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Validation of the Entrepreneurial-Oriented Human Resource Development Paradigmatic Model in the Iraqi Basketball Federation

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to validate the paradigmatic model of entrepreneurial-oriented human resource development in the Iraqi Basketball Federation. This research falls under the category of quantitative-descriptive studies and employed a structural equation modeling approach. In terms of its objective, it was applied in nature. The statistical population consisted of all senior managers of the Iraqi Basketball Federation, estimated at approximately 1,100 individuals. Based on Morgan's Table, a sample of 289 participants was selected. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire. To assess reliability, Cronbach's alpha method and SPSS software were utilized. In a pilot study, the questionnaire was distributed to 30 individuals, and all obtained Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70, indicating high internal consistency for the constructs used in the research model. Ultimately, the research data were analyzed using SPSS 22 and Smart PLS software. The findings revealed that the attitude and responsibility of sports organizations toward entrepreneurship had a path coefficient of 0.95, entrepreneurial resource management had a coefficient of 0.97, individual and organizational strategies had a coefficient of 0.83, the administrative and managerial system had a coefficient of 0.74, entrepreneurship development and incentive-seeking had a coefficient of 0.77, and sports entrepreneurship development had a coefficient of 0.53. All these factors significantly influenced the paradigmatic model of entrepreneurial-oriented human resource development. It can be concluded that the proposed paradigmatic model holds validity for the development of entrepreneurial-oriented human resources.

Keywords: validation, human resource management, creativity, entrepreneurship, paradigmatic model.

Introduction

In today's volatile and rapidly transforming global landscape, entrepreneurial orientation has become a fundamental determinant of sustainable organizational success, especially in emerging economies. Human Resource Development (HRD), when aligned with entrepreneurial thinking, can act as a powerful driver for both innovation and competitiveness. Within the realm of sports organizations, particularly federations, the strategic development of human resources is no longer a mere operational necessity but a critical element in enabling adaptability, creativity, and long-term viability. The importance of human capital in enhancing organizational performance has been widely acknowledged in contemporary literature, with several scholars emphasizing HRD as a key pillar in achieving competitive advantage [1, 2]. In sports organizations, where

performance is shaped not only by athletic output but also by strategic leadership and institutional capacity, HRD becomes an even more vital concern [3]. This is especially relevant for emerging nations such as Iraq, where sports institutions face infrastructural, economic, and managerial constraints that necessitate the formulation of locally grounded and innovation-driven HR models [4].

At the heart of entrepreneurial-oriented HRD lies the capacity to develop competencies that foster opportunity recognition, proactiveness, risk-taking, and value creation. Scholars have stressed that such competencies are closely intertwined with organizational learning, employee empowerment, and innovation systems [5, 6]. The validation of a model in this context must not only assess technical and administrative capabilities but also account for the cultural and structural mechanisms that support entrepreneurial behavior within sports federations [7]. Previous studies indicate that entrepreneurial orientation within sports organizations correlates positively with human capital investments, strategic leadership, and structural flexibility [8, 9].

Recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including Iraq, underscore the need for effective HRD systems that are adaptable to sociopolitical fluctuations and economic reforms. The Iraqi sports sector, like many of its counterparts, requires forward-looking frameworks to institutionalize entrepreneurial thinking within the management structure of national federations. As noted by [10], human resources, when strategically deployed, can become sources of competitive advantage, particularly in the service-intensive sectors such as sports. Similarly, [11] argue that foresight and innovation in HR planning are essential for positioning sports organizations within the competitive matrix of regional and international athletic governance.

In this vein, structural equation modeling (SEM) and the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach offer robust tools for testing hypothesized relationships within complex models involving latent variables. SEM has been extensively used to validate HRD frameworks by examining causal relationships among various constructs, such as organizational commitment, leadership style, and innovation propensity [12, 13]. In validating the entrepreneurial-oriented HRD model for the Iraqi Basketball Federation, it is crucial to evaluate constructs like causal conditions (e.g., human capital, entrepreneurial management), core phenomena (e.g., entrepreneurial thinking), intervening and contextual conditions (e.g., budget constraints, attitudes toward entrepreneurship), strategies (e.g., sports-specific planning), and outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction and work quality). These elements together define the operational logic of a paradigmatic HRD model.

