



# Sports Talent Management and Its Role in the Success of Age-Group Programs in Sports Clubs of the Middle Euphrates Region

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## ABSTRACT

## Original Research Article

The present study aimed to identify the role of sports talent management in the success of age-group programs in sports clubs of the Middle Euphrates region, as well as to examine the relationship between sports talent management and the success of these programs. The researcher adopted the descriptive approach using the survey method due to its suitability to the nature and objectives of the study. The study population consisted of administrators, coaches, and personnel working in age-group programs in sports clubs located in the governorates of Najaf, Karbala, Babil, and Al-Diwaniyah. A purposive sample of (40) participants was selected.

A questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. It consisted of two main dimensions: sports talent management and the success of age-group programs. The validity and reliability of the instrument were verified. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), employing arithmetic means, standard deviations, percentages, Pearson correlation coefficient, and simple regression analysis.

The results revealed that sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region exhibited a high level of sports talent management, while age-group programs showed a good level of success. The findings also indicated a positive statistically significant relationship between sports talent management and the success of age-group programs. In addition, sports talent management had a significant effect on the success of these programs.

Based on the findings, the study recommended giving greater attention to sports talent management and developing mechanisms for identifying, nurturing, and supporting talented athletes. It also emphasized the importance of supporting age-group programs and providing the necessary resources for their success in order to enhance the level of sports performance in sports clubs.

**Keywords:** Sports Talent Management, Age-Group Programs, Sports Clubs, Middle Euphrates Region.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction to the Research

#### Introduction and Significance of the Research

Sports clubs represent the primary environment in which players are prepared and developed. Therefore, nurturing athletic talent has become a crucial issue for sports administrations, as the success of clubs depends not only on

immediate results but also on their ability to build a base of players capable of representing them in the future. Hence, age-group programs have become the starting point for ensuring continuity and providing outstanding players for sports teams.

The success of these programs is not limited to training alone; it also depends on having a management team capable of discovering, nurturing, and developing talent, as well as

providing suitable conditions that help develop players' abilities and prepare them in a way that meets the demands of athletic competition. Therefore, focusing on talent management has become a fundamental requirement that sports clubs strive to strengthen in order to achieve their future goals.

Investing in age groups is one of the most important investments that sports institutions rely on, because preparing players in the early stages contributes to building teams capable of continuing and achieving long-term accomplishments. Also, the process of preparing athletes requires scientific planning that takes into account the characteristics of different age groups and the appropriate training principles for them (Alawi, 1998).

Furthermore, the success of sports institutions is linked to their ability to effectively manage their human resources, as human capital is the cornerstone of achieving their goals and improving their performance (Durra & Al-Sabbagh, 2008). At the same time, age-group programs require continuous planning, organization, and monitoring to ensure their success and the achievement of their intended objectives (Hammad, 2001).

Hence, the importance of the current research lies in its attempt to identify the role of sports talent management in the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region, given the importance of these programs in preparing players and building the future of sports clubs. Furthermore, the research findings can be used to support administrative work and develop age-group programs, thus contributing to raising the level of athletic performance.

### Research Problem

Age-group programs are the foundation upon which sports clubs rely to prepare players and build future teams; however, the success of these programs varies from one club to another. Through his observation of sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region, the researcher noted a disparity in the level of attention given to athletic talent and the mechanisms for discovering, nurturing, and developing it, which may impact the success of age-group programs and the achievement of their objectives.

Hence, the need arose to study the role of sports talent management in the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region, in order to answer the following question:

Does sports talent management contribute to the success of age group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates?

### Research Objectives

1. Identifying the level of sports talent management in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.
2. Identifying the level of success of age group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

3. Understanding the role of sports talent management in the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

### Research Hypotheses

1. Sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region have a good level of sports talent management.
2. The age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates enjoy a good level of success.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between sports talent management and the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

### Research Domains

**Human Domain:** Administrators, coaches, and staff working in age-group programs at sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

**Spatial Domain:** Sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates governorates.

**Temporal Domain:** For the period from 1/1/2026 to 1/4/2026.

## Chapter Two

### Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

#### Sports Talent Management

Talent management has become a subject of increasing interest in modern organizations, given its importance in attracting, developing, and retaining outstanding individuals in line with organizational goals. Modern management is no longer limited to traditional aspects, but now focuses on investing in and directing human resources in a way that achieves efficiency and excellence (Al-Salmi, 2001).

