





Developing a Strategic Flexibility Assessment Scale for the Nineveh Directorate of Youth and Sports

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop and standardize a strategic resilience scale for the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate from the perspective of its employees. Strategic resilience is a modern concept that contributes to enhancing the ability of sports organizations to adapt to environmental changes and achieve sustainable performance. The study employed a descriptive survey methodology, deemed most suitable for the nature of the research. The research population consisted of 231 employees, while the scale development sample comprised 120 employees (54.54%), in addition to a pilot sample of 10 employees and a reliability sample of 30 employees.

The research instrument (questionnaire) was developed according to systematic scientific steps, beginning with defining the axes and presenting them to 15 experts. Four main axes were adopted: resource resilience, organizational structure resilience, decision-making resilience, and communication resilience. Three axes were excluded due to their failure to meet the 75% acceptance rate. The number of items was also reduced from 39 to 35 in the final version. The statistical analysis revealed that all items on the scale possessed discriminatory power, with t-values ranging from 1.519 to 5.957. Correlation coefficients between the items and the overall scale ranged from 0.315 to 0.510, indicating construct validity. The overall reliability coefficient, using the Spearman-Brown formula, was 0.90, a high indicator confirming the instrument's reliability.

Regarding the application results, the overall mean score was 136.78, with a standard deviation of 5.77 and a percentage of 78.16%, exceeding the hypothetical mean of 105. This indicates a good level of strategic flexibility within the directorate. The decision-making flexibility dimension ranked first at 82.25%, followed by organizational structure flexibility at 78.73%, communication flexibility at 78.15%, and finally resource flexibility at 76.13%. The study concluded that the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate possesses a good level of strategic flexibility, with a clear advantage in decision-making flexibility. However, there is still a need to enhance resource flexibility, particularly given financial and infrastructural constraints. The study recommended that the assessment could be applied to other sports institutions, such as federations, clubs, and sports academies, due to its suitable scientific characteristics.

1- INTRODUCTION

The level of management efficiency is a key determinant of national progress and organizational success. Management is the fundamental tool through which human and material resources are efficiently and effectively utilized to achieve strategic objectives. This is confirmed by modern management literature, which indicates that organizational success depends largely on the efficiency of management practices and their ability to balance resources and objectives [1]. Despite many countries and institutions possessing substantial resources, weak management capabilities lead to the suboptimal utilization of these resources, negatively impacting performance and institutional development.

In a complex and rapidly changing organizational environment, strategic flexibility has emerged as a key concept in strategic management. It represents an organization's ability to anticipate and proactively respond to environmental changes by reallocating resources, adjusting organizational structures, and developing decision-making mechanisms. This ensures continuity and enhances long-term competitive performance [2] ; [3]. In this context, strategic flexibility is considered a major application of dynamic capability theory, which focuses on an organization's ability to reshape its resources to adapt to environmental changes[4].

Recent studies have confirmed that strategic flexibility is a crucial approach to improving organizational performance and addressing strategic shortcomings, particularly in service and sports organizations operating in resource-scarce and unstable environments [5]. Studies in sports management also indicate that adopting strategic flexibility contributes to improving the quality of sports performance by promoting innovation, developing organizational structures, improving the decision-making process, as well as achieving a balance between stability and adapting to changes, which is essential in light of the rapid digital transformations and competitiveness witnessed in this sector [6] ; [7].

Despite this growing interest, a review of the literature reveals a clear research gap: the limited number of studies addressing strategic flexibility in governmental sports institutions, coupled with the absence of standardized scientific measures for this variable within the Arab sports environment, particularly at the local directorate level. Most previous studies have focused on analyzing the relationship between strategic flexibility and performance or competitive advantage, without developing precise measurement tools that reflect organizational realities [8]. Therefore, the need arises for developing a scientific measure that can objectively diagnose the level of strategic flexibility.

