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Designing a Strategic Model Based on Succession Planning in Gymnastics in Iraq

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Abstract

This research aims to develop a strategic succession planning model in the sport of gymnastics in Iraq. The research, from an applied perspective, utilizes descriptive-analytical methods and, in terms of execution method, employs qualitative research. The data for this research were gathered through semi-structured interviews and sampling was done purposefully using the Strauss and Corbin method. Among all managers and stakeholders in gymnastics across Iraq, a total of 11 individuals were selected for the interviews based on theoretical saturation. The interviews were analyzed using interpretive analysis techniques, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The analysis of the interviews identified the conditions for succession planning, including human resource management, talent management, support programs, and efficiency enhancement. The contextual and organizational factors influencing succession planning (strategic succession), the conditions for intervention (individual factors), strategies (creating a succession system and individual evaluation), and the consequences (individual and organizational development) were explored. The findings of the interview analysis indicate that strategic succession planning in Iraqi gymnastics can lead to a sense of belonging and development efforts, strengthening the workforce, and using the experiences of veterans to enhance the stability and sustainability of gymnastics in Iraq.

1. Research Definition

1. Introduction and Importance of Research

Organizations face future challenges characterized by uncertainty, high risk, competitiveness, and the rapid emergence of new technologies. Despite this significant competition, organizations not only require talented individuals and intellectual capital but also need to strive for strategic goals. As today's organizations strive to create and maintain innovative capabilities, they are concurrently encountering an array of challenges and expanding issues. Current dynamics demand higher quality and faster innovation at lower costs and in less time, necessitating continuous learning. Moreover, there is a need for a critical and sustainable approach to human resource management to mitigate the adverse effects of mismanagement, high turnover, and the consequent loss of organizational mission and enthusiasm. Recent studies reveal the widespread challenges facing organizations worldwide, such as the lack of strategic succession planning, as evidenced in various reports. Inadequate management processes, the lack of proper selection and appointment of managers at different levels, the absence of clear competency criteria, the failure to establish appropriate performance indicators, strategic planning deficiencies, and vague operational policies are among the most critical weaknesses facing organizations today. This body of research emphasizes the primary role of strategic planning in guiding managers towards achieving high performance and success. In new millennium organizations, there is significant emphasis on intangible assets such as innovation, efficiency, creativity, and knowledge capital. These organizations focus intensively on human resources and strive to gain a competitive edge through continuous learning and preparation for future challenges. This system can be considered as an effective strategy for training skilled leaders and managers.

Strategic management of succession planning plays a critical role in the strategic positioning of today's organizations. It ensures that employee career development and succession planning are aligned with the organization's strategic goals rather than being static or unchanging. A strategic approach to succession planning should also aim to develop employees' capabilities to achieve organizational goals effectively. This requires a comprehensive program that addresses issues related to employee turnover and ensures the strategic alignment of succession planning with overall organizational objectives. Succession planning should encompass strategic elements, including the need for knowledge transfer and the shaping of entrepreneurial skills and organizational knowledge, to transform organizational culture and prepare for future challenges (Ulive, 2019). The lack of a comprehensive information bank on future workforce requirements can lead to unsuitable economic, political, and social appointments and Ritz and colleagues (2016) asserted that the absence of proper succession planning may result in non-optimal decisions being made by many managers who lack a genuine interest in organizational development. When managers avoid proper succession planning, it often leads to a lack of continuity and can result in organizational misalignment. This issue can create significant challenges, such as the appointment of unqualified individuals or the mismanagement of human resources, ultimately affecting the organization's long-term goals and strategies. This also leads to unqualified individuals being intentionally assigned to irrelevant departments (in line with the 'manager's window' principle), for the purpose of justifying the appointment of the unqualified person to a suitable position in the future (Shiri & Therefore, the researcher concluded that it is essential to conduct research on the current inefficiencies within organizations, particularly in governmental organizations. The feeling

