

Strategies for the Development of Boxing in Iraq: A Qualitative Framework Based on Thematic Analysis

Abstract

Purpose: Boxing in Iraq, as a popular post-war sport, plays a vital role in fostering social cohesion and empowering youth. However, without scientific and strategic planning, much of its potential remains untapped. This study aimed to identify key strategies for developing boxing in Iraq.

Method: We adopted a qualitative approach using thematic analysis. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, including coaches, members of the Iraqi Boxing Federation, and university academics. Interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, and data were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding to identify core themes.

Results: The findings were categorized into 48 open codes, 11 sub-themes, and 4 main themes: (1) infrastructure development and resource provision (facilities and equipment improvement, financial policies, technology, and digital systems); (2) human resource and educational system development (training and development of coaches and referees, talent identification and athlete development, and integration into the educational system); (3) governance and strategic management (institutional structure development, performance management and monitoring, and international cooperation); and (4) cultural promotion and development (media and advertising strategies, cultural awareness, and attitude change).

Conclusion: The findings suggest that developing boxing in Iraq requires a set of strategic actions, including establishing standard training centers, creating a financial support fund, designing a national talent identification system, expanding international collaborations, and launching cultural and media campaigns. These strategies can help restore boxing's standing in Iraq and serve as a model for developing other sports in countries with similar socio-political conditions.

Keywords: Sports Development, Infrastructure, Human Resources, Cultural Promotion

Introduction

Boxing, as one of the world's oldest and most popular martial arts, has a rich and extensive history rooted in ancient civilizations (Nakamura, 2019). This sport not only strengthens athletes physically and mentally but also demonstrates exceptional capacity in fostering competitive spirit, discipline, and resilience in the face of challenges (Bozdarov, 2023). Boxing is recognized as both a professional and Olympic sport in numerous countries worldwide and receives extensive support from governments and sporting organizations (Torres, 2017). In the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, despite considerable latent talent and young people's enthusiasm for the sport, boxing development faces multiple challenges and limitations. The political, social, and economic conditions in Iraq in recent decades have significantly impacted the growth and development of various sports, including boxing. Understanding the factors influencing boxing's development in Iraq can provide appropriate strategies for improving the current situation and achieving a deserving position internationally (Al-Zubaidi, 2025). Despite this global standing, the status of boxing in Iraq differs markedly from many other countries and faces its own specific obstacles.

Although boxing in Iraq has a historical background and produced brilliant talents, it has yet to achieve its rightful position in regional and international arenas (Al-Zubaidi, 2024). Over recent decades, political crises, wars, economic sanctions, and internal insecurity have caused widespread destruction of the country's sporting infrastructure, severely disrupting the sports education and development system (Al-Zubaidi, 2024). The lack of equipped facilities, standard equipment, and specialized coaches has prevented the formation of coherent training programs. Consequently, many young talents have either failed to develop or migrated to

neighboring countries (Al-Zubaidi, 2024). Furthermore, insufficient financial support from the government and private sector has prevented Iraqi boxers from actively participating in international competitions and gaining necessary experience (Al-Zubaidi, 2024). Beyond the shortage of infrastructure and basic facilities, managerial and organizational issues are also among the fundamental obstacles to boxing development in Iraq.

From an organizational and managerial standpoint, the Iraqi Boxing Federation faces serious challenges in strategic planning, human resource development, and the establishment of appropriate administrative structures (Haraj, 2019). The absence of clear and long-term strategies for developing this sport, weaknesses in talent identification and development systems, a lack of coaching training courses at various levels, and ineffective cooperation with international boxing organizations constitute fundamental problems (Bouris, 2022). Additionally, insufficient attention to women's boxing, cultural and social limitations, and the absence of mass sport development programs in this discipline have broadened the scope of these problems (Ismael, 2025). The inadequate media situation and lack of appropriate coverage of competitions and boxing activities have also reduced the sport's appeal among the general public (Malih, 2024). These structural and managerial weaknesses have ultimately resulted in poor performance by Iraqi boxers in international competitions.