The significance of the current research lies in its attempt to bridge this gap by developing a standardized scientific measure of strategic flexibility within the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate, as perceived by its employees. This will provide a reliable measurement tool for assessing organizational realities, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and supporting decision-makers in improving administrative performance and enhancing adaptability to environmental changes. In light of this, the research aims to build a strategic flexibility scale, identify the level of this variable and its dimensions within the directorate, as well as provide a scientific tool that can be applied in other sports institutions, in order to contribute to the development of administrative work in the sports field and enhance its modern trends.

2. Methodology

2-1 Research Methodology

The researchers adopted the descriptive survey method because it is suitable for the nature of the current study and its objectives. This method is one of the most common methods in administrative and organizational studies that aim to describe and analyze phenomena by collecting data from a representative sample of the population.

Fig. 1. Flow chart of the methodology for developing, validating, and digitally implementing the Strategic Flexibility scale



2-2 Research Population and Sample

The research population consisted of (231) employees of the Nineveh Governorate Youth and Sports Directorate. (231) questionnaires were distributed. Table (1). Distribution of the Research Population and Samples

Sample Category	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)	Selection Method
Research Population	231	100.00	Total population

Returned and Valid Questionnaires	220	95.23	After excluding incomplete forms
Excluded Questionnaires	11	4.77	Incomplete responses
Scale Construction Sample	120	54.54	Random sampling
Pilot Sample	10	4.54	Purposive sampling (outside the construction sample)
Reliability Sample	30	13.63	Random sampling (outside the construction sample)
Total Samples Used for Scale Construction	160	72.71	—

A number of sources and studies related to strategic flexibility were reviewed. The researchers relied on two methodologies in constructing the scale:

- The experiential approach
- The logical (rational) approach

2-4 Steps for Building the Scale

2-4-1 Identifying Scale Axes

7 initial axes were identified through literature analysis and then presented to (15) experts. A threshold of (75%) or higher was required for acceptance of each axis [9].

The results led to the adoption of (4) final axes: Resource Flexibility, Organizational Structure Flexibility, Decision-Making Flexibility, and Communication Flexibility

2-4-2 Formulating Initial Items

39 items were initially prepared using a five-point Likert scale, adhering to scientific principles of formulation, such as clarity, precision, and measuring one concept per item.

2-4-3 Face Validity

The scale was presented to experts, and a threshold of (75%) was required for item acceptance. This resulted in the deletion of (4) items, leaving (35) items in its final form.

2.4.4 Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted with a sample of (10) employees to ensure the clarity of the items and instructions. The average response time was (13 minutes), and the results confirmed the instrument's validity.

2.5 Scale Validity and Reliability

The psychometric properties of the scale were verified using several statistical methods, as shown in the following table:

Response Rate: 95.23% (220 out of 231 questionnaires were returned and considered valid for statistical analysis).

2-3 Data Collection Tools

2-3-1 Questionnaire

The researchers adopted a questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. It was designed according to systematic scientific steps based on literature and previous studies, and was presented to a group of experts and specialists for the purpose of: Determining the validity of the scale's axes
Evaluating the items and their suitability
Ensuring the clarity of the alternatives

2-3-2 Scientific Sources

Table (2): Coefficients for Building the Strategic Flexibility Scale

No.	Coefficient	Method	Statistical Indicator	Values	Result
1	Construct Validity (Dimensions)	Experts	Agreement Percentage	80% – 100%	Acceptance of 4 dimensions
2	Face Validity	Experts	Agreement Percentage	≥ 75%	Deletion of 4 items
3	Discriminatory Power	Extreme Groups	t-test	2.919 – 5.957	Significant at 0.05
4	Internal Consistency (Item–Dimension)	Pearson	Correlation Coefficient	0.389 – 0.640	Significant
5	Internal Consistency (Item–Scale)	Pearson	Correlation Coefficient	0.315 – 0.510	Significant
6	Correlation of Dimensions with Scale	Pearson	Correlation Coefficient	0.790 – 0.843	Significant
7	Split-Half Reliability	Pearson	Correlation Coefficient	0.82	High

8	Overall Reliability	Spearman–Brown	Reliability Coefficient	0.90	Very High
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This table presents the indicators for constructing the Strategic Flexibility Scale in terms of validity and reliability, and can be interpreted as follows:

First: Validity

Construct Validity:

The axes were presented to experts, and the agreement rate reached 80%–100%, a high percentage indicating that the four axes are appropriate and represent the concept of strategic flexibility well; therefore, they were accepted.

