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EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT



MEMOS XXVII

2024-2025

***DEVELOPING A GOVERNANCE OPERATING MODEL
FOR
THE NATIONAL FEDERATIONS OF THE GAMBIA NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE***

BY

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Submitted: June 2025

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have supported me throughout the journey of completing this MEMOS project.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my tutor, Dr. Donald RUKARE, whose expert guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support have been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this work. Your mentorship has been invaluable.

I am profoundly grateful to my family for their constant encouragement, patience, and understanding. Their belief in me provided the strength and motivation I needed to persevere through the challenges of this academic endeavour.

Special thanks are due to the Gambia National Olympic Committee (GNOC) Membership, Executive Board, and Staff for their steadfast support and for facilitating the environment necessary for the successful completion of this project.

I would also like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the MEMOS jury members who reviewed and provided constructive feedback throughout the various stages of this project. Your insights and recommendations greatly enriched the quality of the final work.

I am very grateful to the excellent team of MEMOS 27 for making our MEMOS journey memorable and fruitful.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Olympic Solidarity for awarding me the scholarship that made this academic journey possible. Your support has been a cornerstone of this achievement.

To all who contributed in one way or another—thank you.

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the governance of the National Sports Federation in the Gambia. This was necessitated due to a low level of governance in the sporting sector. The following objectives guided the study:

1. To enhance organisational governance, focusing on transparency, Accountability, and Democratic Process within National Federations in the Gambia
2. To identify and establish governance gaps in the National Federations in the Gambia
3. To understand how the Board composition influences the performance of National Federations.

The study utilised a mixed-methods approach to gather data for the research, taking into account the very unique environment in which many sporting organisations operate. The findings and discussions regarding this question presented many interesting perspectives on how the governance principles of this study — accountability, transparency, democracy, and board composition — can influence the governance of The Gambia National Sports Federations.

A questionnaire was created and distributed to the 29-member federations of the Gambia National Olympic Committee, receiving 23 responses. Additionally, the research included a review of the constitutions of 10 National Federations and Interviews with 5 notable figures from national sports federations and umbrella Sports organisations, such as the Gambia National Olympic Committee and the National Sports Council. The data collected was analysed qualitatively through a thematic approach and quantitatively using the SurveyMonkey tool. The analysis focused on four governance principles: Accountability, Democracy, Transparency, and Board Composition.

The findings indicate that National Federations need improvements in areas such as financial audits, effective communication of accountability measures, accessibility to important documents, consistency in updates, and representation of key stakeholder groups. The study recommends that the Gambia National Olympic Committee design a distinctive governance model for National Federations, featuring minimum governance standards tailored to the cultural and economic context of The Gambia.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à examiner la gouvernance des Fédérations Sportives Nationales en Gambie. Elle a été motivée par le faible niveau de gouvernance observé dans le secteur sportif. L'étude s'est articulée autour des objectifs suivants:

1. Améliorer la gouvernance organisationnelle, en mettant l'accent sur la transparence, la responsabilité et le processus démocratique au sein des Fédérations Nationales en Gambie
2. Identifier et combler les lacunes en matière de gouvernance dans les Fédérations Nationales en Gambie;
3. Comprendre comment la composition du conseil d'administration influence la performance des Fédérations Nationales.

L'étude a adopté une approche méthodologique mixte pour la collecte des données, en tenant compte de l'environnement unique dans lequel opèrent de nombreuses organisations sportives. Les résultats et les discussions ont mis en lumière des perspectives intéressantes sur la manière dont les principes de gouvernance étudiés — responsabilité, transparence, démocratie et composition du conseil — peuvent influencer la gouvernance des Fédérations Sportives Nationales de la Gambie.

Un questionnaire a été élaboré et distribué aux 29 fédérations membres du Comité National Olympique Gambien, avec 23 réponses reçues. En complément, l'étude a inclus une analyse des statuts de 10 Fédérations Nationales ainsi que des entretiens avec 5 personnalités clés issues des Fédérations Nationales et des organisations faîtières telles que le Comité National Olympique Gambien et le Conseil National des Sports. Les données recueillies ont été analysées qualitativement à travers une approche thématique et quantitativement à l'aide de l'outil SurveyMonkey. L'analyse s'est concentrée sur quatre principes de gouvernance: responsabilité, démocratie, transparence et composition du conseil.

Les résultats indiquent que les Fédérations Nationales doivent améliorer des aspects tels que les audits financiers, la communication efficace des mesures de responsabilité, l'accessibilité aux documents importants, la régularité des mises à jour et la représentation des groupes de parties prenantes clés. L'étude recommande l'élaboration d'un modèle de gouvernance distinctif pour les Fédérations Nationales, conçu par le Comité National Olympique Gambien, intégrant des normes minimales de gouvernance adaptées au contexte culturel et économique de la Gambie.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASC-Australian Sports Commission

ASOIF- Association of Summer Olympic International Federations

AGM – Annual General Meeting, same as an “annual meeting of members”

BIBGIS- Basic Indicators for Better Governance in International Sport

PGG- Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance in Sport

FIFA – International Federation of Association Football

FILA- Federation Internationale des Lutttes Associates’

FIVB- Federation Internationale de Volleyball

GFF- The Gambia Football Federation

GAC-The Gambia Athletes Commission

IAAF – International Association of Athletics Federations

GNOC- The Gambia National Olympic Committee

IF- International Federations

IOC- International Olympic Committee

NF- National Federations

NOC-National Olympic Committee

NSO- National Sport Organisation

NSF-National Sport Federation

NSC- National Sports Council

NSP-National Sports Policy

NSGO- Sports Governance Observer

UCI-International Cycling Union

WADA- World Anti-Doping Agency

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Gambia National Olympic Committee (GNOC) was established in 1972 as an Olympic and Sports Committee and was recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on January 1, 1976 (IOC, Gambia, n.d.). This role positioned the institution as the sole umbrella organisation overseeing all Olympic and non-Olympic sports activities in The Gambia from its inception until 2000, when the National Sports Council (NSC) was formed.

In 2000, the government, via the Ministry of Youth & Sports, established the National Sports Council (NSC), which is empowered as a government body to regulate, coordinate, and supervise the activities of National Sports Federations. (National Sports Policy 2010-2019)

The government exercises de facto control over the sports and Olympic movement as a regulatory sports body, rather than recognising the NOC as an autonomous body with self-regulating tools. The National Sports Council Act contains numerous conflicting laws contradicting the Olympic Charter, which continues to threaten the harmonious working relationship between the government and the Olympic Movement, and, to a large extent, undermines the governance of National Sports Organisations in the Gambia. Therefore, there is a pressing need for the Gambia to transition from government control to a governance approach in sports (Henry & P, 2004).

1.2 Problem Statement

With the increased number of stakeholders interested in the management of Olympic Sports and considering that NOCs depend on the structures of the National Federations to fulfil their roles as representatives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), there, is a need to strengthen the governance structure of the National Sports Federation as a dependable structure for the survival of National Olympic Committees.

Over the years, the National Sports Council (NSC), which the Government has mandated to oversee and regulate National Federations (NFs), has lacked a well-developed governance framework to evaluate and monitor the performance of NFs effectively. This absence has led to inadequate oversight and limited accountability to stakeholders.

It is important to highlight that the services of members of NFs are voluntary and therefore do not attract a skilled labour force, which makes NFs informal associations, meaning they are not properly structured and are run by a few individuals lacking the necessary administrative skills.

Sports federations lack strategic direction, a situation made worse by limited funding. The Board composition does not adequately reflect the required diversity to represent stakeholders' interests. Furthermore, board meetings and Annual General Meetings (AGM) are not held regularly.

In summary, many federations operate with less compliance with their constitutions and lack designed operational guidelines for their programs and activities. Additionally, the clubs of the National Federations are ineffective and cannot hold the NF executives accountable. Consequently, this has resulted in governance gaps within NFs, making it difficult to attain the NOC mission.

1.3 General Objective

The objective of the study is to conduct an assessment of the current governance systems of the National Federations of the Gambia and the Olympic Movement with the ultimate aim of developing a governance model that will strengthen the governance structures of the Olympic and Sports organisations in the Gambia.

1.4 Specific Objectives

1. To enhance organisational governance, focusing on transparency, Accountability, and Democratic Process within National Federations in the Gambia
2. To identify and establish governance gaps in the National Federations in the Gambia
3. To understand how the Board composition influences the performance of National Federations

1.5 Research questions

1. How can Organisational governance (transparency, Accountability, and democratic process) improve the governance structures of National Federations in the Gambia?
2. What are the governance gaps that exist in the Gambia National Sports Federations?
3. How can the Board Composition influence the performance of National Federations in the Gambia?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review covers three different approaches to governance: Systemic, Organisational, and Political governance. For any sports governance framework to be effective, it must reflect on these three governance dimensions and their effect on Olympic Sports organisations' management. The review also briefly discusses the key elements of Organisational governance (Accountability, Transparency, and Democracy) and the different theories, including Agency theory.

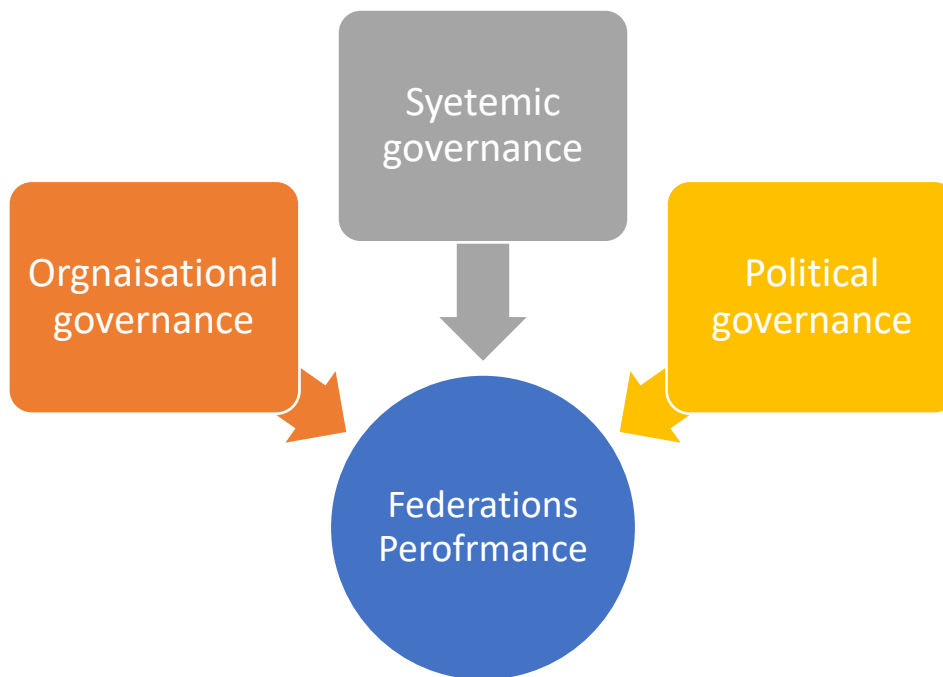
The third part of the literature review examines Board Composition, with a particular focus on diversity and its role in strengthening the governance of Sports Organisations. The final section explores different governance models and offers potential recommendations on how their implementation can enhance the governance of National Sports Organisations.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The concept of good governance in sports was coined by Henry & Lee (2014) as a description of how organisations are directed, controlled, and regulated. Good governance in sports encompasses organisational, systemic, and political perspectives. Organisational governance, or corporate governance, focuses on normative, ethically informed standards of managerial behaviour. Systemic governance addresses the competition, cooperation, and mutual adjustments between organisations within business or policy systems, while political governance pertains to how governments or governing bodies guide rather than directly control the activities of sports organisations (Henry & Lee, p. 24, 2014).