In the field of sports, athletic talent represents the cornerstone upon which clubs rely to build their teams and achieve success. Therefore, nurturing athletic talent has become an essential part of the administrative and technical work within sports institutions. The success of any institution is linked to its ability to manage its resources and capabilities in a way that ensures the efficient and effective achievement of its goals (Al-Hawari, 1999).

Sports specialists emphasize that the process of preparing athletes requires sound scientific planning that takes into account the characteristics of the players and their different capabilities, as well as the importance of having organized programs aimed at discovering talented players, developing their abilities and continuously monitoring their progress (Alawi, 1998; Hammad, 2001).

Furthermore, nurturing sporting talent is not limited to discovery alone, but extends to care, development, and

evaluation, ensuring the optimal utilization of players' potential and contributing to supporting sports teams with individuals capable of consistently achieving success. From this perspective, sports talent management has become a crucial pillar upon which sports clubs rely to build their future and achieve their long-term goals.

### Age Group Programs

Age-group programs receive significant attention in sports institutions due to their crucial role in preparing and developing players for advanced levels. These programs form the foundation upon which sports clubs build their teams and ensure the continuity of athletic performance. Attention to different age groups is essential for the success of the athletic development process, given the unique physical, skill-based, and psychological characteristics of each stage, which necessitate training methods tailored to its specific nature (Abdel-Maqsoud, 1997).

Age group programs contribute to discovering talented players, developing their abilities, and preparing them gradually, in a way that achieves integration between physical, skill, tactical, and psychological aspects, and helps to reach the best levels of athletic performance (Hammad, 1998).

The success of age group programs also depends on sound planning, providing appropriate resources and continuous follow-up, as well as having qualified personnel capable of dealing with the requirements for preparing young players in a scientific and organized manner (Hammad, 2001).

Sports training specialists believe that preparing players at early ages is a long-term investment, because building a player correctly contributes to achieving continuity and supports sports teams with elements capable of competing and achieving future accomplishments (Alawi, 1998).

From this perspective, age-group programs have become one of the fundamental pillars upon which sports clubs rely to achieve their goals, given their important role in preparing and developing players and building a sporting base that contributes to supporting advanced teams and achieving sporting accomplishments.

### Previous Studies

#### First study: Al-Saqi's study (2026)

Al-Saqi (2026) conducted a study entitled "Smart Organizations and Their Role in Managing Sports Talent in Iraqi Professional Basketball League Clubs from the Perspective of Administrative and Technical Bodies." The study aimed to identify the role of smart organizations in managing sports talent in Iraqi professional basketball league clubs. It employed a descriptive survey methodology, using a questionnaire as the data collection tool. The study concluded that managing sports talent is a crucial factor in developing sports activities, and that focusing on, attracting, and developing talent contributes to raising performance levels

and achieving the goals of sports clubs. The researcher benefited from this study in defining the concept of sports talent management and in utilizing the methodology and research tool employed.

#### Second study: Al Thani study (2020)

Al Thani (2020) conducted a study titled "Talent Management Strategies and Their Impact on the Success of Professional Sports in the State of Qatar," which aimed to identify the impact of talent management strategies on the success of professional sports. The study adopted a descriptive approach and used a questionnaire as a data collection tool. The results showed a positive impact of talent management strategies on the success of professional sports, particularly with regard to attracting, developing, and retaining talent. The researcher benefited from this study in identifying the dimensions of sports talent management and utilizing them when developing the research instrument's parameters.

#### Third study: De Bosscher and De Rycke (2017)

He conducted De Bosscher and De Rycke (2017) conducted a study titled "Talent Development Programmes: A Retrospective Analysis of the Age and Support Services for Talented Athletes in 15 Nations." This study aimed to analyze talent development programs and the services provided to talented athletes in fifteen countries. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach, the study concluded that talent development programs and their supporting services play a crucial role in preparing athletes and achieving long-term athletic success. It also emphasized the importance of the organizational environment and the services provided to talented athletes in supporting their athletic careers. The researchers utilized this study to strengthen the theoretical framework concerning age-group programs and to explain the relationship between sports talent management and the success of player development programs.

