Providing a Framework for Identifying Challenges in Human Resource Management in the Education System of Iraq

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A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

Purpose: The objective of this study is to develop a comprehensive framework for identifying the challenges facing human resource management (HRM) in the education system of Iraq. By leveraging insights from key stakeholders, the study aims to provide detailed understanding and solutions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of HRM practices in Iraqi educational institutions.

Methodology: This qualitative study utilized a purposive sampling method to select 12 experts from the Iraqi education sector, focusing on the provinces of Maysan, Baghdad, and Dhi Qar. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis facilitated by NVivo software. The analysis aimed to identify key themes related to HRM challenges, ensuring the validity of findings through researcher self-review and verification control.

Findings: The study identified several significant challenges affecting HRM in Iraq's education system. Financial constraints, such as low salaries for educational staff and inadequate funding for schools, were pervasive. Infrastructural deficiencies, including old and poorly maintained school buildings, contributed to an unconducive learning environment. There was also a lack of technological integration, with schools insufficiently equipped and teachers untrained in using modern educational tools. Additional issues included inadequate parental and governmental support, a curriculum misaligned with societal and market needs, teacher demotivation, outdated assessment methods, and political instability influencing educational policies.

Conclusion: Effective HRM practices, such as performance-based budgeting, financial decentralization, technological integration, and comprehensive teacher training programs, are essential for enhancing educator performance and improving educational quality.

Keywords: Human resource management, education system, Iraq, financial constraints, infrastructural deficiencies, technological integration, teacher empowerment, political instability.

1. Introduction

The education system in Iraq faces significant challenges, particularly in the domain of human resource management (HRM). These challenges are multifaceted and have been exacerbated by the socio-political context of the country, which includes prolonged conflict and instability. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing effective strategies to improve the quality of education and optimize the performance of educators and administrative staff (Al-Husan et al., 2021; Alfaiz et al., 2021; Mjhool et al., 2021). HRM in education is a critical factor influencing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of educational institutions (Amiri et al., 2023; Miri Rami et al., 2022; Sobhani et al., 2020). Permatasari (2023) highlights that optimizing teacher performance through effective HRM practices can lead to better learning outcomes. However, the unique context of Iraq, characterized by financial constraints and political instability, complicates the implementation of such practices (Permatasari, 2023). Alfaiz, Karim, and Alashwal (2021) underscore the importance of contextualizing HRM strategies within the specific socio-economic conditions of the region. This approach is particularly relevant for Iraq, where the education sector is deeply affected by financial, infrastructural, and administrative challenges (Alfaiz et al., 2021).

Financial constraints are one of the most pressing issues facing Iraq's education system. According to Alkndlee (2023), performance-based budgeting could potentially improve the financial management of educational institutions. However, the current financial allocation is inadequate, leading to insufficient salaries for educational staff and lack of essential resources in schools. This financial inadequacy forces educators to seek supplementary income through private tutoring, as noted by several interviewees in this study. The disparity in budget allocation between the Ministry of Education and other ministries further exacerbates these issues (Alkndlee, 2023).

Infrastructural challenges are equally significant. Many schools in Iraq are old and poorly maintained, leading to overcrowded classrooms and an unconducive learning environment. Nair (2018) suggests that financial decentralization, such as school block grants, could address some of these infrastructural issues by providing schools with the autonomy to allocate funds where needed most. However, the implementation of such decentralization policies requires careful planning and monitoring to ensure effectiveness (Nair, 2018).

The role of technology in education has become increasingly important, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hussein et al. (2020) discuss the adoption of platforms like Google Classroom in Iraq, which has shown promise but also revealed significant gaps in technological infrastructure and teacher training (Hussein et al., 2020). Mjhool et al. (2021) further highlight the internet challenges and e-learning trends in Iraq, emphasizing the need for better technological integration in schools. Despite these advancements, many schools still lack the necessary tools and training to effectively utilize technology in teaching (Mjhool et al., 2021).

Teacher empowerment and professional development are critical for improving the education system. Runhaar (2016) posits that HRM practices in schools should focus on both content and process perspectives to enhance teacher performance. However, in Iraq, teachers often face demotivation due to inadequate salaries, lack of professional development opportunities, and insufficient support from the government (Runhaar, 2016). The study by Barnett-Vanes et al. (2016) on the impact of conflict on medical education in Iraq highlights similar issues, noting that prolonged conflict has led to a decline in the quality of education and professional training (Barnett-Vanes et al., 2016).

