



ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AT THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS IN IRAQ AND IDENTIFYING ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the essential requirements for implementing strategic human resource management (SHRM) at the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Iraq. The researcher employed a descriptive survey methodology using both personal interviews and online (electronic) questionnaires to suit the nature of the study and achieve its objectives and research questions.

The research sample was selected intentionally and included 276 individuals from Ministry employees as well as stakeholders from clubs and sports federations in Iraq. The exploratory study was conducted on twenty-three individuals, while the main study included 253 participants. Data were collected and analyzed statistically using the social and psychological research software SPSS v.25, providing various statistical analyses.

The study concluded that the essential dimensions for implementing SHRM at the Ministry included: strategic thinking, strategic analysis, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Strategic management, human resources, Ministry of Youth and Sports, organizational improvement

1.1 Introduction and Research Significance

Strategic management is a broad concept covering diverse topics, concepts, and research methods, including industry and competitor analysis, assessment of strengths and weaknesses, technology, innovation, product development, diversification, and organizational design. Strategy requires substantial effort to create value for clients, respond to competitive challenges, and build a strong organization (Al-Khuzami, 2008, p. 28; Pantih & Suwardhi, 2024, p. 1041).

The responsibilities of human resource management (HRM) have evolved due to the growing importance of the human element as a critical factor influencing organizational productivity. With changes in management philosophy and the adoption of democratic leadership styles, modern HRM has added new roles beyond traditional responsibilities. The HR manager now acts as an internal consultant and change agent, proactively providing insights and recommendations rather than waiting for instructions from senior management.

Given the importance of the human element in organizations, activities related to HR must be managed either by a resolute organizational unit or a specialized HR department, which can create a supportive organizational climate, address employee complaints, and manage them effectively (Barnouti, 2007, p. 22).

2.1 Research Problem

Strategic management is a vital topic in contemporary administrative thought, as it deals with decisions regarding resource allocation, building internal and external relationships over the long term, and



organizational improvement. It emphasizes studying and analyzing products, markets, and approaches to competitors to achieve long-term objectives and goals.

Despite the growing attention to strategic HRM in developed countries, there has been insufficient research on its application within sports organizations, even with increasing market mechanisms and global competition. This highlights the importance of the current study as an attempt to identify the essential requirements for applying strategic HRM concepts.

3.1 Research Objectives

The study aimed to identify the essential requirements for implementing strategic HRM at the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Iraq by:

1. Enhancing the planning and execution capacity of strategic HRM at the Ministry.
2. Improving measurement, evaluation, and transparency in implementing strategic HRM.
3. Empowering the organizational community and standardizing practices through applied research and the development of policies and procedures.

4.1 Research Questions

- What is the general framework for “strategic thinking” in applying strategic HRM at the Ministry, and how does it link vision, objectives, analysis, and decision-making?
- How can analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation be conducted sequentially and integratively to ensure effective SHRM implementation?
- Do responses vary according to gender, age, job qualifications, and work conditions, and what is their impact on the essential dimensions of SHRM implementation at the Ministry?

3.1 Research Methodology

The researcher employed a descriptive survey methodology, using questionnaires, personal interviews, and online (electronic) surveys to suit the nature of the study and achieve its objectives.

3.2 Research Scope

3.2.1 Time Scope

All research procedures were conducted between April 2, 2023, and September 2, 2025.

3.2.2 Human Scope (Research Population)

The research population included Ministry employees and stakeholders from clubs and sports federations in Iraq.

3.2.3 Spatial Scope

All research procedures were conducted within the Republic of Iraq. The exploratory study was conducted via personal interviews, while the main study used a questionnaire implemented through Google Drive.

3.3 Research Sample

The research sample included 276 individuals, selected intentionally from Ministry employees and stakeholders from clubs and sports federations in Iraq. The exploratory study involved twenty-three participants, while the main study included 253 participants. Table (1) presents the numerical description of the total research sample according to some demographic variables, distributed across the exploratory and main study.

