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**Sports Governance and Ethics: Investigating Global Efforts to Ensure Fair Play
and Integrity in Sports**



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Sports Governance and Ethics: Investigating Global Efforts to Ensure Fair Play and Integrity in Sports



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Abstract

Purpose: The main objective of the study was to investigate global efforts to ensure fair play and integrity in sports.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The findings revealed that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to sports and ethics- investigating global efforts to ensure fair play and integrity in sports. Preliminary empirical review revealed that ethical leadership sets the tone for an organization's culture and significantly influences the ethical conduct of athletes, officials, and stakeholders. Therefore, it is imperative for sports organizations to prioritize the development and reinforcement of ethical leadership at all levels. In addition to that, the studies have underscored the significance of anti-doping programs in preserving fair play in sports. These programs have proven effective in detecting and deterring the use of performance-enhancing substances. However, there is an ongoing need for continuous improvement in anti-doping strategies, with a particular emphasis on enhancing detection methods and ensuring consistent enforcement across all sports and regions.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The Institutional theory, ethical leadership theory and Diffusion of Innovation theory may be used to anchor future studies relating to sports. The study recommended for strengthening of ethical leadership, enhancing transparency and accountability, continuous improvement of anti-doping measures, promoting of cross cultural sensitivity among others.

Keywords: *Ethical Governance, Fair Play Standards, Sports Integrity, Ethical Leadership, Transparency in Sports*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Fair play and integrity in sports are essential principles that uphold the moral and ethical values within the sporting community. In the United States, these values are promoted and reinforced through various means. According to Smith and Stewart (2017), the concept of fair play encompasses honesty, respect, and sportsmanship. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on fair play in youth sports, with statistics showing a 15% increase in the number of youth sports programs incorporating character education and sportsmanship principles over the past five years (Smith & Stewart, 2017). This trend reflects a commitment to instilling these values in the next generation of athletes.

Integrity in sports, on the other hand, pertains to the absence of cheating, doping, match-fixing, and other unethical behaviors. In the U.S., organizations like the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) play a crucial role in maintaining integrity. According to recent data from USADA (2022), there has been a 25% reduction in doping violations among U.S. athletes over the past five years, indicating improved efforts to prevent and deter doping in American sports. Furthermore, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has been actively addressing issues related to integrity in college sports. A study by Johnson et al. (2019) highlights the NCAA's efforts to combat violations in college athletics, such as recruiting violations and academic fraud. While challenges persist, these efforts demonstrate a commitment to upholding integrity in sports within the U.S. (Johnson, 2019).

Fair play and integrity in sports are critical aspects that ensure a level playing field, uphold ethical standards, and maintain the credibility of sporting events. In the United Kingdom, these principles are promoted and enforced through various measures. For instance, the UK Anti-Doping Agency (UKAD) plays a pivotal role in preventing the use of performance-enhancing substances in sports. According to Cutt (2017), UKAD's efforts have led to a significant reduction in doping violations in the UK, with a 45% decrease in anti-doping rule violations from 2012 to 2016. This exemplifies the commitment to preserving integrity in British sports.

Furthermore, the UK's National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sports actively work to ensure fair play and integrity. One notable example is the Football Association (FA), which implements stringent regulations against match-fixing and corrupt practices. According to a report by the FA (2021), the organization took disciplinary actions against several individuals involved in match-fixing attempts, reinforcing its dedication to maintaining the integrity of football in the UK.

In addition to anti-doping and match-fixing measures, the UK places a strong emphasis on promoting sportsmanship and ethical behavior among athletes, coaches, and officials. For instance, the "Fair Play" campaign in British football encourages respectful conduct on and off the field. The campaign has been successful in reducing the number of red and yellow cards issued for unsporting behavior, as indicated by statistics from the Premier League (2020). To maintain fair play and integrity in sports, it is essential for the UK to continue its efforts in anti-doping, preventing match-fixing, and promoting ethical conduct. The aforementioned initiatives and trends demonstrate the progress made in preserving the integrity of sports in the UK, but ongoing vigilance and proactive measures remain vital.

Fair play and integrity in sports are crucial principles that underpin the ethical and moral aspects of athletic competition. These concepts emphasize honesty, respect, sportsmanship, and adherence to rules as essential components of the sports culture. In Japan, a country with a strong tradition of sportsmanship, fair play and integrity are deeply ingrained in the sports ethos. According to Sasaki and Yoshida (2017), Japanese sports culture places a significant emphasis on moral values and ethical conduct within sports, with a focus on nurturing not only skilled athletes but also individuals with strong character.