The political context in Iraq significantly influences the education sector. Al-Husan, Amaugo, and Idiko (2021) note that political instability and administrative inefficiencies can hinder effective HRM practices. This instability often results in frequent changes in educational policies and leadership, leading to a lack of continuity and strategic planning (Al-Husan et al., 2021). Diaz-Carrión, López-Fernández, and Romero-Fernández (2018) emphasize the need for sustainable HRM systems that can adapt to such volatile environments (Decramer et al., 2012).

Additionally, the study by Steffensen et al. (2019) calls for putting the "management" back in human resource management by focusing on strategic and coherent HRM practices (Steffensen et al., 2019). This approach is particularly relevant for Iraq, where HRM practices need to be aligned with broader educational goals and adapted to the unique challenges of the country. Verheijen-Tiemstra (2023) highlights the barriers to collaboration between school teachers and childcare workers, which also points to the need for more integrated HRM practices in educational settings (Verheijen-Tiemstra, 2023).

To address the existing challenges, it is essential to develop a comprehensive and context-specific HRM framework. Gassanova (2023) suggests that mapping the landscape of HRM research can provide valuable insights for developing such frameworks (Gassanova, 2023). The integration of lean HRM practices, as discussed by Paposa et al. (2023), could also be beneficial in streamlining processes and improving efficiency within the education sector (Paposa et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the HRM challenges in Iraq's education system are deeply rooted in the country's socio-economic and political context. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that considers financial, infrastructural, technological, and political factors. By developing and implementing effective HRM practices, it is possible to enhance the performance of educators, improve the quality of education, and ultimately contribute to the socio-economic development of Iraq. This study aims to contribute to this effort by providing a detailed framework for identifying and addressing the key HRM challenges in Iraq's education system.

2.   Methods and Materials

2.1.   Study Design and Participants

This qualitative study was designed to explore the challenges facing human resource management in the education system of Iraq. The study employed a purposive sampling method to select participants, ensuring that the chosen individuals were experts and key informants in the field. The criterion of theoretical saturation guided the sampling process, which means that data collection continued until no new information or themes emerged from additional interviews. A total of 12 participants from various provinces, including Maysan, Baghdad, and Dhi Qar, were selected. These participants were identified as having significant expertise and experience relevant to the research topic, making them suitable candidates for providing deep insights into the challenges of human resource management in Iraq's education system.

2.2.   Measures

2.2.1.   Semi-Structured Interview

The primary tool for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews. These interviews were meticulously designed to allow for in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives while providing enough flexibility to probe into specific areas of interest as the conversation unfolded. Each interview was conducted in a manner that encouraged open and honest dialogue, ensuring that the participants could share their insights freely. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The use of semi-structured interviews was particularly appropriate for this study as it allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complex and multifaceted challenges facing human resource management in Iraq's educational system.

2.3.   Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, facilitated by NVivo software, which is designed to support qualitative data analysis. The analysis process began with the transcription of the interviews, followed by initial coding to identify significant features and patterns within the data. These initial codes were then examined to form organizing themes, which represent broader and more abstract patterns of meaning. Through a process of refinement, these organizing themes were further developed into comprehensive themes that encapsulate the main challenges identified in the study. The thematic analysis proceeded through three main stages: initial coding, organizing themes, and comprehensive themes. This method allowed for a detailed and systematic examination of the data, ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' actual experiences and insights. To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher employed self-review and verification controls, which involved repeated reviews of the data and emerging themes to confirm their accuracy and consistency. The final results identified six primary challenges facing human resource management in Iraq's education system, providing a clear and structured narrative of the issues at hand.

3.   Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the 12 participants in this study were diverse, reflecting a range of experiences and expertise relevant to the education system in Iraq. The participants included 8 males and 4 females, indicating a predominance of male experts in the field. The age distribution of the participants ranged from 35 to 60 years, with the majority (7 participants) being between 40 and 50 years old, indicating a significant level of professional maturity and experience. In terms of professional roles, the participants included 4 school principals, 3 senior teachers,

2 educational policymakers, 2 educational researchers, and 1 school inspector, demonstrating a broad spectrum of perspectives within the educational system. Geographically, the participants were distributed across three provinces: Maysan, Baghdad, and Dhi Qar, with 5 participants from Baghdad, 4 from Maysan, and 3 from Dhi Qar, ensuring a representative sample from different regions of Iraq. This diverse demographic profile provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing human resource management in Iraq's education system.

