



## The Impact of University Internal Environment, Development Talents on Sustainable Competitive Advantage

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### ABSTRACT

There is a need to make serious efforts For Iraqi universities to be in the ranks of advanced universities in the world. This requires attracting teaching talents and providing an incubating environment for them. Therefore, the objective of the research was to explore the influence of (the environment, the development of talents) on sustainable competitive advantages. The research followed the descriptive approach and used the quantitative analysis method. Almaaqaal university is the field of study. The study sample size (of 76 people), from almaaqaal university teachers, and the sample comprised the available staff specialized in the field of Teaching and research. The questionnaire was utilised as a data collection tool and (spss) program was the main program used in the analysis. Methods of attracting talents and providing an incubating environment for talents contribute to the development of talents on the one hand, and to strengthening the positive link among the university and society on the other influence. Iraqi universities still lack methods of attracting and nurturing talent. In addition to the lack of studies dealing with this subject, this study provides a theoretical and practical addition to Iraqi studies in this field. The improvement of university outputs also reflects positively on the national economy and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** University Internal Environment, Development Talents, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Iraq Universities

## INTRODUCTION

Universities are important parts of local improvement and creativity systems that are described by detailed conditions for example economic, political cultural, and social factors (Matt & Schaeffer, 2018). They form as organizational formations to contribute to solve social and economic problems in society. Universities have an essential role to run entrepreneurial activity because of their ability to apply and invent new ideas and inventions. Hence, based on this assumption, it is supposed that the academic environment constitutes more conditions for its development as universities need to learn how to manage further opportunities to manage the current ones. The contemporary environment is considered as being in form of globalization, technology development, rapid dissemination of different technologies, and utilizing knowledge. This undoubtedly requires exploring university talents (especially teaching ones), developing them, and directing them toward investing in future opportunities in a complex and rapidly changing environment (Papula, Ján, et al, 2013). So, universities can gain a sustainable competitive advantage through the continuous growth of innovations, talents, managerial knowledge, and skills (Barney, 1991., Papula, Ján, et al, 2013 & Abbas et al., 2022). The sustainable competitive advantage allows universities to maintain (permanently) their competitive position in the long term, or improve their good position in the market. This requires that universities focus on the area in which excellence has been achieved (in terms of quality, performance, diversity, etc.), in this field, university talents form core competency, which lays the foundation for building sustainable university competitive advantages. Proceeding from the important role of the university competitive environment incubating the development of university talents and directing them towards building sustainable university competitive advantages, was justified to choose the influence of the interaction of (the university environment with the development of university talents) on university sustainable competitive advantages.). The reason for choosing AL-Maaqal university as a field of the current study is due to the ambitious to sustain its distinction in comparing with other universities of both national and regional level. It also provides better conditions for conducting research procedures successfully.

The topic of this study addresses a new and complicated problem regarding Iraqi university environment, and the accuracy of the results requires the knowledge and experience of its directors and instructors. In line with the field of study, a deliberate sample of faculty members in these universities was chosen. And those who hold the rank of professor or assistant professor. The

research methodology and structure were organized to verify the main hypothesis that (there is a statistically important influence of the communication of the environment with talent development on sustainable competitive advantages). For collecting data, a questionnaire of (18 questions) was developed covering the three main indicators of the research. The research was organized based on (an introduction and five parts), the first part of which included the problem of the study, the second the previous literature, the third the methodology, the fourth the results, and the fifth the conclusions and recommendation.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Universities of the private sector in Iraq face intense competition among each other's. For example, in the center of Basra governorate, there are more than one university and seven colleges as well as formal evening education. Meaning that it requires a review of the method of organizing the effective and developed link with the academic community depending on its academic talents and environmental capabilities (Abbas, Ahmad-Zaluki, & Mehmood, 2023). Thus, the issue was defined by the next questions. To what extent can Iraqi universities explore and maintain their core competency. To what extent can Iraqi universities create and maintain competitive advantages. To what extent does the essential ability (interaction of potentials of the internal university environment with academic talent) contribute to the formation of sustainable competitive advantages for Iraqi universities?