Face Validity:

The results of the experts' evaluation showed that items that achieved an agreement rate of 75% or higher were acceptable, while four items were removed due to their inappropriateness. This reinforces the clarity and accuracy of the scale items.

Discriminatory Power:

Using the two extreme groups method and the t-test, the values ranged from 2.919 to 5.957, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that the items are able to distinguish between individuals with high and low levels of strategic flexibility.

Internal Consistency:

(Item-Axis): Correlation coefficients ranged from 0.389 to 0.640, which is statistically significant, indicating that the items are well-aligned with their respective axes.

(Item-Scale): Correlation coefficients ranged from 0.315 to 0.510, which is also significant, indicating the consistency of the items with the scale as a whole.

(Axis-Scale Correlation): Correlation coefficients ranged from 0.790 to 0.843, which are high values, indicating that the axes are strongly correlated with the overall scale.

Second: Reliability

Split-Half Reliability:

The correlation coefficient was 0.82, a high coefficient indicating the stability of the scale and the consistency of its results.

Overall Reliability: Using the Spearman-Brown equation, the reliability coefficient was (0.90), which is a very high coefficient, confirming that the scale has a high degree of reliability and can be relied upon in application.

2-6 Description of the Scale in its Final Form

The Strategic Flexibility Scale in its final form consists of: 1- (35) items 2- (4) main axes 3- A five-point Likert scale (1-5)

The total score range is between (35-175) points, and all items are positive.

2-7 Statistical Methods

The SPSS statistical software was used to analyze the data, and the following methods were employed:

- mean
- Standard deviation
- Percentage
- T-test
- Pearson correlation coefficient
- Spearman-Brown rank correlation coefficient⁴.

3 Results

3-1 Presentation of Results

Table (3) shows the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, percentage, and ranking of the four axes of the strategic flexibility scale.

Dimensions	Mean (X̄)	Std. Deviation (±SD)	Number of Items	Total Score	Hypothetical Mean	Percentage	Rank
Resource Flexibility (Human – Material – Financial)	34.26	3.50	9	45	27	76.13%	Fourth
Organizational Structure Flexibility	35.43	2.88	9	45	27	78.73%	Second
Decision-Making Flexibility	32.90	2.35	8	40	24	82.25%	First
Communication Flexibility	35.17	2.65	9	45	27	78.15%	Third
Overall Scale	136.78	5.77	35	175	105	78.16%	—

Table (2) shows that the arithmetic mean of the scale reached (136.78) with a standard deviation of (5.77), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of (105).

This indicates a statistically significant difference between the arithmetic mean and the hypothetical mean. The percentage reached (78.16%) for the

strategic flexibility scale, according to the opinions of the study sample from the employees of the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate. From the researcher's perspective, this result indicates that strategic flexibility within the directorate is functioning well. It can be observed that the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate largely adopts strategic flexibility concepts such as flexibility in decision-making, organizational structure, and communication. Furthermore, the directorate possesses adequate resources. These concepts are essential for improving the organization of sports activities in the governorate. This result confirms that the employees in the directorate have a shared understanding of priorities and the ability to automatically redistribute their efforts in the event of any emergency. This enhances the overall performance efficiency of the directorate, which is what Teece (2018) emphasized when he stated that successful institutions are those that possess dynamic capabilities that enable them to sense With opportunities and risks, and responding to them quickly, these capabilities are not a luxury but an essential part of the sustainability of administrative work. [10]. Bratianu et al. (2020) also indicate that organizations that achieve high levels of resilience are those that encourage their employees to think outside the box, thus reducing performance gaps resulting from sudden changes. [11].