that these conditions undermine the preservation of fitness and trust in these organizations is a crucial issue. In the context of sports and geopolitical environments, the lack of professional skills, preparedness, and the type of training is another significant issue. Failure to achieve the goals of sports and geopolitical environments for various reasons, including the inability to achieve replacement tasks and the lack of knowledge about it, has led to the complete neglect of this vital task. Furthermore, according to research on the conditions of human resources in sports organizations in Iraq, the necessity of succession planning is emphasized. It is noted that continuing this process depends on the organization's commitment to implementing proper succession planning, creating an environment where skills and talents can flourish, and preparing organizations to face potential crises. Moreover, this study indicates that sports organizations in Iraq face significant challenges in achieving their goals. As such, it is necessary to follow the example of successful models in other regions, which researchers have identified as effective methods for talent management and succession planning. This includes designing strategic models for sports and geopolitical contexts and addressing important research questions such as: What are the facilitating factors in sports and geopolitical environments? How can strategic training be implemented under these conditions? How can organizations ensure the development and retention of talented individuals in key positions? The findings of this research suggest that strategic succession planning is vital for achieving organizational goals and ensuring the long-term stability of sports organizations in Iraq. The identified strategic approach includes understanding the facilitating and limiting factors, as well as developing educational strategies and implementing effective succession planning to meet the unique needs of sports organizations in Iraq.

Methodology

The present research is developmental and employs a qualitative method. As previously described, this research utilizes a grounded theory approach to gain in-depth knowledge about strategic succession planning in the field of gymnastics in Iraq. The study adopts Strauss and Corbin's systematic approach, involving a purposive sampling method to select participants. Participants in this research include professors, academic faculty members, specialists, heads, and deputies of sports organizations, as well as senior managers and technical directors from the gymnastics federation. Additionally, senior staff and experts with a minimum of 5 years of professional experience in gymnastics were included in the sample. A total of 11 individuals were selected based on the criterion of theoretical saturation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to obtain detailed insights. The initial interviewees were selected from managers, senior sports administrators, heads and deputies of the gymnastics federation, and technical experts. These interviewees recommended other potential participants, continuing until theoretical saturation was achieved and no new information was forthcoming from additional interviews. For data validation, the snowball sampling technique was used to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample. The interviews were then analyzed using the techniques of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify key themes and concepts related to strategic succession planning in gymnastics. The qualitative data were evaluated based on four main criteria for research reliability and validity: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were employed to ensure the rigor and accuracy of the research findings. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and

participants. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail, and confirmability was achieved by maintaining a reflexive journal.

The final step involved extracting data from the interviews and comparing these with existing literature to identify common patterns and unique insights. The results were compiled into a comprehensive report, with the findings demonstrating high consistency and agreement among the participants, as shown by a reliability coefficient of 91%.

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2 \times \text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{Total Number of Codes}} \times 100$$

This methodological approach ensured a robust analysis, providing valuable insights into strategic succession planning in Iraqi gymnastics.

| Row | Total Codes | Agreed Codes | Disagreed Codes | Reliability |
|-------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1 | 26 | 12 | 4 | 0.92 |
| 2 | 23 | 11 | 1 | 0.96 |
| 3 | 28 | 12 | 6 | 0.86 |
| Total | 97 | 42 | 13 | 0.91 |

To ensure the reliability of the research, the opinions of several sports management experts were solicited and their feedback and suggestions were implemented.

Findings

The demographic characteristics of the interviewees are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants

| Type of Relationship with Core Phenomenon | Education Level | Work Experience (years) | Gender | Age |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------|-----|
| Sports Manager | PhD in Sports Science | 9 years | Male | 39 |
| Sports Coach | Master's Degree | 10 years | Female | 35 |
| Sports Manager | PhD in Sports Science | 8 years | Female | 58 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------|------|----|
| Sports Manager | PhD in Sports Science | 9 years | Male | 54 |
| Academic Faculty Member | PhD in Sports Science | 12 years | Male | 59 |
| Academic Faculty Member | PhD in Sports Science | 12 | Male | 49 |
| Sports Manager | Master's Degree | 19 | Male | 63 |

As indicated in Table 2, most participants held a Master's degree. Their work experience ranged from 9 to 33 years, and their ages varied between 39 and 66 years. The gender distribution included 6 men and 5 women. The results derived from the interviews are categorized into main themes, axial codes, and selective codes as shown in the following table.

