**Studying the reality of sports professionalism on the development of Iraqi football from the point of view of sports intellectuals**

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# *Abstract. Sports in our current era have witnessed a great development in the lives of people and for various activities, events, ages, and genders, and have become of great importance to countries and governments through the establishment of huge sports facilities for practice, marketing, and investment, thus transforming it into a sports industry managed by international sports companies. The aim of the research is to identify the reality of sports professionalism in the development of Iraqi football from the point of view of sports intellectuals. The researcher used a descriptive approach for its suitability and the nature of the research problem. The research community was represented by (1200) individuals from sports intellectuals, while the research sample consisted of (800) individuals, i.e. (400) individuals were excluded due to incomplete answers. It was divided into a survey sample (50) individuals, a construction sample (350) individuals, and an application sample (400). The results of the tables showed the total degree of answers of the sample members on all areas of the scale, and despite the different names and functions of the research sample, their results were close. These results indicate that all members of the application sample had a positive outlook and full awareness of a high degree towards the legal texts of sports professionalism and its importance in works to improve the good of Iraqi football clubs. The researcher concluded that the scale proved its effectiveness in measuring sports professionalism on the development of football from the point of view of sports intellectuals. The application of regulations and laws in a good and effective manner helped to provide the best for sports professionalism.*

***Keywords:*** *Sports, Professionalism, Development, Football*

# INTRODUCTION

Sports in our current era have witnessed a great development in the lives of people and for various activities, events, ages, and genders(Sweeney et al., 2021), and have become of great importance to countries and governments through the establishment of huge sports facilities for practice, marketing, and investment, thus transforming it into a sports industry managed by international sports companies(Akbar et al., 2024). Football is one of the most important and popular sports on the global level in general and Iraq in particular, and it has been in continuous development since its inception as a hobby(Raiola et al., 2023), desire and enjoyment until it has turned today into a profession and a profession called professional sports to be a source of livelihood for many players, so it has become a basic pillar of the economy of countries that apply the professional system(O’Sullivan et al., 2023). Sports professionalism has contributed to the development of Iraqi football at the present time to include players, coaches, referees, therapists, administrators(Cordery & Davies, 2016; Hussein & Khalaf, 2022), consultants and experts in the field of sports marketing and investment, and they receive wages in exchange for their commitment and completion of their work(Zelyurt & Şaşmaz Ataçocuğu, 2016), with an annual or multi-year contract that guarantees the rights of both parties, as the Iraqi government has paid great attention to the sports professionalism system to develop football to keep pace with the challenges imposed by this system(Kjær, 2019), by working to establish and develop sports facilities and stadiums with international specifications to develop and raise the sports level(Mohammed Hammood et al., 2025). The importance of the research lies in the fact that it addressed the study of the reality of sports professionalism on the development of Iraqi football from the point of view of sports intellectuals.

Through the researcher's experience and specialization in the field of sports management and sports marketing and his follow-up on the professionalism system in the Iraqi football league, the researcher wanted to shed light on the reality of the professional experience in Iraq, by answering the following question:

What is the level of sports professionalism in the development of Iraqi football from the point of view of sports intellectuals?

Research objective: Identify the reality of sports professionalism on the development of Iraqi football from the point of view of sports intellectuals.

# MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study participants**

The research community represents (1200) individuals from sports intellectuals for the 2023-2024 football season. The research sample was selected using a stratified random method, with a number of (800) individuals, i.e. (400) individuals were excluded due to incomplete answers to the scale form. After that, the researcher considered the scientific conditions for selecting the sample, as it was divided into a pilot sample (50) individuals, a construction sample (350) individuals, and an application sample (400) individuals. Table (1) shows the division of the research samples.

**Table 1.** shows details of the research community, its samples, and their percentages

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sample** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **Total Number** |
| 1 | Pilot Sample | 50 | 4.16% | *1200* |
| 2 | Construction Sample | 350 | 39.16% |
| 3 | Application Sample | 400 | 33.33% |
| 4 | Excluded | 400 | 33.33% |
| 5 | Total Sample | 800 | 66.66% |

**Study organization**

**Study Design**

The researcher used the descriptive method for its suitability and the nature of the research problem(Adham Ali et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2022).

