Identification of Dimensions, Components, and Indicators of Human Resource Development in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports

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ABSTRACT

Given the importance of human capital, this study was conducted with the aim of identifying the dimensions, components, and indicators of human resource development in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports. A qualitative approach using thematic analysis was employed. The participants consisted of 22 experts who were selected purposively based on criteria such as specialized knowledge, relevant experience, and willingness to cooperate. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and the content validity of the instruments was confirmed by subject-matter experts. The coding process was carried out by two independent coders, whose inter-coder agreement was reported as 86 percent. Findings revealed 75 sub-themes and eight main dimensions, including the physical dimension (5 components), the intellectual dimension (9 components), the financial dimension (10 components), the emotional and motivational dimension (9 components), the cultural and social dimension (12 components), the structural and environmental dimension (17 components), the occupational and professional dimension (8 components), and the creativity and innovation dimension (6 components). Overall, the study demonstrated that human resource development in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports requires a comprehensive, systematic, and coordinated approach—one that addresses individual empowerment and skills enhancement on the one hand, and improved structures, organizational culture, and environmental conditions on the other. The proposed model can serve as a basis for strategic planning, human resource policymaking, and the design of developmental interventions within the ministry, thereby facilitating progress toward performance improvement, increased efficiency, and enhanced human capital.

Keywords: Human resource development, sports organizations, Iraq

1. Introduction

Human resource development (HRD) has increasingly been recognized as a strategic lever for enhancing organizational performance, building dynamic capabilities, and sustaining competitive advantage in both public and private sectors (Garavan et al., 2024; Werner, 2023). In contemporary administrations, especially in complex service systems such as sport and youth affairs, human resources are no longer viewed merely as operational staff but as strategic

assets whose knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values directly shape organizational effectiveness and public value creation (Sharma et al., 2022; Shuck & Alagaraja, 2022). Governments and public organizations are therefore under mounting pressure to design coherent HRD architectures that link training, career development, talent management, and organizational learning with broader national development priorities and societal expectations (Babaei Rayini et al., 2021; Moezineh Alavi et al., 2020). This challenge is particularly pronounced in ministries responsible for youth and sports, where the quality of human capital directly affects youth engagement, social cohesion, and the development of sport as both a cultural and economic field (Husain et al., 2025; Saputro, 2024).

Modern HRD thought has evolved from a narrow focus on training to a multi-dimensional, systemic perspective that incorporates learning, performance, and talent development at individual, team, and organizational levels (Garavan et al., 2024; Werner, 2023). Empirical research in recent years has emphasized that HRD systems must be aligned with strategic human resource management (SHRM) orientations, leadership styles, organizational culture, and external environmental conditions to produce sustainable results (Jamai et al., 2024; Zamani, 2023). Studies show that integrated HRD frameworks can foster employee engagement, innovation, and adaptability, especially in environments characterized by rapid technological change and shifting stakeholder expectations (Kim & McLean, 2021; Shuck & Alagaraja, 2022). In this regard, sport and youth organizations are confronted with the dual task of professionalizing their internal HR systems while simultaneously responding to social, cultural, and economic demands specific to youth development and sport governance (Moradi et al., 2022; Varothai & Bunchapattanasakda, 2020).

Within the domain of sports and public administration, several efforts have been made to conceptualize and model HRD and related constructs, highlighting the importance of contextualized frameworks. Research on Iranian government organizations has shown that carefully designed HRD models can significantly enhance effectiveness, responsiveness, and service quality when they are grounded in local institutional realities and governance structures (Babaei Rayini et al., 2021; Rakhshani et al., 2020). In sport-specific contexts, models of HRD with an entrepreneurial or green orientation have been developed to address emerging priorities such as innovation, environmental sustainability, and stakeholder participation in public organizations

(Rakhshani et al., 2020; Sepahvand et al., 2018; Tavakoli et al., 2018). Likewise, studies in national sport systems underscore the need for systematic HRD approaches that take into account professional competencies, strategic alignment, and performance indicators specific to sport governance and management (Moradi et al., 2022; Varothai & Bunchapattanasakda, 2020).