Diagram 2.1 below depicts how the different governance perspectives (Organisations, Systemic and Political) can influence the governance of National Sports Federations

Diagram 2.1: Conceptual framework



2.3 Key Definitions of Governance

Governance has become an interesting topic for research in the last 20 years due to corruption, match-fixing, and doping in sports. Some of the widely known cases include the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), International Olympic Committee cases (IOC) regarding bribery in the 2002 Olympic Games and the right to host them by Salt Lake City (Mallon 2000). These scandals have reduced and created trust gaps between sports institutions and their stakeholders.

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of governance due to the nature of how the concept is perceived in different purposes and different organisational settings (meaning 2017). However, the definition of the European Commission (2013) has been widely cited by many sports organisations: *“The framework and culture within which a sports body sets policy to deliver its strategic objectives, engage with stakeholders, monitors performance, evaluates and manages risks and reports to its constituents on activities and progress including the delivery of effective, sustainable and proportionate sports policy and regulation”*. The European definition of

Governance encompasses all the components that a sports organisation would need to strengthen its governance structure.

2.4 Theoretical Review

There are many theories developed in the framework of governance of Non-profit organisations, which include: agency theory, stewardship theory, institutional theory, resource dependency theory, network theory, stakeholder theory, democratic perspective theory, and managerial hegemony theory (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). All these theories highlight the interest of Board members and their roles, managers, and stakeholders. However, this study limits its focus to Agency Theory.

2.5 Agency Theory

According to Rational Theory, human beings are self-centred, and to diffuse this self-centeredness, there should be checks and balances to ensure that those entrusted with managing the affairs of organisations thoroughly represent the stakeholders' interests.

Agency Theory highlights the conflict between the interests of the 'agency' (staff, paid employees, & Board) and the 'principal' (owners), which leads to asymmetrical information sharing. This conflict is often exacerbated by remuneration packages, short-term profit maximisation, and corporate investments that lack ethical considerations (Buchholz and Rosenthal, 2002). Effective control mechanisms are necessary to mitigate these conflicts and protect stakeholder interests. These mechanisms require transparency throughout the administrative system, supported by financial management, monitoring processes, and rules and regulations for agents to follow.

Agency theory focuses on the internal monitoring controls that ensure the Board and staff prioritise shareholders' interests as the primary factors in their decision-making within the organisation they oversee. Conversely, the Board and staff (Agents) should be subject to ongoing checks and balances to avoid or mitigate actions that may not reflect the interests of the shareholders. This partially illustrates how governance systems function. One limitation of sports is that financial

gains cannot be directly linked to shareholder benefits. An example of this approach is the framework for good governance in the UK established in 2004, which detailed a process for closely monitoring the Board's compliance (Hoye & Cuskely, 2007)

2.6 Significance of good governance (Accountability, Transparency, and Democracy)

Governance has been defined in various ways, including as the exercise of authority and power, the establishment of an organisation's objectives, and the formulation of fundamental policies within it (Hums & MacLean, 2004). Many writers use the term "good governance," but it's crucial to note that there is no widely accepted definition, nor are there any impartial criteria for identifying "good governance" in organisations. Nevertheless, three basic concepts are typically and distinctly reflected in these definitions: Accountability, Transparency, and Democracy (Aguilera & Cuervo-Cazurra, 2004). Accountability is defined as the ability and willingness to justify the actions taken by an organisation's governing body (IOC 2016). It is important to understand to whom the governing body is accountable, including its members and stakeholders in the system in which it operates. Accountability is recognised as a cornerstone of good governance (Klusacek et al., 2018).

Governance refers to the rules, norms, and power structures that guide an organisation's operations to efficiently meet its goals and objectives (Chappelet, 2018). These actions must align with values such as transparency, equity, accountability, and responsibility (Chalip, 1995; Mezzadri et al., 2018). A key role of governance is to balance the interests of organisations and their stakeholders, which is vital for the effective implementation of public policies in sports (Chalip, 1995). Within this framework, the principle of good governance in sports organisations is essential for advancing high-performance sports within the country (De Dycker, 2019; Thompson et al., 2022). Consequently, good governance principles arise, with transparency serving as a foundational element. Transparency involves organisations providing and sharing a range of information that benefits the public, beyond mere compliance with existing laws and regulations (ASOIF, 2016; Henry and Lee, 2004). This openness is vital for ensuring the credibility of the organisation and its leadership, influencing both internal stakeholders and external parties (Geeraert, 2015; Král and Cuskelly, 2018).

Good governance is hard to quantify; however, when discussing governance, there are two specific terms to think about: the governance structure and governance model. The structural elements of governance provide the governing mechanism of how organisations are operated, specifically outlining the board's structure. The directors are usually in charge of representing the company in high-level decision-making. The structural features would outline details of how the directors are selected, how they are removed, the size of the Board, etc. In a clear accountability and effective governance setting, it is spelt out to whom the Board is accountable and the procedure for how this process is achieved.

In summary, Governance is important in sports as most National Federations are seen to be autonomous according to the IOC. This means sports institutions are expected to be self-regulatory and need to establish a strong governance framework that will win the hearts of the Stakeholders. With the argument of autonomous bodies to operate independently without government interference, there should be a strong governance system that guarantees that sports institutions operate in the best interest of their stakeholders.

The introduction of elements of accountability, transparency, and democracy into the governance model will strengthen the Board's role in fulfilling the organisation's objectives, ultimately increasing stakeholder interest. Conversely, sports federations operating without a governance framework may lead to inconsistency, overlaps, and operational failures. As the first study on governance in The Gambia, this research will enhance the level of governance awareness. The model will serve as a foundation or reference for future development and improvements aimed at enhancing efficiency.

2.7 Board Composition and Its Effects on National Sport Federations

The Board of National Federations is central to directing the governance wheel; therefore, for the Board to effectively execute its governance roles, the composition of the Board, in terms of diversity and size, is a relevant aspect (McLeod 2020). Board diversity could be task-related (educational or occupational background) or non-task-related (gender, religion, age, ethnicity, beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, and athlete representation), all crucial for reflecting the

Board's performance (Carter et al., 2003). In addition to the inclusiveness of the Board, four key roles are essential for running a Board, which include human resources, operations, finance, and the direction of the Board (Mercie 2012). It is argued that a Board built on diversity is strongly positioned to overcome complex challenges. People from different backgrounds tend to have various perspectives on issues, which enhances the decision-making of organisations.

Although there are many divergent views about Board size, however, research has shown a significant number of standards being adopted to encourage Board diversity to reflect on gender representation and skills, and also a sizeable board size between 5 to 12 Directors as good governance practices. (McLeod, et al. (2021):

On the other hand, resource dependency theory (Zahra and Pearce, 1989) advocates for larger boards in sports organisations to leverage the varied skills of their members while also fostering networking opportunities. In contrast, stewardship theory (Turnbull, 1997) contends that having a large board may hinder effective relationship management. Goodstein et al. (1994) suggest that boards exceeding 12 members could lead to the formation of separate factions, making it challenging for such a size to enhance effective decision-making in sports Organisations. Both the Australian Sports Code and the UK Sports Code advise that the boards of National Federations should not exceed 12 directors; however, there is no empirical evidence to support adherence to this guideline. Research by McLeod et al. (2021) indicates that the average board size in Indian National Sports Federations (NSFs) is 19.5 directors, surpassing the averages in sampled Western countries, which range from 7.2 to 14.2 directors. The professional backgrounds of directors in Australia and the UK show significant representation in business. Conversely, India, South Africa, and the USA have a higher proportion of directors with sports backgrounds. Indian NSFs also include a noteworthy percentage of politicians and a relatively low number of women on their boards compared to their Western counterparts. McLeod et al. (2021)

In conclusion, reflecting the aforementioned viewpoints within the context of Gambia's sports Organisations, no regulations are guiding the incorporation of diversity in task-related matters crucial for effective board performance. The current compositions of National Sports Organisations' boards are based on equal representation among constituents, which has been

termed a “constituency-based” or “representative-based” board (Corbett, 2011a). Additionally, board members are selected based on political affiliations, often influenced by ethnic and cultural backgrounds, rather than comprising individuals with the appropriate balance of skills, knowledge, experience, and representation of the sport's diversity. Other practical challenges faced by the National Sports Federations include the absence of a board charter or ethical code of conduct. Athletes, as one of the most influential stakeholders of the sport's governing bodies, are not represented on the boards of the National Sports Organisations, although the Gambia National Olympic Committee has begun allowing the Athlete Commission chair to sit on the board, despite this not being a constitutional requirement.

Furthermore, boards elected through democratic processes can encounter challenges related to experience, where the commitment to democracy may overshadow the necessity of selecting competent or expert board members (Cornforth, 2004). This democratic approach emphasises that any member can be elected to represent the group, regardless of their expertise (Chelliah et al., 2015). Often, how individuals are elected as directors, as specified by organisational rules or policies, results in a limited selection of potential candidates, which in turn restricts the variety of skills represented on the board (Chelliah et al., 2015, p. 12). This is in stark contrast to Agency theory, which asserts that the expertise and independence of board members are essential for effective governance and compliance (Cornforth, 2004).