Despite this finding, the researcher believes that the strategic flexibility of the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate requires further development and an opportunity for improvement in public administration. This result indicates that the directorate is adept at responding to changes, but it still lacks the ability to anticipate challenges before they occur and prepare for them proactively, rather than waiting for them to happen. Therefore, the challenges related to administrative centralization and the lack of future planning tools must be addressed. (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017) point out that many government institutions face a challenge in transitioning from procedural flexibility to innovative flexibility, which requires reducing administrative constraints and encouraging employees to make bolder field decisions [12].

Furthermore, Van de Walle et al. (2016) emphasize that continuing to raise levels of flexibility requires linking performance to modern technological and information systems. The lack of complete digitization in some aspects of the work remains the biggest obstacle to achieving comprehensive flexibility. [13].

We observe from Table (16) that the decision-making dimension ranked first with a very good level and a percentage of (82.25%).

The researcher believes that this result reflects the directorate's ability to make flexible and rapid decisions that are compatible with the nature of environmental changes. This indicates the adoption of

advanced decision-making methods based on information, analysis, and prediction. This level also points to the existence of an organizational environment that encourages initiative and innovation and reduces the constraints that hinder the speed of decision-making. This result can also be explained by the presence of a degree of administrative decentralization that grants different administrative levels broader authority in decision-making, which contributes to improving the speed of response and reducing the time required to address problems. This is what indicated when they stated that the flexibility of decision-making is a crucial factor in achieving strategic flexibility, as it enables the organization to continuously modify its strategies. [2].

The researcher believes that reaching this high percentage (82%) means that there is a firm conviction among employees that they have the ability and freedom to make decisions that are appropriate to the requirements of field work without the need to refer to senior management for every detail. This type of administrative empowerment is the true essence of strategic flexibility. An organization is not flexible unless its decision-makers possess quick wit and the ability to deal with emergencies as soon as they occur. It also reflects a positive spirit within the directorate, where employees feel that their voices are heard and that their ability to evaluate and decide on matters is not restricted. This is what Joyce (2015) emphasized: Organizations that enjoy high flexibility are those that distribute decision-making powers across multiple organizational levels, which reduces the time wasted in review bureaucracy and allows the organization to seize opportunities and avoid risks with high efficiency. [14].

Table (16) shows us that the flexibility of the organizational structure came in second place with a percentage of (78.73%). According to the researcher, this result reflects a state of institutional maturity in the Directorate of Youth and Sports in Nineveh, as it is clear that the organizational structure of the directorate has the ability to adapt and distribute roles in a way that ensures the smooth flow of work and avoids cases of administrative delays or routine procedures that hinder the completion of work quickly and accurately. This level also indicates that the organizational structure in the directorate is characterized by a degree of flexibility and fluidity, which allows for the redistribution of roles and tasks in a way that is compatible with the requirements of the work. This result also reflects the directorate's ability to reduce organizational rigidity and adopt modern organizational patterns that are more adapted to the environment.

The researcher believes that this result was achieved thanks to the high level of awareness among the directorate's employees and the existence of a good

organizational climate. This means that the directorate does not operate according to specific and fixed templates, but rather according to a vision characterized by openness to change and acceptance of ideas that would raise and develop administrative performance. This enhances the effectiveness of the directorate's performance as a whole. The directorate possesses organizational confidence, where the employee feels that the organizational structure within which he works is supportive and helpful in enabling him to be creative. This is what Al-Ali & Ibrahim (2025) indicated, stating that a flexible organizational structure is one of the essential factors that contribute to enhancing innovation, as it allows for the flow of information and reduces complexity, which is reflected positively on organizational performance. [15]

Although this dimension ranked second, the researcher believes that its performance needs development and enhancement through continuous updating of the directorate's organizational structure. This can be achieved by adopting reforms such as further simplifying the administrative hierarchy and reducing gaps between organizational levels to ensure the fastest possible delivery of instructions, directives, and requests. It also involves greater investment in young human resources and their participation in redesigning career paths to align with modern technological advancements. Furthermore, increasing employee empowerment by granting broader authority will contribute to raising this performance level and achieving distinguished and high standards.