## **OBJECTIVES**

Exploring and maintaining the core capabilities of Iraqi universities. Exploring and developing competitive advantages in Iraqi universities. "The contribution of the interaction (between the enablers of the internal environment and the development of academic talents) in the formation of sustainable competitive advantages in Iraqi universities".

## **IMPORTANCE**

Scientific importance: Providing researchers, scholars, and professional managers with a wealth of information about the fundamental ability of the university and its role in building sustainable competitive advantages. Economic importance: the endeavor of Iraqi private universities and colleges to survive and continue in light of the intense competition among them, and the pressures of the external political and economic environment. Social importance: Contribute to

strengthening the relationship between the university and society, and improving the quality of life.

## **DETERMINANTS**

Weakness of Iraqi university leaders' awareness of flexible university resources, and methods of exposing and investing them. Iraqi universities lack plans that help discover and build the university's core competency, that contributing to sustainable university features. Many of Iraqi university leaders, still have limited knowledge of each of (core competency, sustainable university advantages, flexible university resources, methods of building the relationship between the university's income resources and competitive advantages). The interest of Iraqi university leaders especially at private ones in ways of maximizing profitability and increasing returns, more than their interest in scientific and knowledge development.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

University internal environment, the internal work environment is one of the core challenges facing any business, good or suitable working environment circumstances at the university assistance the teaching staff Including academic talent to perform the activities in an best, healthy, comfortable manner, and safe (Akbar, 2017). A good effort environment for academic body is one that delivers a socially and psychologically comfortable atmosphere for them), (Anoraga, 2001: 57), in the higher education context. The focus will be on the creation of supportive work environments and positive work for academic talent. Thus, the university talent varies in relation to the conditions of the university internal environment. The variance in the environment involves diverse applies regarding the requirements of supporting the overall performance of university (Kenneth, Leithwood et al, 2004 & Al-Saedi., Abbas, 2023). The contemporary internal environment of university needs academic persons who adapt quickly to meet the conditions and demands of the change in society and market needs, and this requires a well-planned method to talent management. Talent is an important part for (teaching and research) in university.

Talent management performs are often considered a key strategic priority. Because it discovers, attract and develops talents, and makes them capable of facing rapid change and complexity in the university process, in a way that ensures the progress of the university process towards the specified goals easily (Kathleen, 2022). Thus, it should be famous the interdependence among the

nature of the university internal environment, which is characterized by raising complexity, rapid variation, and planned for emerging university talents.

Summary: the nature of the university internal environment that characterized flexible resources and features appropriate to the aspirations of academic bodies, form the basis for attracting and Developing university talents .

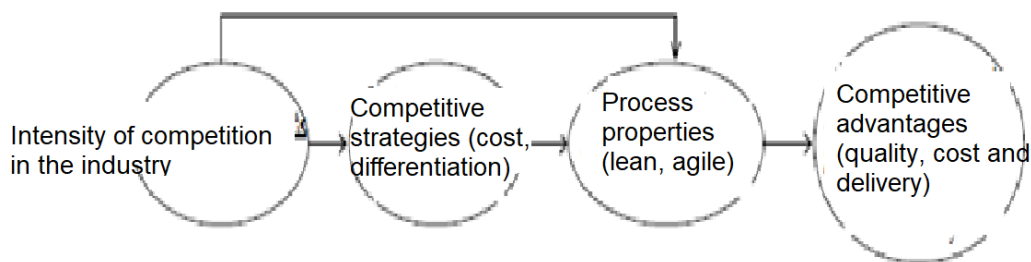
### **Development of university talents**

Talents are viewed as unique strategic resources necessary to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Universities “make” the future workforce and from this place are recruited employees who are recognized as talented or have unlimited potential (Honorata et al, 2022 & Aman-Ullah, Aziz, Ibrahim, Mehmood., & Abbas, 2021). The three main motives behind the increasing interest in talent in general, and university in particular (belief in the importance of talent in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Dries, 2013 & Huselid et al, 2021), demographic changes that have led to problems in providing talent (Tarique, et al, 2010). Transformative changes in work environments that affect the characteristics and quantity of the talent essential (Ashton et al, 2005 & Schuler et al , 2011 ). In response to the requirements of the transition to a knowledge-founded economy, talent development in universities is focused on teaching and research activities. Because universities essential to classify pivotal and high-value- added roles in both teaching and research (Davenport et al., 1996). Clear leadership parts form the core of the pivotal places essential for the positive application of the university's strategy, therefore, it is necessary to harmonize between the university's strategy and how to recruit, develop, retain and reward academic talents (Bradley, 2016), (“Universities seek to achieve the best outcomes that are concerned with employment, lifelong learning, good citizenship for talent development in which they form the components of the core competency in the university represented by communication skills, information technology, learning how to learn, and working with others”).