At the international level, Iraqi boxers, due to the lack of standard training facilities, limited access to coaches with global experience, and the absence of scientific and modern preparation programs, are unable to perform satisfactorily against athletes from other countries (Mohammad Abdolzahra et al., 2024). This issue is clearly observable in the weak results of Iraq's national boxing team in Asian and world championships. Moreover, the

failure to establish proper relations with the World Boxing Federation and regional organizations has limited opportunities for participation in training courses, specialized workshops, and coach and athlete exchange programs. Consequently, the performance gap between Iraqi boxing and leading countries **continues** to widen, **rendering increasingly apparent** the necessity of identifying and formulating comprehensive and effective strategies for boxing development **in this country** (Clausen, 2024). To achieve such strategies, reviewing previous research and studies can provide a scientific and theoretical foundation.

A comprehensive study examined development strategies for sports (including boxing) in developing countries and identified strong sporting infrastructure and government investment accompanied by private sector participation as key success factors (Till, 2020). Additionally, studies **have** demonstrated that coherent planning in talent identification and development, along with investment in coach education, leads to improved national performance in combat sports, including boxing (Roberts, 2021). Furthermore, available evidence indicates that without establishing appropriate institutional structures for attracting private investment and without targeted talent identification programs, development efforts in low- and middle-income countries often remain insufficient and unsustainable (Liu, 2024). **In the context of** sports development in crisis-affected regions and developing countries, political insecurity, social instability, and economic limitations are major obstacles to the advancement of sports programs, including boxing (Matthews, 2022). Sočić et al. (2024) examined media coverage and marketing effects on the popularity and expansion of martial arts, including boxing, and found that traditional media and social networks play important roles in changing public attitudes toward boxing, **with** prominent athletes' media presence being significantly

influential (Cvejić, 2024). Rossi and Brewer (2025) demonstrated that joint training programs, coach exchanges, and hosting international camps lead to increased technical knowledge transfer and capacity building for boxing coaches and athletes; these actions contribute substantially to technical performance improvement and **local** capacity growth (Rossi, 2025). Despite these studies, no comprehensive research specifically examining Iraq's situation has been conducted, **which** highlights the necessity of the present study.

As evident from the review of previous studies, the necessity of conducting this research is significant from several perspectives. First, the current state of Iraqi boxing demonstrates severe backwardness **in** international and regional arenas, and without adopting effective and scientific strategies, this gap will gradually increase. Second, considering the high potential of Iraqi youth in martial arts and their great interest in boxing, inadequate utilization of these capacities **not only wastes talents but also** results in **missed** opportunities for achieving international success. Third, the reconstruction and development of Iraq's sporting infrastructure after years of war and insecurity requires precise planning and systematic strategies that **will** not be possible without **a** proper understanding of priorities and solutions. Fourth, the absence of comprehensive and scientific studies on the status of Iraqi boxing and its development strategies constitutes one of the most important research gaps in this field that urgently needs to be filled. Finally, formulating appropriate strategies can be a turning point **in** the path of reviving and developing Iraqi boxing and **provide** the foundation for **Iraq's** effective presence in international arenas. **Beyond the mentioned necessities**, from a scientific perspective, this research will contribute to enriching the research literature in sports management and development in developing countries and regions with special challenges, and will provide a

model for other countries in the region with similar conditions. From a practical standpoint, the results of this research can provide direct guidance for sports managers, boxing federation officials, and Iraqi sports policymakers in future decision-making and investments. Additionally, identifying effective strategies can help optimize the use of limited resources and properly prioritize development actions. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to identify strategies for boxing development in Iraq.