Table 3: Influential Conditions on the Core Phenomenon of the Research

| Theoretical Factors | Components | Concepts | Summarized Initial Codes |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| | Human Resource Management | Attention to Workforce Empowerment | Planning for Human Resource Development, Transparency in HR System, Defining Key Positions, Promoting Diverse Groups for Organizational Future, Aligning Talent with Federation Goals |
| | Talent Management | Identifying Individuals | Evaluating Individual Performance, Focusing on Individual Talent, Assessing Individual Capabilities Identifying Talented Individuals, Replacing |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | | Selecting Talented Individuals | Key Positions with Talented Individuals, Assessing Individual Capabilities |
| | Supportive Plans | Supportive Culture | Trust in Federation Members, creating a Supportive Atmosphere, Implementing Supportive Policies within the Federation |
| | | Senior Managers Support | Focusing on Federation Members' Success, Emphasizing Participation and Guidance by Senior Managers in the Federation |
| | Efficient Development | Efficient Development Program | Advancement Based on Competency, Enhancing Performance Based on Competency |
| | | Performance Evaluation System | Creating a Realistic Evaluation System Based on Actual Performance, Continuous Improvement Based on Performance Metrics |

The influential conditions identified in Table 3 highlight the occurrence and expansion of core phenomena. In this research, four central categories were identified, which include Human

Resource Management, Talent Management, Supportive Program, and Efficient Development. These categories encompass eight influential conditions.

Table 4: Core Phenomenon of the Research

| Theoretical Factors | Components | Concepts | Summarized Initial Codes |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Core Phenomenon | Strategic Succession Planning | Qualitative Preparation | Developing Young Workforce, Training Successors for Key Positions, Ensuring Individual Competence for Important Roles |
| | | Quantitative Preparation | Training and Preparing Individuals for Various Roles, Having Successors for Key Positions |

The core phenomenon identified in Table 4 needs to be closely aligned with the central subject of the study. This research focuses on the strategic succession planning phenomenon in the field of gymnastics in Iraq.

Table 5: Contextual Conditions Influencing the Core Phenomenon of the Research

| Theoretical Factors | Components | Concepts | Summarized Initial Codes |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Contextual Conditions | Personal Factors | Personality Traits | Emotional Stability, Self-Motivation, Self-Esteem, Self-Confidence |
| | | Personal Skills | |
| | | Existing Succession System | Flexibility, Stability, Control, Management, Leadership, Responsibility, Work Ethic, Effective |

| | | | |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | | Succession Management | Communication, Negotiation |
| | Management Factors | | Presence of a succession system, Internal organizational continuity, Experience in succession planning, |
| | Organizational Factors | Organizational Characteristics | Lack of senior management support for succession, Absence of strategic approach in succession management, Resource constraints, Fear of losing position |
| | Trans-organizational | Laws and Regulations | Federation structure, Dominant culture in the federation, Utilization of resources, Evaluation and performance measurement methods |
| | | | Federation's global directives, Federation's global culture, Selection criteria for senior managers, international cooperation |

These conditions are also recognized as contextual components. In this research, four central categories were identified, which include individual factors, management factors, organizational factors, and trans-organizational factors. Six subcategories of contextual conditions were also identified.

Table 6: Intervening Conditions Influencing the Core Phenomenon of the Research

| Theoretical Factors | Components | Concepts | Summarized Initial Codes |
|--|---|------------------------------|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Intervening Conditions</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Organizational Factors</p> | Organizational Structure | Federation structure, Dominant culture in the federation, Global directives of the federation |
| | | Characteristics of Promotion | Dominance of traditional thinking, Experience in advancement, Educational and political background |
| | | Structural Limitations | Planning, Organizational monitoring and control, Succession planning management, Formation of a succession committee |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Personal Factors</p> | Individual Capabilities | Experience and relevant skills, Knowledge and expertise, Decisiveness and decision-making ability, Analytical thinking, Strategic thinking |
| | | Individual Characteristics | |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | Job insecurity, High level of discrepancy in competency, Lack of managerial satisfaction, Inefficiency, Lack of motivation |
|--|--|--|--|

Intervening conditions are specific factors that influence the pathway to achieving the core phenomenon. In this study, two central codes and five sub-codes of intervening conditions were identified, which include organizational factors and individual characteristics.

Table 7. Strategies Influencing the Core Phenomenon of the Research

| Theoretical Factors | Components | Concepts | Summarized Initial Codes |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------|
|----------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------|

The purpose of implementing management strategies is to better achieve and realize the core phenomenon in the given context. In this research, four central codes were identified: establishing a succession system, developing individuals with talent, evaluating the effectiveness of successors, and identifying factors influencing the strategic succession development in the field of gymnastics in Iraq.

