

Strategic Planning among Professional Football Teams in Palestine

التخطيط الاستراتيجي لفرق الاحتراف الفلسطينية

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Abstract: The study aimed to investigate the implementation of strategic planning in Palestinian professional football teams from the point of view of professional team board members (experts, technical and administrative staff). It also aimed to identify the differences in their points of view according to years of experience. The researchers designed a questionnaire that measures the strategic planning process in Palestinian teams and used it on a sample consisting of 81 experts, technical staff, and administrative staff. The results show that the strategic planning process is limited due to a poor financial budget. However, the study recommended that it is necessary to provide financial resources for professional Palestinian teams to carry out the development process and to adopt strategic planning processes for Palestinian teams with the assistance of specialists in this field.

Keywords: Professional Teams, Football, Strategic Planning.

المستخلص: هدفت الدراسة التعرف الى درجة تطبيق إدارات أندية المحترفين بكرة القدم في فلسطين للتخطيط الاستراتيجي على أرض الواقع، من وجهة نظر اعضاء مجلس ادارة كل نادي (خبراء، طاقم فني، طاقم إداري)، وايضا الى الفروق من وجهات نظرهم تبعاً لمتغيرات الصفة الإدارية، وسنوات الخبرة، وقد قام الباحثان بتصميم استبيان يقيس عملية التخطيط الاستراتيجي في الفرق الفلسطينية، وتكونت عينة الدراسة من (81) عضوا من اعضاء مجالس ادارات اندية المحترفين بكرة القدم، ما بين خبير وطاقم فني واداري، واستخدم الباحثان المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وقد اظهرت النتائج ان الاندية الفلسطينية بشكل عام تعاني من ضعف الميزانية المادية وهو الامر الذي يحد من عملية التخطيط الاستراتيجي والتي جاءت بدرجة متوسطة. وقد اوصت الدراسة بضرورة توفير مصادر مالية للأندية الفلسطينية للقيام بعملية التطوير على أسس علمية سليمة، واعتماد عمليات التخطيط الاستراتيجي للنهوض بواقع رياضتنا الفلسطينية والاستعانة بمختصين بهذا المجال.

كلمات مفتاحية: أندية الاحتراف، كرة قدم، تخطيط استراتيجي.

INTRODUCTION:

Football recently has become a very popular sport all over the world. It has been described as an enterprise involving huge investments. With massive players transfer expenses, disputes, endless negotiations for shares in television rights, and battles between sponsors to get "star" footballers to promote and advertise products. This shows that the football industry has become very competitive (Dimitropoulos, 2010).

The Palestinian Football Association is one of the sport federations in the world that faces difficulties and challenges at all sporting, social, political and economic levels. This is due to the Israeli occupation. It is vital to consider that Palestine is one of the countries that began to be interested in competitive sports at the highest levels, and has demonstrated a remarkable presence in sports settings at the regional and international levels. This is represented by the great development that Palestine has witnessed, whether in terms of sports facilities, or through the development of the technical level of Palestinian sports, especially in football (Altlool & Ghanima, 2021).

In (2010), the Palestinian League began a new journey as a professional league in the West Bank. The Palestinian Professional Football League was launched in its first season 2010/2011, which is a league that brings together the best Local teams based on the ranked league. It is the core of the Palestinian national team. It is the highest league in Palestine and is organized by the PFA. It includes (12) teams in the West Bank. The club reaches on pro division, based on their positions in the general league standings. The conditions of the professional system are applied, and they are committed to fulfilling the contracts of players and coaches and paying their monthly salaries (Amad, 2021).

In order to survive in this competitive environment, football teams must focus on strategic methods related to efficiency, effectiveness, competitiveness and sustainability. Furthermore, they must comprehensively measure and manage their performance (Coskun & Tetik, 2013), to achieve the desired goals and to adapt rapidly to the demands of modern competition. Strategic planning has become the ideal solution for many sports institutions improve especially after the increasing openness and globalization in this area locally, regionally and globally (Jaber & Radwan, 2021).