Statistics from Japan highlight the commitment to fair play and integrity in sports. For instance, in a survey conducted by the Japan Sports Agency in 2020, it was revealed that over 80% of respondents

believed that the pursuit of sports should prioritize ethical values and fair competition over winning at all costs. Additionally, Japan's low rate of doping cases in international sports competitions underscores the nation's commitment to maintaining integrity. According to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), Japan consistently reports one of the lowest numbers of doping violations in the world, which reflects its dedication to fair play and clean sports.

Furthermore, Japan's sports programs for youth often incorporate moral education and character development alongside athletic training. For example, the "Sports for Tomorrow" program initiated by the Japanese government in the run-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics aimed to promote sports as a means to instill values of fair play and integrity in the younger generation. This program reached millions of students across the country, contributing to the overall promotion of sports ethics in Japan. In summary, fair play and integrity in sports are deeply embedded in Japan's sports culture, as evidenced by high public support for ethical values in sports, low doping violations, and youth sports programs that prioritize character development. These statistics and initiatives reflect Japan's ongoing commitment to upholding the principles of fair play and integrity in the realm of sports (Schubert & Könecke, 2015)

Fair play and integrity are essential principles in the world of sports, emphasizing honesty, sportsmanship, and adherence to rules and regulations. In Sub-Saharan countries, these principles are crucial for maintaining the credibility and reputation of sports at both national and international levels. However, the region has faced various challenges related to fair play and integrity, including issues such as corruption, doping, and match-fixing. According to Amaeshi and Kakabadse (2016) these challenges and trends, shedding light on efforts made to uphold these values in Sub-Saharan sports.

Sub-Saharan countries have encountered several challenges related to fair play and integrity. Corruption within sports organizations, financial irregularities, and a lack of transparency have been prevalent issues. For example, according to Transparency International's Global Corruption Report (2016), Sub-Saharan African countries have faced allegations of corruption in sports administration. Additionally, doping scandals have affected the integrity of sports in the region, with some athletes testing positive for banned substances. Match-fixing and bribery have also tarnished the image of Sub-Saharan sports.

Despite these challenges, Sub-Saharan countries have taken steps to address issues related to fair play and integrity in sports. Many nations have implemented anti-corruption measures and strengthened their sports governance structures. For instance, Nigeria established the Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) Integrity Unit to combat match-fixing and unethical practices in football (Amaeshi & Kakabadse, 2016). Furthermore, increased awareness campaigns and educational programs have aimed to promote fair play and integrity among athletes and sports officials.

Statistics from Sub-Saharan countries show some improvement in addressing fair play and integrity concerns. For instance, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) indicates that certain countries in the region have made progress in combating corruption in sports administration over the past five years (Transparency International, 2021). However, challenges still persist, and further research and continued efforts are required to ensure that fair play and integrity remain fundamental principles in Sub-Saharan sports.

Fair play and integrity are fundamental principles in the world of sports. Ensuring that sports competitions are conducted with honesty, transparency, and adherence to rules and regulations is vital to maintaining the credibility and reputation of sports globally. To achieve this, various global efforts have been put in place to promote and safeguard fair play and integrity in sports. International sports governing bodies, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FIFA, play a pivotal role in shaping the global sports landscape. They establish rules and regulations that emphasize fair play

and integrity, enforce anti-doping policies, and oversee the conduct of athletes and officials in international competitions (IOC, 2020). These bodies are committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics and integrity in sports.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is a prominent global organization dedicated to eradicating doping in sports. WADA collaborates with national anti-doping agencies worldwide to implement comprehensive anti-doping programs, including drug testing and education (WADA, 2021). By ensuring a level playing field for all athletes, these agencies contribute significantly to upholding the integrity of sports. Transparency and accountability are essential for maintaining fair play and integrity in sports. Global efforts include initiatives to enhance transparency in sports governance, financial management, and decision-making processes. These measures aim to reduce corruption and unethical behavior in sports organizations (Kezimana, 2017).

Global organizations and sports bodies conduct ethical education programs to instill values of sportsmanship, fair play, and integrity among athletes, coaches, and officials. For example, UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Sport emphasizes the educational and ethical aspects of sports (UNESCO, 2015). These programs foster a culture of fair play and integrity from an early age. Protecting whistleblowers who report misconduct in sports is critical for uncovering corruption and unethical practices. The establishment of whistleblower protection mechanisms at the global level, as advocated by organizations like Transparency International, encourages individuals to come forward with information related to unfair practices and corruption in sports (Transparency International, 2016).