**Steps for building the scale**

**The goal of building the scale**

The purpose of the research is to build a scale of sports professionalism to develop Iraqi football and use it to know the reality of professionalism.

**Determining the phenomenon to be measured:**

To determine the phenomenon to be measured, its concept and boundaries must be clear(Culvin, 2023), and the phenomenon that the research aims to measure is sports professionalism.

**Preparing the scale's fields and paragraphs and their validity**

The researcher prepared three fields and paragraphs in the initial form of the sports professionalism scale based on relevant sources. After studying, analyzing, and presenting these paragraphs to a group of experts and specialists in the field of sports management, testing, measurement, and football, numbering (13) experts, the researcher used the (Ka2) test to identify valid paragraphs from others. Similar and unclear paragraphs were excluded, and the remaining paragraphs were reformulated to be consistent with the aspect of sports professionalism so that the number of scale paragraphs would be (21) paragraphs distributed over three fields, and each field has (7) paragraphs. Table (2) shows this.

**Table 2.** Shows the fields and paragraphs of the sports professionalism scale and their validity

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **no** | **Areas** | | **Number of Experts** | | **Value of Ka2** | **Paragraph validity** |
| **First** | **Legal texts for professionalism** | **Applicable** | **Not Applicable** |
| 1 | Legal texts regulating professionalism work to raise the efficiency of administrative work in football clubs | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 2 | Iraqi football clubs work to organize the structure of legal texts of professionalism and manage their activities successfully | | 11 | 2 | 6.23 | fit |
| 3 | There are supervisory bodies for the application of sports professionalism laws at the level of football clubs | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 4 | Legal texts of professionalism contribute to simplifying the procedures for players to become professional with football clubs | | 12 | 1 | 9.30 | fit |
| 5 | Legislation and legal texts of professionalism have executive authority at the club level | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 6 | Professionalism laws for football clubs help attract professional players | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 7 | Reviewing the laws of professionalism in other countries helps improve the requirements of administrative work related to sports professionalism | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| **no** | **2nd** | **HR Training** | | | | |
| 8 | The availability of human resources helps in the success of the work of sports club management | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 9 | Working on holding courses on sports professionalism helps in developing the efficiency of workers | | 12 | 1 | 9.30 | fit |
| 10 | Sports professionalism works to qualify workers to use modern technology in administrative work | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 11 | Professionalism contributes to the continuous development of human resource behaviors and experiences | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 12 | Sports professionalism has a positive impact on the management of workers at the level of football clubs | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 13 | Professionalism contributes to enhancing the confidence of sports club presidents in the success of the management by applying this system | | 12 | 1 | 9.30 | fit |
| 14 | Sports professionalism helps in discovering administrative and technical energies within clubs | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| **no** | **Third** | **Sources of funding** | | | | |
| 15 | Adequate financial support helps cover the requirements of the professional club | | 12 | 1 | 9.30 | fit |
| 16 | Professionalism contributes to bringing different sources of funding to professional clubs | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 17 | Professionalism laws help football clubs search for new sources of funding to improve the work of the clubs | | 12 | 1 | 9.30 | fit |
| 18 | The current financing process contributes to raising the administrative level of football clubs | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 19 | Professionalism helps the club employ marketing, investment, and advertising specialists to increase sources of funding | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |
| 20 | The revenues from television broadcasting rights for matches contribute to supporting the budget of professional sports clubs | | 12 | 1 | 9.30 | fit |
| 21 | Government support helps clubs implement sports professionalism | | 13 | - | 13 | fit |

Table value (Ka2) = 3.84 at degree of freedom (1) and significance level (0.05)

**Scale correction key**

The researcher used the five-point Likert scale to measure the responses of the research sample to the scale items(Ali, 2022), which were all in the positive direction, as shown in Table (3).