Finally, the concept of equity pertains to who has access to representation in the decision-making processes and the acquisition of power within sports organisations. This includes ensuring athletes, supporters, and managers are represented on the boards of these organisations (Di Marco, 2019; Henry & Lee, 2004). The democratic process for selecting decision-makers must be transparent and devoid of obstacles or biases, enabling everyone involved to participate (Haas, 2019). Conversely, accountability involves the responsibility to assign duties to individuals or entities that have been given financial and managerial resources, requiring them to report back to those who delegated these tasks, thereby illustrating proper resource usage (Akutsu and Pinho, 2002; Henry and Lee, 2004).

2.7 A Governance Operating Model and Its Effect on National Sport Federations

High-profile governance failures have brought governance to the forefront of research and debate recently (McLeod, Adams & Sang, 2020). Sports organisations, both internationally and nationally, face pressure to enhance governance structures by adopting governance codes to maintain the confidence and trust of stakeholders (sponsors, fans) (Chappelet, 2018). Various sports organisations have developed numerous governance codes, all of which consistently feature and promote good governance principles such as accountability, transparency, and democracy. However, no universal code is suitable for all sports organisations (Parent et al., 2022). Given the impracticality of National Sports Organisations (NSOs) adopting a universal governance framework, each NSO should be able to formulate a robust, tailored governance framework that aligns with its specific sporting governance needs, with the view to mitigating governance failures (Parent et al., 2022).

Among the developed models are:

2.7.1 IOC Basic's Universal Principle for Effective Governance (2019)- This model has identified 7 basic elements of good governance which include, Vision, Mission, and Strategy of Sports Organizations, Institutional Governance, Ethical and Integrity Standards, Financial Governance, Support to Athletes, Solidarity—Social and Sustainable Development through Sport, Autonomy of the Olympic Movement—Harmonious Relationships with Government Authorities and External Stakeholders.

When the IOC introduced the Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance in 2010, the adoption of these principles was mandated for all International Federations and National Olympic Committees (IOC, 2008a). However, due to the complex nature of various IFs and NOCs, some IFs, including FILA (Wrestling), FIFA(Football), UCI (Cycling), and FIVB (Volleyball), responded by seeking recognition as autonomous bodies and the ability to develop their own governance rules (Chapelett, 2013).

This demonstrates that no single governance model is suitable for all. Thus, the effectiveness of a governance model may depend on the nature of the organisation, societal and economic realities, and the specific governance principles that each NOC or IF needs to develop.

2.7.2 The Sports Governance Observer (SGOB) is a benchmarking tool that features indicators of good governance, according to Geeraert (2018). Designed to evaluate the governance of International Federations, this instrument aims to determine the level of good governance of each IF based on the established code. The code consists of four elements, which are further divided into 57 principles and 309 indicators. The four elements are: **transparency**, which involves the reporting of the organisation's internal working structures; **democracy**, which pertains to the establishment and application of a fair and democratic election process as well as a democratic approach to internal decision-making; **internal accountability**, which ensures the segregation and separation of duties and powers to support compliance of internal structures and strengthen accountability; and finally, **societal representation**, which guarantees that the organisation takes appropriate measures to positively impact both internal and external stakeholders interests.

2.7.3 Geereart-Sports Governance Observer (2015) -In partnership with the University of Leuven, Play the Game created and released the Sports Governance Observer (SGO), a measurement and benchmarking tool. The tool is among the numerous products of a study that was supported by the European Commission to assess and measure of governance of six selected International Olympic Federations to determine their weaknesses and strengths for possible recommendations for improvements.

Four dimensions are proposed by the set: Checks and balances, democracy, transparency, and solidarity. Each dimension is divided into many indications (36) and a "qualitative" score system that assesses how well an indicator is satisfied (completely unfulfilled, weak, and moderate).

2.7.4 Basic Indicators for Better Governance in International Sport (BIBGIS): An Assessment Tool for International Sport Governing Bodies (2013)-According to Henry and Lee (2000), BIBGIS proposes seven principles of good governance: Transparency, Accountability, Democracy, Responsibility, Equity, Efficiency, and Effectiveness. These tools were developed as a guide to assess the governance of specific international sports Organisations to address their governance deficiencies over the years.

Among the many scholars, academics, and sports organisations that have developed and recommended governance tools, the collective aim is to improve governance in both national and international sports Organisations. However, no research has been found, nor has any sports governance tool been developed for the western part of the African continent, where sports are considered a voluntary service. The question of whether governance tools applicable in Europe will effectively address governance challenges in The Gambia and the African continent remains a research gap that has not yet been explored.

Other researchers argued that the application and implementation of a governance framework are not sufficient to guarantee governance challenges, but its application could mitigate unethical behaviours and create a mindset that will discourage corruption (Geeraert, 2018).

According to (ASC 2015), “Governance structures significantly affect the performance of sporting organisations. Ineffective governance practices not only impact sports but also undermine confidence in the sports industry as a whole.” In summary, applications of the governance model will address Clarity of roles, responsibilities, authority, and relationship, Consistency of the decision-making process, Clear accountability and transparency, and an agreed framework for Board effectiveness.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides detailed information about the methodology approach and plans to obtain relevant data needed to address the research questions highlighted in Chapter 1 of this study. The Chapter outlines the data collection strategy, sources of data, the targeted population for the data, sample selection, and how the collected data will be processed and analysed.

3.2 Target Population/ Sample Size

The target population refers to the total collection of all the elements or individuals under consideration (Orodho,2009). This study targeted all 29 affiliated members of the Gambia National Olympic Committee. In addition to the affiliated member associations, the study also interviewed (n=5) participants: 2 members from the Board of the Gambia National Olympic Committee, (n=1) Senior staff member of the Gambia Football Federation, (n=1) Chairperson of the Gambia Athletes Commission and (n=1) Chairperson of the National Sports Council. The study was also informed by a desk review of the constitutions of 10 national federations, namely: football, athletics, volleyball, judo, basketball, Swimming, Paralympics, Taekwondo, Cycling, and table tennis.

These 10 National Federations were chosen to ensure representation in the sample based on their popularity, membership size, international recognition, and potential to reach the international podium. Associations that lack these characteristics and are underperforming were also included in order to provide a balanced understanding of their situation within the context of the study.

3.3 Sampling Size and Technique

The sampling technique is the process of selecting a subset of the total population to be a true representative of the total population (Orodho, 2009). This study engaged either the Presidents, Secretaries General, senior staff, or an elected senior member of each National Association in completing the questionnaires.

This approach was taken to ensure that all the different categories of federations in terms of Olympic Sports, non-Olympic Sports, team sports, Individual Sports, paralympic Sports, and multi-sports are all represented in the sampling to ensure a representative sample of the entire population.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection is the process of gathering information relevant to conducting research. Primary data was collected using questionnaires from the member associations and interviews, while secondary data was gathered from a review of existing sports organisational policies in The Gambia.

3.5 Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools used to collect data. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008), a researcher must develop instruments to gather the necessary information. Primary data was collected using questionnaires, which were distributed to respondents using the SurveyMonkey tool via email to gather data and enable the researcher to reach a broad population of respondents. The questionnaires included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Secondary data was obtained through a desk review of constitutions, websites of a few associations, general meeting reports, annual reports, financial statements, and other relevant documents.

3.6 Questionnaires and Interview Questions:

Questionnaires and interview questions were designed to address the study's research questions, which are inextricably linked to accountability, transparency, democracy, and board composition. The study utilised Geeeraert's (2018) National Sports Governance Observer (NSGO) Tool, which is designed to establish a robust framework for evaluating and enhancing governance in the National Sports Organisation. This tool served as the foundation for both the questionnaire and the open-ended interview structure.

These dimensions have been chosen based on relevant theoretical insights that explain their beneficial effects on legitimacy, efficacy, and resistance to unethical practices. First, implementing the four dimensions contributes to perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. Second, each dimension specifically affects effectiveness and good conduct.

3.7 Data Analysis

For this Study, I employed a mixed-method study approach, which is grounded in technical documentary research on governance, to identify pertinent information regarding the research

questions. The analysis is based on four governance principles: transparency, accountability, democracy, and board composition, by utilising the following approaches:

3.8 Data Collection and Analysis Approach

3.8.1 Qualitative-Questionnaire: A questionnaire was distributed to respondents via email through SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey automatically generates responses in percentages and counts, enabling the analysis to be translated into charts for visualising the results.

3.8.2 Quantitative-Interviews and Desk Review:-I adopted a thematic analysis approach to examine the data obtained from the interviews and the desk review, which was particularly focused on the board composition regarding diversity, qualifications for the election of board members, term limits, and annual general assembly requirements, among others. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method used in qualitative research to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within data. It organises and describes the data in rich detail with minimal requirements.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study avoided mentioning the respondents' names to ensure they felt free and confident in participating. An introductory letter was also attached to the provided document to explain the intended use of the information, which was for academic purposes only.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter focuses on presenting the results derived from the analysed data, aimed at meeting the outlined objectives and addressing the research questions. Consequently, it showcases the findings related to the research questions:

1. How can Organisational governance (transparency, Accountability and democratic process) improve the governance structures of National Federations in the Gambia?
2. What are the governance gaps in the Gambia National Sports Federations?
3. How can the Board Composition influence the performance of National Federations?

The results are divided into two phases: These phases outline quantitative and qualitative analyses to obtain the results of the study. The first phase is a self-assessment questionnaire utilised to evaluate the current state of good governance within NFs. The responses were assessed and scored across the 4 various governance dimensions guided by this study, namely: Accountability, Transparency, democracy and Board composition. The SurveyMonkey data analysis tool was used to visually display the results in graphs.

The findings from the self-assessment are discussed to gain insight into the governance status. In the latter part of the chapter, these results are aggregated and analysed to provide an overview of good governance in the NFs.