Materials and methods

This research was conducted with the aim of developing strategies for boxing development in Iraq and utilized a qualitative and exploratory approach. For data analysis, thematic analysis was selected because this method, due to its flexibility and high efficiency, is considered a appropriate tool for identifying patterns and key themes in qualitative data. The research sample included coaches, boxing federation officials, and university professors specializing in boxing. Purposive sampling was employed, and after achieving theoretical saturation at the eighteenth interview, two additional complementary interviews were conducted to ensure data comprehensiveness. To ensure data accuracy, in addition to note-taking, all interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Prior to the interviews, an interview guide containing key questions was designed, including inquiries such as: 1) what is the current status of boxing infrastructure in Iraq? 2) What is the situation of boxing coaches and referees in this country? 3) What strategies do you suggest for identifying and developing young talents in Iraqi boxing? 4) What role do media and advertising play in boxing development? This guide was used as a framework for semi-structured interviews.

The initial interview questions were designed based on the research literature

and study objectives, but during the interviews, supplementary questions appropriate to each session's circumstances were posed. Each interview began with collecting participants' demographic information and then proceeded to the main research questions. At the end, the interview was concluded by asking an open question such as "Is there anything else you would like to add?" The duration of interviews varied from 25 to 45 minutes. Data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify boxing development strategies in Iraq. This qualitative method extracted and organized key themes from the data and formed a network of related themes. The analysis process was conducted in three stages: 1) data transcription and initial coding to extract basic themes, 2) deep interpretation of themes and drawing the thematic network, and 3) synthesis of results to develop the final report. This systematic approach provided a comprehensive understanding of factors affecting boxing development in Iraq and presented a coherent framework for identifying development strategies for this sport.

To ensure the validity and credibility of research findings, the Lincoln and Guba (1985) framework was employed. This framework includes three key criteria: credibility (correspondence with reality), transferability (generalizability), and dependability (stability of results), which are equivalent to internal validity, external validity, and reliability in quantitative research. To strengthen the credibility of findings, interviews were designed and conducted with a standardized approach using open-ended questions. Data triangulation was performed by comparing the perspectives of coaches, boxing federation officials, and university professors as diverse sources to increase data coherence and credibility. This method strengthened confidence in the accuracy of findings by examining responses from different angles. Additionally, repeated review of data by researchers and careful

examination of interview texts to assess response consistency systematically enhanced the credibility of results. This multi-stage process ensured the accuracy and validity of findings and enabled the generalization of results to similar contexts. Despite careful selection of research samples, reliance on interviewees' perspectives may somewhat limit the transferability of findings. To assess interview reliability, the intra-subject agreement method was employed. For this purpose, a doctoral student in statistics was selected as the second coder due to his

expertise in data analysis, and after brief training in coding techniques, the reliability assessment process began. Common codes between the two coders were recorded as "agreement" and different codes as "disagreement." Three interviews were randomly selected for pilot analysis, and the agreement rate was calculated using the formula $(100 \times (2 \times \text{number of agreements} / \text{total number of codes}))$. This quantitative index constituted the reliability criterion for analyses, and its results are presented in Table 1. This systematic approach enabled objective assessment of coding reliability.

Table 1. Reliability Results between Two Coders

Interview Number	Total Codes	Number of Agreements	Number of Disagreements	Reliability Percentage
Two	16	6	4	75.00
Seven	15	7	5	93.33
Eleven	18	7	6	77.77
Total	49	20	15	82.03

As shown in Table 1, the total number of codes in two 30-day intervals, to ensure analysis stability, was 49 codes, with 20 agreements and 15 disagreements. Using the formula $(100 \times (2 \times \text{number of agreements} / \text{total number of codes}))$, the test-retest reliability of interviews was calculated as 82.03%. This value, considering the acceptable standard

Findings

Table 2 below provides a brief description of the demographic characteristics of the research sample in terms of age, gender,

threshold of 60%, confirmed the reliability of the coding. For analyzing qualitative interview data, MAXQDA software was used, which provided the capability for organizing codes, extracting themes, and conducting systematic data analysis. The combination of these measures provided a valid and reliable foundation for extracting themes and developing boxing development strategies in Iraq, and participant type. Participants were selected based on their expertise and direct experience in boxing and sports management to provide diverse perspectives.