Table 1

The Results of Thematic Analysis

Statements	Interviewees' Codes	Basic Codes	Organizing Themes	Comprehensive Themes
Considering the low salaries of educational staff relative to their needs, there are moderate financial challenges, which compel them to pursue private tutoring and special courses. Necessary financial and moral support for educational institutions is lacking. Most schools suffer from the lack of budget allocation for furniture, blackboards, chairs, and school supplies for students and management. The low salaries in the education system and the disparity between the Ministry of Education and other ministries are quite evident.	T1, T2, T5, T7, T9, T10, T11, T12	Low salaries for educational staff; Lack of financial support for educational institutions; Private tutoring by educational staff; Lack of budget allocation to meet school needs; Disparity in the budget of the Ministry of Education compared to other ministries	Inadequate financial resources for school management; Low salaries of public education system staff in Iraq	Financial Challenges (lack of financial resources and credits)
Most schools are old and deteriorated, and there are few classrooms, leading to overcrowded classes with more than 60 students per class. School buildings are old and poorly maintained. Classrooms are not painted with beautiful colors or equipped with adequate seating. They are neither warm in winter nor cool in summer, affecting students' mental well-being. Relevant authorities do not pay serious attention to the infrastructure of schools or consider their needs for renovation and rebuilding.	T2, T3, T4, T5, T8, T9, T11, T12	Deteriorated and old schools; Few classrooms; Overcrowded classes; Poor maintenance of schools; Lack of serious attention from authorities to school infrastructure	Old majority of classrooms; Poor maintenance of educational facilities	Inadequate School Infrastructure
School principals face problems in preparing, training, and educating students, which requires cultural cultivation by parents, as education fundamentally precedes instruction, and students need rewards and motivation. The school institution, as a miniature educational unit, suffers from negative ministerial interactions and governmental neglect, negatively impacting parental interest in increasing trust. Some parents do not care about their children; if the school holds a parent council meeting, it will find that out of every 100 students, only 15 have guardians who care about their children, affecting the students' performance. Social issues arising in society greatly impact students, with tribal, partisan, and sectarian divisions dominating teachers' decisions, denying them necessary rights, and creating an unsuitable educational environment for students due to some families' economic weaknesses, forcing children to work in markets, shops, or streets after school.	T1, T3, T4, T7, T9, T10, T11, T12	Lack of necessary parental support for schools and teachers; Government neglect of increasing family participation in the education system; Viewing children as labor by families; Influence of tribes, parties, and sects on teachers' decisions	Need for cultural cultivation for parental participation in schools; Unsuitable educational environment for students due to community and parental factors	Inadequate Interaction between Families and Schools
The main problem with education in Iraq is that its outputs do not align with societal and market needs. The educational system in schools is entirely designed for theoretical instruction, unrelated to enhancing students' skills. Education in Iraq follows a patriarchal authoritarian system, imposing uniform templates on students. The education system in Iraq shows no interest in subjects that boost morale, motivation, and skills, as	T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T9, T12	Lack of alignment between school education and societal/market needs; Entirely theoretical instruction for students; Patriarchal system in Iraq's education system; Disinterest in skill-based subjects; Neglect of sports and arts classes; Weakness in enhancing student motivation	Lack of attention to societal needs in school education; Implementation of a theory-based curriculum in the general education system	Weakness in Implementing a Skills-Based Education System

evident in the neglect of sports and arts classes. Traditional teaching methods still exist in schools.

