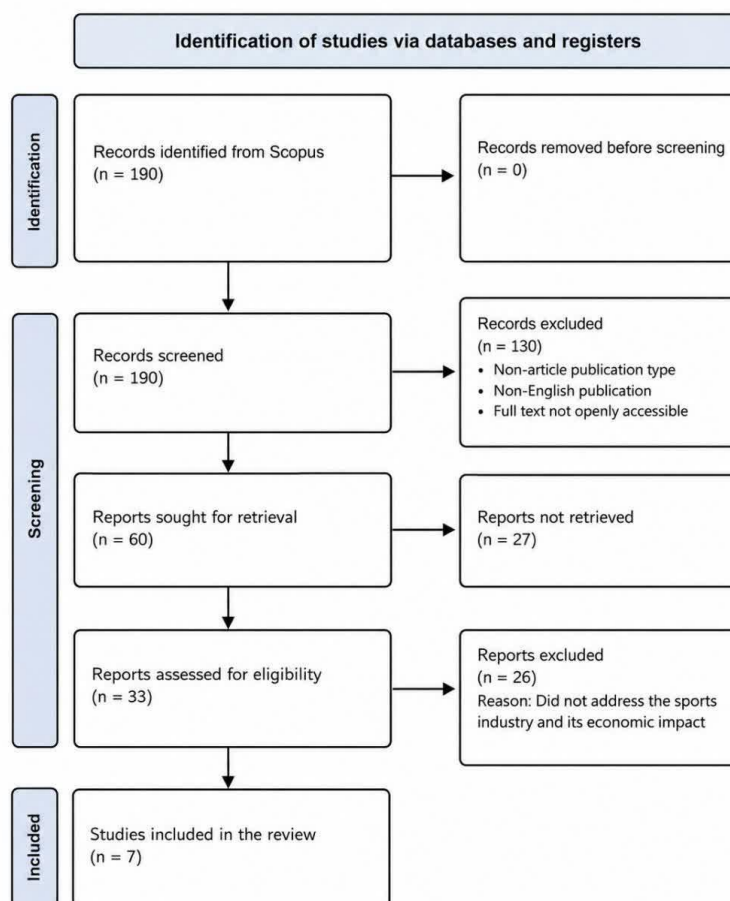


Figure 2. PRISMA flowchart of the article selection process

3. Results

The PRISMA-based screening process identified seven articles that were relevant to this study. Data were extracted

according to several aspects, including article title, author, year of publication, research method, sample, and main findings. The characteristics of the included articles are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Research articles included in the systematic review