Table 2. Participant Characteristics

Interview Code	Gender	Age	Participant Type
1	Male	49	Federation Member
2	Female	47	Federation Member
3	Male	50	Boxing Coach
4	Male	55	Federation Member
5	Male	48	Federation Member
6	Male	46	Academic Staff
7	Male	48	Federation Member
8	Male	53	Boxing Coach
9	Female	42	Boxing Coach

10	Male	58	Boxing Coach
11	Male	51	Federation Member
12	Male	60	Federation Member
13	Female	43	Federation Member
14	Male	49	Academic Staff
15	Male	39	Federation Member
16	Female	48	Academic Staff
17	Male	65	Academic Staff
18	Female	37	Boxing Coach
19	Male	43	Academic Staff
20	Male	44	Boxing Coach

In the data analysis process using thematic analysis, the research identified 48 open codes that were subsequently organized into 11 sub-themes after categorization. The open codes were extracted through several rounds of coding and discussions among researchers and then organized into sub-themes and main themes. These sub-themes were ultimately aggregated into four main categories: 1) Infrastructure development and resource provision, 2)

Human resource development and educational system, 3) Governance and strategic management, and 4) Promotion and cultural development. It is noteworthy that the extraction of sub-themes was conducted directly from interview texts after repeated reviews by researchers, while main themes were formed based on thematic and conceptual relationships between sub-themes. The variation in the number of codes resulted from participants' greater emphasis on certain areas.

Table 3. Boxing Development Strategies in Iraq

Open Codes	Sub-themes	Main Themes
Allocation of specialized training halls for women	Equipment and facility development	Infrastructure development and resource provision
Establishment and development of specialized boxing centers and academies		
Construction of standard training centers		
Providing free access to sports facilities for youth		
Providing low-interest loans for establishing training centers	Financing policies	
Targeted financial policymaking		
Tax incentives and investment for attracting sponsors		
Establishing a boxing development fund		
Creating a database for coaches and players	Technology and digital systems	
Creating a national boxing portal and application		
Utilizing modern technologies and digital transformation		
Player performance tracking system		
Permanent institution for training referees and coaches	Training and development of coaches and referees	Human resource development and educational system
Inviting international coaches for in-person training		
Scientific and targeted training programs		
Providing financial and motivational incentives to coaches and referees		
Creating a comprehensive boxing talent identification system	Talent identification and athlete development	
Continuous training camps for players		
Creating a scoring system for emerging players		
Organizing regular sports competitions and festivals		
Comprehensive support for players		
Including boxing in school sports programs	Integration into educational system	
Cooperation with universities and international institutions		

Strengthening interaction between universities and federation		Governance and strategic management
Creating counseling centers for families to raise awareness		
Utilizing former champions for role modeling		
Creating a supreme sports planning council	Institutional structure development	
Establishing a permanent scientific advisory council		
Creating a national coordinating body with financial and legal authorities		
Strengthening federation capacity for attracting investment		
Transparent sports governance with participation of various institutions		
Establishing monitoring and evaluation committees	Performance management and supervision	
Promoting performance evaluation culture		
Coach participation in evaluation and planning		
Forming specialized and technical committees		
Strengthening and expanding international cooperation	International cooperation development	
Using sports diplomacy to attract technical assistance		
Need for international scholarships		
Active membership in international organizations		
Hosting regional competitions to increase experience		
Production and broadcasting of boxing media content	Media strategy and advertising	Promotion and cultural development
Promoting boxing competitions and sporting events		
Creating a national Iraqi boxing brand		
Coverage of domestic and international competitions		
Creating new discourse in sports and investment	Cultural development and attitude change	
Government and social support for greater women's participation		
Awareness campaigns		
Organizing cultural sports festivals		

As observed in Table 3, the results were categorized into four main categories: infrastructure development and resource provision (equipment and facility development, financing policies, technology and digital systems), human resource development and educational system (training and development of coaches and referees, talent identification and athlete development, integration into educational system), governance and

strategic management (institutional structure development, performance management and supervision, international cooperation development), and promotion and cultural development (media strategy and advertising, cultural development and attitude change).

To visually present the findings and better organize the extracted codes, a hierarchical tree diagram was developed. This diagram illustrates the four main themes identified along with their related sub-themes.