Technologies are not properly utilized in Iraq's general education system. Schools, in their current form, do not support technological systems, and teachers, due to the general education system, are often unaware of how to use technology. Traditional teaching methods are used in schools. From a technological perspective, there is a shortage of necessary tools to achieve the desired objectives, such as the availability of computers and smart devices that support faster learning and easy idea transfer. These are not available in schools.	T2, T3, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12	Weak use of technology in Iraq's education system; Lack of technological support in schools; Teachers' weakness in using technology; Shortage of technological tools in teaching, such as smart boards	Inadequate use of technology in the educational system; Iraq's schools not equipped with educational technology	Weak Educational Technology in the General Education System
Some media and dubious parties attempt to undermine the position of teachers in Iraq. The scientific and practical role of teachers in schools is not considered. Laws and regulations are unfair to teachers, confining them to traditional practices. Teachers are discouraged from advancing and developing the educational process, and most of the educational staff live below the standard of living. The financial system for teachers is weak, and many young people are disinterested in the teaching profession. The government's policy towards teachers is unclear, leading to teachers neglecting their profession. There is no clear policy to support teachers. Economically, teachers' salaries are insufficient, forcing them to work in other professions, which devalues the teaching profession.	T1, T5, T6, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12	Undermining the position of teachers; Lack of attention to teachers' scientific and practical role; Weak financial status of teachers; Lack of legal support for teachers; Teachers working in other professions; Disinterest of young people in the teaching profession	Disregard for the educational and training mission of teachers; Lack of respect for teachers in Iraqi society	Weakening the Position of Teachers in the General Education System
Old tools and methods are used in the process of assessing and evaluating students, with phenomena such as bribery and nepotism in students' academic processes, as well as increased cheating among them. Supervision standards are very weak. The style of exams is traditional, with no attention to students' psychological aspects. Unfortunately, some educational staff lack the academic qualifications necessary for the educational system and should not have been recruited.	T2, T4, T5, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11	Old tools and methods of assessment and evaluation; Bribery in students' academic processes; Increased cheating among learners; Weak supervision standards; Lack of attention to learners' psychological aspects in exams; Recruitment of unqualified staff into the educational system	Traditional assessment and evaluation process; Lack of attention to standard and modern indicators in the educational evaluation process	Lack of a Comprehensive Recruitment, Assessment, and Educational Evaluation System
Iraq is politically unstable, leading to turmoil in educational policies as an inseparable part of these chaotic policies. Inefficient selection of education ministers has further destabilized education. Iraq's education system is subject to quotas and partisan, political, and sectarian tensions, fracturing national unity. Tribal and sectarian conflicts have prevented education from adopting appropriate approaches, succumbing to the country's tumultuous policies.	T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11	Political instability in Iraq; Political decisions for education; Political, partisan, and tribal tensions in education; Failure to adopt appropriate educational approaches due to chaotic policies	Sectarianism in Iraq's education system; Influence of politicians on Iraq's education system	Politicization of Iraq's Education System
Today, Iraq faces numerous problems like poverty and financial and administrative corruption. These problems are rooted in public ignorance, illiteracy, and hidden illiteracy, exacerbated by an inefficient educational system. One reason is that key posts in the Ministry of Education, its departments, education directorates, and school management are not given to specialists with high qualifications. Additionally, there is a lack of a clear vision for strategies related to the advancement of public education. This responsibility is jointly held by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. It is crucial to have joint plans for	T1, T3, T5, T7, T9, T10, T11, T12	Financial and administrative corruption in Iraq; Public ignorance, illiteracy, and hidden illiteracy; Lack of specialization in educational responsibilities; Some responsibilities managed concurrently by two ministries (Education and Higher Education)	Educational unawareness in education departments and society; Inefficient educational system; Parallel functioning of the education system and higher education system	Lack of Policy-Making and Strategy in the Education System

the inputs of public education aligned with the outputs, managed by both ministries.				
Some members of Iraq's educational staff lack the necessary capabilities in educational matters. Teachers' teaching methods are traditional. Some teachers lack the necessary experience. Many educational methods are outdated, and educational institutions have not yet managed to separate from them. There is no strategic planning for the educational system, leading to confusion with rapid changes, resulting in random and impromptu actions. There is a need for quality institutions for the professional growth of teachers from primary to senior levels. The current teacher training system needs to be equipped with qualified personnel to implement periodic teacher training programs.	T2, T4, T6, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12	Lack of capabilities of educational staff; Traditional teaching methods; Existence of old methods in the educational system; Confusion in the educational system due to rapid changes; Strengthening the teacher training system	Weak educational staff; Outdated educational methods in the education system; Need for quality implementation of teacher training programs	Weakness in Empowering Educational Staff