Recent research in the context of youth and sport governance in Iran has provided important conceptual and empirical foundations for HRD model-building in this sector. For example, a human resource development model for the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Iran has identified multi-dimensional structures that encompass physical, cognitive, financial, emotional, cultural, structural, professional, and innovative aspects of human capital (Gholami et al., 2023). Other scholars have examined green HRM in sport organizations, highlighting how sustainability considerations can be embedded into HR practices to support long-term social and environmental goals (Sepahvand et al., 2018; Tavakoli et al., 2018). In parallel, studies on human resource brand development in sport organizations emphasize how the perceived value and identity of HR systems affect attraction, retention, and engagement of key talent, particularly in youth and sport departments (Naghi, 2024). These findings collectively suggest that HRD in sport and youth institutions must be conceptualized as a multi-layered construct that integrates strategic, structural, cultural, and behavioral dimensions (Gholami et al., 2023; Naghi, 2024).

At the methodological and conceptual level, grounded theory and interpretive approaches have been widely used to design HRD and HRM models tailored to public and sport organizations. For instance, research has developed HRD models for government organizations and governorates by systematically extracting dimensions and indicators through qualitative strategies and expert input (Asadi et al., 2022; Babaei Rayini et al., 2021). Similar qualitative frameworks have been used to define professionalism models for HRM in the public sector, demonstrating how competencies, values, and behavioral norms can be integrated into coherent development systems (Asadi et al., 2022; Fazlali & Moazami, 2022). Within the sport sector, grounded theory studies have produced HRD models for national football systems and sport organizations that link micro-level competencies with macro-level governance and strategic imperatives (Hamidjavad et al., 2024; Jalalpour Barforoush et al., 2024). These approaches underline the importance of deriving HRD architectures from empirical realities and

expert tacit knowledge rather than transplanting generic models without adaptation (Jamai et al., 2024; Moniri et al., 2025).

Technological and digital transformations have added another layer of complexity and opportunity to HRD in public and sport organizations. The emergence of electronic training systems, virtual learning platforms, and data-driven HR analytics has fundamentally altered how organizations design, deliver, and evaluate HRD interventions (Azadari et al., 2024; Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Research on electronic HR training and development systems in public administration shows that integrated digital platforms can help standardize processes, increase transparency, and support the health and integrity of administrative systems (Azadari et al., 2024; Eslam Panah et al., 2024). Within educational and sport contexts, innovative HRD strategies leveraging e-learning, blended learning, and competency-based digital tools have been proposed as key "weapons" for enhancing individual capacities and organizational performance (Eslam Panah et al., 2024; Kim & McLean, 2021). Looking ahead, new technologies such as the metaverse and artificial intelligence are being explored as emerging infrastructures that can expand experiential learning, simulation-based training, and virtual collaboration in sports HRD (Hamidjavad et al., 2024; Piwowar-Sulej, 2021).

The strategic human resource management literature further emphasizes that HRD cannot be considered in isolation from broader organizational orientations and environmental dynamics. Studies on strategic HRM in educational and other organizations have underscored how soft and hard HRM orientations shape commitment, motivation, and performance outcomes (Jamai et al., 2024; Zamani, 2023). Research examining the impact of leadership style and competitive work environments on HRM and HRD suggests that developmental initiatives are most effective when leadership behaviors encourage learning, autonomy, and empowerment, while organizational climates reward innovation and collaboration (Fazlali & Moazami, 2022; Sharma et al., 2022). At the same time, macro-level factors such as economic globalization, national development policies, and socio-cultural values influence both the priorities and the feasibility of HRD in public institutions (Negin Taji & Ismailinia, 2023; Reza'alizadeh et al., 2025). These findings highlight the need for HRD models that integrate micro-level developmental practices with macro-level institutional and societal considerations (Rezaalizadeh et al., 2024; Shuck & Alagaraja, 2022).