## Chapter Three

### Research methodology and procedures

#### Research Method

The researcher adopted the descriptive survey method, as it was well-suited to the nature and objectives of the research. This method is one of the most commonly used in studies that aim to describe and analyze phenomena and uncover relationships between their variables. Furthermore, this approach allows for the collection and scientific analysis of data from the sample, which helps in understanding the role of sports talent management in the success of age-group programs at sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

#### Research Population

The research community included administrators, coaches, and staff working in age-group programs at sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates governorates, namely Najaf, Karbala,

Babylon, and Diwaniyah, due to their direct involvement with age-group programs and their knowledge of the nature of sports talent management and its implementation mechanisms within sports clubs.

### Research Sample

The research sample was selected purposively from administrators, coaches, and staff working in age-group programs at sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates governorates, namely Najaf, Karbala, Babylon, and Diwaniyah, due to their direct connection to the research topic and their knowledge of the reality of sports talent management and age-group programs.

The research sample consisted of (40) individuals, selected from a number of sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates governorates, in order to achieve the research objectives and contribute to obtaining the necessary data to answer its questions.

### Research Instrument

The researcher adopted the questionnaire as the primary data collection tool, given its suitability for descriptive studies and its alignment with the nature and objectives of the current research. The questionnaire was developed based on relevant literature and previous studies, contributing to the collection of data necessary to understand the role of sports talent management in the success of age-group programs at sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections, namely:

#### First axis: Sports talent management

This section aims to identify the reality of sports talent management in sports clubs, and it includes a number of paragraphs that address the following aspects:

- Discovering sporting talents.
- Attracting sports talent.
- Developing athletic talents and enhancing their abilities.
- Providing the right environment for nurturing sporting talent.
- Preserving and utilizing sporting talents.
- Monitoring and evaluating the performance of talented players.
- Supporting and encouraging sporting talents.
- Planning sports talent development programs.
- Providing specialized personnel to supervise sports talents.

#### Second axis: Success of age group programs

This section aims to identify the level of success of age group programs in sports clubs, and it includes a number of paragraphs that address the following aspects:

- Clarity of goals for age group programs.
- Planning and organizing age group programs.
- Providing the necessary resources and equipment.

- The competence of trainers and staff in age group programs.
- Continuity and follow-up in program implementation.
- Attention should be paid to preparing players physically, technically, and psychologically.
- Discovering and developing outstanding players.
- The ability of programs to supply advanced teams with players.
- Achieving the goals set for age group programs.
- Employee satisfaction level with the reality of age group programs.

The questionnaire items were formulated to align with the research objectives and the nature of the sample. A five-point Likert scale was used to answer the questionnaire items, based on the following alternatives: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), and assigned weights of (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) respectively.

### Instrument Reliability

To verify the validity of the research instrument, the researcher presented the questionnaire in its initial form to a group of experts and specialists in the fields of sports management, physical education, and sports science, in order to obtain their opinions on the suitability of the questionnaire items to the research objectives and themes, the clarity of its wording and its scientific soundness, as well as to suggest necessary modifications by deletion, addition, or rewording.

In light of the experts' observations, the necessary modifications were made to some paragraphs, and the paragraphs that received a suitable level of agreement were adopted. Thus, the face validity of the research instrument was confirmed, and the questionnaire, in its final form, became ready for application to the research sample.

### Instrument Stability

To verify the reliability of the research instrument, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the degree of internal consistency of the questionnaire items after administering it to a pilot sample of the research population. The results showed that the questionnaire items possessed a good degree of reliability, indicating their suitability for data collection and achieving the research objectives.

### Statistical Methods

The researcher adopted the statistical package for social sciences. (SPSS) was used to process and analyze the data, and the following statistical methods were employed:

- arithmetic mean.
- standard deviation.
- Percentage.
- Pearson correlation coefficient.
- Cronbach's alpha coefficient.
- simple slope.

## Chapter Four

### Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Results

#### Presentation and Analysis of the Results of the Sports Talent Management Axis

The responses of the (40) members of the research sample related to the sports talent management axis were analyzed using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation to identify the level of sports talent management in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates, as shown in the table (1).