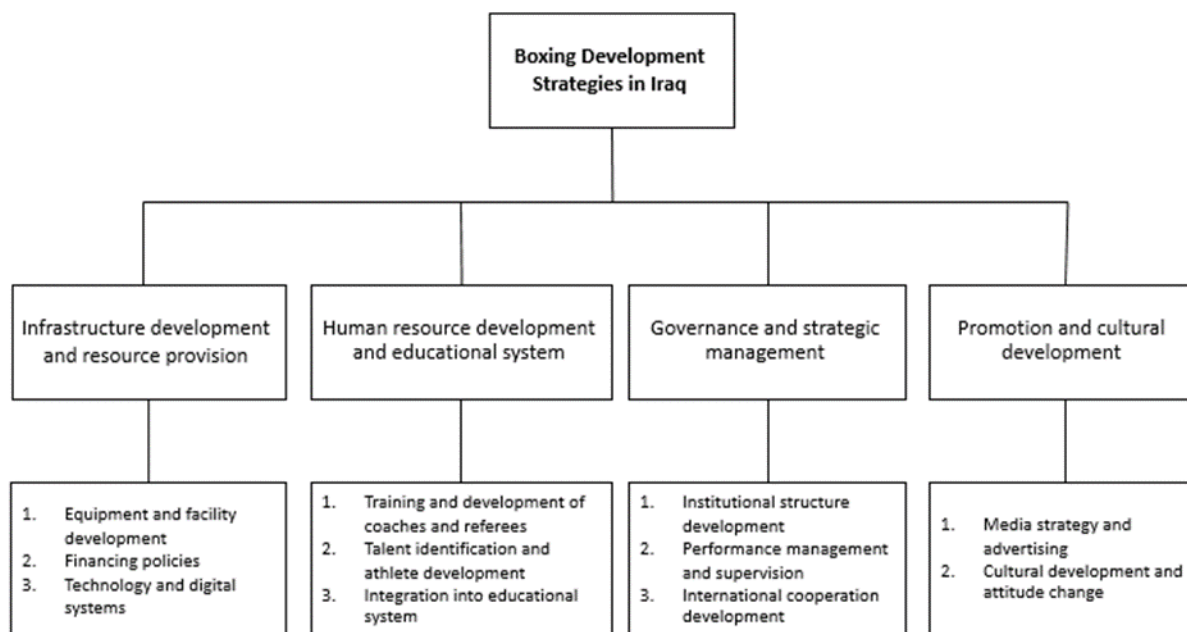


Figure 1. Strategies for the Development of Boxing in Iraq

Overall, the findings indicated that boxing development in Iraq requires simultaneous action in four main areas. Each of these areas includes a set of specific strategies that can lead to performance improvement, infrastructure enhancement, and increased public participation in the discipline.

During the analysis of interviews, participants presented diverse perspectives on challenges and strategies for boxing development in Iraq, which were categorized into four main themes. Below is a summary of the most important ideas and sample quotes from participants.

Theme 1: Infrastructure Development and Resource Provision

Most participants considered the lack of adequate infrastructure and standard facilities as one of the most fundamental obstacles to boxing growth in Iraq. **Participant 4** stated: "In many provinces, there are still no specialized halls for boxing, and clubs are forced to use multipurpose halls that do not provide professional training conditions." **Participant 3** also said: "When young people see that suitable equipment and facilities do not exist, they lose their interest. We need to build specialized centers and modern academies." Beyond the shortage of training spaces, the lack of

sustainable financial support was also criticized. **Participant 11** noted: "Private investors, when they are not assured of legal support, are not willing to invest in clubs." Additionally, some considered the role of technology important in improving infrastructure quality. According to **Participant 9**, "Having digital systems for recording performance and evaluating players can make training targeted and help coaches understand where they need to work on athletes."