4.2 Analysis and Findings

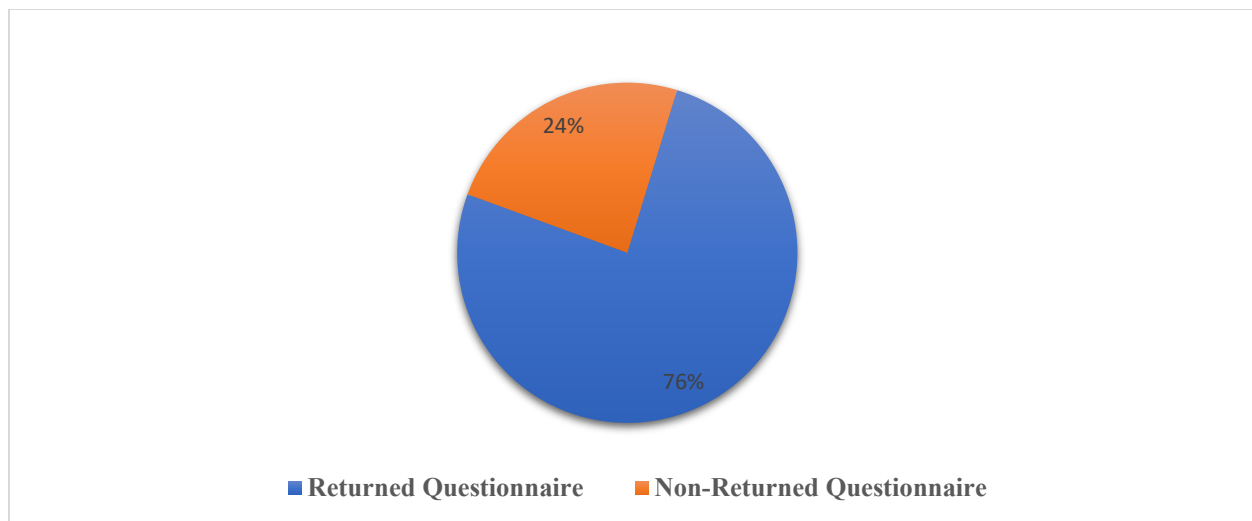
The following graphs illustrate the responses received in percentages based on the questionnaires on the 4 governance principles of this study.

4.2.1 Questionnaire Response Rate

The self-assessment questionnaire targeted the Presidents or Secretaries General of 29 National Federations, with 23 responses received, resulting in a response rate of 76 per cent, which is considered adequate for analysis for the completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire response rate is presented in Tables 4.1 and Figure 4.1

Source: Author, (2025)-Table 4.1: Questionnaire Response Rate

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Questionnaires Received	23	79
Questionnaires not received	6	21
TOTAL	29	100



Source: Author (2025) -Figure 4. 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

The second phase analyses the information gathered from the desk review of the statutes and other relevant documents of the 10 national federations of the Gambia National Olympic Committee.

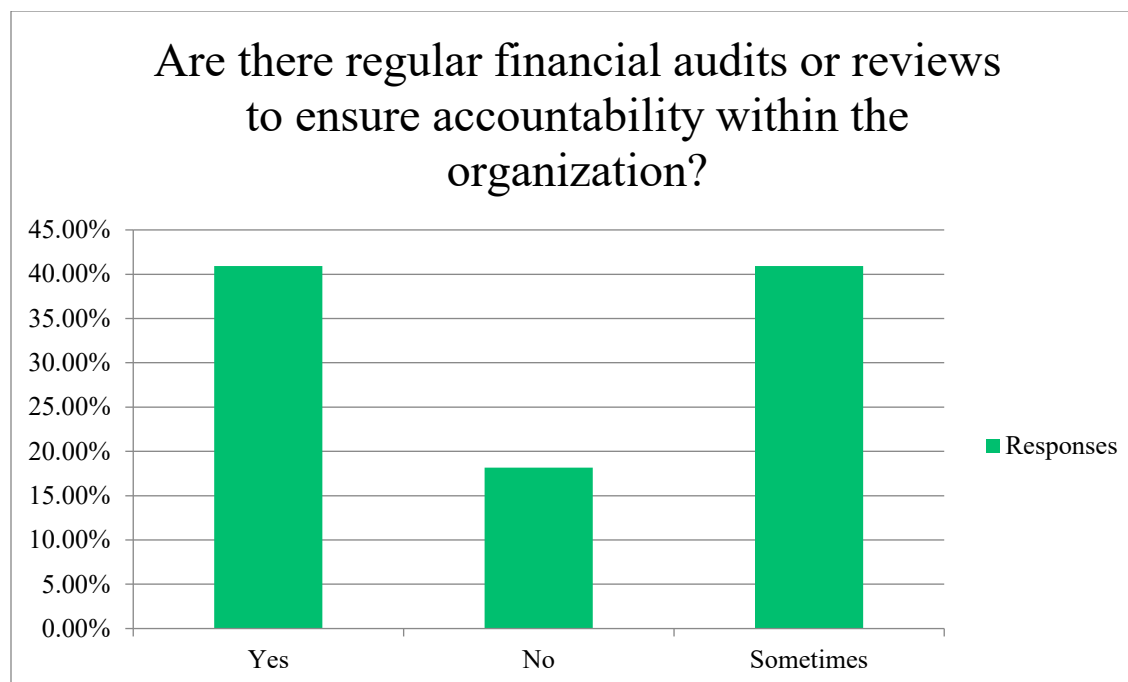
The third and final phase is the study sample results, which consisted of interviews with permanent staff and executive committee members of the National Federations, National Olympic Committee and National Sports Council.

Section 1: Accountability



Source: Author (2025)-Figure 4.2: Clear policies for Board Accountability

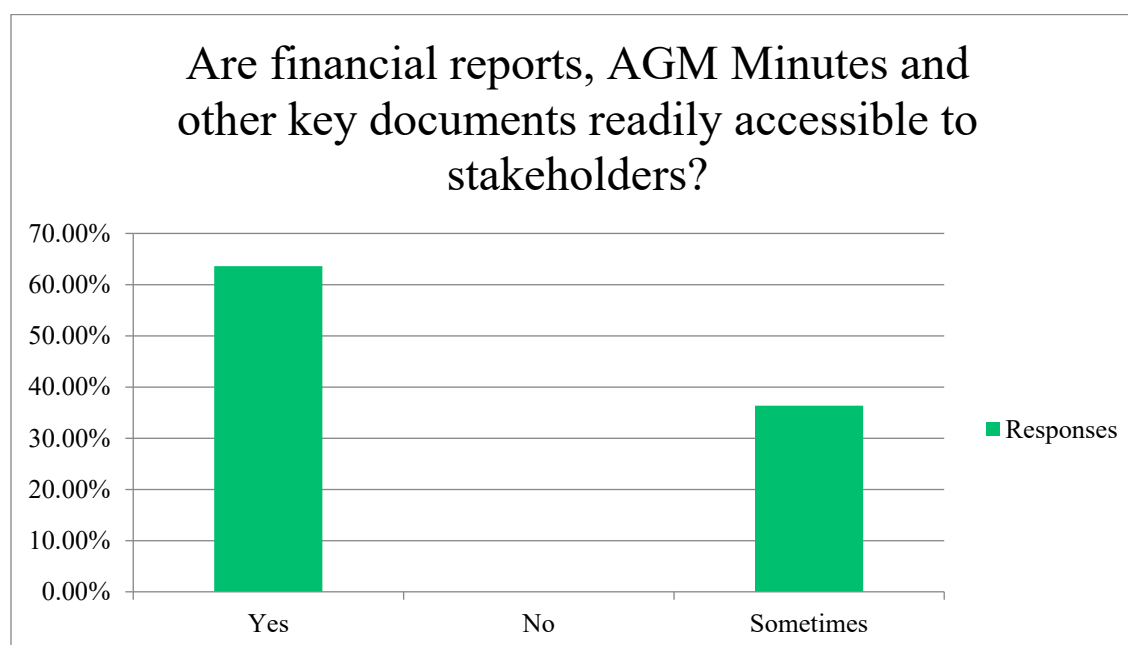
Regarding the clarity of policies and governance structures within National Federations, Figure 4.2 indicates that 56.52% of participants (n=23) responded affirmatively. In contrast, 43.48% rated their organisation's governance policies as below average or non-existent. This suggests that, while the majority of constitutions show clarity, nearly half of the respondents suggest inconsistencies and gaps in governance frameworks, and also suggest low enforcement of the constitution.



Source: Author, (2025)- Figure 4.3: Financial Statements Audits

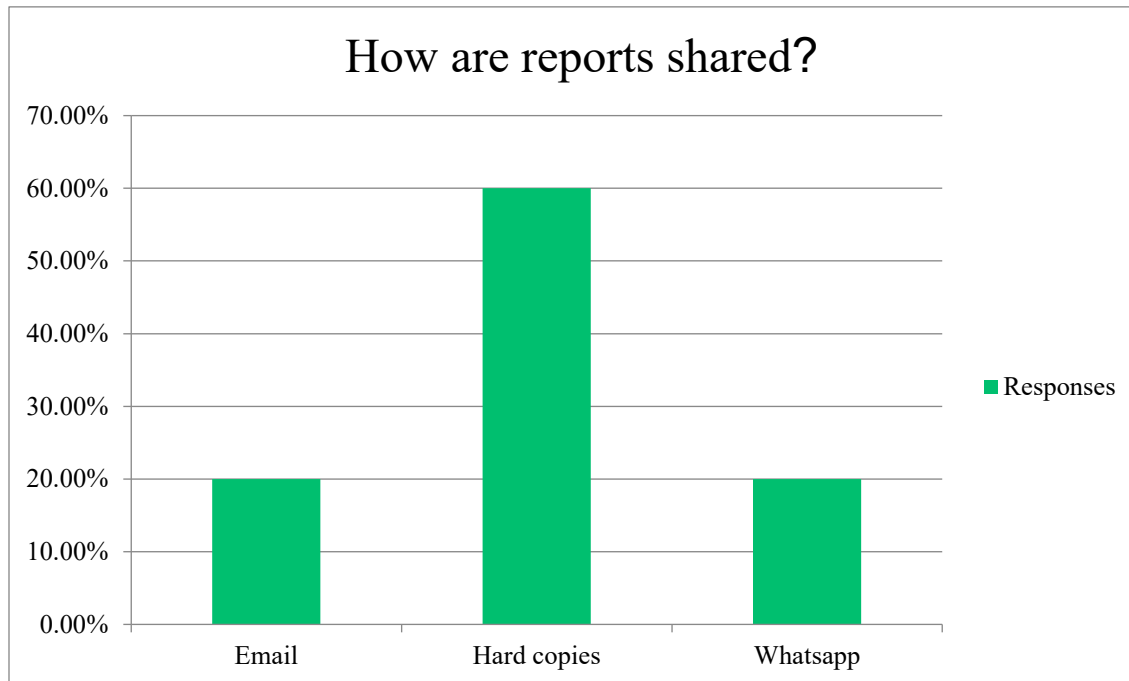
Figure 4.3 shows that 40% of (n=23) said the accounts are audited, while 42% said sometimes, and 18.18% said no. This suggests that the majority of NFs do not consistently ensure that their Accounts are annually audited.