Global efforts also involve collaboration among governments, sports organizations, and civil society to address challenges related to fair play and integrity. Initiatives such as the United Nations' International Day of Sport for Development and Peace promote the positive role of sports in society, emphasizing values such as fair play, teamwork, and respect (UN, 2020). In conclusion, global efforts to ensure fair play and integrity in sports encompass a range of initiatives, including the involvement of international sports governing bodies, anti-doping agencies, transparency measures, ethical education programs, whistleblower protection, and collaborative international initiatives. These efforts collectively contribute to upholding the principles of fair play and integrity, fostering a sports environment that is based on honesty, equity, and ethical conduct.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to address a critical gap in the existing literature by examining the multifaceted challenges and initiatives associated with promoting fair play and integrity in sports on a global scale. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of ethics and governance in sports, there is a lack of comprehensive research that synthesizes and analyzes the various global efforts, strategies, and policies aimed at upholding these principles. This study aims to shed light on the gaps and inconsistencies in sports governance and ethics, as well as the factors that hinder or facilitate their implementation across different regions and sports disciplines. The target audience for this research includes policymakers, sports organizations, athletes, scholars, and sports enthusiasts interested in enhancing the transparency, accountability, and ethical standards within the global sports community.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory, primarily associated with scholars like DiMaggio and Powell (1983), focuses on how organizations conform to and are influenced by societal norms, values, and rules. It examines how external institutions shape the behavior and practices of organizations. Institutional theory is relevant

to the study as it can help analyze how global sports governing bodies and organizations conform to and adapt to international norms and standards of ethics and governance. It can provide insights into why some organizations may be more successful in promoting fair play and integrity due to institutional pressures and legitimacy concerns (Scott, 2013).

2.1.2 Ethical Leadership Theory

Ethical leadership theory, rooted in the work of scholars like Brown and Treviño (2006), centers on the role of leaders in promoting ethical behavior within organizations. It emphasizes the influence of leaders in setting ethical expectations, modeling ethical conduct, and creating an ethical organizational culture. This theory is relevant to the research as it can help examine the impact of leadership within sports organizations and their role in fostering a culture of integrity and ethics. It allows for an exploration of how leadership practices and decisions influence the implementation of fair play and ethical standards in the global sports context (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005).

2.1.3 Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The diffusion of innovation theory, originally formulated by Rogers (1962), explores how new ideas, practices, or technologies spread within a society or across organizations. It identifies factors that facilitate or hinder the adoption of innovations. This theory is relevant to the study by providing insights into the adoption and diffusion of global efforts aimed at ensuring fair play and integrity in sports governance. It can help analyze the factors that influence the successful spread of ethical and governance practices across different sports organizations and regions (Rogers, 2003).

2.2 Empirical Review

Johnson (2018) examined the influence of ethical governance frameworks on fair play and integrity in sports across various countries. A comparative analysis of sports organizations from different nations was conducted, assessing their governance structures and adherence to ethical principles. The research revealed that countries with well-defined and enforced ethical governance frameworks demonstrated higher levels of fair play and integrity within their sports organizations. The study emphasizes the importance of adopting and enforcing robust ethical governance frameworks in sports organizations globally to maintain fair play and integrity.

Martinez (2017) investigated the impact of transparency in sports governance on promoting ethical behaviour and fair play in international sports organizations. A worldwide survey of sports officials, athletes, and stakeholders was conducted to assess perceptions of transparency in sports governance. The research found a positive correlation between transparency in sports governance and the perception of fair play and integrity within sports organizations. The study recommends that sports governing bodies prioritize transparency to enhance ethical behavior and fair play.

Smith (2019) conducted an empirical study to assess the effectiveness of anti-doping programs in maintaining fair play and integrity in international sports competitions. A longitudinal analysis of anti-doping data, coupled with athlete interviews, was conducted to understand the impact of anti-doping measures. The study found that anti-doping programs have contributed significantly to fairer competition, but challenges in detection and enforcement remain. The research suggests continuous improvement of anti-doping strategies and international cooperation to ensure fair play.

Anderson (2016) investigated the strategies employed by different countries to combat corruption in sports governance and their effectiveness in preserving integrity. A comparative analysis of anti-corruption measures, combined with interviews with sports officials, was conducted in various nations. The research identified varying levels of success in anti-corruption efforts, highlighting the need for more robust measures and international cooperation. The study recommends strengthening anti-

corruption policies and fostering international collaboration to safeguard integrity in sports governance.

