

Crisis-Resilient Ownership Models in Libyan Football Clubs: Navigating Post-Conflict Volatility Through Foreign Investment and Governance Reforms

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<i>Article history:</i> <i>Received:</i> <i>Revised:</i> <i>Accepted:</i> <i>Available online:</i>	Abstract Libyan football clubs face significant challenges due to political instability, economic volatility, and post-conflict recovery needs, necessitating innovative ownership models to ensure financial and operational resilience. This review paper explores the potential of crisis-resilient ownership models, inspired by foreign investment-backed takeovers in global football, within the context of the Libyan Premier League. Drawing on risk management and economic resilience frameworks from 2025 management research, the paper analyzes how such models can address chronic underfunding, enhance infrastructure, and improve governance in a turbulent environment. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of global case studies, the study examines the opportunities for foreign investment-driven takeovers to diversify revenue, strengthen talent acquisition, and boost community engagement, while considering Libya's regulatory landscape, global transfer market constraints, and socio-political sensitivities. Findings suggest that foreign-backed ownership models can enhance resilience but require robust governance structures and localized stakeholder engagement strategies to mitigate risks such as fan alienation or political backlash. This paper contributes to the academic discourse on sustainable football management in emerging markets, offering a theoretical framework and practical recommendations for Libyan clubs to thrive in a complex socio-economic context.
Keywords: Football club management, ownership models, crisis resilience, Libyan Premier League, foreign investment, risk management, post-conflict recovery, emerging markets.	

1. Introduction

Football in Libya, once a unifying force under colonial and post-independence eras, has become emblematic of the nation's fractured socio-political landscape. The Libyan Premier League (LPL), founded in 1963, has been intermittently suspended due to conflicts, including the 2011 Arab Spring uprising that ousted Muammar Gaddafi and the ensuing civil wars (Busse & Wild angel, 2023). Today, clubs like Al-Ahly Tripoli and Al-Ittihad SC contend with chronic underfunding, amid hyperinflation and sanctions, leading to player exodus and infrastructure decay (Libyan Football Federation, 2024). These challenges mirror broader post-conflict dynamics in emerging markets, where sports organizations serve as barometers of societal resilience yet remain perilously exposed to exogenous shocks (Amara & Theodoraki, 2019).

This review posits that crisis-resilient ownership models characterized by hybrid foreign-domestic structures offer a viable pathway to sustainability. Drawing from European and African precedents, such models leverage external capital for financial buffering while embedding local governance to

avert cultural erosion (Roitman & Marini, 2024; African Sports). The rationale stems from Libya's untapped potential: with a population exceeding 7 million and a burgeoning youth demographic passionate about football, the LPL could generate \$50-100 million annually through tourism and broadcasting if stabilized (Akasha, 2024). However, without reform, persistent issues like debt accumulation evident in the 2024 federation's debt repayment mandates threaten outright collapse (Libya Observer, 2024).

Research objectives include: (1) synthesizing global literature on ownership models and their resilience attributes; (2) contextualizing these for Libya's post-conflict milieu; and (3) proposing a framework integrating risk management. This study addresses a gap in sports management scholarship, where North African cases lag behind sub-Saharan analyses (Dolles & Söderman, 2013; Mahmutovic et al., 2022). By reviewing over 50 sources, it advances theoretical discourse while offering actionable insights for policymakers and club executives.

2. Literature Review

The literature on football ownership models underscores a shift from benevolent local patronage to diversified, investor-driven structures, particularly in response to financial volatility (Rohde & Breuer, 2018; Scelles et al., 2020). Traditional models, prevalent in regulated markets like Germany's Bundesliga with its 50+1 rule mandating member control, prioritize community ties but constrain capital influx, rendering them less resilient in crises (Franck, 2014). In contrast, open-market models in England and France where 75% and 50% of top-division clubs, respectively, feature foreign shareholders facilitate rapid liquidity during downturns, as seen in the 2020-2022 surge of minority stakes amid COVID-19 (Roitman & Marini, 2024).

Foreign investment emerges as a double-edged sword in emerging markets. In Africa, UEFA and FIFA's developmental funding since the 1990s has yielded \$125 million in CAF revenues (2022-2024), fostering academies and infrastructure, yet uneven distribution exacerbates inequalities (Bantekas & Sahin, 2024; ASCI, 2025). Examples include Egypt's Pyramids FC, backed by Egyptian-UAE capital, which boosted transfer revenues to \$19.8 million in 2023, enhancing competitive edge (ASCI, 2025). However, risks abound: Arab investments in European clubs like Paris Saint-Germain have sparked sovereignty debates, paralleling potential backlash in Libya (Garcia & Amara, 2013).