The validation of HRD models in sports is particularly significant when addressing the unique characteristics of federated structures. Unlike corporate organizations, sports federations often exhibit hybrid governance systems, volunteer-based operations, and funding uncertainties. Thus, generic HRD strategies may not be sufficient. A tailored model that integrates entrepreneurial orientation offers a better fit for these contexts, as supported by research in entrepreneurial strategy contextualization [9] and sports-specific HR innovation [14, 15]. Furthermore, the decentralization of sports management in countries like Iraq creates both challenges and opportunities for empowering local leadership through HRD initiatives that are entrepreneurial in nature [16].

The relationship between HRD and innovation has been widely emphasized, especially in sectors undergoing structural transformation. Empirical evidence supports that organizations with well-developed HRD systems are more likely to adopt innovative practices, engage in strategic planning, and respond to environmental complexity [17, 18]. Within the realm of sports, innovation not only enhances organizational resilience but also contributes to athlete development, brand

positioning, and stakeholder engagement [19]. These outcomes align closely with entrepreneurial goals, thereby reinforcing the necessity of integrated HR-entrepreneurial models in sports federations.

Additionally, one cannot ignore the role of intangible resources such as organizational culture, leadership vision, and strategic intent. According to [3], these intangibles are pivotal in creating value and supporting long-term organizational sustainability. When mapped onto an HRD framework, they serve as catalysts for transforming traditional administrative systems into dynamic, opportunity-oriented units. In the case of the Iraqi Basketball Federation, where the infrastructure for sports governance is still evolving, a validated entrepreneurial-oriented HRD model can serve as both a blueprint and a diagnostic tool for organizational development.

It is also essential to recognize the value of localized models in HRD, as imported frameworks often fail to address context-specific issues. The work of [20] highlights the need for future-oriented HR strategies tailored to the sociocultural and institutional realities of Iran's sports industry—an insight equally applicable to Iraq. Similarly, the study by [21] employing Delphi-fuzzy methods demonstrates the importance of methodological pluralism in constructing contextually valid HRD models.

The strategic incorporation of entrepreneurship into HRD aligns with global trends emphasizing agility, innovation, and resilience. These competencies are particularly vital in sports federations, which must navigate bureaucratic rigidity, political interference, and limited budgets. As [22] notes, performance measurement in emerging markets should consider social and institutional variables that extend beyond financial metrics. This is especially true for sports federations that aim to become competitive while also fulfilling national developmental objectives.

Taken together, the present study seeks to validate a comprehensive, empirically grounded, and contextually sensitive paradigmatic model of entrepreneurial-oriented HRD for the Iraqi Basketball Federation.

Methods and Materials

This study was conducted as a quantitative-descriptive research project using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach and is applied in terms of its objective. The statistical population included all senior managers of the Iraqi Basketball Federation, with an estimated total of approximately 1,100 individuals. The Morgan Table was used to determine the sample size. Based on this table, a sample of 289 participants was selected to ensure high precision and validity of the research findings. Selecting this sample size helps ensure that the results of the statistical analyses have sufficient generalizability and validity and can be extended to the broader population of senior managers within the Iraqi Basketball Federation.

Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha method and SPSS software were employed. In a pilot study, the questionnaire was distributed to 30 individuals. All Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70, indicating high internal consistency of the constructs used in the research model.

Finally, the research data were analyzed using SPSS version 22 and Smart PLS software. These analyses enabled the researcher to examine the relationships among variables, test the accuracy of the hypotheses, and evaluate the implications of the study.