Strategic planning is considered one of the most important factors of strategic management, as it defines the institution's plan and strategy for a specific period of time, according to a specific timetable. In addition to that, it analyzes the internal and external changes in the institution's environment. However, this helps the institution identify its environment, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the current and future situations. Furthermore, leads strategic planning to improve the performance, raise efficiency, and obtain a comprehensive vision about the institution and its surroundings (Marchesna, 2004).

Rumelt. al,1994 defines Strategic management as the means used by an organization to outline its strategy in order to achieve the desired goals. Strategic management carries out strategic planning by making appropriate decisions, taking actions and following up the performance the on short and long

term (Vrontis D. et. al, 2014; Ali et al., 2016) recognize that strategic planning affects the institutions performance greatly.

As modern sports institutions are constantly striving for survival, growth and success, the need for strategic planning along with convenient planners is a must (Mosleh, 2010). Previous studies were conducted on the same matter due to its importance. Radwan and Jaber (2021) conducted a study entitled as the extent to which administrations of professional football teams in Jordan apply strategic planning and analysis. It showed that the Jordanian teams in general suffer from poor financial budget, which limits the process of strategic planning for the future. Correspondingly, Raja and Ibrahim's (2019) study concluded that the obtained strategic planning was less than the average due to the lack of practice of the administrative staff. Relatively, Abu Al-Khair (2016) and Al-Widyan (2017) explained that the financial resources required for teams are among the most significantly administrative obstacles to strategic planning.

Eadie (2000) confirms that the main goal of strategic planning is to balance between the institution and its environment for a specific period of time. Likewise, the researchers believe that strategic planning is compulsory to overcome obstacles, and develop efficiency, effectiveness, and balance for a period of time to.

Study problem:

The Palestinian Football Association plays a vital role in the development process and provides various services in various sports fields. It has a future vision which stipulates that the Palestinian Football Federation be a professional institution to carry out the advancement of the Palestinian football reality at various levels (locally, in the Arab world and internationally). Due to that, the need of Strategic Planning is necessary.

Throughout the researchers' scientific and practical observation and the follow-up to the activities in the Palestinian professional football teams, and due to the fact that one of the researchers is a coach in the professional league, and the presence of the other researcher in many committees of the Palestinian Olympic Committee, the most important of which is the committee for preparing curricula for football courses, the researchers have noticed that the achievements of the Palestinian Football teams are fluctuating due to the constant change of administrative and technical staff in the one hand. On the other hand, the lack of interest in strategic planning and future vision within the Palestinian professional football teams. In addition to the fact that Palestinian football teams are facing challenges because of the Israeli occupation. Therefore, the researchers seek to shed light on the reality of professional football teams, to know the actual reality of applying professional club managements and strategic planning on the ground within Palestinian sports institutions.

Study objectives:

This study aimed to identify the extent to which professional football clubs' managements in Palestine apply strategic planning and the differences in the respondents' response about the degree of strategic planning according to the variables of the study (administrative capacity and years of administrative experience).

Study questions: This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the degree of applying the management of professional football clubs in Palestine to strategic planning in their clubs?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in the application of strategic planning among members of the professional football teams' divisions due to the variables of the study (administrative capacity, years of administrative experience)?

The terminology of the study:

-Professional League: It is the league that is held in the Palestinian Territories for football, and brings together the best local teams.

Strategic planning: It is an organized plan and activities that are developed in a way that ensures the creation of a degree of congruence between the institution's mission and goals and between them and the environment in which it operates in an effective and highly efficient manner. (Almoghrabi, 2009)

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Study Approach:

The researchers used the analytical descriptive approach to collect data due to its suitability with the nature and objectives of the study.

Study community:

The study community is consisted of (127) professional Palestinian football experts, technical and administrative staffs in the season 2022/2023.