International experiences in sport and public sector HRD provide useful comparative benchmarks for contexts like Iraq. For example, research on competency development among sports staff in professional football clubs in Thailand illustrates how targeted HRD interventions can systematically build technical, managerial, and interpersonal competencies aligned with league and club strategies (Varothai & Bunchapattanasakda, 2020). Studies in Indonesia on HRM in tourism, youth, and sports offices reveal the centrality of structured HR planning, capacity building, and performance management in improving service delivery and productivity (Husain et al., 2025; Saputro, 2024). Comparative work on sustainable HRM and HRD among production engineers in manufacturing shows that development initiatives must increasingly incorporate environmental and social criteria alongside economic goals (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). These global insights underscore that HRD in youth and sport ministries cannot be limited to training and staffing; rather, it must be framed within broader trajectories such as sustainability, digitalization, and public sector reform (Garavan et al., 2024; Werner, 2023).

Within this broader landscape, the specific context of Iraqi youth and sports governance presents both critical needs and unique opportunities. Iraqi sport organizations have been the focus of some empirical work on managerial competencies and organizational challenges, highlighting gaps in professionalization, leadership, and systemic HR planning (Moradi et al., 2022; Roohbakhsh Ejtemai et al., 2022). However, a comprehensive, empirically grounded HRD model that captures the multi-dimensional nature of human capital in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports is largely absent from the literature. Given the country's demographic profile, with a large youth population, and the role of sport in social integration and national identity, the development of an explicit HRD framework for this ministry has strategic significance for both organizational performance and wider societal outcomes (Gholami et al., 2023; Husain et al., 2025). Moreover, lessons from national and international HRD models suggest that any framework for Iraq must integrate physical, cognitive, emotional, cultural, structural, professional, and innovative dimensions while being sensitive to local institutional, cultural, and security conditions (Azimi & Bayat, 2023; Moezineh Alavi et al., 2020; Rakhshani et al., 2020).

Existing research also demonstrates the importance of linking HRD in sport and youth ministries to broader policy agendas, including national development visions, anti-corruption reforms, and administrative health and integrity

initiatives (Azadari et al., 2024; Negin Taji & Ismailinia, 2023). Studies on HRD in government organizations with entrepreneurial, green, or sustainability orientations show that HR systems must support not only technical competence but also ethical conduct, social responsibility, and innovative problem-solving (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021; Rakhshani et al., 2020; Sepahvand et al., 2018). At the same time, HRD models tailored to specific industries—such as the plastic industry cluster or technology centers—underscore the need to account for sectoral dynamics, knowledge flows, and ecosystem relationships when designing competencies and development pathways (Azimi & Bayat, 2023; Moniri et al., 2025). For the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports, this implies that HRD must be configured not only around internal administrative processes but also around the wider sport ecosystem, youth organizations, and community stakeholders.

Despite the growing body of HRD research in sport and public administration, a clear gap remains in relation to multi-dimensional, context-specific models for ministries of youth and sports in developing and post-conflict settings. Many existing studies either focus on narrow aspects such as training, leadership style, or specific competencies, or they are situated in different institutional and cultural environments (Asadi et al., 2022; Kim & McLean, 2021; Sharma et al., 2022). There is therefore a need for research that systematically identifies and validates the dimensions, components, and indicators of HRD tailored to the realities of the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports, drawing on expert knowledge, relevant literature, and the lived experience of managers and specialists (Garavan et al., 2024; Gholami et al., 2023; Naghi, 2024). Accordingly, the present study aims to identify the dimensions, components, and indicators of human resource development in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports.

2.   Methods and Materials

In this study, a qualitative approach using thematic analysis was employed. The participant community consisted of 22 individuals, including university faculty members in sport management, sport managers and experts, and specialists with practical experience or scholarly publications related to the topic. Participants were selected purposively based on criteria such as subject-matter knowledge and experience, willingness to collaborate, adequate time availability, and scientific competence. Information sources also included scientific, documentary, and library materials that were purposively selected. Data collection instruments included library research, transcription and note-taking for concept extraction, and semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information. To enhance the quality of the instruments, the content validity of the library transcripts and interview questions was reviewed and confirmed by experts.

Furthermore, the validity of coding and the level of agreement between coders were assessed using two experienced coders, with results indicating an 86 percent inter-coder agreement. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, Lincoln and Guba's criteria—including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were applied. Credibility was achieved through sufficient time spent collecting data, the participation of 22 experts, the use of two coders, and continuous feedback of the emerging model to interviewees. Transferability was examined by presenting the findings to experts outside the study. Dependability was strengthened through detailed documentation of all processes, notes, and research decisions. Confirmability was ensured by fully recording and preserving all documentation, including complete interview files in both audio and written formats.

