



Identification and analysis of factors affecting the development of small and medium businesses in Iraq

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this research is to identify and analyze the factors affecting the development of small and medium businesses in Iraq. This research is placed in the mixed group (qualitative-quantitative) in terms of practical purpose and in terms of paradigm. In order to analyze the data in the qualitative part, the inductive content analysis method was used, and in the quantitative part, pairwise (binary) comparisons with the AHP technique were used to rank the categories. The study population of this research includes faculty members, entrepreneurship experts and small and medium business owners in Iraq, who were selected through theoretical and targeted sampling. According to the knowledge of the researcher and considering the objectives of the research, interviews were conducted with 32 academic staff members, experts and experts of entrepreneurship and business development in Iraq. Collecting research data in the qualitative part with two documentary-library methods, field observation and interview, and in the quantitative part through the pairwise comparison questionnaire. The results showed that after analyzing and coding the information obtained from the interview, 14 main categories were extracted, which were classified from the most important to the least important categories after ranking. These categories in order of importance are as follows: human capital management, market and marketing, technology and innovation, policies and laws, support, organizational culture, networking and social capital, risk management, research and

development, access to sustainability, security and establishment and positive resources, access to economic status.
 infrastructure, **Keywords:** small and medium businesses, content analysis, environmental entrepreneurship, development.

Introduction

The conditions governing economic activities in a country include the production of goods and services, distribution, domestic and international financial exchanges, and cross-border trade. These factors are the most important causes of a country's economic development or failures. These conditions are considered as a complete view of the economy of a society, and nowadays, experts, and investors pay a lot of attention to them. These conditions can be considered as a business environment that mainly arises from external factors and affects factors such as productivity and employment of the workforce, investment, economic freedoms of producers, and production capacities. In fact, business refers to any kind of repetitive and legitimate economic activity such as production, purchase, and sale of goods and services with the intention of obtaining economic benefits (Math & Bahraini, 2022). Small and medium-sized businesses in developing countries play an important role in the economy. The main sources of job creation are known in countries. Because they usually operate in different regions, they can help create job opportunities for the youth and the unemployed and reduce the unemployment rate (Kamel Hussein Al-Naseh, 2008). One of the important conditions for sustainable success in the current economy is the expansion of small businesses, which play an important role in stabilizing incomes, economic growth, and employment. Today, the economy of developed countries is based on small and medium-sized businesses. Small businesses Due to their simplicity in organizational structure, they have great flexibility in the face of changes and an acceptable speed in carrying out activities. In addition, small and medium-sized enterprises are the source of attraction and employment of a large part of the population of countries and the training of skilled workers, and the provision of specialized manpower for large companies is done by them. In order to ensure development, governments should provide equal opportunities for social mobility, participation in decision-making, and security (Omidi et al., 2018). Small and medium-sized enterprises play a key role in economic capability as an engine of future economic growth. Due to globalization, these businesses face increasing competitive advantages over their competitors around the world (Rahimpour, 2021). A good business environment and government support are very important. Economic, political, legal, financial and social infrastructures can facilitate entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors. The business environment includes all the direct and indirect factors affecting the performance of the business, and many aspects of it are affected by the performance, Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a very important role in the economies of countries around the world: more than 95% of the total employment created in the world belongs to these types of businesses. In Europe, there are more than 16 million companies, of which less than 1% are large corporations and the rest are small and medium-sized enterprises. In the Asia-Pacific region, 90 percent of companies are small and medium-sized businesses, and 32 to 48 percent of employment and 60 to 80 percent of the region's GDP are related to them. In the United States, economic performance is largely due to the creation of small and medium-sized businesses, which account for 43% of the employment index. In Turkey, 8.99% of all enterprises are small and medium-sized businesses. These businesses play a very important role in creating jobs, attracting investment, and the GDP of countries: 7.76% of the total employment in Turkey belongs to small and medium-sized businesses. 38% of investments in Turkey are related to these businesses. But only 5% of bank credits in Turkey are allocated to these businesses. Therefore, it can be said that small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the economy in many countries of the world and play a very important role in job creation, GDP, and investment. However, the access of these businesses to bank credits is limited compared to their share in the economy (Malshahi et al., 2015). In addition to creating a lost opportunity cost, it has caused policymakers to act without a specific plan and strategy and