**Table 3.** shows the five-point Likert scale scores

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Answer** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** |
| degree | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Validity of the scale**

The validity of the scale means that the questionnaire questions measure what they were designed to measure(Hummadi et al., 2024; Trish, 2018). The researcher verified the validity of the questionnaire in two ways:

**Validity of the arbitrators**: The researcher presented the questionnaire to a group of experts and specialists in the field of sports management. The researcher responded to the experts' opinions and made the necessary deletions and modifications considering their suggestions. Thus, the questionnaire came out in its initial form to be applied to the survey sample.

**Validity of internal consistency**: Validity of internal consistency means the extent of consistency of each paragraph of the questionnaire with the field to which this paragraph belongs(Al-Alwani & Ali, 2023; Hazem Al-Mawla, 2015). The researcher calculated the validity of the internal consistency of the scale by finding the correlation coefficient between each field and the total score of the scale. The researcher conducted validity and reliability on the sample of the survey experiment, which numbered (50) individuals, to find the correlation coefficients for each paragraph in the field to which it belongs, as well as the correlation coefficients between each field and the scale, as shown in Table (4).

**Table 4.** shows the validity coefficients for each paragraph with the total score of the sports professionalism scale

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The field of legal texts for professionalism** | | |
| **Paragraphs** | **Truth** | **Significance** |
| 1 | 0.690 | 0.01 |
| 2 | 0.522 | 0.01 |
| 3 | 0.570 | 0.01 |
| 4 | 0.722 | 0.01 |
| 5 | 0.665 | 0.01 |
| 6 | 0.562 | 0.01 |
| 7 | 0.590 | 0.01 |
| **Human Resources Training Field** | | |
| **Paragraphs** | **Truth** | **Significance** |
| 1 | 0.785 | 0.01 |
| 2 | 0.821 | 0.01 |
| 3 | 0.784 | 0.01 |
| 4 | 0.695 | 0.01 |
| 5 | 0.574 | 0.01 |
| 6 | 0.659 | 0.01 |
| 7 | 0.754 | 0.01 |
| **Funding sources field** | | |
| **Paragraphs** | **Truth** | **Significance** |
| 1 | 0.408 | 0.05 |
| 2 | 0.521 | 0.01 |
| 3 | 0.401 | 0.05 |
| 4 | 0.852 | 0.01 |
| 5 | 0.709 | 0.01 |
| 6 | 0.589 | 0.01 |
| 7 | 0.675 | 0.01 |

Table (4) shows that all validity coefficients are high and statistically significant at the level of (0.05), which gives confidence in the scale's ability to distinguish.

**Scale stability**

The stability of the scale is that the questionnaire gives the same result when distributed more than once under the same conditions and circumstances(Saeed et al., 2024; Yahya, 2011). The stability of the study questionnaire was verified using the following methods:

**The split-half method:** This method was used to verify the stability of the scale by calculating the correlation coefficient between the odd and even paragraphs(Ali et al., 2024; Tuastad, 2019). The modified Gutman coefficient was used for the split half due to the inequality of the two halves, as shown in Table (5).

**Table 5.** shows the stability coefficient of the sports professionalism scale using the split-half method

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Areas** | **Number of paragraphs** | **Correlation coefficient before adjustment** | **Correlation coefficient after adjustment** | **Significance** |
| 1 | Legal Texts for Professionalism | 7 | 0.544 | 0.683 | 0.01 |
| 2 | Human Resources Training | 7 | 0.559 | 0.621 | 0.01 |
| 3 | Funding Sources | 7 | 0.570 | 0.710 | 0.01 |
| Total scale | | 21 | 0.625 | 0.764 | 0.01 |

Table (5) shows that all the stability coefficients using the split-half method were high and that the overall stability coefficient of the scale reached (0.764), which indicates that the scale has a high degree of stability.

**Cronbach's alpha method:** This method was used by calculating the stability coefficient between the paragraphs of each field separately(Sæther et al., 2022), as the results of the correlation coefficient of the scale were high and reached (0.865), which indicates the strength and validity of the scale, as shown in Table (6).