Section 2: Transparency



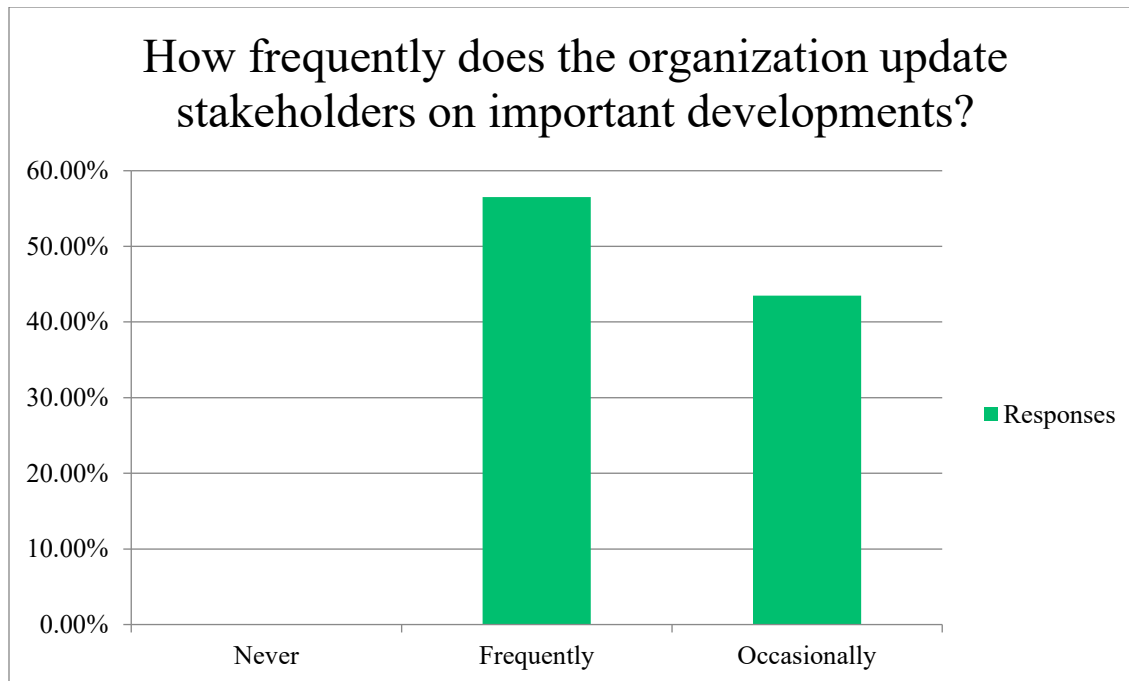
Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.4: Accessibility of Key Documents

Figure 4.4 shows that 63.64% of (n=23) said they have access to key documents, while 36.36% said sometimes. This suggests that some NFs find it challenging to have access to key documents



Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.5: How the key documents are accessed

Figure 4.5 shows that 60% of (n=23) circulate documents in hard copies, while 20 % of surveyed respondents indicated they are shared by email, and 20% on WhatsApp. This suggests that traditional methods dominate digital methods and further suggests that NFs do not have websites to publish annual audited accounts, minutes of the AGM and other key documents, and as a result, it shows difficulty in accessing relevant documents timely.



Source: Author, (2025)- Figure 4.6: Frequency of updates

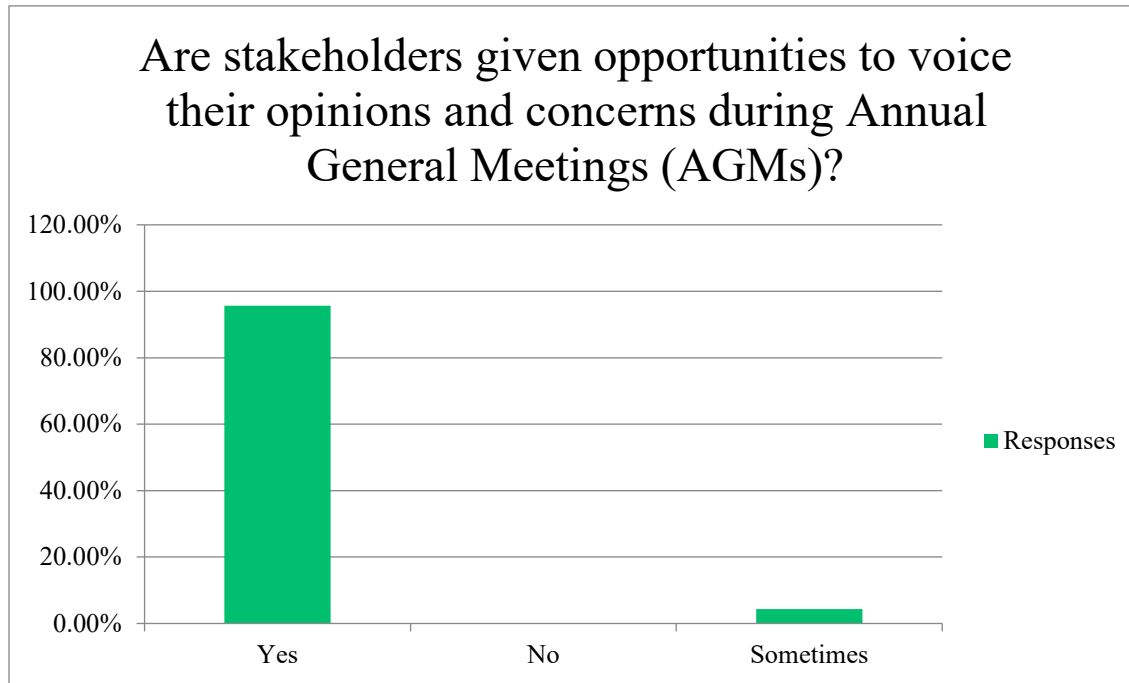
Figure 4.6 shows that 54.55% of (n=23) said frequently, while 45.45% said occasionally. This suggests that updates are not consistently provided by NFs. Therefore, a need to diversify channels of communication structurally.

Section3: Democracy



Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.7: Regular stakeholder Meetings

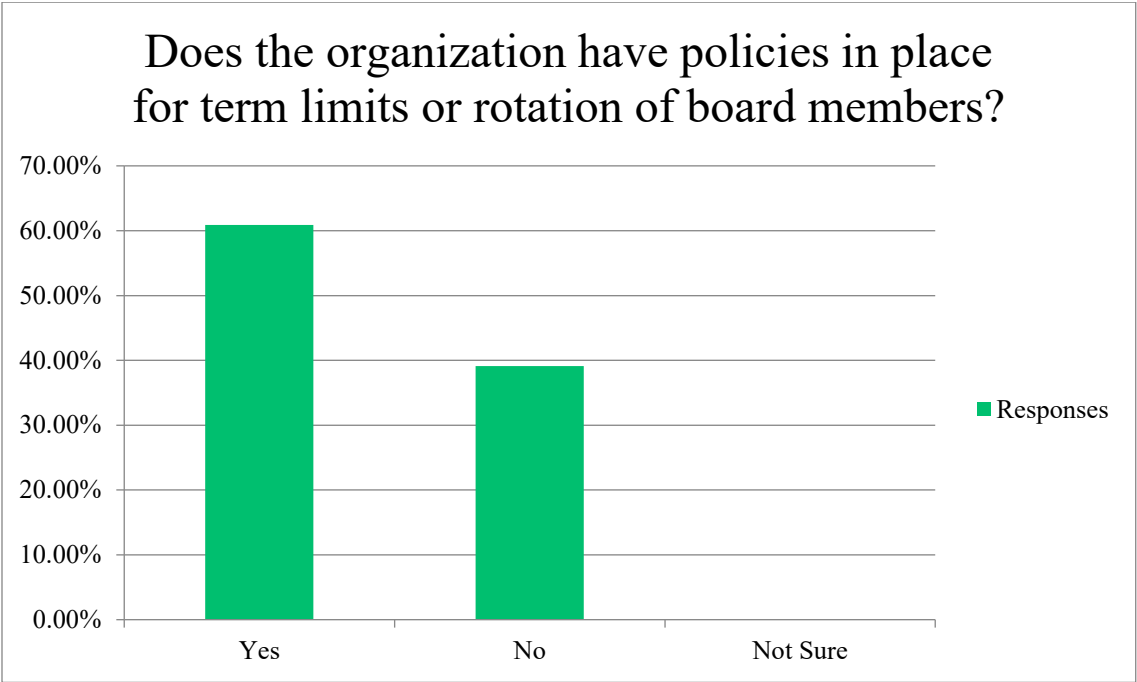
Figure 4.7 shows that 43.48% of (n=23) said yes, there are regular meetings, while 47.83% said sometimes, and 8.70% said no, they do not have regular meetings. This suggests that meetings are not consistently held by NFs.



Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.8: Stakeholders' Voice at AGMs

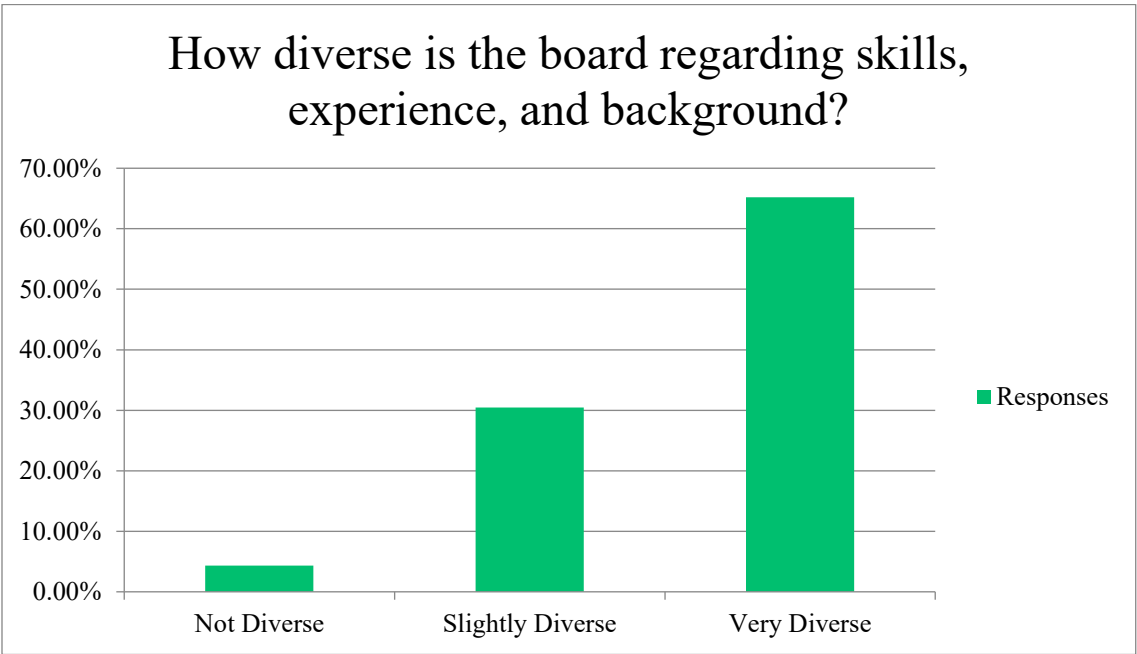
Regarding stakeholder participation in the decision-making process at AGMs, the findings in Figure 4.8 highlight that 95.65% of participants (n=23) believe their voices are heard during AGM, while 43.48% (n=23) argued that "sometimes it happens". This suggests that AGMs are key platforms where voices are heard, but the infrequency of holding AGMs is a concern.