3.   Findings and Results

Table 1 presents selected characteristics of the participants in the study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Academic Degree	Occupation	Age	Years of Sport-related Experience
P1	PhD	Faculty Member	48	28
P2	PhD	Faculty Member	51	30
P3	PhD	Faculty Member	45	21
P4	PhD	Faculty Member	49	28
P5	PhD	Faculty Member	51	37

P6	PhD	Faculty Member	49	29
P7	PhD	Faculty Member	42	26
P8	PhD	Faculty Member	44	25
P9	PhD	Sport Manager	51	21
P10	PhD	Sport Manager	46	27
P11	PhD	Sport Manager	42	18
P12	PhD Candidate	Sport Manager	41	18
P13	PhD Candidate	Sport Manager	40	22
P14	PhD Candidate	Sport Manager	42	24
P15	PhD Candidate	Sport Manager	54	40
P16	PhD Candidate	Sport Manager	49	34
P17	Master's Degree	Sport Manager	47	34
P18	Master's Degree	Sport Expert	56	35
P19	Master's Degree	Sport Expert	58	35
P20	Master's Degree	Sport Expert	46	30
P21	Master's Degree	Sport Expert	46	32
P22	Master's Degree	Sport Expert	39	21

Based on the interview analysis, 112 initial codes were identified by experts and documentary sources. After removing duplicate codes, 76 conceptual codes from the first coding cycle were extracted, as shown in the table below.

The frequency of repetition of key concepts for each core concept in the interview content is also reported. It should be noted that the final selection criterion was a minimum of five repetitions.

Table 2

Concepts Extracted from First-Stage Coding (Initial Coding)

Row	Initial Codes	Frequency
1	Requires continuous effort	8
2	Up-to-date HR training according to the requirements of the present era	8
3	Attention to economic infrastructures	9
4	Oversight and moral support	7
5	Establishing an independent HR development institution	8
6	Monitoring and identifying capable groups	11
7	Commitment to ethics, honest effort, perseverance	11
8	Planning for individual and professional development	10
9	Creating promotion opportunities	9
10	Employee participation in goal-setting	9
11	Effective organizational communication with employees	8
12	Support for the exchange of up-to-date knowledge	9
13	Performance-based compensation	7
14	Addressing political and sectarian problems	9
15	Support from news and advertising media	8
16	Awareness-raising workshops and seminars	10
17	Establishing departments of sport human development in universities	10
18	Use of visual and mass media in training	7
19	Guidelines for identifying and developing HR indicators	7
20	Valuing rationality in HR	8
21	Anti-corruption control guidelines in sport	9
22	Attention to prerequisites of human development	9
23	Attention to scientific research on human resources	9
24	Establishing coherence between ideology and democracy in HR development	8
25	Having a strategic plan for human development	7
26	Justice-based development programs	7
27	Eliminating discrimination and individualism in development decision-making	6
28	Attention to security indicators in development	8
29	Valuing knowledge in the development model	8
30	Determining a control system in the development model	9
31	Determining an independent HR evaluation system	7
32	Foresight in HR development	10