No.	Year	Country	Title	Research Method	Research Sample	Research Result
(1)	2023	China	An analysis of the leverage effect of Internet+ on the economic spillover of the sports industry	Fixed-effects model used to examine the linear relationship between the sports industry and economic growth; Hansen panel threshold regression.	Eleven provinces and regions in China: Shanghai, Shandong, Zhejiang, Hebei, Guangdong, Anhui, Chongqing, Hunan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Jiangxi. Data were taken from the China Internet Statistics Report, China Statistical Yearbook, China Sports Statistical Yearbook, and provincial sports development reports.	The sports industry had a positive effect on regional economic growth, although the effect was relatively small (0.010; significant at the 10% level). Eastern and western regions reached optimal levels faster than the central region.
(2)	2024	China	Can the integration of sports and health industries drive the upgrade of the sports industry? An empirical study based on Chinese-style modernization	Panel data collected from 2015 to 2020 and analyzed using a panel econometric regression model.	Data were collected from four major Chinese cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen.	The integration of sports and health industries played an important role in improving the sports industry structure. The market had a stronger influence than the government, while the government remained important in the long term.
(3)	2025	China	Research on the influence mechanism of the digital economy on the development of the sports and health industry in China	Construction of an index evaluation system with 25 indicators across seven dimensions and three systems; linear interpolation was used to complete missing data.	270 prefecture-level cities in China from 2011 to 2023. Data were obtained from the Chinese sports statistics yearbook and Chinese health and family planning statistics yearbook.	Panel-data regression showed that the digital economy had a significant effect on the development of sports and health industries in China (up to 1%). Evidence also suggested that the digital economy reduced the operating-cost ratio of companies in the sports and health sectors.
(4)	2025	Albania	Economic impact of sports sponsorship models on the development of the sports industry: Albanian experience	Qualitative approach with descriptive, analytical, and comparative design. Secondary data were obtained from scientific publications, official reports, policy documents, and sports funding statistics.	No respondent sample was used. The analysis consisted of policy documents, official reports, secondary data, and case studies of sports sponsorship in Albania and comparable countries.	Sponsorship helped Albania develop its sports industry sustainably despite limited state funding. Sponsorship funds contributed to the modernization and development of sports infrastructure through successful public-private partnerships that met international standards.
(5)	2022	China	Analysis and research on the influence of sports industry development on economic development	The research group used a step-by-step delay statistical method, while the control group used early-data statistics.	Twelve socioeconomic industries, including six in the research group and six in the control group. Economic data included economic growth, industry type, policy/strategy/market factors, and industry action time (7-10 months on average).	Key factors affecting the economy after intervention included economic growth (x1), type of sports industry (x2), level of integration with the economy (x3), timing of industry action (x4), and scale of the sports industry (x5).
(6)	2023	China	The impact of sports industry agglomeration on the high-quality development of green energy	Entropy weight method used to calculate the level of green-energy development across provinces in China from 2010 to 2018.	A combination of cross-sectional and time-series data from Chinese provinces from 2010 to 2018. The focus was the sports industry in the tertiary sector as the main agglomeration variable. Green-energy data were obtained from the China Energy Statistical Yearbook and related official sources.	Sports industry clustering increased the level of high-quality green-energy development. The effects varied by region, with developed regions showing stronger effects than less developed regions.
(7)	2024	Slovakia	The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures on the sports industry in Slovakia	Survey study using two questionnaires: one for athletes and sports professionals and one for sports organizations.	Individual respondents included athletes and sports professionals (N = 1,040), and sports organization respondents (N = 626). The questionnaire was accessed through sports organizations in Slovakia.	The study recommended establishing a reserve fund, diversifying income sources, and strengthening financial education for practitioners facing future crises.

The following section provides a detailed analysis of the main findings from the seven scientific articles that met the selection criteria. These articles present findings on the strategic role of the sports industry in economic growth and transformation. The analysis highlights how digital innovation and resilient financing models act as key drivers

of industrial progress. It also identifies challenges such as regional development disparities and the potential contribution of the sports industry to sustainable development through technological advancement. The thematic synthesis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Thematic synthesis analysis

No.	Theme	Finding	Article(s)
1	Integration between the health and sports sectors	One key driver of changes in the industrial structure is the integration of the sports industry with the health industry. This may create new societal trends and health standards, with the market playing a stronger role than the government.	2, 3, and 5
2	Funding models, crisis management, and sponsorship	Sponsorship models play a crucial role in the financial stability of sports infrastructure. In this context, crisis management, particularly revenue diversification and resilience enhancement, is essential for responding to future economic crises.	(4, 7)
3	Transformation and the digital economy	The Internet+ initiative acts as an economic catalyst by reducing operational costs. This is a non-linear process in which significant growth occurs once internet development passes a certain threshold.	(1, 3, 5)
4	Regional heterogeneity in industrial development	Economic effects differ across regions. The eastern region is more advanced in infrastructure and gains greater economic benefits from the digital sector than the western and central regions, which remain at relatively developing stages.	(1, 3, 6)
5	Industrial clusters and sustainable development	Sports industry clusters drive regional GDP growth. Another positive effect is their contribution to green-energy development. Through technology, the sports industry can optimize energy resources in developed regions.	(1, 5, 6)

The researchers also conducted a keyword co-occurrence analysis using VOSviewer, as shown in Figure 3. Several keywords emerged from the seven included articles,

including controlled study, China, industry, sport, government, article, human, economic aspect, economic development, and sport organization.