### **Sustainable Competitive Advantages**

In light of the highly turbulent intense competition and contemporary environment. “It is necessary for organizations to maintain their competitive advantages by adopting advanced technologies, which are characterized by the flexible and customer-focused situations to enable the detection of new markets and future products that have an effective and long-term response to its environment”

(Srivastava1, 2013). In this case, potential competitive advantages should be able to achieve an effective balance between the capabilities of the organization and the needs of the market. In order to achieve long-term success, hence the importance of core competencies. Because the core ability is the process of using flexible elements in the manufacturing process and these elements are (skills, machines, and equipment) that constitute the basic drivers in the organization's ability to respond effectively to various environmental changes. Building the core competency of the organization makes it able to continually generate and maintain its competitive advantages, which form the basis for building sustainable competitive advantages, (Papula, Voln , 2013, p. 1 & Abbas et al., 2022) Since the core competency is the power that the organization adopts to build and sustain its competitive advantages, organizations should therefore maintain their core competency. “This is done by discovering and using its internal sources in building its core capacity because the internal sources of core capacity can be controlled and preserved in an environment whose future is difficult to predict. Figure (1 ) presents the relationship between core competency and competitive advantages”.



**Figure 1:** The relationship between ( core competency ) and competitive advantages

Sustainable competitive advantage refers to the development to meet the requirements without compromising its ability for future generations. It is the distinctive value resulting from a distinct combination of (internal organizational resources and capabilities that cannot be replicated by competitors), this combination constitutes (the core capability of the organization). Sustainable advantages enable the company to survive and overcome its competition for the longest possible period of time, (Damanpour, 1996 & Aman-Ullah, Mehmood, Amin, & Abbas, 2022) asserted that sustainable competitive advantage means that the organization outperforms its competitors in retaining customers and overcoming competition) core competency that offers the driving force for the firm in the long- term (Sriwidadi, 2016).

A "sustainable competitive advantage" describes the characteristics of elements that cannot be imitated by current or potential competitors entering the industry. Competitive advantage relates to the superiority of the organization of its characteristics such as brand, technological expertise, customer service, distribution, and network. In the field of associations, which are service organizations, two issues should be taken into account when evaluating their sustainable competitive advantages, which are (the extent to which the university can overcome the environmental pressures surrounding it, i.e. (to carefully assess the tests and pressures of the environment), and (understanding the requirements of stakeholders, interesting and unifying resources, and facing external variations and solving internal issues). This requires that the university have (the general transferable capabilities necessary for lifelong success, as well as a flexible work force). That is, it has its own core competency due to the core competency related to the concept that the components differ from one country to another, but despite the difference, there is a common thread between them. However, it is necessary to meet three needs: the needs of the labor market, lifelong learning, and good citizenship (source: Competitive Advantage Article 3, p. 13). This shows the relationship between intrinsic ability and sustainable university competitive advantages to maintain the competitive advantages of the university. This means the necessity of gaining the intrinsic ability from internal sources, because it is controlled and characterized by relative stability (Papula Papulová , 2013).

In other words, the core competency in Iraqi universities is the outcome of embracing the internal environment university for university academic talents. That is, the characteristics of the internal university environment are more attractive and developing for academic talents. These flexible capabilities of Iraqi universities achieve continuous and developed response to the needs of society and the labor market.

Summary, attracting and embracing the internal university environment for academic talent Lays the foundation for building the university's core competency, which gives the university sustainable competitive advantages, making it superior to its current and future competitors. In the field of effective relationship between the university and society and the requirements of the labor market Method.