Thee 2: Human Resource Development and Educational System

Another recurring topic in discussions was weakness in the educational system and human resource development. **Participant 6** explained: "We still do not have a specific program for talent identification. Each club operates in its own way, and this causes many talents to be lost." **Participant 8**, emphasizing the necessity of upgrading coaches' knowledge, said: "Our coaches have been working with the same old methods for years. International coaches should be invited to transfer current knowledge." Additionally, **Participant 14** emphasized the importance of integrating boxing into the educational system and said: "If formal programs for boxing are not designed in schools and universities, we cannot expect to develop a new generation

of athletes." **Participant 20** also added: "If teenagers become familiar with boxing through school, families will also support it more."

Theme 3: Governance and Strategic Management

Many participants pointed to weaknesses in managerial structures and the absence of a coherent national strategy. **Participant 1** stated: "The federation alone cannot do all the work. A supreme planning council with legal authorities should be established to guide the development path." **Participant 17** also said: "Transparency in management is very low; it is unclear how budgets are spent and there is no regular supervision." According to **Participant 12**, "Forming specialized and scientific committees can help decisions be based on scientific evidence, not personal preference." Additionally, **Participant 19**, referring to the international dimension, added: "Active membership in international organizations and using sports diplomacy can attract significant technical and financial assistance for boxing development in Iraq."

Theme 4: Cultural Promotion and Development

The final identified theme relates to the role of public culture and society's attitude toward boxing. Some participants believed that the general perception of boxing in Iraq is negative and prevents the attraction of youth, especially girls, to this discipline. **Participant 2** stated: "Many families still think boxing is a violent sport and is not suitable for girls." **Participant 18** emphasized: "When media show a positive and champion-nurturing image of boxing, families more easily allow their children to train." According to **Participant 13**, "We should use former champions for role modeling and organize cultural sports festivals so that boxing becomes part of public culture." Additionally, **Participant 7** added: "Creating a national brand for Iraqi boxing and regular coverage of domestic and international competitions can multiply public interest."

Discussion

Infrastructure development and resource provision encompasses three essential components: equipment and facility development, financing policies, and technology and digital systems. Participants emphasized the necessity of constructing standard training centers, creating targeted financial policies, and utilizing modern technologies. **The findings indicate that infrastructure development constitutes the foundation for any progress in Iraqi boxing.** The absence of specialized halls, shortage of standard equipment, and weakness in sustainable financing are the main obstacles to the sport's growth. **The construction of specialized centers not only provides appropriate physical space but also creates conditions for attracting quality coaches and young athletes.** Additionally, establishing a boxing development fund and providing tax incentives can encourage private investment and ensure long-term financial sustainability. The integration of digital technologies, in addition to improving training quality, provides the possibility of scientific monitoring of athlete performance and effective evaluation of their progress. **These findings align with those of** (Goenka, 2019) and (Fang, 2020), **who** identified strong sports infrastructure and government investment accompanied by private sector participation as key success factors in developing countries. Furthermore, (Worakantak, 2024) and (Salazar, 2025) **have** shown that effective institutional structures, particularly transparent legal and regulatory frameworks, are essential for attracting private capital, **which corresponds with the current findings.** However, the emphasis on digital technologies in this research represents a new dimension that has received less attention in previous studies. **This indicates the evolution of modern sports needs and the importance of utilizing technological tools in developing martial arts.** From a theoretical perspective, these findings demonstrate that sports development theory should consider the

specific conditions of post-crisis countries, and classical sports development models are not necessarily generalizable to all conditions. From a practical standpoint, these findings provide clear guidance for Iraqi sports officials. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Iraqi government prioritize establishing a boxing development fund with private sector participation and formulate tax incentive laws for investors. Simultaneously, a comprehensive plan for constructing standard training centers at the provincial level should be prepared and implemented with priority given to high-potential areas. In the technology dimension, creating a national Iraqi boxing portal for registering information about coaches, athletes, and competitions is essential. The Boxing Federation should also strengthen its capacity for attracting international technical and financial assistance and develop a program for utilizing the successful experiences of regional countries.