Findings and Results

Among the total sample studied, 94.2% were male and 4.8% were female, with the majority being men. Within the sample, 6.6% were aged between 20–30 years, 42% between 31–40 years, 9% between 41–50 years, and 13.8% were over 50 years of age. Additionally, 48% held a bachelor's degree, 38% a master's degree, and 13% a doctoral degree.

To validate the proposed model, structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using PLS software, which is a path modeling technique that enables simultaneous assessment of theory and measurement. In PLS, the outer model corresponds to the measurement model in structural equation modeling. The outer model includes convergent and discriminant validity, composite reliability, and the evaluation of factor loadings for the items associated with each construct, which are addressed in the following sections. Composite reliability refers to the degree of interrelatedness among items within a single dimension and assesses the adequacy of the measurement model fit. This interrelatedness is essential to ensure the instrument accurately measures the intended construct. For convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) are calculated.

In PLS modeling, another key criterion for evaluating the outer model is that a construct should share more variance with its associated indicators than it does with other constructs in the model. To assess this, researchers recommend using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which represents the average shared variance between the construct and its indicators. This criterion assumes that the latent variable of interest shares more variance with its assigned indicators than with any other latent variable. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Results of Convergent Validity and Composite Reliability

Research Variables	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability (CR)
Causal Conditions	0.54	0.84
Intervening Conditions	0.74	0.89
Core Phenomenon	0.62	0.74
Contextual Conditions	0.52	0.72
Strategies	0.57	0.68
Outcomes	0.73	0.87

Based on the results of Table 1, the AVE values are all greater than 0.50, confirming convergent validity. The CR values exceed 0.70 in all cases, indicating satisfactory composite reliability.

To assess discriminant validity, the matrix developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was used. In this matrix, the square roots of AVE for each latent variable appear on the diagonal, and the off-diagonal elements represent the correlations between latent variables. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of Discriminant Validity

	Outcomes	Strategies	Core Phenomenon	Contextual	Intervening	Causal Conditions
Causal Conditions						0.69
Intervening					0.61	0.79
Contextual				0.57	0.73	0.78
Core Phenomenon			0.56	0.56	0.49	0.71
Strategies		0.41	0.52	0.62	0.57	0.75
Outcomes	0.52	0.71	0.43	0.53	0.54	0.84

As shown in Table 2, the values on the main diagonal (square roots of AVE for each construct) are higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlation coefficients in the same rows and columns. This indicates that the discriminant validity of the constructs is acceptable.

To determine the reliability of the indicators in structural equation modeling using PLS, their factor loadings are examined. This criterion indicates the correlation of the indicators with their corresponding construct. Table 3 presents the factor loadings and the T-statistics (significance values) for the questionnaire items. According to Hulland, the minimum acceptable value for the factor loading of each item is 0.40. Items with factor loadings below this threshold should be removed from the testing process. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Factor Loadings and Significance Values of Items for Each Construct

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	T-Statistic
Causal Conditions	Human Capital	0.751	11.084
	Entrepreneurial Management	0.696	8.52
	Sports Business	0.685	8.41
Core Phenomenon	Entrepreneurial Thinking in Sports	0.923	35.48
	Entrepreneurial Behavior in Sports	0.681	5.83
	Entrepreneurial Performance in Sports	0.486	3.15
Contextual Conditions	Entrepreneurial Insight	0.886	7.24
	Entrepreneurial Behavior	0.914	7.09
	Entrepreneurial Spirit	0.500	3.69
Intervening Conditions	Personal Bias and Preferences	0.678	3.98
	Budget	0.798	4.72
	Negative Attitude Toward Entrepreneurship	0.797	4.90
	Traditional Resource Management	0.915	4.88
	Inflexible Management	0.211	3.85
Strategies	Sports Entrepreneurship Planning	0.673	4.18
	Implementation of Sports Entrepreneurship	0.425	3.75
	HR Evaluation in the Iraqi Basketball Federation (Entrepreneurial Approach)	0.390	2.92
	Organizational Performance Management	0.613	4.05
	Sports Entrepreneurship Learning	0.582	3.96
Outcomes	Job Performance	0.489	2.14
	Job Satisfaction	0.638	2.98
	Job Quality	0.853	3.41

Based on the results in Table 3, all factor loadings for the items related to each construct are above 0.40. Therefore, it can be concluded that the items used for the research constructs are capable of adequately explaining the intended constructs.