33	All-round stakeholder participation in HR development	8
34	Transparency and measurability of the human development model	11
35	Clearly defining accountability in the human development model	9
36	Gender justice in HR development	11
37	Establishing a comprehensive human development evaluation system	9
38	Designing software and using artificial intelligence in development	9
39	Attention to succession planning in HR	12
40	Valuing creativity in HR	7
41	Importance of HR supply and demand in development	7
42	Considering sustainable development principles	6
43	Expansion of skill-based training	6
44	Enhancement of quality of life	6
45	Social pathology assessment	7
46	Improving health insurance, safety, job security, and retirement	8
47	Justice in compensation, incentives, and rewards	8
48	Developing promotion guidelines	12
49	Supportive and motivational strategies	11
50	Creating trust in the development process	9
51	Enhancing a culture of responsibility	9
52	Anti-corruption administrative guidelines in sport	9
53	Health and medical education	8
54	Employment-creation programs	8
55	Valuing experience in the development model	6
56	Valuing physical health	7
57	Planning for development of physical fitness	6
58	Planning for development of psychological factors	9
59	Systematic and merit-based appointment planning	10
60	Enhancing employee motivation and satisfaction	7
61	Planning in-service training	8
62	Retaining competent employees	8
63	Training for developing a culture of change acceptance	9
64	Enhancing a culture of knowledge creation, acquisition, and transfer	9
65	Enhancing the HR information system	10
66	Valuing competitive advantage in innovative thinking	7
67	Support for HR risk-taking	9
68	Valuing open studies and intellectual development	6
69	Valuing sport training and physical activities	7
70	Financial security support for HR	11
71	Valuing responsibility and conscientiousness	6
72	Communication skills training	9
73	Designing strategies for job and skill rotation	6
74	Guidelines for maintaining personal appearance	5
75	Support for idea generation and implementation in problem-solving	5
76	Determining a compensation system	9

The 76 initial codes extracted from the first coding stage were subsequently structured into eight sub-themes.

Table 3

Second-Stage Coding: Structuring Initial Codes into Core Themes

Core Themes	First-Stage Coding (Conceptual Code)	Code
Physical Dimension	Valuing physical health	Q1
	Planning for physical fitness development	Q2
	Planning for the development of psychological factors	Q3
	Valuing sports training and physical activities	Q4
	Guidelines for maintaining personal appearance	Q5
Intellectual Dimension	Up-to-date HR training according to contemporary requirements	Q6
	Support for the exchange of current knowledge	Q7

|		
	Awareness-raising workshops and seminars	Q8
	Attention to scientific research on human resources	Q9
	Valuing knowledge as a factor in the development model	Q10
	Foresight in human resource development	Q11
	Training for developing a culture of change acceptance	Q12
	Enhancing a culture of knowledge creation, acquisition, and transfer	Q13
	Valuing open studies and intellectual development	Q14
Financial Dimension	Attention to economic infrastructures	Q15
	Creating promotion opportunities	Q16
	Performance-based compensation	Q17
	Valuing rationality in human resources	Q18
	Anti-corruption financial control guidelines in the sports sector	Q19
	Enhancement of health insurance, safety, job security, and retirement	Q20
	Justice in compensation, incentives, and rewards	Q21
	Financial security support for human resources	Q22
	Valuing responsibility and conscientiousness	Q23
	Determining a compensation system	Q24
Emotional and Motivational Dimension	Oversight and moral support	Q25
	Effective organizational communication with employees	Q26
	Justice-oriented development programs	Q27
	Eliminating discrimination and individualism in development decision-making	Q28
	Comprehensive stakeholder participation in HR development	Q29
	Enhancement of quality of life	Q30
	Supportive and motivational strategies	Q31
	Health and medical education	Q32
	Enhancing employee motivation and satisfaction	Q33
Cultural and Social Dimension	Requiring continuous effort	Q34
	Commitment to ethics, honest effort, perseverance	Q35
	Support from news and advertising media	Q36
	Establishing a logical connection between ideology and democracy in HR development	Q37
	Having a strategic plan in human development	Q38
	Transparency and measurability of the human development model	Q39
	Gender justice in HR development	Q40
	Attention to succession planning in HR	Q41
	Social pathology assessment	Q42
	Creating trust in the development process	Q43
	Enhancing a culture of responsibility	Q44
	Anti-corruption administrative control guidelines in the sports sector	Q45
Structural and Environmental Dimension	Establishing an independent HR development institution	Q46
	Monitoring and identifying capable groups	Q47
	Addressing political and sectarian problems	Q48
	Creating sport human development departments in universities	Q49
	Using visual and mass media in training	Q50
	Guidelines for identifying and developing HR indicators	Q51
	Attention to security indicators in development	Q52
	Determining a control system in the development model	Q53
	Determining an independent HR evaluation system	Q54
	Defining accountability in the human development model	Q55
	Establishing a comprehensive human development evaluation system	Q56
	Importance of HR supply and demand in development	Q57
	Considering sustainable development principles	Q58
	Employment-creation programs	Q59
	Systematic and merit-based appointment planning	Q60
	Retention of competent employees	Q61
	Enhancing the HR information system	Q62
Occupational and Professional Dimension	Planning for individual and professional development	Q63
	Attention to prerequisites of human development (human capital, labor force importance, intellectual engagement)	Q64
	Expansion of skill-based training	Q65