pursue inconsistent actions. If this situation continues, in addition to the existing theoretical vacuum, there will be no suitable ground to guide and evaluate the actions of managers and policymakers to benefit from the opportunities for the development of small and medium-sized businesses. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate and identify the factors affecting the development of small and medium-sized businesses in Iraq.

2-Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

Today's business world is subject to constant changes and rapid development. Companies are facing widespread competition and the international sector is expanding (Rad Hassani&Rahimnia, 2016). Researchers have identified a resource framework that influences international entrepreneurship, including skills, attitudes, creativity and innovation, and networking (Pechuan-Gil, 2013, al.et & Gil). Due to the expansion of the dimensions of relations between countries, familiarity with the science of international relations is one of the basic needs of all countries and governments. Familiarity with international relations can have a significant impact on the progress and success of businesses. Regarding business wells, paying attention to the natural, human, organizational and organizational advantages of different regions and facilitating their organizational dimensions can help to succeed in national and international markets (Safari et al., 2015). Saffer& Mino (2021) Small and medium-sized businesses are more vulnerable to environmental fluctuations due to limited financial, technological, and human resources. Unlike large businesses that plan for most eventualities, small and medium-sized businesses often do not have a plan to deal with environmental threats. Also, specific behavior patterns of these businesses such as short-term strategic planning, passive approach to day-to-day problems, focus on operational and technical issues, and weaknesses in management skills, vulnerability (Parvari et al., 2022).The development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is one of the driving forces of the modern economy, plays a significant role in improving employment opportunities, increases exports, and strengthens technological innovations (Sanei et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship, innovation and technological change, creating dynamism in the industry, creating job opportunities, and increasing income. The importance of small and medium-sized businesses in long-term economic growth and stability is due to their characteristics such as flexibility in adverse economic conditions and low investment costs to create new jobs compared to large industries (Karimi &BozarJomehri, 2013). However, some studies have shown that organizational performance for small and medium-sized businesses necessarily includes considering organizational practices. Financial and non-financial, including (1) reflect revenue growth, (2) market share, (3) income gains, (4) return on equity, (5) employee cohesion horn, and (6) improve the competitive position in the market (Mohammadinejad&Bakhshandeh, 2022).

One of the main strategies for business development in governments in the time domain of the present study is focused on the provision and allocation of financial resources and less attention has been paid to other influential factors, especially in the areas of improving the business environment, culture, stability of macroeconomic variables, infrastructure development, reforming the process and structure of facilitation, and the transfer and use of new technologies, or at least a comprehensive strategy in policy-making for the development of the country's businesses, especially small businesses. and moderate which play a fundamental role in solving the problem of unemployment and maintaining, creating and increasing sustainable employment, and avoiding the repetition of the failed experiences of the past (lack of full and timely allocation of the anticipated resources for the implementation of the desired plans, lack of supervision on the place of spending of the allocated resources outside the subject of the proposed plans, and lack of sufficient attention to the market and the amount of the country's needs) have not been observed and it seems that despite some The valuable measures taken in this period (paying attention to regional advantages, identifying job-creating businesses, and identifying the driving jobs of each region), this government, like previous governments, intends to pursue the issue of

employment instead of designing the system and reforming the policy-making process in the development of small and medium-sized businesses and improving all the existing experiences and capacities of the country, through the distribution of more cheap money, which is feared by the continuation of the above strategy. The river, which by wasting and wasting limited financial resources at its disposal while not achieving the goals of each of the announced plans, leads to a sharp increase in liquidity and staggering growth of inflation in the country, which in turn causes the continuation and intensification of the vicious circle of the sequence of not using past experiences, low productivity and repetition of the period of stagflation in the country (Hosseini et al., 2019). The concepts related to the subject should be familiarized. Also, this study helps the researcher to identify the sub-topics and the research problem. If the background check is done correctly, it will help determine the research problem and clarify the relationship between the research findings and previous research. Finally, the purpose of this study is to investigate and identify the factors affecting the development of small and medium-sized businesses in Iraq.