Table (1) Numerical Description of the Research Sample According to Some Demographic Variables Distributed Across the Exploratory and Main Study

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Variable	Category	Total Sample	Exploratory Study Sample	Main Study Sample
Age Group	20–30 years	76 (27.54%)	6	70
	31–40 years	87 (31.52%)	7	80
	41–50 years	75 (27.17%)	6	69
	51–60 years	32 (11.59%)	4	28
	Over 60 years	6 (2.17%)	0	6
Gender	Male	175 (63.41%)	16	159
	Female	101 (36.59%)	7	94
Educational Qualification	Below University	22 (7.97%)	2	20
	University Degree	156 (56.52%)	13	143
	Master's Degree	49 (17.75%)	4	45
	Doctorate	49 (17.75%)	4	45
Field of Study	General Sports	212 (76.81%)	18	194
	Technical / Engineering	20 (7.25%)	2	18
	Law	7 (2.54%)	0	7
	Education / Psychology	17 (6.16%)	2	15
	Administration / Accounting	14 (5.07%)	1	13
	Media	6 (2.17%)	0	6
Job Position	Deputy Minister	1 (0.36%)	0	1
	Ministry Advisor	2 (0.72%)	0	2
	General Director	8 (2.90%)	0	8
	Department Head	28 (10.14%)	3	25
	Section Officer	54 (19.57%)	5	49
	Sports Administrator	68 (24.64%)	6	62
	Sports Coach	41 (14.86%)	3	38
	Club Board Member	26 (9.42%)	2	24
	Sports Federation Board Member	28 (10.14%)	2	26
	Technical / Engineering	20 (7.25%)	2	18
Total		276	23	253

3.4 Research Instrument

The researcher used a questionnaire (designed by the researcher) as the main research instrument.

To develop this instrument (measurement tool), the researcher reviewed the laws and regulations governing the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Republic of Iraq, as well as relevant scientific references and previous studies in related research fields. Based on this review, the researcher designed the questionnaire with five primary dimensions for assessing the essential requirements for implementing strategic human resource management at the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Iraq:



1. **Dimension One:** Strategic Thinking for Implementing Strategic Human Resource Management.
2. **Dimension Two:** Strategic Analysis for Implementing Strategic Human Resource Management.
3. **Dimension Three:** Strategy Formulation for Implementing Strategic Human Resource Management.
4. **Dimension Four:** Strategy Implementation for Implementing Strategic Human Resource Management.
5. **Dimension Five:** Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation for Implementing Strategic Human Resource Management.

For each dimension, the researcher developed a set of items in an initial form.

3.5 Exploratory Studies

3.5.1 First Exploratory Study

This study aimed to measure the face validity of the questionnaire by presenting it to experts in the fields of sports management, strategic planning, human resources, and human development. The tables present the experts' opinions regarding the dimensions and items of the questionnaire and their appropriateness for achieving the research objectives.

3.5.2 Second Exploratory Study

The second exploratory study aimed to extract scientific coefficients for the questionnaire by applying it to a sample of twenty-three individuals using personal interviews to ensure the validity and reliability of the dimensions and items. Reliability was measured using two methods: Cronbach's Alpha and test-retest application of the scale.

3.6 Main Study: Research Implementation Procedures

The main study was conducted across various provinces in Iraq. Procedures included:

- Verifying the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.
- Determining the research sample and its categories.
- Identifying participants' locations.
- Converting the questionnaire into an **electronic format on Google Forms**.
- Conducting trial runs, corrections, and follow-ups.
- Distributing the questionnaire personally and facilitating responses.
- Keeping the questionnaire open from **June 4, 2024, to June 28, 2024**.
- Downloading the data sheet for statistical analysis.

3.7 Statistical Treatments Used in the Research

The researcher employed the **social and psychological research statistical software SPSS v.25** for data analysis.

4.1 Presentation and Discussion of the First Research Question

Research Question One: What are the most important aspects of **strategic thinking** for implementing strategic human resource management at the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Iraq?

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Table (2) Frequency, Percentage, and Statistical Significance of the Research Sample's Responses to the Items of the Questionnaire Dimensions for Implementing Strategic Human Resource Management at the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Dimension One: Strategic Thinking for Implementing Strategic HRM)

N = 253

No.	Item	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Important at All	Mean	SD	Chi-Square	Overall Agreement %	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Adopting a strategic direction for development in strategic HRM.	157	62.06	86	33.99	10	3.95	0	0.00	0	0.00
2	Striving to build a clear vision of the future.	151	59.68	87	34.39	14	5.53	1	0.40	0	0.00
3	Encouraging employees to generate new ideas.	149	58.89	87	34.39	17	6.72	0	0.00	0	0.00
4	Providing necessary information to analyze current and future risks.	120	47.43	111	43.87	21	8.30	1	0.40	0	0.00
5	Attempting to change the attitudes of relevant institutions toward HRM.	83	32.81	117	46.25	48	18.97	4	1.58	1	0.40
6	Adopting a learning culture from past	125	49.41	81	32.02	43	17.00	3	1.19	1	0.40