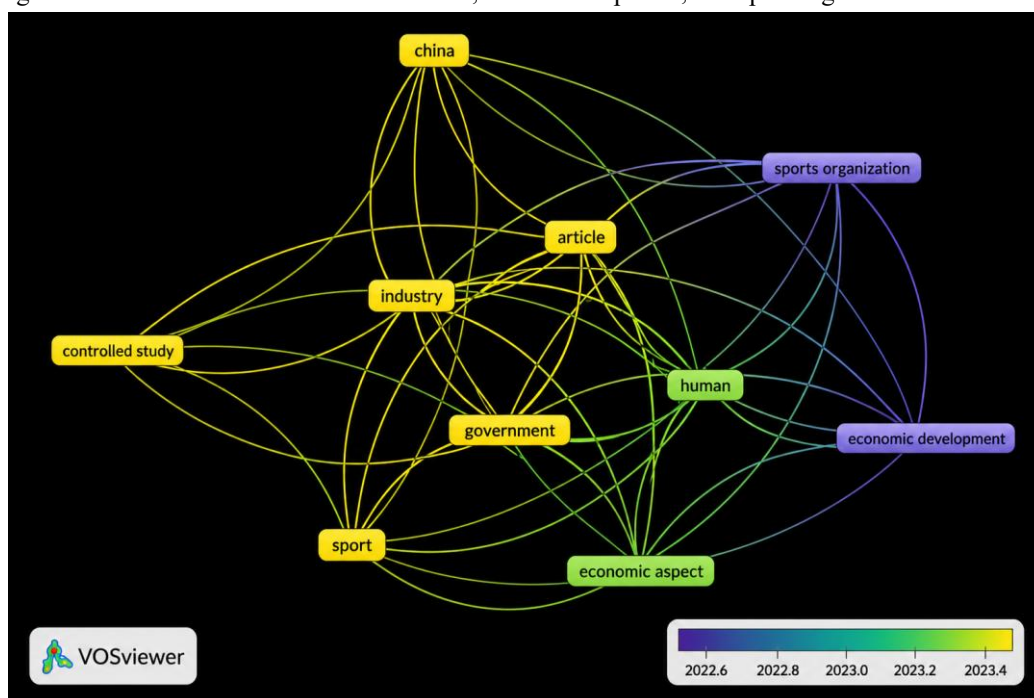


Figure 3. Keyword co-occurrence network generated using VOSviewer

4. Discussion

The systematic review findings indicate that, based on the seven included articles, the sports industry is linked to economic development, increased community income, and sustainable development goals. The sports industry is one area that characterizes reform, development, and the promotion of economic growth (11). These findings indicate that the sports industry should not be underestimated, because it has a significant impact on the modern economy.

The sports industry has a positive impact on economic growth in regions and communities. This finding was reported in the first included article, with significance at the 10% level. Sport also plays a psychological role in preparing individuals for everyday life (12). Recent evidence indicates that the digital economy can enhance sports industry development and support sustainable-development outcomes by improving industrial upgrading, efficiency, and regional economic transformation (13). Although the influence varies across regions, the sports industry can act as an economic driver and a supporter of social welfare within sustainable development.

Sustainable development should be integrated into regional development strategies by adapting the environment to support the growth and development of the sports industry. This approach is consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 11, which calls for cities and human settlements to be inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (14). Relevant government agencies need to strengthen plans for sports industry development, including policy guidelines related to investment management, fiscal management, and tax management. Government support is a key factor in establishing a stable industrial structure so that sports products, facilities, and economic activities can function comprehensively within the state's role in economic development (15).

In addition to policy, management quality is an important determinant of sports industry development. A dynamic and sustainable management process depends on organizational spirit and leadership (16). In the national context, improving the quality of sports services requires a gradual and continuous process. Optimizing public sports services is essential for building an inclusive, equitable, and high-quality sports service system (17). This indicates that the success of the sports industry is determined not only by economic factors but also by governance quality, leadership, and supporting public services.