## JUSTIFICATIONS

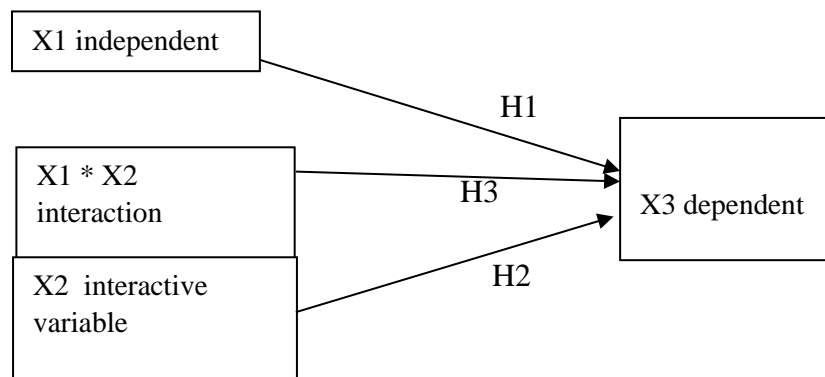
The aspiration of Iraqi universities to keep pace with universities in developed countries, by entering the well-known international rankings of universities. Iraqi universities need to explore their flexible and evolving resources, and adopt new methods to attract and develop academic talents. The need to invest the capabilities of the internal university environment to build the core capacity of the university. The need of community in overall and the labor market in particular for university outputs that strengthen the relationship between the university and society. Including building a positive and productive relationship between Iraqi universities and the industrialization system in Iraq , to enhance the development of the general economy and sustainable development.

## STUDY DESIGN

The paper followed the descriptive method, which contains the integration of (deductive and deductive methods). The theoretical side has been built on (the basis of presentation, discussion and conclusion). And the field side, it followed the quantitative analysis technique. The field of research was al-maaqal University. The study sample included some of Al-Maaqal University academics, with experience and expertise, and they have knowledge and skills in the field of developing university teaching talents. The sample size was (62) persons. For the purposes of data collection, a questionnaire was utilized, which organized its paragraphs as per the characteristics of the study variables. The questionnaire includes three sections; the first deals with the variables that describe the independent variables. The second section involves the variables which are the interactive variables. The third section is regarding the dependent variables. The first and second sections consist of six questions in contrary with the third part that includes four questions. The technique of analyzing data of the present study was enhanced by choosing suitable statistical methods.



### The study model and its hypotheses



Hypothesis1 : “There is a statistically significant effect of the independent variable” (university internal environment X1) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3).

Hypothesis2: “There is a statistically significant effect of the interactive variable” (development of university academic talents X2 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3).

Hypothesis 3: “There is a statistically significant effect of the interaction of” (university internal environment X1 with the development of university academic talents X2 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3)..

## RESULT

Scale consistency test, internal consistency is one of the most important measures of reliability as it describes the homogeneity of the result derived in the test. Meaning that the homogeneity implies an idea of the appropriateness of the survey items to measure the constructs. Cronbach alpha is one of the most used measures of reliability in organizational sciences. The typical value (for Konbash Alpha) is estimated at (70%) or more. Values higher than (70%) indicate higher internal consistency; as for the lower ones, they indicate the weakness of the internal reliability of the scale, go to table (1).

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The descriptive analysis depends on the two measures of essential tendency (the arithmetic mean) and dispersion (the standard deviation). Difference and standard deviation are processes of

dispersion that reveal how close each observed value is to the mean of the entire data set .In data sets with small dispersion, dispersion or variance in the data is measured by (standard deviation). Small standard deviation values indicate that the data is centered around its arithmetic mean (Kaur, Stoltzfus, Yellapu1, 2001), go to (Table 11).

### **Hypothesis testing**

**H1** : “Good or suitable working environment conditions at the university help the teaching staff Including academic talent to carry out the activities in an optimal, healthy, safe and comfortable manner” (Akbar, 2017 ), this form the basis for attracting and developing university talents, which are reflected in turn on the relationship and impact of internal university environment on sustainable competitive advantage, this supported the hypothesis that: (There is a statistically significant effect of the independent variable (university internal environment X1) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3 at Al-Maaqal University, the subject of the study ), Go to (Table 11).