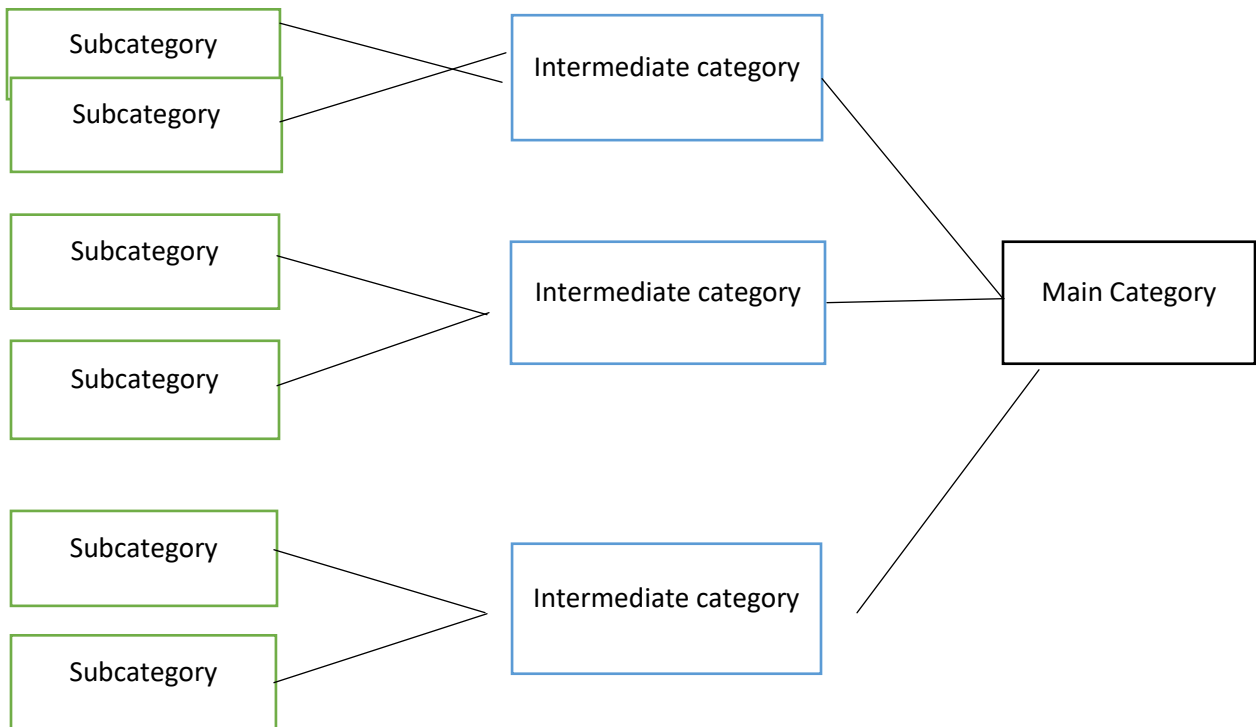
The results of the study of the effect of improving the indicators of the business environment on the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises in the country in order to realize the supports and remove obstacles showed that starting a business, obtaining business licenses, access to electricity, obtaining credit, supporting small investors, paying taxes, cross-border trade, implementing contracts, investment security, level of corruption, access to information, competitiveness, sanctions, international interactions, foreign capital, inflation, government interventions, coordination between organizations, etc. The exit of elites has had a significant impact on the establishment of small and medium-sized businesses. This analysis could not confirm the effect between the indicators of property registration, bankruptcy and cyberspace on the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises. Parvari et al. (2022) in designing a model of resilience of small and medium-sized businesses in crisis situations found that it identified the potential capacities for the resilience of small and medium-sized businesses in crisis situations, which includes four levels: (1) the individual level including personal empowerment and the development of competencies (2) the level of the organization including marketing orientation, strategic orientation, infrastructure preparation, accurate financial system and human resource management (3) the industry level including closer interaction with customers, monitoring competitors. The model obtained from this research shows that the creation of internal and external capacities and contexts leads to the continuation of the resilience of small and medium-sized businesses in critical situations and rapid response to adapt to uncertainties and emerging requirements. They concluded that the greatest impact on the development of small and medium-sized businesses, including financial criterion, added value, external environment, processes, human resources, exports, high-tech production, products, and innovations, is related to the performance of the company, and innovation in technology, including the ability to innovate entrepreneurs, technology infrastructure, innovation culture, and government support for technological innovation, has a positive effect on the performance of manufacturing companies. Attaran et al. (2021) in the sustainable innovation model for small and medium-sized businesses in the food industry sector concluded that government policies, green social pressures, and the green culture of society are the most important factors in the formation of sustainable innovation. Also, in the early stages of development, the focus should be on formulating a green strategy for companies, strengthening organizational capabilities, and obtaining economic advantages for companies. Ali ShabaniKaltah et al. (2021) In designing an entrepreneurship training model for the success of small and medium-sized businesses, the result showed that entrepreneurial skills play the most important role in creating small and medium-sized jobs. (2022) Ikram & Le, in a study titled "Does Innovation, Sustainability, and Competitiveness of Firms Help Improve Firm Performance? Evidence from the small and medium-sized business sector in Vietnam concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between innovation, sustainability, and enterprise competitiveness. Corporate competitiveness has a positive and significant relationship with financial, environmental, and operational performance. Also, sustainability innovation had a positive and significant indirect effect on financial