The study sample:

A sample of (81) experts, technical and administrative staff was selected intentionally from the boards of directors of professional teams with different years of experience as shown in table 1:

Table (1) The distribution of the study sample according to the job title and years of experience in the field

Job Title	Number	Experience	Number
Technical staff	14	Less than 5 years	36
Administrative staff	57	5-10 years	16
Experts	10	More than 10 years	29
Total	81	Total	81

The study tool:

The researchers used a questionnaire prepared for the purpose of identifying the opinions of experts, the technical staff, and the administrative staff in the boards of directors of professional Palestinian football clubs about the degree of strategic planning among the senior managements of the Palestinian Professional Football League clubs. As for the method of designing the questionnaire, the researchers used literature and studies. The questionnaire was presented to a number of academics to verify its validity, and the two researchers made the amendments referred to by the arbitrators, so that it is in its final form consisting of (37) paragraphs.

The following distribution of paragraphs has been adopted in the process of correcting the paragraphs of the study tool and extracting results according to the five-point Likert scale.

Table (2) Tool correction

Answers	Answer out of 5	Range
Strongly agree	5	4.2-5
Agree	4	3.4-4.19
Neutral	3	2.6-3.39
Disagree	2	1.8-2.59
Strongly disagree	1	1-1.79

Study Procedures:

In order to implement the study, the researchers carried out the following research procedures:

- Preparing a questionnaire with the aim of identifying the opinions of experts, technical staff and administrative staff in the boards of directors of Palestinian professional football clubs about the degree of strategic planning of the higher managements of the Palestinian Professional Football League clubs.
- Contact with the arbitrators' committee of academic supervisors to obtain their opinions on the validity of the study tool and based on their instructions and directives, some paragraphs have been canceled and others have been added, as these paragraphs are characterized by weakness and ambiguity from the arbitrators' point of view.

- The study population was determined, which included a sample of (experts, technical staff, and administrative staff in the boards of directors of professional Palestinian football clubs).

- The questionnaire was distributed to the study sample by the two researchers, and the researchers also collected questionnaires, and the number of questionnaires retrieved reached (81) questionnaires.

- The researchers unloaded the responses and extracted the results using statistical treatments.

- The validity of the questionnaire: it was presented to a group of arbitrators and specialists, and they reported the validity of the scale and its validity for the purposes of this study.

- Questionnaire stability: The stability of the tool was confirmed by conducting the internal consistency test and extracting the stability coefficient (Cranach's alpha) on the entire study sample, where the tool stability coefficient was (94.3%), which is a good stability coefficient in human research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

First: The results related to the first main question, which stipulated what is the degree of implementation of the management of professional football clubs in Palestine for strategic planning in their clubs.

To answer this question, the arithmetic mean, standard deviations, and percentages were extracted for the field of study, and the following table shows that:

Table (3). The arithmetic mean, standard deviations, and the percentage of the field of development according to the respondents' responses, arranged in descending order

Number	Paragraph	The standard deviations	The arithmetic mean	the percentage	Average
6	The clubs carry out the process of diagnosing the goals achieved and hoped to be achieved	0.86	3.04	60.7	Medium
8	Self-development in clubs is present	1.00	2.89	57.8	Medium
4	Clubs set clear and gradual goals that contribute to development	0.91	2.84	56.8	Medium
1	Clubs set clear and time-bound development programs	0.93	2.83	56.5	Medium
3	The administrative organization is clear	0.88	2.81	56.3	Medium
5	There is a clear vision for the clubs and they work in an organized manner	0.88	2.73	54.6	Medium
9	The development of human cadres in clubs is programmed and clear	0.94	2.60	52.1	Medium
7	The clubs work to develop the infrastructure of the clubs	0.99	2.58	51.6	Medium
2	Clubs use modern technologies in organizational construction	0.85	2.56	51.1	Medium
Total		0.67	2.76	55.3	Medium

It is clear from the results of the previous table No. (3) that the paragraph that states (the clubs carry out the diagnostic process for the goals achieved and hoped to be achieved) got the highest arithmetic mean and its average was equal to (3.04). Then the paragraph that states (self-development in clubs exists) where it was The arithmetic average is (2.89), while the paragraph that states (clubs use modern technologies in the organizational structure) got the lowest arithmetic mean, as it was equal to (2.56). Then the paragraph that states (clubs are working to develop the infrastructure of clubs) and its arithmetic mean (2.58), and from that, the degree of development can be explained, as it is noted that the general average of the respondents' responses was (2.76), which is of a medium degree.