**Table 6.** shows the Cronbach's alpha stability coefficient for the fields of the sports professionalism scale

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Areas** | **Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient** |
| 1 | Legal Texts for Professionalism | 0.792 |
| 2 | Human Resources Training | 0.814 |
| 3 | Funding Sources | 0.698 |

From Table (6), all the stability coefficients using Cronbach's alpha method were above (0.618), which indicates that the scale has a high degree of stability and can be applied to the study sample.

**Application of the scale**

After completing all the requirements and construction procedures, the scale became ready for application, and its total paragraphs amounted to (21) paragraphs distributed over three areas, and each area had (7) paragraphs, as the researcher applied the scale in its final form to the application sample, which numbered (400) individuals for the period from (1/22/2024) to (2/22/2024), and all the sample's answers to the scale paragraphs were retrieved.

**Statistical analysis:**

The researcher used the SPSS statistical bag system to process the data statistically(Awad et al., 2024; Khalaf, 2025).

# RESULTS

**Presentation the results**

The researcher relied on the percentages shown in Table (7) to interpret the results of the sample individuals' responses.

**Table 7.** shows the percentages and division of response levels for the scale domains

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Categories** | **Level** |
| 1 | 80 % And more | Very High |
| 2 | 70% - 79% | High |
| 3 | 60% - 69% | Medium |
| 4 | 50% - 59% | Low |
| 5 | below 50% | Very Low |

Presentation the question that states (What is the level of sports professionalism in developing Iraqi football from the point of view of sports intellectuals)?

**Presentation of the results of the first field (legal texts for professionalism)**

**Table 8.** shows the frequencies, arithmetic averages, standard deviations, percentages, levels, and arrangement of paragraphs for the field of legal texts for professionalism

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Paragraphs** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Percentage** | **Rank** | **Level** |
| 1 | Legal texts regulating professionalism work to raise the efficiency of administrative work in football clubs | 42.186 | 2.425 | 84.37 | 1 | Very High |
| 2 | Iraqi football clubs work to organize the structure of legal texts of professionalism and manage their activities successfully | 35.933 | 2.471 | 79.85 | 6 | High |
| 3 | There are supervisory bodies for the application of sports professionalism laws at the level of football clubs | 33.239 | 2.337 | 83.09 | 3 | Very High |
| 4 | Legal texts of professionalism contribute to simplifying the procedures for players to become professional with football clubs | 36.291 | 2.769 | 80.64 | 4 | Very High |
| 5 | Legislation and legal texts of professionalism have executive authority at the club level | 26.575 | 1.443 | 75.92 | 7 | High |
| 6 | Professionalism laws for football clubs help attract professional players | 37.440 | 2.344 | 83.2 | 2 | Very High |
| 7 | Reviewing the laws of professionalism in other countries helps improve the requirements of administrative work related to sports professionalism | 40.606 | 2.134 | 80.12 | 5 | Very High |
| Total score | | 251.724 | 15.923 | 81.20 | | Very High |

**Displaying the results of the second field (human resources training)**

**Table 9.** shows the frequencies, arithmetic means, standard deviations, percentages, levels, and arrangement of the paragraphs for the field of human resources training

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Paragraphs** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Percentage** | **Rank** | **Level** |
| 1 | The availability of human resources helps in the success of the work of sports club management | 40.175 | 3.245 | 80.35 | 3 | Very High |
| 2 | Working on holding courses on sports professionalism helps in developing the efficiency of workers | 34.567 | 2.354 | 76.81 | 5 | High |
| 3 | Sports professionalism works to qualify workers to use modern technology in administrative work | 32.457 | 4.324 | 81.14 | 2 | Very High |
| 4 | Professionalism contributes to the continuous development of human resource behaviors and experiences | 34.687 | 2.341 | 77.08 | 4 | High |
| 5 | Sports professionalism has a positive impact on the management of workers at the level of football clubs | 24.356 | 2.451 | 69.58 | 7 | Average |
| 6 | Professionalism contributes to enhancing the confidence of sports club presidents in the success of the management by applying this system | 36.569 | 4.235 | 81.26 | 1 | Very High |
| 7 | Sports professionalism helps in discovering administrative and technical energies within clubs | 38.356 | 3.365 | 76.71 | 6 | High |
| Total score | | 241.167 | 22.315 | 77.79 | | High |