Section 4: Board Composition



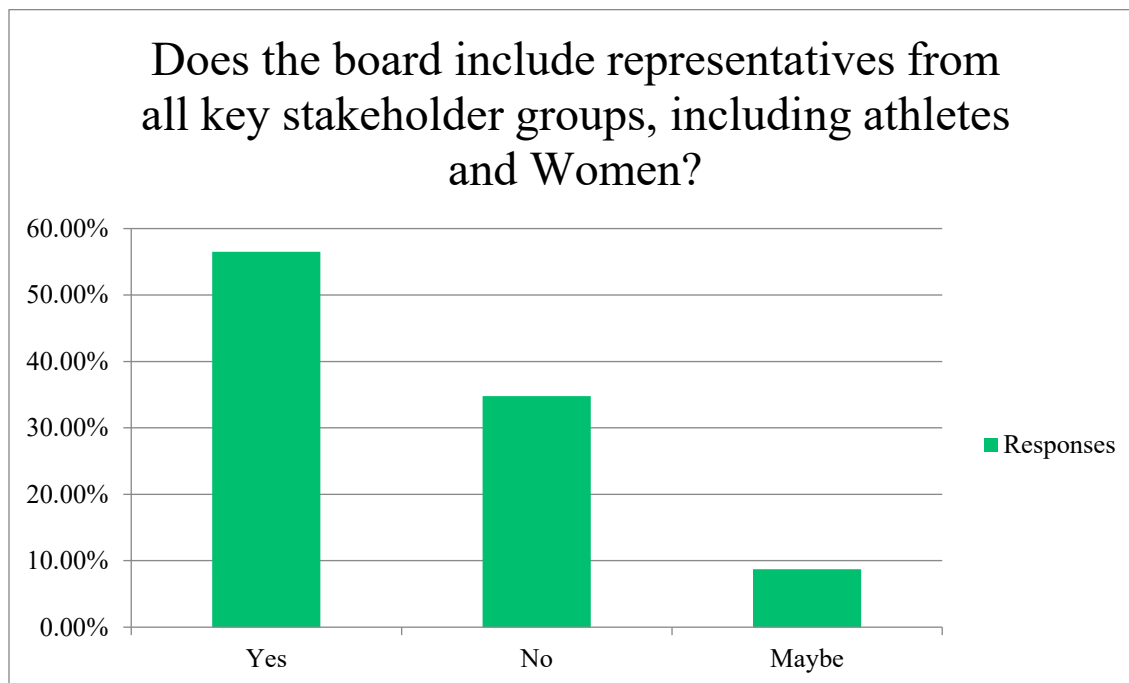
Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.9: Term Limits

Figure 4.9 shows that 60.87% of (n=23) said yes, there are term limits, while 39.13% argued that they do not have term limits. This suggests that the majority recognise term limits, but not universally.



Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.10: Professional Diversity of the Board

Regarding stakeholder representation on the Board in terms of skills and experience, the findings in Figure 4.10 highlight that 65.22% of participants (n=23) believed their board adequately represents diverse professional backgrounds, while a total of 34.78% (n=23) showed that “the Board is not diverse” or “slightly diverse”. This suggests that the majority of the respondents NFS are of the view that there could be diversity in the representation of professional skills on the Board, but it requires strengthening.



Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.11: Representation of Key Groups

Regarding stakeholder representation on the Board, including Athletes, women and others, the findings in Figure 4.11 highlight that 56.52% of participants (n=23) believed their board adequately represents all stakeholders, whereas 43.48% were of the view that stakeholders were not represented. This suggests that while stakeholders could be represented, the representation of women and athletes is not universal. Respondents further suggest that more stakeholder representation would benefit their Federation, while athletes and women are acknowledged as key stakeholder groups.

4.3 Qualitative Research

Phase two and the final phase of the research shift from a quantitative method to a qualitative. This phase uses the grounded theory research method for enhancing the already existing good governance theory and the analysis of the interviews with sports personalities in the Gambia.

4.4 Analysis of National Sports Federations' Constitutions

The first part of phase 2 was used to obtain information from 10 selected National Federations through a desk review of their statutes and other relevant documents for the research.

The constitutions were examined to pinpoint the governance practices they employ to achieve organisational objectives and manage their operations. The focus on these governing documents stems from their ability to present unaltered information, reflecting actual practices.

The researcher carefully reviewed the documents multiple times to discern and formulate governance themes based on the provisions specified for implementation by the federations.

Through detailed analysis of constitutions, websites, and a few financial statements, the researcher successfully categorised various governance themes into broader groups for discussion and research use.

The study found that among the ten national federations selected for the desk review, only the Football Federation and Swimming Association had websites where the researcher could access their constitutions, financial statements, and profiles of board members. The other national federations lacked websites; however, hard copies of their constitutions were requested for review.

Figure 4.2 below illustrates the governance themes identified during this analysis

Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.12: Identified Good Governance Themes in NFs Constitutions



The four standards depicted in Figure 4.12 above must be interpreted within the framework of NFs' constitutions to gain a clear understanding of their implementation and their role in promoting good governance. The desk review of these standards is elaborated below:

4.4.1 Accountability

The constitutions examined the procedures for sharing and reporting financial information by the Executive Board of national sports federations. Elected officials are required to present the annual Budget and an audited financial statement to the General Assembly for approval. Similarly, essential non-financial documents such as the activity report, secretary general's report, treasurer's report, executive committee's report, and president's report are also required to be submitted to the General Assembly of national sports federations.

4.4.2 Democracy

The theme of democracy appeared consistently across NFs' constitutions, with most outlining the election processes for office bearers through the General Assembly as well as the authority of member federations in these elections.

Furthermore, the democratic processes were addressed, detailing rules concerning discussions and sharing opinions during annual and extraordinary general meetings.

Additionally, the consensus on activity reports, budgets, and the induction of new members, along with amendments to the constitutions, required approval from General Assembly members. Further clarifying the democratic theme, a common feature among most constitutions was defining a quorum for both the General Assembly and the executive committee meetings to ensure legitimacy in decision-making.

4.4.3 Transparency

I discovered that out of the ten national federations selected for the desk review, only the Football Federation and Swimming Association had websites where I could access their constitution, financial statements, and profiles of board members. The remaining national federations did not have websites; however, hard copies of their constitutions were requested for review.

4.4.4 Board Composition/Processes

This standard emphasised aspects such as the procedures for convening the annual general meeting of the NFs, including minimum notice periods and agenda distribution. Moreover, the procedures for organising extraordinary and emergency general meetings. The standard further included guidelines for convening executive committee and technical committee meetings.

Lastly, it addressed the documentation requirements for meeting proceedings and the dissemination of decisions and minutes from the general meeting, executive committee, and technical committee meetings to members.

The review also evidenced that elections of the Executive must be held every four years, except for Table Tennis, the constitution of which indicates elections are to be conducted every two years, but no clear procedure leading to the elections is provided in the constitution.

Term limits are captured in the constitutions of Football and Volleyball. For Football, elected executives cannot serve more than two terms of 4 years per term, while for volleyball, it is only the President who cannot serve more than two terms of 4 years per term. The other 8 associations did not explicitly mention term limits in their constitutions

The Constitution of Swimming National Federations caters for athletes' representation on the Board. Other associations, like football and volleyball, have provisions for coaches and referees to be represented on the Board, but do not cater to athletes' representation. In addition, there are no Qualifications attached to various positions on the Executive Board

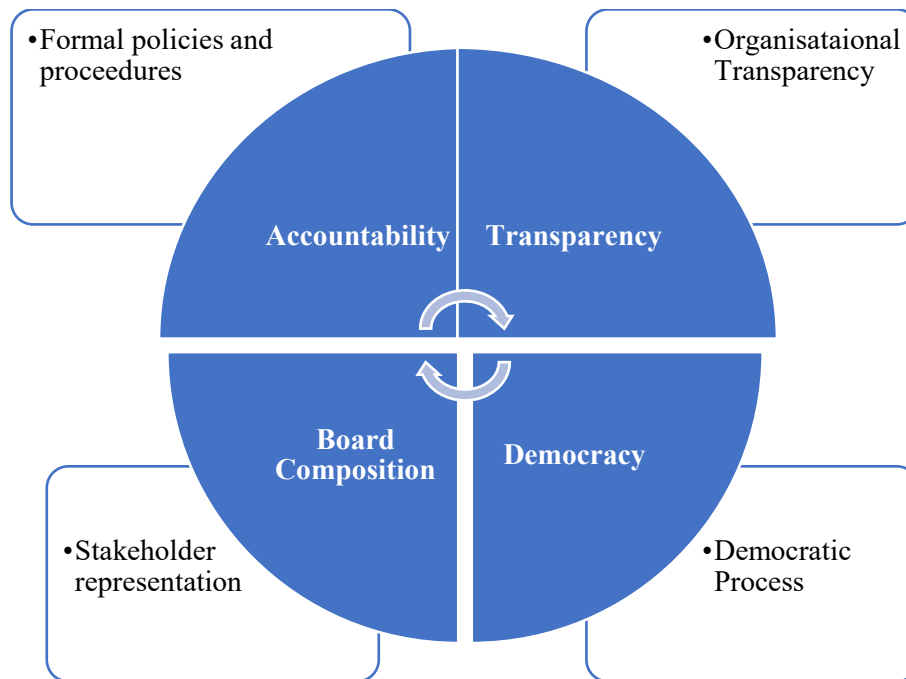
However, the review further states that only the Gambia Football Federation possesses clear governance policies to direct its operations. Other Federations, such as Volleyball, have partially implemented measures, including disciplinary actions against competition manipulation

4.5 An in-depth perspective - Semi-structured Interviews

The data collected from semi-structured interviews was analysed thematically, illustrating the consensus and divergence of opinions concerning the core aim of the study: how to strengthen the governance structures of Gambia's national sporting organisations? For this study, I conducted two face-to-face and three online interviews via Microsoft Teams, and these were transcribed from the recorded sessions. In total, five participants were interviewed, leading to the emerging themes within the four governance principles of the study:

Figure 4.13 below illustrates the governance themes identified during this analysis

Source: Author, (2025)-Figure 4.13: Identified Themes of the Interview



These four themes were coded from data collected through forty-five minutes of recorded interviews and served to gather information on the key aims of this study as outlined in the Research Question. Themes 1-4 are based on findings that, when coded, are linked to the main aim of this study. To report on findings, each participant shall be referred to with a corresponding letter, ie, Participant A said...