	Developing promotion guidelines	Q66
	Valuing experience as a factor in the development model	Q67
	Communication skills training	Q68
	Designing strategies for job and skill rotation	Q69
Creativity and Innovation Dimension	Planning in-service training	Q70
	Employee participation in goal-setting	Q71
	Designing software and using artificial intelligence in development	Q72
	Valuing competitive advantage in innovative thinking	Q73
	Support for HR risk-taking	Q74
	Valuing creativity in human resources	Q75
	Support for idea generation and implementation in problem-solving	Q76

Based on the second-stage coding, the research thematic network was developed, as illustrated in the figure below. Each perspective (core code) contained several dimensions (conceptual codes), as follows: the physical dimension included 5 components; the intellectual dimension included 9 components; the financial dimension included 10 components; the emotional and motivational dimension included 9 components; the cultural and social dimension included 12 components; the structural and environmental dimension included 17 components; the occupational and professional dimension included 8 components; and the creativity and innovation dimension included 6 components. Accordingly, human resource development in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports was identified across 8 core concepts (76 initial codes), as shown below.

Figure 1

Core Concepts Based on Second-Stage Coding
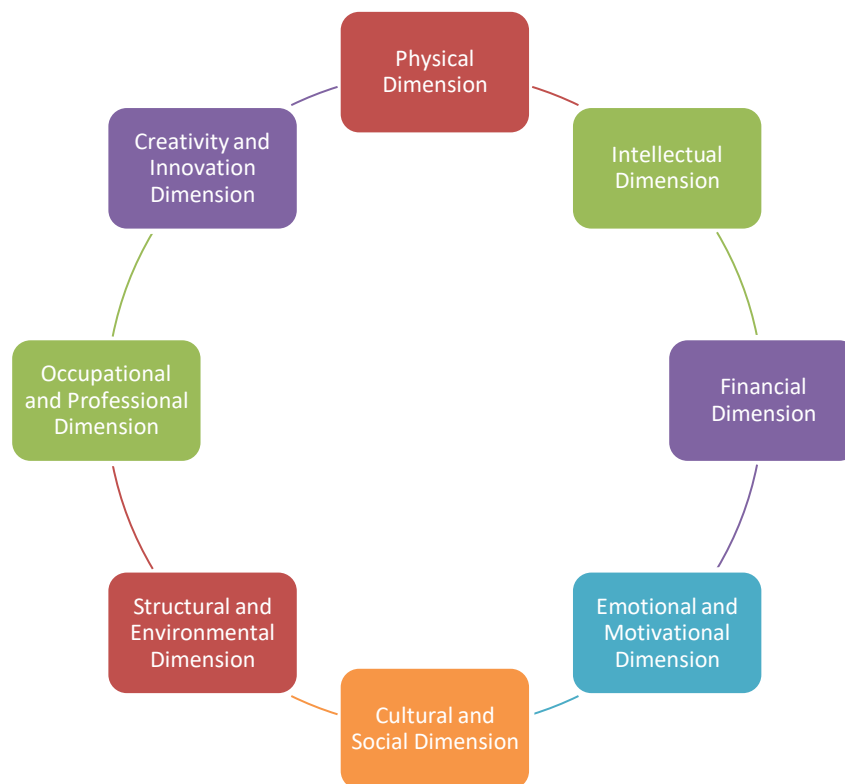
4.   Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify and explain the dimensions, components, and indicators of human resource development in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports. The findings revealed a comprehensive framework consisting of eight major dimensions—physical, intellectual, financial, emotional–motivational, cultural–social, structural–environmental, occupational–professional, and creativity–

innovation—supported by 76 conceptual indicators extracted through qualitative thematic analysis. The emergence of such a multilayered structure indicates that human resource development within governmental sports organizations requires an integrated and systemic conceptualization, consistent with the broader HRD literature emphasizing the interconnectedness of individual, organizational, and environmental factors (Garavan et al., 2024; Werner, 2023). The results also show that the Ministry's HRD needs extend beyond traditional training functions, demonstrating a need for strategic alignment, organizational learning capacity, and supportive systems that foster innovation, responsibility, cultural coherence, and continuous improvement—findings that strongly align with the arguments presented in recent empirical studies on HRD transformation in public and sport sectors (Gholami et al., 2023; Naghi, 2024).