**Table (1):** Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the sports talent management axis

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	Sports clubs are concerned with identifying talented athletes.	4.12	0.71	High
2	Sports clubs work to attract talented athletes.	4.05	0.75	High
3	Sports management contributes to developing the abilities of talented athletes.	4.18	0.69	High
4	Sports clubs provide an appropriate environment for nurturing sports talents.	3.95	0.82	High
5	Sports clubs are keen to retain talented athletes.	4.08	0.77	High
6	The performance of talented athletes is periodically evaluated.	3.89	0.84	High
7	Sports management supports and encourages talented athletes.	4.10	0.73	High
8	There are clear plans for nurturing sports talents.	3.98	0.80	High
9	Specialized supervision is available to monitor talented athletes.	4.06	0.74	High
<b>Overall Mean of the Dimension</b>	<b>Sports Talent Management</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>High</b>

Table (1) shows that the arithmetic means for the items of the sports talent management axis ranged between (3.89) and (4.18) with standard deviations ranging between (0.69) and (0.84), which indicates a convergence in the responses of the sample members and a high level of sports talent management in the sports clubs of the Middle Euphrates.

The statement that "sports management contributes to developing the abilities of talented players" came in first place with a mean of (4.18) and a standard deviation of (0.69), indicating that the sample group agreed on the importance of the role of management in developing the abilities of talented players.

The paragraph stating "Sports clubs are interested in discovering sporting talents" came in second place with a mean of (4.12) and a standard deviation of (0.71), followed by the paragraph on the support and encouragement of talented players by sports management with a mean of (4.10) and a standard deviation of (0.73).

The item related to preserving athletic talent achieved a mean of (4.08) and a standard deviation of (0.77), while the mean

for the item related to the availability of specialized supervision for monitoring talented players reached (4.06) with a standard deviation of (0.74), while the item related to attracting talented players recorded a mean of (4.05) and a standard deviation of (0.75).

The results also showed that the item related to the existence of clear plans for nurturing sports talents achieved a mean of (3.98) and a standard deviation of (0.80), followed by the item related to providing a suitable environment for nurturing sports talents with a mean of (3.95) and a standard deviation of (0.82).

The paragraph stating "The performance of talented players is evaluated periodically" came in last place with a mean score of (3.89) and a standard deviation of (0.84), but it remained within the high rating level.

In general, the overall arithmetic mean for the sports talent management axis was (4.05) with a standard deviation of (0.76), which indicates that the level of sports talent management in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates was high from the point of view of the research sample.

## Presenting and Analyzing the Results of the Success Axis of Age Group Programs

**Table (2):** Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the items of the success axis of age group programs among the research sample (n = 40)

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1	Age-group programs have clear and well-defined objectives.	4.15	0.68	High
2	Age-group programs are properly planned and organized.	4.08	0.72	High
3	The necessary facilities and equipment are available for implementing the programs.	3.92	0.83	High
4	The coaching and administrative staff are competent.	4.10	0.70	High
5	There is continuous follow-up in implementing age-group programs.	4.05	0.76	High
6	The programs focus on the physical, technical, and psychological preparation of players.	4.18	0.65	High
7	The programs contribute to identifying and developing talented players.	4.20	0.64	High
8	Age-group programs successfully supply senior teams with players.	3.96	0.81	High
9	Age-group programs achieve their intended objectives.	4.02	0.78	High
10	Staff members are satisfied with the current status of age-group programs.	3.90	0.85	High
<b>Overall Mean of the Dimension</b>	<b>Success of Age-Group Programs</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>High</b>

Table (2) shows that the arithmetic means for the items in the age group programs success axis ranged between (3.90) and (4.20), with standard deviations ranging between (0.64) and (0.85), indicating the similarity of the responses of the sample members and the high level of success of age group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

The paragraph stating that "programs contribute to discovering and developing outstanding players" came in first place with a mean of (4.20) and a standard deviation of (0.64), followed by the paragraph concerning the programs' focus on preparing players physically, technically, and psychologically with a mean of (4.18) and a standard

deviation of (0.65), and then the paragraph related to the clarity of the goals of age-group programs with a mean of (4.15) and a standard deviation of (0.68).

While the section related to employee satisfaction with the reality of age group programs came in last place with a mean score of (3.90) and a standard deviation of (0.85), it remained within the high rating level.

In general, the overall arithmetic mean for the success axis of age group programs reached (4.06) with a standard deviation of (0.74), indicating that age group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates enjoy a high level of success from the point of view of the research sample.