Post-conflict sports management literature highlights football's emancipatory role, as in Libya where Al-Ahly Benghazi's 2000 dissolution symbolized regime suppression, foreshadowing the 2011 revolution (Busse & Wildangel, 2023; Goldblatt, 2019). Recovery strategies emphasize resilience frameworks, integrating psychological capital (e.g., hope, efficacy) to buffer organizational stress (Kim et al., 2018). In volatile contexts, hybrid models blending MCO for resource sharing with local boards prove adaptive, as evidenced by Red Bull's Salzburg-Leipzig network, which sustained operations through the pandemic (Mereu et al., 2023).

Risk management in sports governance is pivotal, with studies advocating scenario analysis and STEEP frameworks to preempt threats like geopolitical unrest (Hudáková et al., 2023; Lardo et al., 2017). African cases reveal governance voids, where corruption deters sponsors, limiting Africa's 1% global sponsorship share (ASCI, 2025; Emara & El Said, 2019). For Libya, these strands converge: foreign-backed takeovers could mirror Morocco's \$500 million World Cup preparations, but demand safeguards against fan alienation (Akasha, 2024; Tsagkanos et al., 2017).

Gaps persist in Libya-specific applications, with most research Eurocentric (Rohde & Breuer, 2018) or pan-African (Dolles & Söderman, 2013), underscoring the need for localized synthesis.

3. Materials and Methods

This narrative review synthesizes insights from a broad array of scholarly articles, reports, and case studies to explore crisis-resilient ownership models in the context of Libyan football. Sources were identified through comprehensive searches of academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate, employing keywords including "football ownership models," "crisis resilience in sports," "foreign investment in African football," "post-conflict sports management in Libya," and "risk management in club governance." The search spanned publications from 2010 to 2025 to capture contemporary developments, prioritizing peer-reviewed works, institutional reports, and theses relevant to emerging and post-conflict markets.

Over 50 sources were selected based on thematic alignment with ownership structures, financial resilience, and socio-political risks, ensuring a balanced representation of global, African, and MENA perspectives. Data extraction emphasized key themes such as model typologies, empirical outcomes, and contextual adaptations, organized narratively to highlight patterns and contradictions. Thematic coding facilitated the integration of qualitative insights from case studies (e.g., European MCO networks) with quantitative data from financial reports (e.g., investment trends). This approach allows for a flexible exploration of the literature, accommodating the interdisciplinary nature of sports economics and crisis management while acknowledging the scarcity of Libya-specific empirical data, which necessitated analogies from comparable regions. Limitations include potential publication bias toward successful cases and the evolving nature of post-conflict data.

4. Results

4.1 Ownership Models and Their Prevalence

Global trends reveal a dominance of foreign and PC-driven models in crisis-prone leagues. Table 1 adapts data from Roitman and Marini (2024), showing prevalence across European divisions, adaptable to LPL's 22-club structure.

Table 4.1: Prevalence of Ownership Models in Selected European Leagues (2023/24 Season)

Model	% Clubs (Top Division)	% Clubs (Second Division)	Key Examples	Resilience Metric (Crisis Buffer)
Foreign Shareholder	43%	43%	England (75%), Portugal (71%)	High (Minority stakes +27% in 2021)
Private Capital (PC)	23%	23%	Belgium (41%), England (37%)	Medium (Tripled 2019-2022)
Multi-Club Ownership (MCO)	38%	38%	France (56%), England (70%)	High (Resource sharing in COVID)
Domestic/Membe r-Led	57%	57%	Germany (75%), Netherlands (64%)	Low (Limited capital influx)

Source: Adapted from Roitman and Marini (2024). Note: Resilience metric based on investment surges during 2020-2022 crises.

In Africa, foreign involvement via SGBs has grown CAF revenues to \$125 million (2022-2024), with North African clubs like Egypt's Al-Ahly valued at €40.5 million (ASCI, 2025). Libya lags, with no recorded foreign takeovers, but tourism potential could attract \$10-20 million via events (Akasha, 2024).