**H2:** Talents are unique strategic resources to achieve sustainable competitive benefits. Universities aspire outputs that are concerned with employment, lifelong learning, and good citizenship. Besides, the development of talent should be based on the components of the competency in the university that constitute the basis for building sustainable competitive advantages. Thus, it will be supporting the hypothesis that there is a statistically important influence of the interactive variable on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages at Al-Maaqal University).

**H3:** The interactive (modifying) variable determines when or under what conditions it is used to measure the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The interaction variable may reduce or enhance the direction of the link between an independent variable and a dependent variable, or it may change the direction of the link among the two variables from positive to negative or vice versa. The link between the independent variable and the dependent variable can be strong. But it is often considered when there is an unexpectedly weak or inconsistent link among the independent variable and the “dependent variable”. The influence of an (interactive) variable is usually expressed as an interaction between the independent variable and the interactive variable. Interactive variables are always at the same level as the independent variables, concerning their roles as causal variables. They are considered external variables for the dependent variable. (Kim et al. 2001, pp. 64-66) , and this supported the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant effect of the interaction of (university internal environment X1 with the development of university academic talents X2 on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3Al-Maaqal University, the subject of the study. Go to (Table v).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research attempted to reveal the interactive role of the variable (development of university academic talents) in the level of relationship and effect among the independent variable (internal university environment) and the dependent variable (sustainable competitive advantages in the university), as previous studies showed that (attracting and embracing the internal university environment for academic talent lays the foundation for building the university's core competency, which gives the university sustainable competitive advantages, making it superior to its current and future competitors. There is a relationship between the university and society and the requirements of the labor market. It means that the interaction between the internal university environment and the development of academic talent improves the building of sustainable competitive advantages in the university. Whereas the results showed that the percentage of change in sustainable competitive advantages after entering the interactive variable reached (0.005). Although the rate of change is weak, but it shows a positive impact of the interactive variable in achieving sustainable competitive advantages in Iraqi universities. The results obtained in previous studies support the findings of the current study even though they differ in relation to the level of influence. This is similar with a study of (Papula ,Voln, 2013).

Conclusion (1): The positive effect of the interactive variable (development of academic talents) in enhancing the impact of the university's internal environment in building advantages.

Sustainable Competitiveness in Iraqi universities

There is a desire among Iraqi universities towards building sustainable competitive advantages, by encouraging excellence and creativity and building the ability to respond quickly to changes in the labor market and the demands of society.

Conclusion (2): A tendency by Iraqi universities towards building sustainable competitive advantages that enable the response to community needs and labor market demands.

Hypothesis (1) indicated that: There is a statistically significant effect of the independent variable internal university environment on the dependent variable, sustainable competitive advantage of the University of Al-Maaqal, the subject of the study) ( To the relationship and the positive impact of the university's internal environment on competitive advantages this means the need to take care

of the internal environment and make it able to develop (core competency ). However, Iraqi universities still lack awareness of this fact, and the development of flexible university resources that contribute to building university competitive advantages.

Conclusion (3): The possibility of the internal university environment in Iraqi universities contributing to building sustainable competitive advantages.

(Academic talents are considered unique strategic resources important to attaining sustainable competitive improvement) (Howaniec et al, 2022, p.1), (Where the results of the current field study showed to there is a statistically important influence of the interactive variable (development of university talents X2 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3). This means that academic talents are positively reflected in building sustainable competitive advantages in Iraqi universities, but Iraqi university leaders are still weak in interest in attracting and developing academic talents, which resulted in the availability of few of these talents in many Iraqi universities now.

Conclusion (4): There is a weakness in attracting Iraqi universities to academic talents

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The research attempts to discover the extent of the impact of the interaction (internal university environment and advanced academic talents) in the formation and enhancement of sustainable competitive advantages in Iraqi universities. by Characteristics of retaining and evolving these talents over time. As well as directed interaction between the internal environment and the developed talents to crystallize and strengthen (core competency), for enable the retention of sustainable competitive advantages for Iraqi universities.