After testing the outer model, it is necessary to present the inner model, which reflects the relationships among the latent variables of the study. The inner model allows for the examination of the research questions. The output obtained from the execution of the model includes standardized coefficients and T-values, presented in Figures 1 and 2.

When the T-value for a specific path exceeds 1.96, it indicates that the influence of the specified constructs on one another is statistically significant, confirming the research hypothesis. The numbers displayed on the lines in the standardized state are the beta coefficients obtained from the regression equations between the variables, representing the path coefficients.

Figure 1

Tested Model with Standardized Coefficients

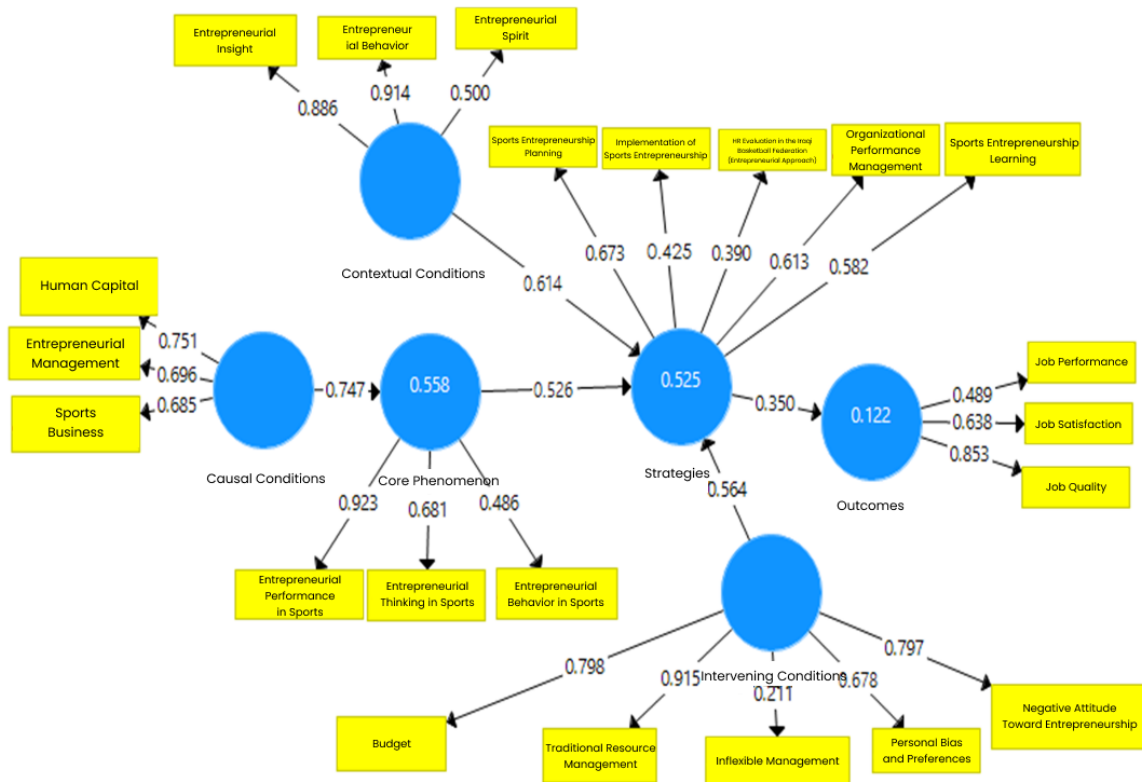
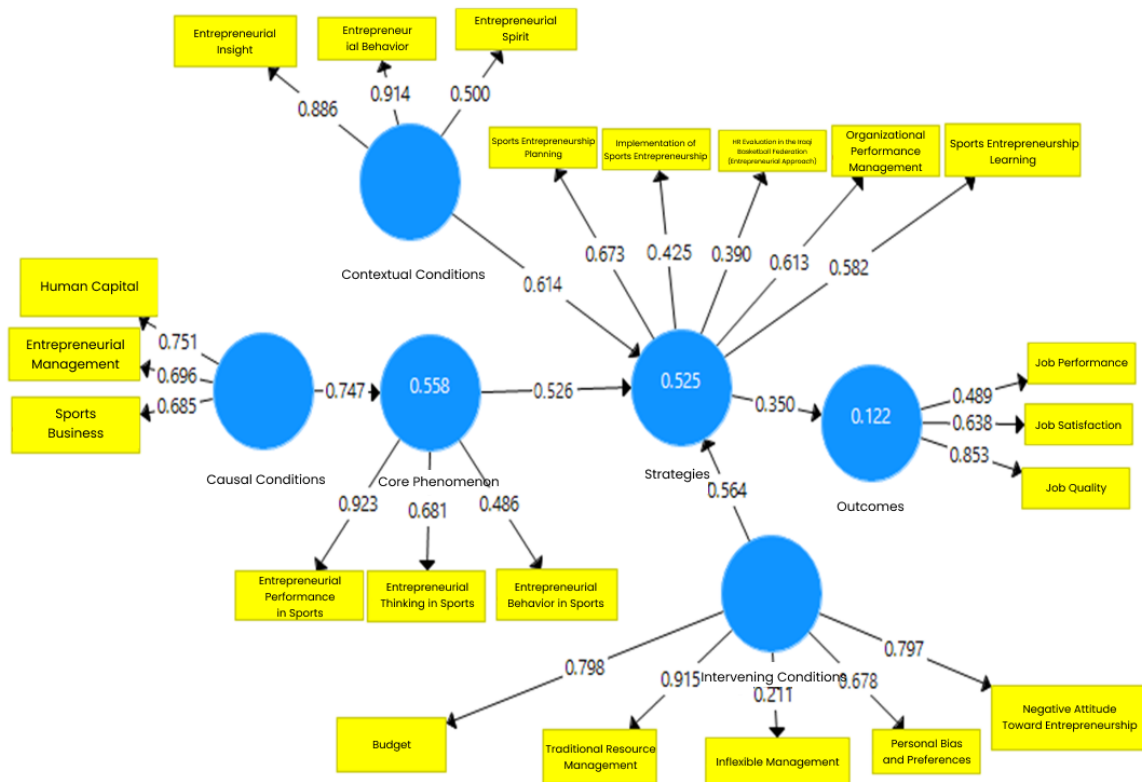