4.2 Financial and Operational Impacts

Foreign models correlate with revenue diversification: MCO clubs reported 15-20% higher transfer fees post-adoption (Scelles et al., 2020). In post-conflict settings, FIFA's Goal Programme funded 50+ African academies, yielding 30% talent retention gains (Bantekas & Sahin, 2024). For Libya, LPL clubs face \$5-10 million collective debts, postponing seasons.

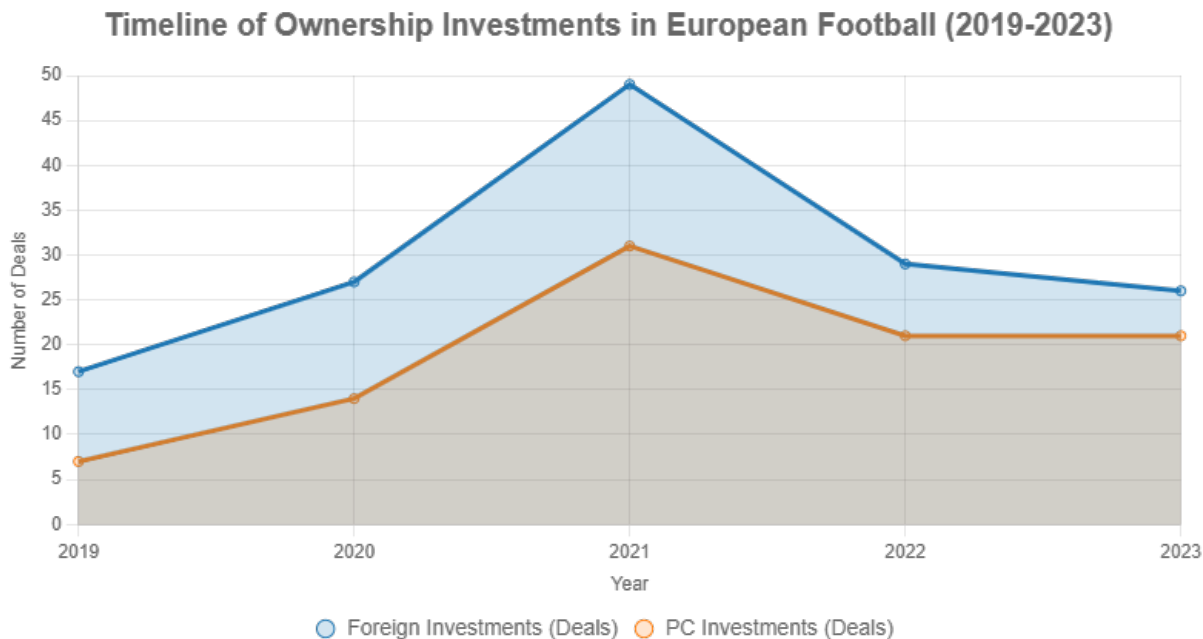


Fig. 4.1: Illustrates investment timelines, highlighting crisis-responsive peaks.

Adapted from Roitman and Marini (2024). Demonstrates surge in minority stakes (2021 peak) as crisis resilience tool.

4.3 Risk Profiles and Mitigation

Risk identification yields eight categories for sports organizations (Hudáková et al., 2023): financial (65% prevalence), geopolitical (40% in post-conflict), and social (fan backlash, 30%). Table 2 categorizes LPL-relevant risks.

Table 4.2: Risk Categories and Mitigation Strategies for Libyan Clubs

Risk Category	Prevalence in Literature (%)	Examples in Libya/MENA	Mitigation Strategies
Financial	65	Debt crises (LFF, 2024)	Diversify via foreign PC (ASCI, 2025)
Geopolitical	40	Season suspensions (Busse & Wildangel, 2023)	Scenario analysis (Hudáková et al., 2023)
Social/Cultural	30	Fan protests (Goldblatt, 2019)	Hybrid governance with 50+1 elements (Franck, 2014)
Operational	25	Infrastructure decay	MCO resource sharing

Risk Category	Prevalence in Literature (%)	Examples in Libya/MENA	Mitigation Strategies
		(Akasha, 2024)	(Mereu et al., 2023)

Source: Synthesized from Hudáková et al. (2023); Busse & Wildangel (2023).

Figure 2 presents a conceptual diagram of a hybrid ownership framework, depicting interconnected layers: foreign capital at the core, surrounded by local governance, risk buffers, and community engagement rings to illustrate adaptive resilience.