Human resource development and educational system includes three components: training and development of coaches and referees, talent identification and athlete development, and integration into the educational system. Participants emphasized the importance of scientific training programs, comprehensive talent identification systems, and including boxing in school sports programs. The results indicate that developing specialized human resources constitutes the main axis of boxing progress in Iraq. The quality of coaches and referees has a direct impact on the technical level of athletes and the quality of competitions. Weakness in the coach training system perpetuates traditional methods and creates backwardness from modern boxing techniques. Additionally, the absence of a coherent talent identification system causes the waste of potential talents and inadequate utilization of Iraqi youth potential. Integrating boxing into the educational system not only creates a

broader base of athletes but also provides the foundation for changing social attitudes toward this sport. These findings correspond with the research of (Ribeiro, 2023), who identified coherent planning in talent identification and development and investment in coach education as factors for improving national performance in martial arts. Additionally, the emphasis on integrating sport into the educational system aligns with findings from European sports development studies. (Andersson, 2024) demonstrates that sports schools in various European countries have created flexible educational programs that allow students to simultaneously pursue school education and sports training. However, (Breuer, 2021) emphasized the importance of joint training programs and coach exchanges, which is also confirmed in this research. From a theoretical perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of a systematic approach to human resource development in sports and demonstrate that sports development is not possible without investment in training and improving coach quality. From a practical standpoint, these findings provide specific strategies for improving the current situation. It is recommended that the Iraqi Boxing Federation first establish a permanent institution for training and educating referees and coaches and design regular training programs in cooperation with the International Boxing Association. Simultaneously, a comprehensive talent identification system should be launched centered on elementary and middle schools, and a committee composed of experienced coaches should be formed to oversee this process. Official cooperation with the Ministry of Education to include boxing in school sports programs is essential. Additionally, coach exchange programs with leading boxing countries and organizing specialized training workshops with international coaches should be prioritized. Creating family counseling centers for parental awareness can also reduce social resistance.

Governance and strategic management encompasses three components: institutional structure development, performance management and supervision, and international cooperation development. Participants emphasized the necessity of creating a supreme planning council, establishing monitoring committees, and strengthening international cooperation. The findings indicate that weakness in managerial and governance structures constitutes one of the fundamental obstacles to boxing development in Iraq. The absence of a coherent national strategy, weakness in coordination between various institutions, and lack of effective performance monitoring have caused scattered efforts and failure to achieve desired results. Creating a supreme sports planning council can establish necessary coordination between various agencies and formulate a unified strategy for boxing development. Establishing specialized and scientific committees also ensures decision-making based on scientific evidence and successful global experiences. Additionally, developing international cooperation not only provides access to current technical knowledge but also creates the possibility of attracting financial and technical assistance. These findings align with research by (Elbargathi, 2019), which demonstrates that political and managerial stability has been a key factor in growth and development in Arab countries. Moreover, the emphasis on international cooperation corresponds with the findings of (Rossi, 2025), who considered the role of joint programs and experience exchange important in developing martial arts. However, the emphasis on creating monitoring and performance evaluation structures is a novel aspect that has received less attention in previous studies. This highlights the importance of transparency and accountability in sports management, which is of particular significance in Iraq's current conditions. From a theoretical perspective, these findings confirm the importance of good governance theory in

sports development and demonstrate that without creating appropriate managerial structures, investment in other areas will not yield desired results. From a practical standpoint, these findings reveal the necessity of structural reforms at the macro level of Iraqi sports management. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Iraqi government first form a supreme sports planning council with representatives from relevant ministries, federations, and the private sector and formulate a national sports development strategy. Simultaneously, a performance monitoring and evaluation system for federations should be launched with specific indicators. The Boxing Federation should also review its internal structure, form specialized committees, and strengthen its capacity for cooperation with international organizations. Establishing active membership in the World Boxing Federation and regional organizations, hosting regional competitions, and using sports diplomacy to attract technical assistance are other implementation priorities.