Table (16) shows that the communication flexibility dimension came in third place with a percentage of (78.15%). The researcher attributes this dimension's high percentage to the success of communication channels within the directorate in overcoming obstacles related to information exchange and the existence of an environment that allows for the transfer of information and data between different administrative levels without any complications, which enhances the speed of work completion. The researcher believes that this consensus among employees is due to the directorate's reliance on modern and diverse communication methods that have reduced dependence on paper correspondence, creating a kind of transparency and speed in transferring information that allows the employee to know the tasks required of him and the expected results clearly. Moreover, communication flexibility in the directorate is the lifeblood of field activities, as the nature of the directorate's work requires rapid coordination that does not tolerate delays. This is confirmed by the percentage of this dimension, indicating that the directorate is able to absorb work pressures and provide the necessary feedback. Robbins & Judge, 2017, also pointed out that communication effectiveness enhances the

organizational capacity of the institution to respond to the changes around it. [1].

On the other hand, the researcher believes that this achieved percentage and ranking of the dimension require further development and an effort to transform communication flexibility from a mere means of transmitting instructions into a tool for enhancing active participation in decision-making. This necessitates working on developing the communication skills of staff through specialized courses, in addition to focusing on strengthening upward communication channels that ensure the easy transmission of ideas and suggestions from employees at various administrative levels to senior management. Furthermore, the directorate should conduct continuous and periodic reviews of its communication methods to ensure their modernity and alignment with developments, thus preventing any future gaps in the communication process. The researcher emphasizes that promoting a communication culture will lead to increased efficiency in coordination between departments within the directorate, contributing to the transition from good communication to outstanding communication, which achieves the highest levels of job satisfaction. This is confirmed by (Miller, 2008), who stated that communication within an organization is not limited to the transmission of messages only, but rather constitutes an integrated system that influences organizational behavior and enhances cooperation between individuals and groups, in addition to its role in improving performance. Institutionalization and improving the efficiency of administrative work. [16]. According to Table (16), the human resources dimension ranked fourth with a percentage of (76.13%). The researcher believes this percentage represents a positive indicator, reflecting that the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate possesses a solid foundation of capabilities that enable it to manage its operations and utilize available resources to serve and achieve its objectives. This indicates a degree of stability in essential material, financial, and human resource needs. The presence of qualified human resources, coupled with material resources and financial support, forms a fundamental basis for the organization's survival and continued operation. This aligns with what Hunger & Wheelen (2020) indicated: The availability of basic resources in organizations is a necessary condition for the continuity of organizational performance and the achievement of administrative stability. [17]

The researcher also attributes the achievement of this percentage to the utilization of the accumulated experiences of the administrative staff of the directorate in dealing with the available resources in a way that ensures an acceptable level of operational efficiency, as

well as creating a balance between these resources (albeit limited) which contributes to the continuity of administrative work and sports activities without interruption, as this integration between resources helps to enhance the directorate's ability to provide and maintain its services, and this is what (Hitt et al. (2024), indicated when he said that the integration of resources is a basic condition for the effectiveness of organizations and the continuity of their performance. [3]

Despite the percentage achieved by this dimension, it ranked last among the dimensions of the scale. The researcher attributes this to several factors, most notably the lack or weakness of government support for the directorate, limited financial resources, and inadequate infrastructure. This ranking indicates the existence of external constraints affecting the level of resource utilization and hindering the directorate's effective performance. The researcher also believes that limited financial allocations reduce the ability to develop material capabilities and improve infrastructure, which is reflected in the quality of implementation of the directorate's sports activities and programs. Furthermore, weak financial resources may limit training and development opportunities for human resources. This is what Hitt et al. (2024) pointed out: Organizations operating in the public sector depend to a large extent on the level of government support and the availability of financial resources to achieve their operational efficiency, and the limited availability of these resources is one of the most prominent factors that hinder the implementation of strategies and weaken the ability to adapt to environmental changes [3].