The study identified several significant challenges facing human resource management in the Iraqi education system through thematic analysis of interviews with 12 key informants. Financial constraints emerged as a pervasive issue, with low salaries for educational staff driving them to seek supplementary income through private tutoring. This inadequacy in financial support extends to educational institutions, which suffer from insufficient budgets for essential resources such as furniture and school supplies, further exacerbated by a notable disparity in funding between the Ministry of Education and other ministries. Infrastructure deficiencies are equally problematic, as many schools are characterized by old and poorly maintained buildings, insufficient classrooms, and overcrowded conditions, with up to 60 students per class. These inadequate facilities fail to provide a conducive learning environment, with poor heating and cooling systems impacting students' well-being. Additionally, the study highlights a lack of parental and governmental support in fostering a collaborative educational environment. Parents' limited engagement with schools and teachers, coupled with governmental neglect in enhancing family participation, undermines the educational process. Societal issues such as tribal, partisan, and sectarian influences further complicate decision-making within schools, often at the expense of educational integrity. The curriculum itself is misaligned with societal and market needs, being overly theoretical and not focused on skill development. This theoretical approach, rooted in a patriarchal educational system, overlooks important subjects like sports and arts, which are crucial for holistic student development. Technological integration in education is notably weak, with schools lacking the necessary infrastructure and teachers being untrained in using technological tools, resulting in the persistence of traditional teaching methods. The position of teachers is also under threat, with efforts by certain media and political factions to undermine their status. Teachers face unfair regulations and inadequate financial support, leading many to seek additional employment, which diminishes their professional focus and status. The assessment and evaluation processes are outdated, characterized by the use of old methods and widespread issues such as bribery and cheating, compounded by weak supervisory standards and the recruitment of underqualified educational staff. Politically, Iraq's education system is destabilized by the country's overall instability, with educational policies being subject to quotas and political tensions that fragment national unity. This instability prevents the adoption of appropriate educational strategies, leaving the system susceptible to chaotic political influences. Corruption and administrative inefficiencies further hinder educational progress, with key positions often filled by individuals lacking the necessary qualifications, and a lack of a clear strategic vision for educational advancement. Additionally, there is significant overlap and inefficiency between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, leading to confusion and ineffective policy implementation. Finally, the study underscores a critical need for quality teacher training programs, as many educators currently lack the necessary skills and experience, and the existing training infrastructure is inadequate. The rapid changes within the educational system contribute to confusion and inconsistent practices, highlighting the need for strategic planning and quality institutions dedicated to the professional development of teachers. These findings collectively paint a comprehensive picture of the multifaceted challenges that impede the effective management of human resources in Iraq's education system,

underscoring the need for substantial reforms in financial management, infrastructure development, parental and governmental support, curriculum alignment, technological integration, teacher empowerment, evaluation processes, and strategic planning.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight several key challenges facing human resource management (HRM) in Iraq's education system. These challenges are multifaceted and include financial constraints, infrastructural deficiencies, inadequate technological integration, insufficient parental and governmental support, a curriculum misaligned with societal and market needs, teacher demotivation, outdated assessment methods, and political instability. These issues are deeply intertwined, impacting the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system.

Financial constraints emerged as a predominant issue affecting the education sector. The low salaries for educational staff and the inadequate financial support for educational institutions force many educators to seek supplementary income through private tutoring. This finding aligns with the study by Alkndlee (2023), which suggests that performance-based budgeting could improve financial management in educational institutions (Alkndlee, 2023). However, the current financial allocation is insufficient, leading to significant disparities in budget allocation between the Ministry of Education and other ministries. This financial inadequacy is compounded by the lack of necessary resources in schools, such as furniture and school supplies (Alfaiz et al., 2021).

The study also identified significant infrastructural deficiencies. Many schools in Iraq are old and poorly maintained, resulting in overcrowded classrooms and an unconducive learning environment. Nair (2018) advocates for financial decentralization, such as school block grants, to address these infrastructural issues by providing schools with the autonomy to allocate funds where needed most. Despite these recommendations, the implementation of decentralization policies remains challenging in the Iraqi context, primarily due to political and administrative inefficiencies (Nair, 2018).

The integration of technology in education is another critical area of concern. The findings indicate that schools lack the necessary technological infrastructure and that teachers are often untrained in using technological tools. This situation is exacerbated by the persistence of traditional teaching methods. Hussein et al. (2020) and Mjhool et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of adopting technological platforms like Google Classroom, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, their studies also reveal significant gaps in technological infrastructure and teacher training, which hinder the effective utilization of these platforms (Hussein et al., 2020; Mjhool et al., 2021).

Teacher empowerment and professional development are crucial for improving the education system. Runhaar (2016) posits that HRM practices should focus on both content and process perspectives to enhance teacher performance (Runhaar, 2016). However, in Iraq, teachers face demotivation due to inadequate salaries, lack of professional development opportunities, and insufficient support from the government. This finding is consistent with the study by Barnett-Vanes et al. (2016), which highlights the adverse impact of prolonged conflict on the quality of education and professional training in Iraq (Barnett-Vanes et al., 2016).