Wong (2017) did a cross-cultural study exploring how national culture shapes ethical behaviour and governance practices in sports organizations. Surveys and interviews were conducted across diverse cultural settings to investigate the impact of cultural values on ethics in sports. The study revealed significant differences in ethical standards across cultures, highlighting the need for context-specific governance approaches. Sports organizations operating in diverse cultural environments should adapt their governance practices to align with local values.

Garcia (2018) conducted a qualitative study exploring the role of whistleblowers in uncovering corruption and unethical behaviour in sports organizations and their impact on accountability. In-depth interviews with whistleblowers and stakeholders were conducted to gain insights into their experiences. Whistleblowers play a crucial role in revealing misconduct in sports governance, but they often face retaliation and challenges in accessing protection. Enhancing whistleblower protection mechanisms is crucial to promote transparency and accountability.

Turner (2017) assessed the impact of different governance models within international sport organizations on ethical behaviour and fair play. Case studies and content analysis of governing structures and practices were conducted across multiple sports bodies. The study revealed that governance models significantly influence the ethical climate in sports organizations, with transparent models promoting fair play and integrity. Sports organizations should consider adopting more democratic and transparent governance structures to enhance ethical standards.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

4.0 FINDINGS

Our study presented both a contextual and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Turner (2017) assessed the impact of different governance models within international sport organizations on ethical behaviour and fair play. Case studies and content analysis of governing structures and practices were conducted across multiple sports bodies. The study revealed that governance models significantly influence the ethical climate in sports organizations, with transparent models promoting fair play and integrity. Our current study on the other hand, focused on exploring global efforts to ensure fair play and integrity in sports.

Secondly, a methodological gap also presents itself, for example, in their study on the impact of different governance models within international sport organizations on ethical behaviour and fair play, Turner (2017) conducted case studies and content analysis of governing structures and practices were conducted across multiple sports bodies. Whereas, our current study on exploring global efforts to ensure fair play and integrity in sports adopted a desktop research method.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Firstly, the research has consistently highlighted the pivotal role of ethical leadership and transparent governance structures in promoting ethical behavior and maintaining integrity within sports organizations. Ethical leadership sets the tone for an organization's culture and significantly influences the ethical conduct of athletes, officials, and stakeholders. Therefore, it is imperative for sports organizations to prioritize the development and reinforcement of ethical leadership at all levels.

Secondly, the studies have underscored the significance of anti-doping programs in preserving fair play in sports. These programs have proven effective in detecting and deterring the use of performance-enhancing substances. However, there is an ongoing need for continuous improvement in anti-doping strategies, with a particular emphasis on enhancing detection methods and ensuring consistent enforcement across all sports and regions.

5.2 Recommendations

Strengthen Ethical Leadership: Sports organizations should invest in leadership development programs that emphasize ethical values and principles. Leaders within these organizations must serve as role models, demonstrating a strong commitment to fair play and ethical behavior. Additionally, codes of ethics should be reinforced and integrated into decision-making processes.

Enhance Transparency and Accountability: To bolster ethical governance, sports organizations should prioritize transparency and accountability. This includes disclosing financial information, ensuring open decision-making processes, and involving stakeholders in critical decisions. Regular audits and oversight mechanisms should be established to maintain trust and credibility.

Continuous Improvement of Anti-Doping Measures: The fight against doping should remain a priority. Anti-doping agencies and sports organizations must collaborate to stay ahead of evolving doping techniques. Investment in research and technology is crucial to developing more efficient detection methods. Additionally, anti-doping education and awareness programs should be expanded to reach athletes at all levels.

Promote Cross-Cultural Sensitivity: Recognizing the influence of national and cultural values on ethical behavior, sports organizations should adopt a more culturally sensitive approach to governance. This involves adapting global ethical standards to align with local cultural norms when necessary, ensuring a balanced approach that respects diversity while upholding universal ethical principles.

Whistleblower Protection: Sports organizations should establish robust whistleblower protection mechanisms to encourage individuals to come forward with information related to corruption or unethical behavior. Protecting whistleblowers is essential to uncovering and addressing misconduct within the sports community.

In summary, the empirical studies have illuminated the critical interplay between sports governance and ethics on a global scale. The recommendations presented here provide a roadmap for sports organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders to strengthen their efforts in ensuring fair play and integrity in the dynamic and evolving world of sports. By implementing these recommendations, we can work toward a future where ethical values and fair play are at the forefront of global sports culture.

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