Promotion and cultural development includes two components: media strategy and advertising, and cultural development and attitude change. Participants emphasized the importance of media content production, creating a national boxing brand, and changing public attitudes toward this sport. The results indicate that cultural development and changing public attitudes toward boxing constitute a prerequisite for the success of other strategies. The negative attitude of some segments of society toward boxing, particularly regarding women's participation, is the main obstacle to expanding this sport in Iraq. Media and social networks play a central role in shaping public opinion, and appropriate coverage of competitions and introduction of champions can increase boxing's appeal. Creating a national Iraqi boxing brand can also strengthen feelings of belonging and national pride and provide the foundation

for greater public support. These findings align with the research of (Cvejić, 2024), who emphasized the important role of media coverage and marketing in the popularity and expansion of martial arts. Additionally, the importance of prominent athlete presence in media, which was raised in that study, is also confirmed in this research. However, the emphasis on changing cultural attitudes, particularly regarding women's participation in boxing, is a special aspect that has been less examined in previous studies. This highlights the importance of the specific cultural and social conditions of each country in formulating sports development strategies. From a theoretical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of the cultural dimension in sports development and demonstrate that sports development models should consider social and cultural factors. From a practical standpoint, these findings reveal the necessity of investment in promotion and cultural development sectors. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Iraqi Boxing Federation establish a specialized media and public relations unit and design a comprehensive content production program. Cooperation with national broadcasting for producing educational documentaries and introducing champions, creating official channels on social networks, and regularly organizing press conferences is essential. Simultaneously, a cultural development program should be implemented centered on schools and universities, and the presence of former champions should be utilized for role modeling. Organizing an annual boxing festival with family participation, creating an Iraqi boxing museum, and formulating a boxing ethics charter can gradually create an appropriate cultural environment for accepting this sport. Additionally, special campaigns to encourage women's participation in cooperation with women's organizations are essential.

The present research identified four main themes for boxing development in Iraq, each having special importance and mutual relationship with others. Infrastructure development and resource provision serves as the physical and financial foundation, human resource development as the qualitative axis, appropriate governance as the managerial framework, and cultural promotion as the social acceptance context — forming a comprehensive and complete set for the revival and development of Iraqi boxing. The results showed that these four themes operate in a complex and mutual network, and success in one area requires simultaneous progress in other areas. Infrastructure development without specialized human resources is fruitless, appropriate governance without cultural support will not be sustainable, and cultural promotion without infrastructure and human resource backing will not succeed. This mutual relationship emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive and coordinated approach and demonstrates that partial or gradual implementation of strategies will not yield desired results. Therefore, successful boxing development in Iraq requires long-term commitment, comprehensive investment, and coordination among all institutions and stakeholders. The findings of this research, beyond boxing, provide a framework for developing other sports in Iraq and similar countries. Based on the overall research findings, it is recommended that the Iraqi government formulate and implement a comprehensive boxing revival and development plan with a 10-year time horizon. This plan should include investment in infrastructure, human resource training, reform of managerial structures, and implementation of cultural development programs. International cooperation, particularly with successful regional countries, should be the main axis of the strategy. Additionally, a continuous monitoring and evaluation system for tracking progress and adjusting programs is essential. Finally, boxing development

should be considered as part of the comprehensive strategy for sports and youth development in the country to receive necessary support.

Conclusion

This study identified four interrelated pillars—infrastructure development, human resource and educational system improvement, governance and strategic management, and cultural promotion—as the foundation for revitalizing boxing in Iraq. The findings demonstrate that sustainable progress in this sport requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach rather than isolated interventions. Infrastructure and financial investment, without skilled human resources, effective governance, and cultural support, will not achieve lasting results. Therefore, the development of boxing in Iraq must be guided by an integrated national strategy that aligns physical, educational, managerial, and cultural dimensions. From a practical standpoint, the study recommends establishing a national boxing development fund, creating standard training centers, implementing systematic talent identification programs, reforming

governance structures, and promoting positive cultural attitudes—particularly toward women's participation. From a theoretical perspective, the findings expand existing sports development models by emphasizing the role of technology, cultural context, and governance in post-crisis environments.

Overall, this research provides a strategic and adaptable framework for policymakers, sports administrators, and international organizations seeking to foster sustainable sports development in Iraq and other countries facing similar socio-political challenges.

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