4.5.1 Accountability- Formal policies and procedures:

Participant (A) said:

“We do not have formal policies or codes of conduct to guide board members' and executives' actions and decisions. Accountability is based on good faith rather than structured guidelines.”

Participant (B) said:

“I do not think the General Assembly appropriately supervises the board. The governance structure lacks a clear separation of powers, and the board does not effectively supervise management. There is no internal financial or audit committee. While the treasurer manages accounts, there is no clear financial control system”

Participant (C):

“We have established mechanisms to ensure accountability among our board members and executives. The General Assembly acts as the supreme decision-making body, where executive members report annually and are subject to review by the general membership”

Participant (D) said:

“I believe our organisation demonstrates accountability through several mechanisms. The General Assembly supervises the board and meets annually to review performance. We have a clear governance structure that separates powers and supervises management appropriately. We have an internal financial audit committee, and the organisation is externally audited by an independent auditor”.

Participant (E) said:

“Many National Federations in The Gambia have been criticised for lacking transparency and accountability. Instances include failure to conduct Annual General Meetings (AGMs), absence of audited financial reports, and non-disclosure of operational activities. The lack of regular AGMs, audited financial statements, and clear communication channels contributes to a culture of opacity. This environment fosters mistrust among stakeholders and hampers sports development in the country”

4.5.2 Democratic Process

Participant (A) said:

Decision-Making Process: *“Decisions are made during General Assemblies and through technical committees for technical matters. However, sometimes, we lack the quorum to*

hold meetings, which leads to decisions being made by a few individuals, without following the due democratic process.”

Stakeholder Involvement: *” Stakeholders are involved in decision-making primarily through General Assemblies and technical committees. There are no other methods to involve stakeholders in the decision-making process”.*

Participant (B)

“Elections are conducted, but the candidates are not known before the election day, and the election of the Executive Board is not very open to the public and not competitive”

Participant (C) said:

“Our federation conducts regular elections every four years, as stipulated in its constitution. An electoral committee oversees the election process, ensuring that it is fair and transparent. The constitution outlines the qualifications for voting and contesting positions.”

4.5.3 Transparency- Access to relevant documents of the Federation

Participant (A) said:

Meeting Agendas: *“The association ensures transparency by sharing the agenda of meetings with members. However, decisions are sometimes made without a quorum..”*

General Assemblies: *“Transparency is demonstrated during General Assemblies, where activity and financial reports are presented. However, these documents are not shared before the meetings, limiting stakeholders' ability to review them in advance.”*

Document Accessibility: *“In most cases, hard copies of reports are provided during meetings, but there is no prior access for stakeholders, which can limit their ability to engage meaningfully”.*

Participant (D) Said:

We publish various documents on our website, including our statutes, internal regulations, sports rules, organisation chart, information about board members and members, annual activity reports, financial statements, and strategic plan.

4.5.4 Board Composition-Stakeholder Representation

Participant (A)said:

“We organise regular elections for board members, typically after the Olympic Games. However, there are no specific criteria for selecting board members other than passion and interest. There are no educational or professional requirements to be elected.”

Participant (B) said:

“We conduct elections at least every four years, however, the candidates contesting for elections are not known before the election day, and there are no steps to ensure that elections of senior officials are open and competitive. There is no nomination committee to oversee the appointment of senior officials. Although a quorum is established for meetings, term limits are not in place, as evidenced by the current president, who has been serving for the past 20 years”

4.5.5 Inclusion of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities:

Participant (A) said:

“As an association, we lack mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in our activities and governance. We have only one woman on the board, and we do not have specific policies for disabled sports”.

Participant (B) said:

“Participation of athletes and referees in policy processes is inconsistent, though coaches and volunteers are involved. We implement a gender equality policy, which is a positive aspect.”

Participant (C) said:

“There is no diversity in representation, particularly in terms of gender, youth, and persons with disabilities”.

Participant (D) said:

“We have various committees that contribute to decision-making. Female coaches and Referees are represented, but athletes’ participation in policy processes is very low”.

Participant (E) said:

“There are reports of internal power struggles within federations, where elected executives remove key staff members based on perceived disloyalty rather than performance. Such actions undermine democratic principles and can lead to unfair treatment of athletes and coaches, manipulation of constitutions, and misleading stakeholders to maintain power”.

4.5.6 Challenges faced by the National Sports Council (NSC)

Participant (E) said:

Enforcement Limitations: *“The NSC has established criteria for the registration and operation of national sports associations, including requirements for AGMs, audited reports, and regional representation. However, enforcement of these standards has been inconsistent, leading to non-compliance by several federations”.*

Resource Constraints: *“The NSC reportedly lacks specialists in policy formulation, research, and development, which hampers its ability to assess and drive key performance indicators for sports development. This deficiency affects the council's capacity to monitor and evaluate the implementation of sports policies effectively”.*

Political Interference and Power Imbalances: *“The governance structure in The Gambia exhibits power imbalances between the government and sports bodies like the Gambia National Olympic Committee (GNOC) and the Gambia Football Federation. Such dynamics can lead to duplication of responsibilities and hinder the effective implementation of sports*

policies. Their affiliation with their international bodies limits the NSC's intervention into some of their internal issues”.

4.5.7 Suggestions to Overcome Governance Challenges

Participant (E) said:

Strategies and Reforms to Strengthen Governance

Capacity Building: *“Investing in the training and development of NSC staff and federation administrators is crucial. Enhancing their skills in governance, financial management, and policy implementation will improve oversight and accountability”.*

Policy Implementation and Monitoring: *“The adoption of the National Sports Policy 2024–2034 provides a framework for sports development. The NSC must ensure rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are in place to track compliance and progress”.*

Legal and Structural Reforms: *“Revising the legal framework governing sports to clarify roles, reduce overlaps, and establish clear consequences for non-compliance can enhance governance. This includes enforcing existing regulations and ensuring that federations adhere to their constitutions and the NSC's guidelines”.*

Promoting Transparency and Accountability: *“Mandating regular AGMs, publication of audited financial statements, and transparent decision-making processes will build trust among stakeholders. The NSC should lead by example, ensuring its operations are transparent and accountable”.*

Stakeholder Engagement: *“Fostering collaboration between the NSC, federations, athletes, and other stakeholders can create a more inclusive governance environment. Regular forums and consultations can facilitate dialogue and collective decision-making.”*

“Addressing these governance challenges requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders involved in sports in The Gambia. By implementing these strategies, the country can build a more robust and transparent sports governance system that promotes development and excellence”.

4.6 Discussions of main findings

This section provides a detailed analysis of the results, which are divided into two sections based on the research question of this study.

4.6. (A) What are the governance gaps that exist in the Gambia National Sports Federation?

The data collection and analysis reveal the state of good governance in the National Sports Federations of the Gambia. The results indicate the presence of barriers hindering good governance and highlight the positive impact of good governance on organisational performance in sports. Baelen (2017) noted that good governance enhances an organisation's productivity, stability, and sustainability. He pointed out that in an environment where all sports federations vie with governments and sponsors for funding, implementing good governance principles would enable a federation to attract funds, provide superior services to its members and athletes, and yield better sporting results. Thus, this study aimed to assess the current situation of good governance in the Gambia National Federations and explore its role in overcoming challenges faced by sporting organisations in achieving better governance and sporting success. The analysis of the findings as per the governance guideline of this study is as follows:

4.6.1 Democratic Process

Democracy involves all stakeholders in decision-making, ensuring they are treated equally under the law. Thibault, Kihl, & Babiak (2010) emphasised that involving the voices and interests of all organisational members—athletes, coaches, administrators, volunteers, executives, and other internal stakeholders—continually democratises sports organisations.

Most of the assessed federations' constitutions in The Gambia indicate the election and reelection of board members. They have established rules regarding voter qualifications, the majority or percentage required to win an election, and, where applicable, vote weighting, quorum, and election rounds. All federations elect their

board members through the general assembly. They set a quorum for board meetings and maintain a general assembly that represents all affiliated members, which also establishes a quorum for assembly meetings. However, the majority of the federations indicate that general assembly meetings occur infrequently. Aside from the Gambia Football Federation and the Volleyball Federation, other federations do not impose term limits on board members. While the organisation values participation, stakeholder satisfaction levels point to infrequent engagements and possibly tokenistic inclusion. Therefore, national sports organisations in The Gambia should enhance stakeholders' participation in policymaking, increase representation, hold more frequent forums, and create easier feedback channels.

4.6.2 Accountability

Most federations explicitly define key board positions and assert that the board determines the organisation's overall policy. They believe there are clear guidelines for board accountability. Despite strong perceptions of formal accountability, issues regarding policy clarity, transparency in financial processes, defined conflict-of-interest procedures, and allowing independent auditors to externally review finances, as well as issues with stakeholder communication, suggest a disconnect between policy and practice. Furthermore, the analysis reveals numerous deficits; for example, there is no clear governance structure founded on the principle of separation of powers. More specifically, the board does not oversee management, as the President and Secretary General seem to be responsible for both formulating and implementing policy.

4.6.3 Transparency

Transparency facilitates the efficient transfer of knowledge and potential information. According to Schenk (2011), transparency in governance means that information is readily available to the public, particularly those most affected by decisions and their implications. This indicates that decision-making processes adhere to established rules and regulations, are conducted professionally and

impartially.

Concerning transparency, the surveyed federations in The Gambia indicated that National Federations continued to rely on traditional methods for sharing information rather than adopting digital approaches. Specifically, the publication of legal and policy documents for their internal stakeholders occurs primarily through emails, WhatsApp, and printed hard copies. Furthermore, except for the Gambia Football Federation and the Gambia Swimming Association, national federations lack a website or platform for publishing policies and reports. As a result, accessing the organisations' statutes, bylaws, Executive Board members, mission statements, vision, organisational chart, member club lists, and annual reports can only be accomplished by requesting hard copies from the President or Secretary General. While transparency is formally recognised, stakeholders express concerns regarding access to leadership, consistency in updates, and timeliness.