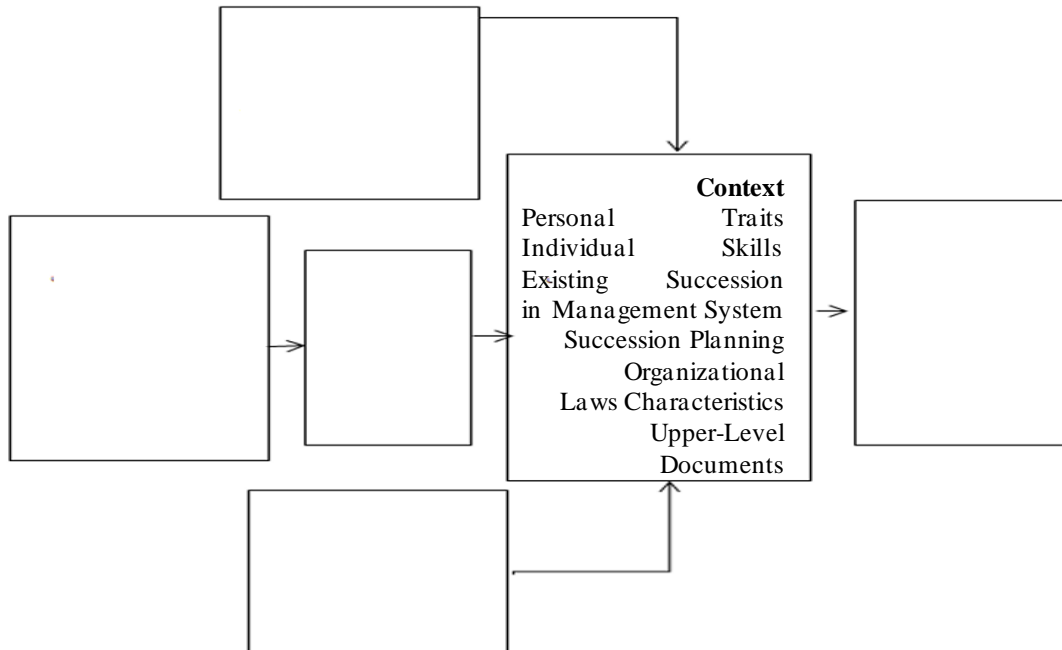
Table 8: Identified Outcomes from the Core Phenomenon of the Research

| Theoretical Factors | Components | Concepts | Summarized Initial Codes |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Outcomes | | Development of Belonging | Sense of belonging, Reduced stress, Job satisfaction, Increased work ethic |
| | | Individual Endeavor Development | Job satisfaction, Improved individual and organizational performance, Increased employee motivation |
| | | Strengthening Talented Workforce | Creating more candidates for succession, Aligning workforce with the needs of the federation |
| | | Participation in Change | Engagement in the change process, Participation in the vision of the federation, Having a positive outlook towards change |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | <p>Elevation of the federation</p> <p>Sustainability of Federation</p> | |
|--|--|--|--|

If appropriate and suitable actions and conditions are present, they will create the necessary contextual conditions, which can lead to desired outcomes. Based on the results, the identified outcomes include five main themes related to individual and organizational development, as well as six themes related to the strategic development of succession planning in gymnastics in Iraq.

Figure 1. Strategic Succession Planning Model for Gymnastics in Iraq



Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to design a strategic succession planning model for gymnastics in Iraq. Based on the final pattern of this research, which includes 17 categories and 36 concepts, the strategic succession planning model for gymnastics in Iraq was identified. According to the qualitative analysis of interview data, the model comprises the following components: human resource management, including talent management, support programs, and performance enhancement; contextual and organizational factors, involving organizational and managerial elements; and strategic succession planning. The model also includes conditions for intervention, such as creating a succession system, evaluating individuals for succession, and cultivating talented individuals.