The development of sports facilities as public spaces can improve the quality of urban life. Sports facilities integrated with green open spaces may increase healthy urban density and encourage more inclusive urban growth. Informal sport is an important feature of urban life, particularly in the use of public spaces (18). The sports industry has a strategic position in shaping the urban economy and driving urban development and regeneration (19). The existence of sports facilities and programs in city parks shows the important role of city governments in providing platforms for community participation in sport (20). Sport also has a direct impact on wider community participation, including in schools and among high-achieving athletes (21).

To optimize this potential, sports entrepreneurship should be developed. Several aspects can be optimized through sports entrepreneurship in the management process, including business management, operations, public relations management, innovation management, social issue management, and socioeconomic development (22). Synergy among these aspects may encourage the sports industry to create new opportunities and attract investors (23). Over time, the sports industry has transformed by exploring the potential of digitalization (24).

Digitalization has influenced sports consumption patterns, as shown by growing public interest in sports products, content, teams, leagues, athletes, and sporting events (25). Digitalization not only changes perceptions and consumption patterns in sport but also expands markets, creates new business models, and increases interaction between consumers and potential consumers interested in purchasing products or using services. Digitalization has a significant effect on industrial development (26). Sport requires technological development, and research into areas that strategically influence efficiency and effectiveness in sport also needs to be advanced (27).

Research by Sun et al. (28) also shows that the digital economy has a significant impact on the development of the sports and health industries, especially in regions with higher levels of technological development. Urban areas are particularly relevant for supporting sustainable economic growth. Sport has the potential to revitalize the urban environment by promoting public facilities, enhancing the city image, and improving community quality of life in relation to regional economic development (29).

The development of a sports city, especially in preparation for hosting large-scale events, requires strategic steps such as constructing sports venues, hotels, and transportation facilities, as well as adopting a long-term

development perspective (30). Joint sports-based initiatives can also be used by communities as a means of promoting social inclusion (31). Diverse consumers and individual needs require complex management (32). Sports development and advancement involve activities within the sports sector as well as the business resources of non-profit organizations and non-sport government organizations (33).

This discussion confirms that the sports industry is a strategic sector that contributes not only to sustainable economic development but also to environmental and social development. The sports industry can support urban development, improve community quality of life, and create employment opportunities integrated with digital transformation. These findings emphasize that sustainability-oriented public policies have strong potential to serve as a foundation for future development.

This review was limited to the Scopus database and included seven heterogeneous studies. No formal risk-of-bias assessment was performed. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as a focused narrative synthesis rather than a comprehensive estimate of the global economic effects of the sports industry.

5. Conclusion

Based on this systematic review, the sports industry plays a strategic role in promoting sustainable economic development and provides new perspectives for future development. The integration of the sports industry with the health sector, digitalization, government policy, and human resources has a significant impact on economic development. Human resource involvement in each region is consistent with SDG 11, particularly in increasing community capacity for sustainable development. This includes increasing community income through the sports industry and strengthening government policy support to develop the industry as part of broader efforts to build cities and countries based on sustainable principles.

Authors' Contributions

All authors made substantial contributions to the conception and development of this study. Zakiya Zanjabila served as the lead author and was responsible for the literature search, article screening, data extraction, and manuscript preparation. Ahmad Nasrulloh provided methodological supervision, conceptual guidance, and research design validation. Sigit Nugroho contributed to data interpretation, bibliometric mapping using VOSviewer, and

language translation. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Declaration

Language editing support using DeepL was employed solely to improve the clarity and readability of the manuscript. All scientific content, interpretation, and final editing were performed and approved by the authors.

Transparency Statement

All data analyzed in this systematic review were extracted from previously published studies and are summarized within this article. No new datasets were generated during the review. Additional extraction details are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

This systematic review analyzed only previously published studies and did not involve direct recruitment of human participants or the use of animals. Therefore, new institutional ethical approval was not required. The review was reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 statement.

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