Figure 2

Tested Model with T-Statistics



In testing the hypotheses using structural equation modeling, the software output indicates that the fitted structural model is appropriate for testing the research hypotheses.

Table 4

Structural Equation Modeling Results for Hypotheses Testing

Standardized Coefficient	T-Value	Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Hypothesis Test Result
0.95	7.23	Attitude and Responsibility of Sports Organizations Toward Entrepreneurship	Human Resource Development Model in the Iraqi Basketball Federation (Entrepreneurial Approach)	H ₀ Rejected
0.97	6.73	Entrepreneurial Resource Management	Human Resource Development Model in the Iraqi Basketball Federation (Entrepreneurial Approach)	H ₀ Rejected
0.83	4.55	Individual and Organizational Strategies	Human Resource Development Model in the Iraqi Basketball Federation (Entrepreneurial Approach)	H ₀ Rejected
0.74	11.73	Administrative and Managerial System	Human Resource Development Model in the Iraqi Basketball Federation (Entrepreneurial Approach)	H ₀ Rejected
0.77	4.16	Entrepreneurship Development and Incentive Seeking	Human Resource Development Model in the Iraqi Basketball Federation (Entrepreneurial Approach)	H ₀ Rejected
0.53	3.28	Sports Entrepreneurship Development	Human Resource Development Model in the Iraqi Basketball Federation (Entrepreneurial Approach)	H ₀ Rejected