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	experiences and others' mistakes.										
7	Proposing alternative solutions to problems and seeking integration among them.	132	52.17	91	35.97	24	9.49	5	1.98	1	0.40
8	Searching for new ways to accomplish tasks using available resources.	129	50.99	100	39.53	20	7.91	4	1.58	0	0.00
9	Developing organizational culture to encourage creativity in various work areas.	124	49.01	93	36.76	32	12.65	4	1.58	0	0.00
10	Working on developing employees' capabilities.	158	62.45	81	32.02	14	5.53	0	0.00	0	0.00
11	Determining what is right or wrong based on personal experience, previous expertise, and scientific studies.	137	54.15	76	30.04	34	13.44	6	2.37	0	0.00
12	Focusing on tangible results by relying on previous experiences.	129	50.99	76	30.04	44	17.39	3	1.19	1	0.40
13	Motivating employees to engage in direct	121	47.83	106	41.90	24	9.49	2	0.79	0	0.00

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	discussions with managers and supervisors.										
14	Ensuring that the concept of change and flexibility is a top strategic priority.	106	41.90	101	39.92	39	15.42	7	2.77	0	0.00
15	Establishing high trust with employees to provide a suitable work environment.	129	50.99	95	37.55	26	10.28	2	0.79	1	0.40
16	Focusing on internal evaluation of employees and achieving job satisfaction.	129	50.99	92	36.36	30	11.86	2	0.79	0	0.00

*Chi-square significant at 0.05 = 9.49



It is evident from Table (2), which presents the frequency, percentage, and statistical significance of the research sample's responses to the items of the questionnaire dimensions for implementing Strategic Human Resource Management (Dimension One: Strategic Thinking), that the agreement percentage ranged from 77.37% to 86.53%. Accordingly, the chi-square values ranged between 103.43 and 267.69, which are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The ranking of items was based on the highest agreement percentages. The following summarizes five key points derived from the table:

1. **Adopting Strategic HRM as a Comprehensive Development Approach:**
Enhancing strategic planning for human resources and guiding development based on the organization's objectives and future vision.
2. **Focusing on Employee Capacity Building and Supportive Work Environment:**
Developing employee capabilities, enhancing trust and job satisfaction, and providing an environment that encourages open discussion and expression of ideas.
3. **Culture of Creativity and Continuous Learning:**
Encouraging the generation of new ideas, learning from past experiences and mistakes, and developing organizational culture to promote innovation and creativity.
4. **Flexibility and Change as Strategic Priorities:**
Prioritizing change and flexibility within management, and striving to shift institutional attitudes toward HRM in ways that enhance sustainability and adaptability.
5. **Decision-Making Based on Information and Organized Insights:**
Providing necessary information for risk analysis, relying on experience and scientific studies, and proposing alternative solutions while integrating them to reach informed decisions.

These results demonstrate the research sample's agreement on the importance of strategic thinking for implementing strategic HRM, consistent with the findings of Abdullah Hamad Abdullah (2024) and Pantih & Suwardhi (2024).

Strategic thinking results from cognitive processes and has historically accompanied pioneering ideas within knowledge-based frameworks. It is considered one of the essential components attracting scientific inquiry in attempts to conceptualize it (Yadnya et al., 2023, p. 584). Some view strategic thinking as a method to align organizational capabilities with competitive realities (Tariq Sharif Younis, 2002, p. 54). Its characteristics have been linked to strategic vision in various fields—decision-making, economics, politics, and military strategy—highlighting its depth and continuous development. Strategic thinking involves both analytical and synthetic dimensions, which are core responsibilities of strategic managers in organizations (Iftikhar & Li, 2024, p. 2; Andrew Edkins, 2024, p. 15).

Conclusions

- Implementing strategic HRM in the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Iraq enhances communication across administrative levels and improves coordination between executive planning and human resources, ensuring more consistent achievement of organizational vision.
- Significant differences in responses based on demographic factors (gender, age, educational qualification, job position) affect key implementation dimensions, necessitating flexible and adaptive policies for diverse workforce segments.
- Strategic analysis, measurement, monitoring, and evaluation are crucial pillars for successful strategic HRM, although some gaps exist in measurement mechanisms and decision-making at the execution level.



- Institutional capacity needs strengthening through a practical framework for strategy formulation and providing necessary resources and technologies to ensure disciplined and sustainable implementation of strategic management across the ministry.

Recommendations

- Develop a unified framework for strategy formulation, execution, monitoring, and evaluation with timelines, continuous evaluation mechanisms, and specialized training for personnel on strategic thinking and planning tools.
- Design differential analytical mechanisms considering demographic differences (gender, age, qualification, job position) to target actions and policies effectively and mitigate response variability in decision-making.
- Enhance human resource capacities by investing in information technology and data (HR information systems, analytical reports) and establishing a transparent measurement and evaluation system that allows continuous feedback and periodic improvements in applied strategies.

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