Table (4).The arithmetic mean, standard deviations, and percentage of the planning field according to .the respondents' responses, arranged in descending order

Number	Paragraph	standard deviation	The arithmetic mean	Percentage	Average
2	Planning strategy in teams depends on experience	0.95	3.63	72.6	High
7	Planning processes commensurate with the tendencies and needs of the crowd	0.79	3.56	71.1	High
10	Planning takes place within the available capabilities and resources that will be provided	0.79	3.22	64.4	Medium
3	The planning process in the teams is commensurate with the goals	0.72	3.01	60.2	Medium
6	The planning process is commensurate with the vision and general goals	0.76	2.95	59.0	Medium
4	The planning in the teams is flexible (subject to modification and change).	0.83	2.88	57.5	Medium
8	Planning in teams is linked to continuous evaluation processes	0.90	2.79	55.8	Medium
9	Planning in teams is based on true databases and statistics	0.80	2.74	54.8	Medium
5	Teams have a time gradient in implementing plans to achieve goals	0.81	2.73	54.6	Medium
1	Teams set a short and long-term vision for the future	1.08	2.56	51.1	Medium
Total		0.53	3.01	60.1	Medium

Table (4) shows that the paragraph which states (planning strategy in teams depends on experience) has obtained the highest arithmetic averages and its mean is equal to (3.63). Then the paragraph which states (planning operations commensurate with the tendencies and needs of the masses) where The arithmetic mean was (3.56). However, the paragraph that states (clubs set a short and long-term future vision) got the lowest arithmetic mean, as it was equal to (2.56).

Then the paragraph that reads (teams have a time gradient in implementing plans to achieve goals) Its arithmetic mean was (2.73), and from that, the degree of the planning field can be explained, as it is noted that the general average of the respondents' responses was (3.01), which is of a medium degree.

The researchers attribute this result to the importance of the planning process for any sports team, and in this study we single out professional football clubs in Palestine. There must be planning specialists or sports specialists, but we suffer, unfortunately, from the presence of the majority of club board members who are from outside the sports community, and therefore it is not expected Carrying out strategic planning operations to develop work in sports clubs that need specialized sports experts supported by certificates and scientific expertise in this field. This result is consistent with several studies, such as the study of (Jaber &Radwan, 2021), and the study of (Al Widian, 2017).

Table (5). The arithmetic mean, standard deviations, and percentage of the field of implementation according to the respondents' responses, arranged in descending order

Number	Paragraph	Standard deviations	Mean	Percentage	Average
3	The process of implementing the plan is affected by financial difficulties	1.10	3.73	74.6	High
5	The implementation process is linked to administrative stability	0.89	3.63	72.6	High
7	The implementation of the strategic plan is coordinated with the public authority and the local community	0.90	3.20	64.0	Medium
6	Most of the time, part of the plan is implemented	0.75	3.12	62.5	Medium
2	Implementation priorities are carefully arranged	0.91	2.89	57.8	Medium
1	The stages of implementation of the plan are clear according to a specific timetable	0.96	2.78	55.6	Medium
4	The plans drawn up are implemented in most clubs	0.85	2.72	54.3	Medium
8	Clubs have standards in implementing future plans	0.84	2.63	52.6	Medium
9	There is precision and discipline in implementing the plan	0.93	2.41	48.1	Low
Total average		0.56	3.01	60.2	Medium

Table (5) shows that the paragraph that states (the implementation process of the plan is affected by financial difficulties) got the highest arithmetic average and its average was equal to (3.73). Then the paragraph that states (the implementation process is linked to administrative stability) where the arithmetic average was (3.63).