The identification of a physical dimension highlights the role of health, well-being, and physical readiness in workforce performance—an area often overlooked in public-sector HRD frameworks but widely emphasized in sport organizations where physical capability and vitality influence both productivity and psychological resilience. This aligns with international research showing that competency frameworks for sports staff increasingly incorporate physical and psychological preparedness as key components of professional development (Varothai & Bunchapattanasakda, 2020). The study's emphasis on health promotion, fitness development, and psychological wellness also resonates with organizational perspectives underscoring the relationship between physical well-being and employee engagement (Kim & McLean, 2021).

The second major dimension, intellectual development, underscores the centrality of knowledge, research engagement, continuous learning, and future-oriented thinking in building a dynamic HRD system. The participants emphasized updated training, knowledge-transfer mechanisms, research-driven decision-making, and anticipatory thinking—elements highlighted in the literature as prerequisites for long-term HRD effectiveness (Shuck & Alagaraja, 2022; Werner, 2023). Studies examining HRD in government and educational organizations also affirm that intellectual empowerment and learning culture contribute substantially to innovation and strategic adaptability (Azimi & Bayat, 2023; Eslam Panah et al., 2024). The finding that HRD should include components such as knowledge-sharing workshops, scientific literacy, and change-acceptance training indicates a shift from reactive HR

practices toward a proactive, capability-building orientation, consistent with contemporary HRD thinking (Jamai et al., 2024; Nam Kim et al., 2024).

The financial dimension also emerged as a core HRD theme, emphasizing fair compensation, financial support, anti-corruption mechanisms, economic infrastructure development, and job-security enhancement. These findings reflect earlier HRD models in government organizations that argue that financial justice, economic stability, and administrative integrity are essential prerequisites for building trust and fostering motivation among employees (Babaei Rayini et al., 2021; Rakhshani et al., 2020). They also align with the broader HRM literature showing that compensation systems and financial incentives directly influence performance outcomes and organizational citizenship behaviors (Fazlali & Moazami, 2022; Sharma et al., 2022). In the context of the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports, where financial instability and administrative challenges are frequently reported, this dimension reflects a crucial foundational need for institutional strengthening.

The emotional–motivational dimension identified in the study highlights the importance of supportive organizational relationships, moral encouragement, justice-centered policies, stakeholder involvement, and quality-of-life enhancement. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing the role of emotional engagement, psychological safety, and supportive climates in strengthening employee commitment and performance (Kim & McLean, 2021; Moradi et al., 2022). Similarly, studies in sport organizations have shown that morale-building and motivational systems are essential for ensuring sustained athlete and staff performance (Roohbakhsh Ejtemai et al., 2022). The finding that emotional and motivational components shape HRD outcomes underscores the viability of holistic HRD approaches that incorporate both structural and humanistic elements, echoing international HRD frameworks that emphasize employee well-being as core to organizational success (Garavan et al., 2024; Werner, 2023).

Cultural and social components formed another prominent dimension in the HRD model. Emphasis on ethics, perseverance, cultural responsibility, gender justice, transparency, strategic orientation, and social problem analysis indicates that HRD in the Ministry must be deeply connected to the larger societal context. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that HRD systems are strongly shaped by cultural norms, societal values, and ideological frameworks (Reza'alizadeh et al., 2025; Rezaalizadeh et al., 2024). Furthermore, attention to succession planning, media

engagement, and social pathology aligns with findings suggesting that HRD systems in sport and youth sectors must integrate societal-level considerations, given their direct interaction with communities and public stakeholders (Negin Taji & Ismailinia, 2023; Saputro, 2024). The prominence of gender justice reflects global HRD trends emphasizing equity, inclusion, and social sustainability (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021).