performance. &Promono (2021) al.et In examining the determinants of SME progress: a case study of entrepreneurs in Manado, Indonesia found that the results of stepwise regression enabled researchers to identify which variables are most important in recognizing entrepreneurs' characteristics. Self-efficacy, the need for success, personal habits, and barriers to progress are among these variables. &Shiyuti (2021) al.et In Examining Why Business Fails? The thematic review analysis in small and medium-sized businesses concluded that the description of the studies on business failure was grouped into four clusters (1) the effect of business failure, (2) the prediction of business failure, (3) the cause of business failure, and (4) the solution to business failure. (2020) al.et &StefanThe results in the study of SMEs are the engine of economic growth through investment and innovation show that estimation has a positive effect on the number of active micro-enterprises on territorial economic growth. (2019) al.et &Intanon investigated the factors affecting the success and sustainable development of small and medium-sized businesses in one of Thailand's industrial cities. The results of this study indicated that factors such as capital (financial resources), accounting system, external interactions, and information network are among the most important factors affecting the success of these SMEs. On the other hand, there was a high correlation coefficient between the level of production and marketing, which showed that one of the other factors affecting the performance and success of the company is marketing and the participation of the work members. The resilience of small and medium-sized businesses, sustainable innovation for small and medium-sized businesses, entrepreneurship training for the success of small and medium-sized businesses, obstacles and limitations of small and medium-sized businesses, financing mechanisms for small and medium-sized businesses, positive changes in the business environment, the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the government's support for small and medium-sized businesses prompted us to identify the effective factors and provide a model for the development of small and medium-sized businesses in the country. Iraq.

3- Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to use a mixed approach (qualitative-quantitative) and a sequential-exploratory type that has an applied aspect. In the qualitative part, the content analysis method based on induction was used to analyze the data, and then in the quantitative part, an even scale (double) with AHP technique was used to rank the factors. Sampling was done through theoretical and purposive sampling method. According to the researcher's knowledge and considering the goals of the research, interviews were conducted with 32 faculty members, experts, and experts in entrepreneurship and business development in Iraq. Based on the theoretical adequacy index of the data, from the 29th interview, the data became repetitive and the theoretical saturation index was obtained. However, in order to ensure that no new data is added to the previous data, and to ensure theoretical saturation, 3 more interviews were conducted (a total of 32 interviews) and theoretical saturation was achieved due to the fact that no new concepts and categories of interview data were obtained. In the process of content analysis based on induction, the initial categories are first identified by open coding, and then a list of classes is classified under a larger surface. The purpose of data classification is to reduce the number of similar classes by combining similar data (Rezaei et al., 2018).

Figure 1: Category Classification in Inductive Content Analysis (Tabrizi, 2014)



In order to validate and robustness the data during the interviews, the four criteria of Lincoln and Guba were used. In order to ensure the reliability of the tool, in addition to the mentioned method, the intra-subject agreement method was used. In order to ensure the reliability of the tool, in addition to the mentioned method, the intra-subject agreement method was used. For this purpose, while providing the necessary training for coding the interviews, two experts were asked to code three randomly selected interviews. The degree of reliability (intra-subject agreement) is calculated using the number one relationship, the results of which can be seen in table 1.

$$\text{Relationship One: } \frac{2M}{N1 + N2} : \text{Percentage of Reliability (Intra-Subject Agreement)}$$

M: The number of common codes between two coders

N1: The number of codes identified by the coder 1

N2: The number of codes identified by the coder 2

Table 1 The results of the reliability study in the qualitative part of the research (research findings).

Reliability percentage	Number of shared codes	Number of encoder codes 2	Number of encoder codes 1	The title of the interview	Row
0/84	16	18	20	7	1
0/81	18	22	26	13	2
0/80	16	19	21	27	3
0/81	50	59	67	Total	

According to the calculations, the rate of internal agreement above 60% indicates appropriate reliability. Therefore, the results of the above table show that the interviews have had acceptable reliability.

4- Findings

The data were conceptualized using the inductive content analysis method as open and basic coding. Then, after reviewing and reviewing the concepts several times, the concepts were extracted and the initial codes were obtained. Data were then compared with each other and classified by merging similar cases.

Table 2: Conceptualization and Creation of Broad Categories of Data (Categories) Obtained from Interviews.

Row	Number of Repetitions	Concept	Category	Code
1	16	Updating existing technologies	Technology Innovation &	So1
2	21	Creating and using new innovations		
3	22	Using digital tools to improve processes and communication		
4	20	Use of modern software tools and systems		
5	23	Process Automation		
6	28	Artificial intelligence and artificial intelligence.		
7	26	Creating innovative products and services		
8	24	Access to new technologies		
9	17	Having an experienced and committed team	Human Capital Management	So2
10	18	Effective Human Resource Management		
11	13	Recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce		
12	19	Training and Developing Employees' Skills		
13	25	Planning for Service Compensation		
14	21	Improving leadership skills		