As a result of the analysis, the developmental outcomes were identified as individual and organizational development, enhanced individual performance, and organizational efficiency. This research determined four main themes, including human resource management, support programs, efficiency enhancement, and performance evaluation systems, which encompass eight sub-themes. The findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of support programs, talent identification, managerial selection, and the influence of a supportive culture. Succession planning is essential for sustainability and job stability. Effective succession planning ensures that active and skilled individuals can replace those in key positions. With a strategic approach, succession planning can significantly contribute to the achievement of organizational goals (Rezaei & Salehipour, 2019). Effective succession planning aligns the organization's goals with its current needs, as outlined. In this research, qualitative findings indicated that succession planning includes four main components: talent independence, conditions and context for succession planning, and cultural and managerial factors. Furthermore, the results showed that these factors significantly influence succession planning. The findings highlight the importance of identifying behavioral, cultural, social, ethical, and health characteristics in succession planning, aligning with the studies which established the relationship between small family business performance and succession planning. In addition, (Kornosenko et al., 2021) demonstrated that succession planning affects the performance and sustainability of small family businesses in various economic conditions. The critical factor for effective succession planning, as highlighted by these findings, is its impact on the sustainability and performance of succession planning programs. In this research, four central themes were identified, including individual factors, managerial factors, organizational factors, and trans-organizational factors, which comprise the conditions for the context and organizational factors. The identified characteristics for succession planning include the characteristics of the existing succession system, succession management, organizational characteristics, and upper-level laws and documents. The findings align with those

Managers can improve their performance by evaluating their existing goals, aligning them with organizational strategies, and improving organizational performance. Additionally, allowing employees to have a say in important decisions helps them feel a sense of responsibility (Othman et al., 2024) and inclusion, which can enhance their participation and strategic thinking (Dhurgham

& Imad Adel Ali, 2020) In this regard, (Hammad et al., 2022) assert that the primary requirements for implementing scientific succession planning include considering cultural foundations, managerial commitment, and transparency in human resource management. Accordingly, legal, economic, and technological support is necessary for stability and sustainability. In this vein, Nasr Esfahani and (Al-Jadaan, 2021) suggested that contextual factors (absence of succession system, structural and cultural issues, lack of adequate financial resources) are critical in strategic succession planning for gymnastics. Similarly, (Hamad et al., 2024) emphasizes that talent development is among the most difficult challenges that organizations face. The focus on human resources ensures that organizations can adapt to present challenges by leveraging the skills and competencies of their workforce. (Hamad et al., 2023) agreed to consider them as factors of growth and development. As a collection of methods and activities for a group of individuals, it can create a difference in the organization's performance. Mahmoud Abdulfatah (Ghazi et al., 2024) agreed that talent management as a collection of methods and systems aims to attract, retain, and cultivate skilled individuals for the organization. (Al-Alawi et al., 2019) and Hartman and (Saad, 2017) agreed that when researchers look at talent management, they are looking at an action plan that includes talent identification, talent development, and talent retention. In this study, two main axes, namely organizational factors and personal characteristics, and five criteria: organizational structure, structural limitations, personal abilities, and personal motivation conditions, were identified. The results were consistent with the findings of (Jiang et al., 2023),

Organizations must focus on key changes to maintain business continuity and preserve their current state. They have been forced to revise their emergency replacement plans. In this regard, (Jiang et al., 2023) emphasized that without having a proper retirement plan, the organization will face a vacuum of valuable forces. (Bircan & Gencler, 2015) stated that adequate attention to human resources in sports organizations will ensure the necessary readiness in case of retirements. In addition, (Hurd, 2005) in their research indicated that due to insufficient attention to human resources in sports organizations, and also due to weak planning in the maintenance and development of a proper succession system, organizations will face significant threats in the future. (Bradley et al., 2022) believed the lack of deep investigation about the cultivation of dwarfism in organizations is one of the major factors indicating fundamental problems in the administrative health of organizations. On the other hand, various studies suggest that the existence of divergent attitudes in the field of organizational pathology, if they emerge as destructive phenomena in organizations, can play a detrimental role. (Bradley et al., 2022) believe that organizational dwarfism should be thoroughly examined as it can potentially have a pervasive impact on the organization.

In addition, (Bonnes et al., 2019) stated in their research that the current situation forces organizations to revise their emergency replacement plans. These include examining the replacement management, implementing official replacement plans, effective communication programs, diverse educational opportunities, and psychological health programs for employees.