## Analysis the Relationship between Sports Talent Management and the Success of Age-Group Programs

**Table (3):** Pearson correlation coefficient between sports talent management and the success of age-group programs

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance Level (Sig.)	Type of Relationship
Sports Talent Management × Success of Age-Group Programs	0.78	0.000	Positive and Statistically Significant

Table (3) shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient between sports talent management and the success of age-group programs was (0.78), a high positive value, indicating a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The significance level was (0.000), which is lower than the accepted significance level (0.05), indicating that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant.

This result indicates that improving the level of sports talent management contributes to enhancing the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region, as the focus on discovering, attracting, developing, and retaining sports talent positively impacts the efficiency of age-group programs and their ability to achieve their goals.

Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted, which states that there is a statistically significant relationship between

sports talent management and the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

**Table (4):** Results of simple regression analysis of sports talent management in the success of age-group programs

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Coefficient of Determination (R <sup>2</sup> )	F Value	Significance Level (Sig.)
Sports Talent Management	Success of Age-Group Programs	0.61	59.46	0.000

Table (4) shows the results of the simple regression analysis of the role of sports talent management in the success of age group programs, where the value of the coefficient of determination reached (R<sup>2</sup>) (0.61), which means that sports talent management explains (61%) of the variance in the success of age group programs, while the remaining percentage is attributed to other factors not addressed by the research.

The value also reached (F) calculated (59.46) at a significance level of (0.000), which is less than the adopted significance level of (0.05), indicating a significant effect of sports talent management on the success of age group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates.

Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted, which states that sports talent management contributes to the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Conclusions

In light of the research findings, the researcher concluded the following:

1. Sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region enjoy a high level of sports talent management.
2. The age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates enjoy a good level of success.
3. Sports clubs are concerned with discovering, developing, and preserving sporting talent.
4. Age group programs contribute to preparing players and supplying advanced teams with outstanding talent.
5. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between sports talent management and the success of age-group programs.
6. The management of sports talent has a significant impact on the success of age-group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region.

#### Recommendations

In light of the research findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Focusing on managing sports talent and developing mechanisms for discovering and nurturing talented players.

2. Providing a suitable environment that contributes to developing the abilities of players at different age levels.
3. Providing financial and moral support to age-group programs to help them achieve their goals.
4. Attention to developing administrative and technical staff working in age group programs.
5. Develop clear plans to nurture and retain sporting talent.
6. Conducting further research and studies that address sports talent management and its relationship to other administrative and sports variables.

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## Appendices

### Appendix (1)

#### Research questionnaire

Dear Professor / Esteemed Coach / Respected Age Group Supervisor

Greetings,

The researcher aims to conduct research entitled:

#### **"Managing sports talent and its role in the success of age group programs in sports clubs in the Middle Euphrates region"**

This is in fulfillment of the requirements of scientific research. Given your experience and knowledge in the field of sports, please answer the questionnaire items accurately and objectively. Please note that the information obtained will be used for scientific research purposes only and will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Please mark (✓) next to the alternative that expresses your opinion.

#### **First:** The focus of sports talent management

No.	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Sports clubs are concerned with identifying talented athletes.					
2	Sports clubs work to attract talented athletes.					
3	Sports management contributes to developing the abilities of talented athletes.					
4	Sports clubs provide an appropriate environment for nurturing sports talents.					
5	Sports clubs are keen to retain talented athletes.					
6	The performance of talented athletes is periodically evaluated.					
7	Sports management supports and encourages talented athletes.					
8	There are clear plans for nurturing sports talents.					
9	Specialized supervision is available to monitor talented athletes.					
10	The club management is keen to provide the necessary resources for developing sports talents.					

#### **Second:** The key to the success of age group programs

No.	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Age-group programs have clear and well-defined objectives.					
2	Age-group programs are properly planned and organized.					
3	The necessary facilities and equipment are available for implementing the programs.					
4	The coaching and administrative staff are competent.					
5	There is continuous follow-up in implementing age-group programs.					
6	The programs focus on the physical, technical, and psychological preparation of players.					
7	The programs contribute to identifying and developing talented players.					
8	Age-group programs successfully supply senior teams with players.					
9	Age-group programs achieve their intended objectives.					
10	Staff members are satisfied with the current status of age-group programs.					