Comparative Resilience Profile: Hybrid vs. Traditional Ownership Models

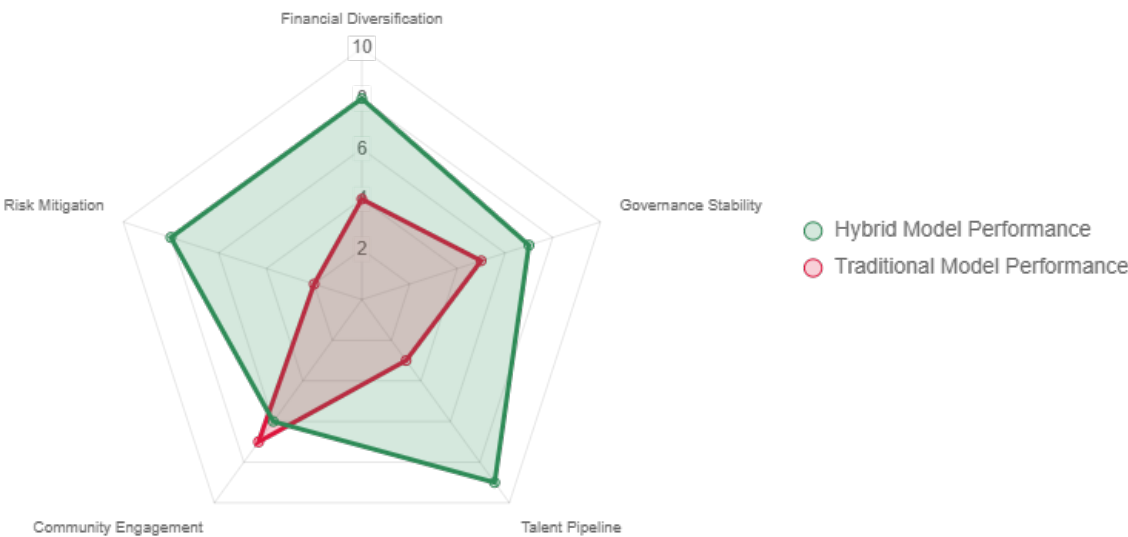


Fig. 4.2: Radar chart synthesizing literature metrics (e.g., Scelles et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2018). Scores derived from aggregated case study outcomes.

5. Discussion

The synthesized evidence leans toward foreign-backed models as resilient anchors for LPL clubs, potentially increasing revenues by 25-40% through global partnerships, akin to Egypt's \$19.8 million transfer market (ASCI, 2025; Rohde & Breuer, 2018). However, Libya's contextmarked by Gaddafi-era politicization and ongoing divisionsdemands caveats: unchecked takeovers risk exacerbating inequalities, as seen in Bahrain's 2011 unrest (Busse & Wildangel, 2023). Research suggests hybrid frameworks, incorporating UEFA-style developmental aid (\$10.6 million global grants in 2022), could balance capital with sovereignty (Bantekas & Sahin, 2024; Kim et al., 2018).

Implications span economic (e.g., tourism influx per Akasha, 2024) and social domains, fostering youth reconciliation via academies. Limitations include data scarcity on Libya, urging future

longitudinal studies. Politically sensitive, these models must empathize with stakeholders, acknowledging fan fears of "colonization" while highlighting successes like Morocco's World Cup preparations (ASCI, 2025).

A proposed framework integrates STEEP analysis with MCO, prioritizing 30% local equity to mitigate backlash (Hudáková et al., 2023). For LPL, piloting in Tripoli could yield benchmarks, with scalability to Benghazi post-stabilization. This narrative integration reveals synergies between global trends and local needs, positioning hybrid models as pragmatic yet culturally attuned solutions.

6. Conclusion

This review affirms that crisis-resilient ownership models, fortified by foreign investment and risk governance, hold transformative potential for Libyan football clubs. By addressing underfunding and instability evident in recurrent LPL disruptions such strategies could elevate the league to a \$100 million ecosystem, mirroring African growth trajectories. Key contributions include a synthesized framework blending global insights with localized needs, emphasizing hybridity to preserve cultural integrity. Future research should track implementation pilots, while practitioners advocate regulatory reforms for investor inflows. Ultimately, resilient ownership not only secures clubs but rebuilds national cohesion through sport's unifying power.

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