This study identified four main axes in creating a succession system: evaluating individuals for succession, fostering individuals with potential, assessing interim successors, and the strategic development of successors in the context of Iraq. A critical issue is the commitment of federation managers to succession planning, having a program for key federation positions, and specifying the important criteria for key positions including identifying talents, fostering talents within the federation, nurturing talents outside the federation, job characteristics, and behavioral and performance traits. The results of succession performance were consistent with the findings of .

Every organization must adopt the best methods to ensure its sustainability in a competitive, complex, and unpredictable commercial environment. This, in turn, requires reliable support for long-term performance and sustainability. This is consistent with the (Mohamed, 2020) According to the research results of (Aldewan & Al-Temimy, 2013) the implementation of talent management actions must go through seven stages, including establishing a management system, identifying motivations, talent attraction, and assessing entry criteria for individuals into the talent plan. The selection of talents and the evaluation of key position indices were identified. The results of (MUSHREF & Sulaiman, 2022) also indicated that in the talent development model, it is essential to consider growth dimensions and the development of talents and entry criteria, evaluating plans and networks, and supporting and evaluating talents' strategic abilities and the direct impact of talent development on organizational strategy. Oyabenjo and (Mushref, 2024) also emphasized the necessity of having a strategic approach and evaluation of strategic needs in talent management efforts.

Additionally, having an official plan for talent development is crucial, as highlighted by Elinger (Gabriel & Alina, 2014) who noted that implementing the planning process for leadership successor candidates is crucial for the long-term sustenance of the organization. Developing leadership skills is definitely essential for those planning to occupy managerial roles. (Al-Dabbagh, 2020) in their research stated that the sustainability of small organizations is highly dependent on succession management, which is generally achieved through training and retaining existing employees within an organization. Among the exemplary organizations in Southeast, there is a high level of satisfaction with the implementation and execution of adequate succession management programs. This guarantees the long-term sustainability of many organizations in the geopolitical regions.

Given the results obtained, five main axes including individual development and organizational development, and six other codes from the outcomes of succession development were identified. Strategic development of succession planning in the context of Iraq involves efforts to develop individuals, strengthen the workforce through talent identification, and participate in organizational change. The findings align with the results of various federation studies on sustainability, including those Succession planning is very important because it facilitates the creation and expansion of supportive plans that a company can use to respond to unforeseen opportunities and actions. Moreover, it can help a company prepare for external and internal challenges (Charlz, 2016). Additionally, well-designed succession planning helps organizations to

expand career paths for their employees by inspiring them. (Mashkoo et al., 2021) stated in their research that using competitive talent management models significantly contributes to an organization's better management and competitive advantage. Nasr Esfahani and Fouladi (2021) also found that using successful patterns of talent management has remarkable benefits for organizations, including achieving goals, development, sustainability, and increasing organizational empathy. (Muhammed, 2021)) also indicated that the outcomes (achieving goals, development, sustainability, increasing organizational commitment, etc.) are important in recognizing strategic sports and geopolitical planning. Furthermore, (Aljadaan, 2018) identified the importance of these plans. According to their research findings, it can be said that the individual and organizational outcomes attributed to succession planning include relevance to individual factors, involvement, and interaction. (Muhammad, 2023) also noted in their research that increased activity in succession planning areas is possible through administrative personnel management. It helps government organizations to better confront challenges and preserve organizational knowledge. (Clardy, 2008) stated in their research that there are limited academic studies evaluating the effects of succession planning programs on the results of senior executives (CEOs). Considering the findings of the research on succession planning, reducing transfer costs and improving the effectiveness of talent programs within organizations is critical. Organizations that have succession planning programs not only have confidence in handling unforeseen events but also experience faster recovery in financial turnovers. Succession planning helps new managers gain quicker and more appropriate experiences for adapting to the organizational environment. It improves performance, financial turnover, and efficiency. According to the research findings, it is suggested that Iraqi sports managers, particularly in strategic and geopolitical contexts, establish a real performance evaluation system to identify employee performance and use it for job promotions and career path planning. Holding regular feedback sessions and involving employees in this process are also recommended. Supporting and utilizing existing scientific knowledge and experience can ensure the development of sustainable human resources for the future of the organization. Additionally, adopting this approach in promotions and job advancements aligns with global federation guidelines and standards and should be considered for higher-level management selections.

Thanks and appreciation

We record our thanks to those in charge of the work

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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