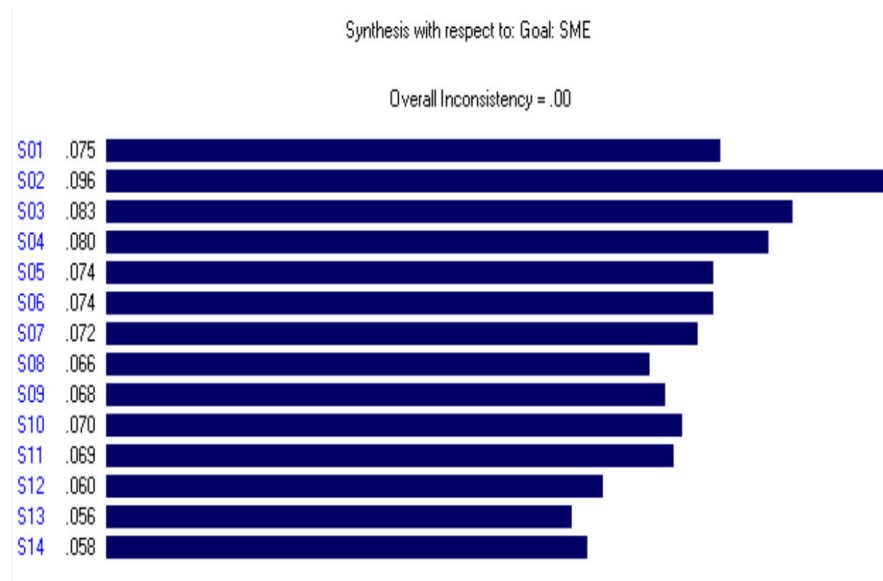
15	12	Creating opportunities for career advancement and growth				
16	20	Proper archiving and monitoring of the workforce				
17	15	Marketing Strategies	Market & Marketing	So3		
18	10	Strong sales to attract new customers				
19	17	Retaining existing customers				
20	14	Implementing effective sales methods				
21	16	Creating a strong brand identity				
22	15	Creating continuous communication with customers				
23	17	Competitive and attractive markets				
24	17	Providing distinctive and customer-oriented services				
25	14	Market Analysis				
26	13	Identifying Target Customers				
27	11	Determining Appropriate Advertising Strategies				
28	20	Reducing Tax Problems			Protective Restrictions	So4
29	16	Reducing problems with permits				
30	19	Employees' Salary Base and Fair Payments				
31	15	Complexity in obtaining extensive permits and permits				
32	8	Fair Work Laws				
33	16	Protective Restrictions				
34	18	Healthy work culture	Organizational Culture	So5		
35	15	Values and Ethics				
36	19	Effective collaboration and interaction between members of the organization				
37	24	Creating an environment conducive to innovation and growth				
38	18	Passing on Successful Experiences				
39	12	Collaboration between businesses				
40	17	Creating Learning Opportunities				
41	25	Providing credit and financial facilities	Supports	So6		
42	27	Reducing taxes				
43	23	Providing business training and consulting Providing business training and consulting				
44	28	Creating Business Opportunities				
45	15	Creating Simplified Rules and Regulations				
46	14	Access to information				
47	12	Creating Communities				
48	11	Trading Networks				

49	16	Knowledge Sharing	Networking and Social Capital	So7
50	17	Resource sharing		
51	9	Relationships with other businesses		
52	19	Access to financial resources	Access to Resources	So8
53	15	Access to supply networks and raw materials		
54	13	Access to capital and banking facilities		
55	7	Access to communication	Access to infrastructure	So9
56	9	Access to routes and means of transportation		
57	21	Access to basic and basic services		
58	21	Defects in transmission networks	Risk Management	S10
59	10	Financial Risk Management		
60	9	Marketing Risk Management		
61	15	Legal Risk Management		
62	8	Operational Risk Management		
63	23	Investment research and development	Research & Development	S11
64	26	Improving products and services		
65	27	Process Improvement		
66	25	Improving processes and technologies		
67	20	Creating Innovation		
68	21	Exploring the Competitions		
69	19	Efforts to develop new technologies		
70	17	Fulfilling environmental standards	Environmental Sustainability	S12
71	15	Sustainable Resource Management		
72	16	Encouraging the use of clean technologies		
73	18	Defending workers' rights		
74	22	Reducing pollution and waste		
75	14	Ethical Standards		
76	12	Diversity and balance in the economic structure	Positive economic situation	S13
77	21	Reducing dependence on specific industries and sectors		
78	25	Increasing production		
79	26	Increasing national income		
80	20	Creating economic activity in different regions		
81	21	Reducing the unemployment rate		
82	17	Increased employment	Security Deployment	S14
83	14	Data Protection		
84	15	Employee awareness and training		
85	13	Using cloud services		
86	10	Support for update programs		
87	12	Use security solutions		