Furthermore, the paragraph that states (there is accuracy and discipline in implementing the plan) got the lowest arithmetic mean, as it was equal to (2.41), then the paragraph that states (clubs have standards in implementing future plans) and its arithmetic mean was (2.63). Hence, the degree of implementation field can be explained, as it is noted that the general average of the respondents' responses was (3.01), which is of a medium degree.

The researchers attribute this result to the process of strategic analysis to facilitate the implementation process, which is the core of the administrative work in the board of directors of professional clubs, in terms of analyzing the environment and identifying weaknesses and strengths in Palestinian teams, as well as identifying available opportunities and threats, especially as we are still suffering from the scourge of the occupation and the continuous and targeted encroachments of Palestinian sport.

Therefore, we rely on analyzing the environment within the available capabilities to facilitate the implementation process and overcome any of the obstacles that may limit or stand in the way of Palestinian sports. In addition to the existence of a financial deficit in the budgets of the teams and is considered one of the biggest obstacles that stand in the way of implementing any vision required by the strategic work. This result is consistent with many studies, including the study of (Al Widian, 2017) and the study of (Abu Khair, 2016).

Table (6). The arithmetic mean, standard deviations, and percentage of the evaluation field according to the responses of the respondents, arranged in descending order

Number	Paragraph	standard deviations	mean	Percentage	Average
2	Adopting the results of the teams in improving the administrative work	0.86	3.17	63.5	Medium
9	The results of the evaluations are visible to the public	0.97	2.86	57.3	Medium
5	Follow up on the implementation of the plan and its impact on the team	0.68	2.79	55.8	Medium
1	There is a clear mechanism in the evaluation at all stages of implementation of the plan	0.91	2.78	55.6	Medium
8	Teams benefit from the results of the evaluation for upcoming planning	0.89	2.73	54.6	Medium
3	The evaluation process continues throughout the planning period	0.77	2.67	53.3	Medium
6	Errors are corrected properly	0.81	2.64	52.8	Medium
4	Teams use various evaluation strategies	0.87	2.57	51.4	Medium
7	Teams involve experts in the evaluation process	0.98	2.09	41.7	Low
Total average		0.57	2.70	54.0	Medium

Table (6) shows that the paragraph that stipulates (accrediting the results of teams in improving administrative work) has obtained the highest arithmetic averages and its average was equal to (3.17). Then the paragraph that states (the results of the evaluation are clear to the public) where the average was arithmetic (2.86). However, the paragraph that states (clubs involve experts in the evaluation process) got the lowest arithmetic average, as it was equal to (2.09). Then the paragraph that states (teams use various evaluation strategies) had an arithmetic average of (2.57). From this, the degree of the evaluation field can be explained, as it is noted that the general average of the respondents' responses was (2.70), which is of a medium degree.

The researchers attribute this result to the fact that the strategic work requires an evaluation mechanism in order to develop the results and build on them in the future, and this is what the Palestinian football teams need, as it is the popular game prevailing in Palestine and which enjoys a significant audience.

Palestinian clubs suffer from it due to the lack of game and field experts, the absence of a strategic evaluation mechanism, and the majority of teams, although they practice strategic evaluation, do not benefit much from that evaluation, which seeks to correct the situation and correct it because this is reflected in their upcoming strategic plans, and this we do not see on the ground.

This result is consistent with many studies, including the study of Bakir, et al. (2014), which recommended educating workers in the field of football about the importance of professionalism, its return and requirements, and encouraging public and private national institutions to sponsor teams that practice professionalism, and the study of Lot and Bin Mosbah (2018), which recommended The need for Algerian teams to adopt strategic planning as an input to improve the level of production, by providing the requirements for implementing the organizational, material and human strategic plan.

To answer the second question of the study, which states: Are there statistically significant differences in the application of strategic planning among members of professional football teams' division due to the study variables (administrative job name and years of administrative experience)?