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Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.944	16
1 – The value of alpha for each scale reached (.944), which is greater than the standard alpha value of (.70 ), confirming the homogeneity of the scale items .	
Result: Reliability is achieved based on the consistency of the scale items.	

FIG (1 ) internal scale consistency

### Descriptive statistics.

Table (1 ) Descriptive e statistics

VAR	Question summary	Mean	Std. Deviation	Comment
VAR1 improvement and initiative	Provide development opportunities for academic bodies	2.73	1.09	The value of arithmetic mean of the variables of the university's internal environment ranges (2.54 – 2.90 ), indicating the possibility of building (core competency), which forms the basis for
VAR2 Psychological and social environment	The suitable environment to enhance the performance of academic bodies	2.54	.86	

VAR3 Research and teaching	Developing the research and learning skills of academic bodies	2.57	1.13	sustainable university advantages.
VAR4 Professional and cultural values	The university promotes the cultural and professional values of the academic bodies	2.59	1.16	
VAR5 Core competency	Developing and maintaining competitive advantages	2.90	1.22	
VAR6 Flexible resources	Multiple use resources and possible development	2.96	1.25	
VAR7 Attracting academic talents	Attraction of academic skills	2.83	1.31	The value of arithmetic mean of the variables <b>Developing academic talents</b> ranges (2.73 – 4.16 ), indicating the possibility Attracting, developing and retaining academic which forms the other basis for sustainable university advantages.
VAR8 academic talents Multiple skills	Easily use multiple skills	2.81	1.40	
VAR9 Maintaining academic talents	Supporting academic talents for the longest possible period	2.73	1.18	
VAR10 Developing academic talents	Continuously improve knowledge and skills	2.81	.99	
VAR11 New educational technologies	Providing and using new educational technologies	4.16	1.19	
VAR12 Sponsoring talent	Sponsoring and developing academic talents	2.73	1.09	
VAR13	Promote excellence and creativity	3.03	1.25	
				The value of arithmetic mean of the variables

Excellence and creativity				Sustainable university competitive advantages ranges (2.83 – 3.52 ), indicating the possibility of Building sustainable competitive advantages in Iraqi universities
VAR14 flexibility response	Rapid response to environmental change	3.03	1.29	
VAR 15 continuous improvement	Continuity of improving the performance of academic talent	2.83	1.28	
VAR16 Labor market	Rapid response to change in labor market needs	3.52	1.40	
<b>Conclusion :</b> - The reality of Iraqi universities is relatively close to the perception that helps build sustainable competitive advantages for these universities. - Flexible resources and nurturing talent help a lot to build (core competency ). - Encouraging excellence and creativity, and responding quickly to changes in labor market demands, indicates the possibility of building sustainable university advantages..				

### Causal statistics (Hypothesis testing ):

**H1 :** There is a statistically significant effect of the independent variable (university internal environment X1 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3) ..

**Table (11) Hypothesis ( 1) test**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	sig	0.00 < 0.01
1	.768 <sup>a</sup>	.589	.582	0.000	The significance of the test model and the acceptance of the hypothesis that is ( Hypothesis1 : There is a statistically significant effect of the independent variable (university internal environment X1 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3) ..



H2 : There is a statistically significant effect of the intractive variable (development of university talents X2 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3).

Table (111) Hypothesis ( 2) test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	sig	
1	.716 <sup>a</sup>	.513	.504	.78565	0.00	0.00 < 0.01 The significance of the test model , and the acceptance of the hypothesis that is (There is a statistically significant effect of the intractive variable (development of university talents X2 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3).

H 3 : There is a statistically significant effect of the interaction of (university internal environment X1 with the development of university talents X2 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3).

Table (1v) Hypothesis ( 3) test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	sig	
1	.768 <sup>a</sup>	.589	.582	.72114	.589	0.00	The percentage of change in the direction of the dependent variable (sustainable competitive advantages) amounted to (0.005), that is, interest in academic talent pushes towards achieving sustainable competitive advantages for the university, confirming the validity of the hypothesis that states (There is a statistically significant effect of the interaction of (university internal environment X1 with the development of university talents X2 ) on the dependent variable (sustainable university competitive advantages X3).
2	.771 <sup>b</sup>	.594	.580	.72306	.005	0.00	