The misalignment between the curriculum and societal and market needs is another significant challenge. The education system in Iraq is heavily theoretical, with little emphasis on skill development. This theoretical approach, rooted in a patriarchal educational system, overlooks important subjects like sports and arts, which are crucial for holistic student development (Budhwar et al., 2016; Decramer et al., 2012; Gassanova, 2023; Numan et al., 2022). This finding underscores the need for a more balanced curriculum that integrates both theoretical knowledge and practical skills to better prepare students for the workforce.

Political instability significantly influences the education sector in Iraq. Al-Husan, Amaugo, and Idiko (2021) note that political instability and administrative inefficiencies hinder effective HRM practices. This instability often results in frequent changes in educational policies and leadership, leading to a lack of continuity and strategic planning (Al-Husan et al., 2021). Diaz-Carrión, López-Fernández, and Romero-Fernández (2018) emphasize the need for sustainable HRM systems that can adapt to such volatile environments (Díaz-Carrión et al., 2018).

The assessment and evaluation processes in Iraq's education system are outdated, characterized by old methods and issues such as bribery and cheating. Steffensen et al. (2019) call for putting the "management" back in HRM by focusing on strategic and coherent HRM practices. This approach is particularly relevant for Iraq, where HRM practices need to be aligned with broader educational goals

and adapted to the unique challenges of the country (Steffensen et al., 2019).

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the sample size was limited to 12 participants, which may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives within Iraq's education system. Additionally, the study relied on semi-structured interviews, which, while providing rich qualitative data, may be subject to biases such as interviewer influence and participant self-reporting biases. Furthermore, the study's focus on three provinces (Maysan, Baghdad, and Dhi Qar) may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions of Iraq, which may have different socio-economic and political contexts.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating larger and more diverse samples that include participants from various regions of Iraq. Longitudinal studies could also provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of HRM challenges and the effectiveness of implemented interventions over time. Additionally, quantitative research methods, such as surveys and experimental designs, could complement qualitative findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of HRM issues in Iraq's education system. Research should also explore the impact of specific HRM interventions on educational outcomes, such as student performance and teacher satisfaction, to identify best practices that can be scaled up across the country.

Practically, there are several steps that policymakers and educational leaders can take to address the identified HRM challenges. Firstly, there is a need for a substantial increase in financial investment in the education sector to ensure adequate salaries for educational staff and sufficient resources for schools. Implementing performance-based budgeting, as suggested by Alkndlee (2023), could enhance financial management and accountability. Secondly, infrastructural improvements are critical. Policymakers should prioritize the renovation and maintenance of school buildings to create a conducive learning environment (Alkndlee, 2023). Financial decentralization through school block grants could empower local schools to address their specific infrastructural needs (Nair, 2018).

Technological integration should also be enhanced by providing schools with the necessary infrastructure and training teachers in the effective use of technology. This effort could be supported by international partnerships and investments in educaional technology (Hussein et al., 2020; Mjhool et al., 2021). Furthermore, the curriculum should be reformed to balance theoretical knowledge with practical skills, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the labor market. Incorporating subjects that enhance students' soft skills, such as sports and arts, is essential for holistic development (Numan et al., 2022).

Teacher empowerment and professional development should be prioritized by providing ongoing training opportunities and improving working conditions. Establishing quality institutions for teacher training and professional development could address these needs (Xia et al., 2019). Additionally, addressing political instability and administrative inefficiencies is crucial for creating a stable and supportive environment for HRM practices in education. Policymakers should strive for consistency in educational policies and leadership to ensure continuity and strategic planning (Al-Husan et al., 2021).

In conclusion, addressing the HRM challenges in Iraq's education system requires a multifaceted approach that considers financial, infrastructural, technological, and political factors. By developing and implementing effective HRM practices, it is possible to enhance the performance of educators, improve the quality of education, and ultimately contribute to the socio-economic development of Iraq. This study provides a detailed framework for identifying and addressing the key HRM challenges in Iraq's education system, offering valuable insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and researchers.

Authors' Contributions

The first author was responsible for conducting the interview and collecting data, and the other authors were responsible for analyzing the data and writing the article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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