Ranking the factors affecting the development of small and medium-sized businesses

In this stage, 14 factors affecting the development of small and medium-sized businesses are ranked in terms of importance in order to determine their priority for policy-making (Figure 1). Naturally, it is not possible to focus on all factors at the same time, and it is necessary to formulate a policy while prioritizing these factors. 14 Factors of Action. For this purpose, a questionnaire consisting of a binary table of 14 items was designed and provided to the relevant experts, and using the AHP method and using 11 choice expert software, this table was evaluated and the final results of the ranking were determined as follows.

Figure 1. Pairwise Comparisons of Small and Medium Business Development



In the table, pairwise comparisons have been made between 14 factors affecting the development of small and medium-sized businesses. which has been completed by the relevant experts and used after determining the incompatibility rate. The numbers in the table are between 0 and 1, of which 1 is completely preferable and 0.9 is completely non-preferred. According to Tables 2 and Figure 1, the human capital management factor is the most important factor (first rank) with a coefficient of 0.096 and the factor of positive economic status is the least important factor (rank 14) with a coefficient of 0.056.

5- Discussion and Conclusion

The development of small and medium-sized businesses is a scientific process that requires careful planning. Most of these businesses are resource-constrained, so there's no room for trial and error. In the development plan of these companies, all possible risks should be carefully identified and appropriate solutions should be provided to deal with them. The development of small and medium-sized businesses is vital, but failure to manage risks can jeopardize their survival. Therefore, these businesses must have a comprehensive and well-documented development plan in order to be able to have a precise and targeted plan. The managers of these businesses must have a long-term view of their organization and at the same time strengthen the infrastructure. Having development strategies helps managers to enter this path with precision and planning, predict its risks, and be ready to go through it. This increases the chances of success

in business development and creates a better future for yourself, your employees, and your customers. For the success of small and medium-sized businesses, there is no single secret, but rather a set of key factors that drive the development of these businesses. After identifying and analyzing these factors in the research, the researcher presents the results of the research and related suggestions. Providing correct results and appropriate suggestions in research provides the possibility of transforming theories into practice and is of great importance. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the factors affecting the development of small and medium-sized businesses in Iraq.

The factors identified in this study include: human capital management, market and marketing, technology and innovation, policies and laws, supports, organizational culture, networking and social capital, risk management, research and development, access to resources, access to infrastructure, environmental sustainability, security and establishment, and positive economic status. In the rankings, 14 factors affecting the development of small and medium-sized businesses were prioritized in terms of importance, from the most important to the least important. Human capital management is the most important factor (1st rank) with a coefficient of 0.096 and positive economic status is the least important factor (14th place) with a coefficient of 0.056. Small and medium-sized enterprises, the following suggestions can be considered as practical solutions:

1. Training and empowerment of managers and employees:

- Holding training courses in the fields of management, marketing, sales, finance and information technology
- Creating continuous learning opportunities and updating marketing skills
- Encouraging employees to participate in innovative and creative processes

2. Improving access to new markets:

- Assisting in the development of export programs and entering international markets
- Providing networking opportunities and participation in exhibitions
- Creating digital platforms to introduce and sell products

3. Improving the business infrastructure:

- Establishing incubators and business accelerators
- Facilitating access to new technologies and digital infrastructure
- Improving physical infrastructure such as transportation and logistics.

4. Strengthening innovation and creativity processes:

- Creating supportive environments for ideation and development of new products
- Encouraging collaborations between businesses and research centers
- Creating incentive programs for patents and protecting intellectual property

5. Improving access to financial resources:

- Creating appropriate loan and loan programs for small and medium-sized businesses
- Supporting financing through bold and venture capital
- Providing advice and guidance to attract investment

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