**Displaying the results of the third field (funding sources):**

**Table 10.** Shows the frequencies, arithmetic averages, standard deviations, percentages, levels, and arrangement of the paragraphs for the field of funding sources.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Paragraphs** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** | **Percentage** | **Rank** | **Level** |
| 1 | Adequate financial support helps cover the requirements of the professional club | 41.247 | 4.251 | 82.49 | 1 | Very High |
| 2 | Professionalism contributes to bringing different sources of funding to professional clubs | 33.564 | 2.341 | 74.58 | 6 | High |
| 3 | Professionalism laws help football clubs search for new sources of funding to improve the work of the clubs | 32.147 | 3.147 | 80.36 | 2 | Very High |
| 4 | The current financing process contributes to raising the administrative level of football clubs | 33.654 | 5.417 | 74.78 | 5 | High |
| 5 | Professionalism helps the club employ marketing, investment, and advertising specialists to increase sources of funding | 25.346 | 4.214 | 69.56 | 7 | Average |
| 6 | The revenues from television broadcasting rights for matches contribute to supporting the budget of professional sports clubs | 35.647 | 3.214 | 79.21 | 3 | High |
| 7 | Government support helps clubs implement sports professionalism | 38.784 | 3.478 | 77.56 | 4 | High |
| Total score | | 240.389 | 26.062 | 77.54 | | High |

# DISCUSSION

**Discussion of the results of the sample members' responses to all areas of the scale:**

The results of tables (8, 9, 10) showed that the total score of the sample members' responses to all areas of the scale, despite the difference in the names and functions of the research sample, their results were close, as the field of legal texts for professionalism came in first place with a percentage of (81.20%) and a very high level of appreciation, followed by the field of human resources training with a percentage of (77.79%) and a high level of appreciation, and then the field of funding sources with a percentage of (77.54%) and a high level of appreciation. These results indicate that all members of the application sample in the results of the first area had a positive view and full awareness and a high degree towards the legal texts for sports professionalism and its importance in works to improve Iraqi football clubs. This was confirmed by the study (Roderick, 2006) that the legal texts organized in a good way for professionalism have a positive impact on clubs and ensure the achievement of the best results(Mohamadi Turkmani et al., 2022). As for the results of the second area, they were at a high level(Williams et al., 2024), which indicates that human resources training has a positive impact on the administrative work in professional football clubs(Khalaf & Ahmed, 2024; Khalaf & Shihab, 2023). Foot, and this is what was confirmed by the study (Abdullah & Khalaf, 2022; Farley et al., 2019), that sports professionalism has a major role in developing the level of human resources performance in football clubs, and with regard to the results of the third and final field, they were at a high level,(Khalaf & Waga, 2019) because the diversity of funding sources has a positive impact on the level of sports professionalism in terms of the diversity of obtaining funding from many sources to improve the status of Iraqi football clubs, and this was confirmed by the study (Vaughan et al., 2022), that most clubs suffer from a lack of current funding sources, and if many funding sources are obtained, the clubs will achieve their goals and reach the top in the world of professionalism(Aljassar et al., 2023).

# CONCLUSIONS

1. The scale has proven its effectiveness in measuring sports professionalism in developing football from the point of view of sports intellectuals.
2. The implementation of regulations and laws in a good and effective manner helped to provide the best for sports professionalism.
3. A shortage in human resources cadres reduces and weakens professionalism.
4. The lack of funding sources causes many problems for football clubs and the failure to activate the professionalism system.

Considering the conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Conduct standardized studies of sports professionalism systems and regulations in line with the traditions of Iraqi society.
2. Work on involving human resources cadres in specialized courses.
3. Find sources of funding for sports clubs in order to take into account professionalism in football.
4. The necessity of establishing sports facilities according to international specifications that consider the principle of professionalism.

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