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to validate the entrepreneurial-oriented human resource development (HRD) paradigmatic model within the organizational structure of the Iraqi Basketball Federation using structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings confirm the significance of multiple constructs—causal, contextual, and intervening conditions as well as strategic mechanisms—that collectively influence entrepreneurial outcomes in sports organizations. Among the key results, the strongest path coefficients were observed for entrepreneurial resource management ($\beta = 0.97$), followed by organizational attitude and responsibility toward entrepreneurship ($\beta = 0.95$), individual and organizational strategies ($\beta = 0.83$), and administrative and managerial systems ($\beta = 0.74$). The model also confirmed significant, albeit relatively weaker, effects from entrepreneurship promotion strategies ($\beta = 0.77$) and sports entrepreneurship development ($\beta = 0.53$). These findings collectively support the internal consistency and external validity of the proposed HRD model for entrepreneurship-based reform in a professional sports federation.

The prominent role of entrepreneurial resource management in the model aligns with previous studies emphasizing the need for strategically aligning human resources with organizational goals in the sports sector [2, 13]. Armstrong and Taylor highlight that efficient HR systems not only contribute to employee development but also serve as a foundation for long-term innovation and performance. Similarly, Emadi et al. emphasize that the strategic planning of HR in national sport agencies fosters adaptability and institutional alignment. The high beta coefficient for this variable in the current study indicates that resource management is not merely an operational function but a transformational driver in entrepreneurial HRD.

Organizational attitude and responsibility toward entrepreneurship also demonstrated a strong influence, reflecting a shift in mindset necessary for institutional transformation. This result mirrors the arguments presented by Gupta et al., who underscore that entrepreneurial orientation—including proactiveness, autonomy, and strategic responsibility—is critical for organizational innovation, especially in uncertain or dynamic environments [8]. In the context of Iraq's developing sports sector, where traditional management systems may be resistant to change, the positive orientation of leadership toward entrepreneurship becomes an enabling condition for successful HRD implementation. Zahra et al. similarly argue that entrepreneurial strategy must be contextually embedded in institutional cultures to yield results [9].

The significance of individual and organizational strategies in the validated model further strengthens the conceptual understanding that entrepreneurship in HRD is not a singular intervention but a coordinated, multi-level process. Studies by Safari et al. and Poursoltani Zarandi et al. reinforce this perspective, showing that organizations adopting entrepreneurial HR practices are more likely to achieve strategic renewal and organizational innovation [6, 10]. In particular, the integration of entrepreneurship into strategic planning, performance appraisal, and talent management ensures that organizational behavior aligns with entrepreneurial objectives.

The administrative and managerial system's contribution ($\beta = 0.74$) also indicates the importance of institutional structure in shaping HRD outcomes. This finding is consistent with the views of Ehsani et al., who emphasize the interplay between administrative frameworks and HR development in professional sports organizations [19]. In rigid or centralized systems, inflexible management can act as a barrier to innovation. In contrast, adaptable and participatory management structures support the implementation of entrepreneurial policies and practices. Similarly, Alidoust Ghahferokhi et al. argue that competitive advantage in sports organizations depends largely on HRD strategies that are fully integrated into the broader managerial ecosystem [1].

The dimensions relating to entrepreneurship promotion strategies and sports entrepreneurship development—though statistically significant—registered lower path coefficients than other constructs. These relatively weaker effects could be attributed to contextual and structural limitations within the Iraqi Basketball Federation, such as limited funding, lack of incentives for entrepreneurial behavior, or insufficient training infrastructure. Babapour and Karimizadeh have observed similar outcomes in Iranian sports institutions, where top-down approaches to entrepreneurship often lack the operational mechanisms necessary for sustainability [7]. Likewise, Ronaghi et al. argue that foresight and long-term vision are essential in shaping HRD models that support sports tourism and related entrepreneurial ventures [11].