Furthermore Teece (2018) asserts that a weak physical and financial base limits an organization's ability to flexibly restructure its resources, thus impacting its performance level. [10].

Therefore, the researcher believes that the challenge in this dimension lies in financial constraints, infrastructure limitations, and weak institutional support, rather than a lack of human resources. This necessitates strengthening government funding, developing infrastructure, and expanding and maximizing revenue streams to enhance performance efficiency and improve strategic flexibility within the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate.

Conclusion

The study results indicate that the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate possesses a good level of strategic flexibility, with the overall mean score exceeding the hypothetical mean by 78.16%. This reflects the directorate's ability to adapt to environmental changes and respond efficiently to the demands of administrative and sports operations. The results also

showed that the decision-making flexibility dimension outperformed the other dimensions, indicating a suitable degree of decentralization and employee empowerment, which contributes to faster decision-making and improved response to emergencies. Organizational structure and communication flexibility were also at good levels, reflecting a relatively flexible organizational environment that supports smooth workflow and information exchange between different administrative levels.

However, the resource flexibility dimension ranked last, indicating challenges related to limited financial resources and infrastructure, which may limit the directorate's ability to achieve higher levels of strategic flexibility. The results also show that the directorate relies more on reactive flexibility than proactive flexibility; that is, it tends to deal with changes after they occur rather than anticipating and preparing for them in advance. On the other hand, the scale used in the study demonstrated a high degree of validity and reliability, confirming its suitability as a scientific tool for measuring strategic flexibility in sports organizations.

In light of these findings, the study recommends strengthening future strategic planning, developing financial resources and infrastructure, supporting administrative decentralization, and modernizing organizational structures. It also emphasizes the importance of developing communication systems and human resources, as well as adopting and implementing the current scale in other sports organizations for benchmarking and comparison.

Study Limitations:

The results of this study are subject to several limitations that must be considered when interpreting and generalizing them. The study was limited to employees of the Nineveh Youth and Sports Directorate, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other sports institutions or government sectors with different organizational environments. Furthermore, the study relied primarily on questionnaires as the data collection tool, which may make the results susceptible to biases related to individual responses, such as the desire to provide positive or socially acceptable answers.

Additionally, the study focused on measuring strategic flexibility through four specific dimensions, which may not reflect all aspects of this multidimensional concept, especially given recent developments in management literature. The use of a descriptive survey methodology is limited to describing and analyzing the phenomenon without delving into the causal relationships between variables.

The study's results were also influenced by the temporal and spatial context in which it was conducted, particularly the challenges related to financial

resources and infrastructure, which may affect the directorate's level of strategic flexibility. Therefore, generalizing the results should be done with caution, taking into account the specific nature of the organizational environment under study.

Author Contributions

Researcher Rahma Mahmoud Amin contributed to formulating the research idea, designing the measurement instrument, collecting and analyzing data, and writing the first draft of the research. Researcher Yasser Bazel Mohammed contributed to the scientific supervision, reviewing the theoretical framework, verifying the results, and supervising the final drafting of the research. All researchers approved the final version of the manuscript.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that there is no conflict of interest that could affect the research results or their interpretation.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available to the researchers upon reasonable request.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were adhered to in conducting this research. Participants in the sample participated voluntarily after the study's objective was clearly explained, and the confidentiality of the information was guaranteed, with its use limited to scientific research purposes only.

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