First: the job title variable

Table (7). Arithmetic mean and standard deviations for the application of strategic planning among members of professional football teams' division due to the job title variable

Job title variable	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Number
Technical staff	0.33840	2.9427	14
Administrative staff	0.56878	2.8878	57
Experts	0.25068	2.6705	10
Total	0.50819	2.8704	81

Table (8). The results of the one-way Analysis of Variance test for the application of strategic planning among members of the professional football teams' division due to the job title variable

Source of variation	SUM of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	P. value
Between groups	0.490	2	0.245	0.947	0.392
Within groups	20.171	78			
Total	20.661	80	0.259		

Based on the one-way variance test, it was found that the value of sig is greater than (0.05), which is therefore not statistically significant, and here the result comes that there are no statistically significant

differences at the level of statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the degree of applying strategic planning among members of professional football teams' administrations due to for the job title variable.

The researchers attribute this result to the absence of statistically significant differences due to the variable of administrative capacity, that the team president often succeeds within a specific list, and therefore the decisions are taken by the majority of votes, and the vote of the club president is the one who tips the scale in the event of a tie in the votes, but in the event of a preponderance of the scale towards any A certain party, so the president's voice is like any existing board member, but this does not preclude the exception in some teams that are controlled by one person, and expensively the financier of the team, and they are few in number, and this explains the absence of statistically significant differences depending on the administrative job title variable.

Second: the variable years of administrative experience.

Table (9). Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the application of strategic planning among members of professional football teams' division due to the variable years of management experience

The years of administrative experience variable	Number	Arithmetic means	standard deviations
Less than 5 years	36	2.8463	0.53915
5 – 10 years	16	2.9992	0.59180
More than 5 years	29	2.8293	0.41825
Total	81	2.8704	0.50819

Table (10). Results of the ONE WAY Analysis of Variance test for the degree of applying strategic planning among members of professional football teams' division due to the variable years of administrative experience

Source of variation	SUM of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	P. value
Between groups	0.335	2	0.168	0.643	0.528
Within groups	20.325	78			
Total	20.661	80	0.261		

Based on the one-way variance test, it was found that the sig value is greater than (0.05), which is not statistically significant, and there are no statistically significant differences at the level of statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the degree of applying strategic planning among members of professional football teams' divisions due to the variable years of experience.

The researchers attribute this result to the absence of statistically significant differences due to the variable of administrative experience, to the fact that the majority of workers in the boards of directors of teams have little experience, and therefore the differences between them will be few on this variable.

Therefore, this result is logical because the strategic work needs tight scientific capabilities and broad knowledge, and we in the Palestinian professional teams lack these human potentials. The administrative in the club is any addition to the level of awareness of what the strategic planning process is, or the knowledge of the strategic planning tools for the entire system, which forced the researchers to explain extensively to most of them the concept of strategic planning and its mechanisms so that the study sample could answer with credibility and integrity on the paragraphs of the questionnaire.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The researchers reached the following conclusions:

The professional football teams in Palestine apply planning, implementation and strategic evaluation to a moderate degree from the point of view of the members of the boards of directors of professional football teams (experts, technical and administrative staff). Furthermore, the majority of professional teams in Palestine suffer from sufficient financial support, which is the main reason that limits the building of strategic plans capable of developing teams. In addition to, employing sports teams for strategic planning, implementation and evaluation processes is an incentive for members of the board of directors and team employees to reveal what is in their team in a scientific and thoughtful manner, and the need to benefit from this information as much as possible.

Recommendations:

After conducting this study, the researchers recommend the following:

- 1-The need to build strategic plans for the team based on the foundations of correct scientific strategic planning, with consultations with specialists from outside the team's sports system to obtain real results that are far from expectations.
- 2-Finding various sources of income for the team to contribute to the process of developing strategic plans and development within the team.
- 3-Work on training human cadres in the team and educating them on the importance of strategic planning for the future.

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