The model's strength also lies in its multi-dimensional structure, which mirrors contemporary frameworks for strategic HRD. For instance, the causal conditions comprising human capital, sports business management, and entrepreneurial management echo the findings of Sadeghi et al., who stress the foundational role of training and development in enabling entrepreneurial capabilities within organizations [5]. Similarly, Saebi highlights the significance of skill development programs as precursors to entrepreneurial behavior [17]. These variables play a central role in fostering an enabling environment for innovation, risk-taking, and strategic foresight.

In terms of contextual conditions, the significant contribution of entrepreneurial insight, behavior, and spirit aligns with theoretical propositions made by Jalili et al. in validating similar models for student populations in higher education institutions [18]. Their work confirms that entrepreneurial awareness and values serve as mediating constructs between institutional support and entrepreneurial outcomes. This supports the conclusion that psychological and cognitive predispositions of employees, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and openness to change, are critical elements of the entrepreneurial HRD ecosystem.

The intervening variables—budget constraints, negative attitudes toward entrepreneurship, and inflexible management—demonstrated complex interactions. These findings resonate with the literature emphasizing the mediating and moderating roles of organizational culture and administrative systems in shaping HR outcomes [12, 23]. While these factors may not directly drive entrepreneurial development, they act as critical conditions that can either facilitate or inhibit model

implementation. In this context, the inclusion of such variables enhances the practical applicability of the validated model by highlighting potential organizational bottlenecks.

Importantly, the study's methodological rigor, particularly the use of PLS-based SEM, allows for a nuanced exploration of both direct and indirect relationships among constructs. As demonstrated in studies by Farahanitajar and Ginting, employing SEM in sports HRD research not only strengthens construct validity but also facilitates policy-relevant insights that can guide systemic reform [4, 21]. This aligns with the broader academic consensus that structural modeling is essential for theory building in complex, multidimensional research areas such as HRD and entrepreneurship.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for entrepreneurial paradigms in HR development, particularly in the sports sector of developing countries. By validating a contextualized model tailored to the Iraqi Basketball Federation, it bridges theoretical constructs with practical imperatives, offering a roadmap for policymakers, administrators, and practitioners seeking to modernize human capital strategies.

This study, while comprehensive, is not without limitations. First, the research sample was limited to senior managers of the Iraqi Basketball Federation, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other sports federations or lower-level personnel. Second, cultural and political dynamics specific to Iraq—such as administrative centralization, political interference, and post-conflict reconstruction—may have influenced participants' perceptions and responses. Third, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions over time. Lastly, the use of a researcher-made questionnaire, despite its demonstrated validity and reliability, may introduce subjective bias in item construction.

Future research should explore the application of the validated entrepreneurial HRD model in other sports institutions across Iraq and neighboring countries to assess its cross-sectoral and cross-cultural validity. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the temporal dynamics of entrepreneurial development within sports organizations. Additionally, qualitative or mixed-methods designs could uncover latent variables and organizational narratives that quantitative models might overlook. Researchers may also consider examining how digital transformation, athlete development programs, and gender inclusion influence the effectiveness of entrepreneurial HRD strategies in sports settings.

To implement the validated model effectively, sports organizations should integrate entrepreneurship training into HR development programs, emphasizing strategic thinking, innovation, and problem-solving. Leadership should promote a culture of openness and adaptability, encouraging risk-taking and continuous learning among staff. Budget allocation should prioritize human capital development initiatives that align with long-term strategic goals. Additionally, performance evaluation systems must be revised to reward entrepreneurial behavior, creativity, and proactive contribution to organizational growth. Aligning administrative structures with entrepreneurial values will be essential to ensure systemic consistency and sustainable impact.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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