The structural and environmental dimension—one of the most complex in terms of number of indicators—demonstrates the need for infrastructure development, governance reforms, transparency, monitoring and evaluation systems, and alignment with sustainable development principles. Such findings mirror organizational scholarship emphasizing that HRD effectiveness depends significantly on structural arrangements such as organizational architecture, policy frameworks, technological infrastructures, and evaluation systems (Azadari et al., 2024; Jamai et al., 2024). Studies examining HRD models in government organizations have similarly found that structural reforms, coupled with systematic monitoring and performance evaluation, are indispensable components of HRM modernization (Asadi et al., 2022; Babaei Rayini et al., 2021). Additionally, the emphasis on sustainable development supports recent shifts in HRD scholarship advocating green and responsible HRM practices (Sepahvand et al., 2018; Tavakoli et al., 2018).

The occupational and professional dimension identified in this study highlights the importance of individual and career development, skill training, competency enhancement, experience valuation, and structured career progression. Such elements reflect the professionalization movement in HRD research, which argues that organizations must integrate clear career pathways, competency frameworks, and continuous professional learning to achieve workforce excellence (Asadi et al., 2022; Varothai & Bunchapattanasakda, 2020). The findings are consistent with studies illustrating that professional development and skill-building are particularly important in sports administration, where specialized knowledge and practical competencies shape organizational success (Moniri et al., 2025; Moradi et al., 2022). They also resonate with broader HRD arguments that professional growth fosters motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (Sharma et al., 2022).

Finally, the creativity and innovation dimension signifies the Ministry's need to cultivate an innovative HR culture that encourages risk-taking, idea generation, artificial intelligence adoption, and competitive thinking. These findings align with global HRD research emphasizing that innovation capabilities are essential for organizational adaptability and long-term competitiveness (Azimi & Bayat, 2023; Eslam Panah et al., 2024). Studies in the sport sector also highlight the growing role of digital transformation, metaverse technologies, and AI-driven systems as catalysts for HRD innovation (Hamidjavad et al., 2024). In addition, the emphasis on employee participation in goal-setting reflects empirical findings showing that participatory management enhances creativity, engagement, and organizational alignment (Nam Kim et al., 2024; Roohbakhsh Ejtemai et al., 2022).

Overall, the results converge with international and regional HRD scholarship, highlighting that human resource development in youth and sport ministries must be conceptualized as a systemic, strategic, and context-sensitive process rather than a set of isolated training activities. The complex structure of the HRD framework identified in this study confirms that advancing HRD in the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports will require coordinated interventions across physical, cognitive, emotional, cultural, structural, occupational, and innovative domains—an approach consistent with the integrated HRD models proposed in previous research (Garavan et al., 2024; Werner, 2023).

This study, although comprehensive in its qualitative exploration, relied on interviews with a specific group of experts whose perspectives may not fully represent all categories of employees within the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The findings are based on subjective interpretations and thematic categorization, which may be influenced by contextual, cultural, or personal biases. In addition, the qualitative nature of the research limits the generalizability of results to other ministries or national contexts. The absence of a quantitative validation phase means that the weighting or relative importance of each HRD dimension could not be empirically tested.

Future research should aim to validate the proposed HRD model using quantitative methods such as structural equation modeling or confirmatory factor analysis. Comparative studies across different provinces or governmental bodies could help identify contextual variations in HRD needs. Longitudinal research designs may also offer insight into how HRD interventions evolve over time and how they influence measurable organizational outcomes. Further studies might explore the integration of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and metaverse-based training

platforms to assess their practical impact on HRD effectiveness.

Practitioners should consider integrating the identified HRD dimensions into strategic planning and policymaking processes within the Ministry. Developing specialized training programs, digital learning systems, and performance evaluation mechanisms aligned with the proposed framework could enhance workforce capability. Management should also invest in creating a supportive organizational climate that fosters innovation, ethical conduct, and employee well-being. Finally, building partnerships with academic institutions, sport federations, and community organizations can strengthen the ecosystem required for comprehensive human resource development.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were considered.

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