4.6.4 Board Composition

The findings indicate that nearly all associations lack clear nomination and electoral processes for selecting the Executive Board. Although the member constitutions stipulate that elections for the Executive must be held every four years, there is no further guiding procedure other than that of the Gambia Football Federation. Additionally, no qualifications are stipulated for election to the Executive Board, nor is there gender or athlete representation to ensure inclusivity and equal representation. The board is generally perceived as effective and transparent; however, formal governance policies, stakeholder-specific roles, and gender inclusiveness still require enhancement.

4.6 (B) The influence of good governance on the performance of sports organisations in the Gambia

Participants' perspectives on good governance and organisational performance allowed the researcher to investigate how good governance impacts the performance of sports organisations in The Gambia.

Concerning good governance principles, interviews and questionnaire responses highlighted the significance of various governance elements within an organisation, such as transparency, democracy, accountability, responsibility, and board composition

Geereart (2018) noted that researchers dissect the concept to identify essential good governance elements. Four sub-dimensions of good governance include transparency, democratic processes, internal accountability, and social responsibility, which significantly reinforce and shape one another. Nonetheless, as supported by theoretical literature, these dimensions remain analytically distinct.

Chappelet & Mrkonjic (2013) outlined seven principles of good governance in sports: transparency, accountability, democracy, responsibility, equity, effectiveness, and efficiency. Furthermore, Parent & Hoye (2018) suggested it would be worthwhile to determine whether the increasing number of proposed governance principles has affected the processes and performance of sports organisations, especially in light of recent corruption scandals and calls for improved governance.

This study identifies several ways in which principles of good governance can benefit sports organisations when applied. They promote and maintain stability and sustainability, laying a strong foundation for any sports entity's success. Baelen (2017) pointed out that in certain countries, public authorities have made even minimal adherence to good governance standards a requirement for sports federations to receive public funding. He further elaborated that good governance is crucial for an organisation's stability and long-term viability.

Transparency enables the effective transfer of knowledge and relevant information. Schenk (2011) stated that transparency ensures information is accessible to the public, especially those directly impacted by decisions and their consequences. This suggests that the decision-making processes follow established protocols and are executed with professionalism and neutrality.

Accountability delineates the responsibilities necessary to accomplish the organisation's mission by involving both internal and external stakeholders to identify any gaps that could impede optimal performance.

Democracy incorporates all stakeholders in decision-making, guaranteeing equal treatment under the law. Thibault, Kihl, & Babiak (2010) highlighted that engaging the perspectives and interests of all members of the organisation—athletes, coaches, administrators, volunteers, executives, and other internal stakeholders—contributes to the ongoing democratisation of sports organisations.

A clear organisational structure with defined responsibilities enhances credibility and nurtures a positive institutional image, thereby increasing its likelihood of earning trust from sponsors and potential donors. Donnelly et al. (2001) pointed out that a well-structured organisation forms a dependable base for any thriving sports body.

The study explored two aspects of organisational performance: methods for achieving long-term objectives and sporting success. The results underscore vital strategies for federations to attain long-term goals: emphasising the organisation's vision, mission, and values, cultivating the capability of future sports managers, and developing strategic plans that respond to stakeholders' needs.

Sporting success is influenced by a variety of factors and processes predominantly orchestrated by national sports bodies. This research revealed several determinants of sporting success among sports organisations in The Gambia, with a notable emphasis on the necessity to strengthen the governance structures of National Federations. Investing in good governance is tantamount to investing in sporting success (EOSE, 2017), alongside effective sports development policies, Board commitment, and financial stability. Although prior research supporting these findings is limited, Emrich & Klein (2012) have long recognised the significance of cultural, social, economic, and demographic factors.

4.7 Limitations

While the study was conducted in line with the expectations of the researcher at the start of the process, there were several limitations to the work identified throughout the research period.

Concerning the study, there are 3 key limitations to consider:

- Lack of previous research studies on the topic. Depending on the scope of my research topic, prior research studies were limited and could not find any within the Gambia sport sector, since the Gambia Sport sector is new in terms of research.
- The questionnaire and interview questions targeted the Presidents and Secretaries of the National Federations. Therefore, there may be biases in the responses regarding the sports organisations they are responsible for leadership. Future studies should potentially investigate and engage different representations with the National Federations in more detail.
- In addition to any potential impact on discussions created by the researcher's position, the researcher's own subconscious bias was another possible limitation of the study. While every effort was made to ensure all data collected was analysed objectively, the researcher's position working within the sector had the potential to influence the steering of discussion or conversation and possibly impact the positioning of any data among existing knowledge or understanding of issues in the sector.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

5.1 Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the governance of the National Sports Federation in the Gambia. This study was necessitated due to a low level of governance in the sporting sector. The following objectives guided the study:

4. To enhance organisational governance, focusing on transparency, Accountability, and Democratic Process within National Federations in the Gambia
5. To identify and establish governance gaps in the National Federations in the Gambia
6. To understand how the Board composition influences the performance of National Federations.

The study utilised a mixed-methods approach to gather data for the research, taking into account the very unique environment in which many sporting organisations operate. The findings and discussions regarding this question presented many interesting perspectives on how the governance principles of this study —accountability, transparency, democracy, and board composition —can influence the governance of The Gambia National Federations.

A questionnaire was created and distributed to the 29-member federations of the Gambia National Olympic Committee, receiving 23 responses. Additionally, the research included a review of the constitutions of 10 National Federations and Interviews with 5 notable figures from the National Federations and umbrella organisations, such as the Gambia National Olympic Committee and the National Sports Council. The data collected was analysed qualitatively through a thematic approach and quantitatively using the SurveyMonkey tool. The analysis focused on four governance principles: Accountability, Democracy, Transparency, and Board Composition.

The findings indicate that National Federations need improvements in areas such as financial audits, effective communication of accountability measures, accessibility to important documents, consistency in updates, and representation of key stakeholder groups. The study recommends a distinctive governance model to be designed for National Federations by the Gambia National Olympic Committee, featuring minimum governance standards tailored to the cultural and economic context of The Gambia.

The study revealed problems with the existing framework put in place by the Government for sports organisations, overseen by the National Sports Council. It also pointed out the potential for greater independent regulation within the sector. One proposed solution is for the Gambia National Olympic Committee to take on governance implementation and monitoring tasks, allowing it to focus more on promoting and participating in initiatives.

Ultimately, the findings of this study, along with broader literature and previous studies, underscore that educating and training board members is vital for effective governance. It also identified a significant education and training gap across the sector that needs to be addressed to ensure that everyone involved in sports governance is well-informed and prepared to tackle any possible challenges, thereby safeguarding the long-term sustainability and growth of organisations.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address the governance challenges highlighted by the study to enhance the organisation's governance and stakeholder trust.

5.2.1 Accountability:

- **Strengthen financial oversight with regular audits:** The study found that the majority of National Federations do not conduct annual audits of their accounts. This is because most of the funds they receive for their annual activities are below the threshold deemed sufficient for auditing. However, despite this, there should be a minimum audit standard that aligns with the financial benefits they receive each year. This standard should be enforced regularly to address the irregular or absent reviews. In addition, the governance model that will emerge from this study should establish a minimum annual financial reporting standard based on the financial benefits received.
- **Enhance accountability policies:** Create and distribute explicit, written guidelines mandating that national federations review their constitutions, with a minimum requirement for governance structures that all NFs must implement to ensure board member accountability and minimise ambiguity.

5.2.2 Transparency:

- Convert document access for stakeholders by shifting from physical copies to secure digital platforms, such as cloud storage or member portals, for sharing AGM minutes and financial reports.
- **Standardise update frequency to ensure regular communication-** Implement a consistent update schedule (e.g., quarterly) to keep stakeholders informed about developments. Improve leader accessibility through open forums: Set up office hours, Q&A sessions, or digital forums to enhance engagement with leadership.

5.2.3 Democratic Process:

- **Institutionalise regular stakeholder forums:** Schedule meetings beyond AGMs to maintain continuous dialogue. Regular Board meetings should be clearly outlined in the constitution, and there should be a transparent process grounded in strong democratic principles during all these meetings, including the Annual General Meetings, which must be held at least once a year. This measure will enhance regular engagement with stakeholders, promote information sharing, and strengthen trust
- **Encourage inclusive participation in decision-making.** Ensure that underrepresented groups (e.g., women, athletes) are actively involved in decision-making processes.
- **Formalise feedback loops and report back on input.** Implement structured feedback tools (e.g. Surveys, suggestion boxes) and report back on how input is used.

5.2.4 Board Composition:

The composition of the governing bodies of National Sports Federations should be clearly articulated in the statutes and relevant regulations. The organisation must establish clear, transparent, suitable, and objective eligibility criteria that include, at the same time, the necessary skills and expertise, alongside equitable, inclusive, and diverse representation of the key components in its governing bodies, particularly emphasising:

- A balanced representation of genders among the members (with a minimum of 30% of each gender).
- Athletes' representation with active participation in decision-making processes
- Term limit or rotation of the Board members.
- A special focus on diversity and inclusion within the board, with defined roles and responsibilities for each member. Establish technical committees (e.g., audit, ethics, and nominations) to oversee specific areas.
-

5.3 Implementation and Enforcement of Policies:

A governance framework necessitates a strong commitment from the Executive Board and the entire Organisation. Leadership must establish a tone that encourages acceptance and devise a serious roadmap with a clear focus on addressing governance challenges. Engaging all stakeholders in the transformation process is essential; it should also involve structural reforms and the creation of specific governance measures that include quantifiable actions and transparent reporting to support performance evaluation and monitoring.

The policies developed to strengthen the National Federation's governance structures must be enforced to drive the necessary changes. Effective policy implementation is crucial to realising the organisation's goals. Therefore, there is a pressing need to establish an independent compliance committee tasked with ensuring strict adherence to the compliance code that will be developed for member National Federations.

Action Plan for Strengthening Governance of the Gambia National Federations

Priority	Overall Objective			Responsible	Time frame
	To develop a minimum governance standard for National Federations			Executive Board	Jan to Dec.2026
1	Introduction of the framework of the concept to the GNOC Executive Board			MEMOS Graduate	July 2025
	Objective	Action	Resources	Responsible	Time frame
2	Accountability: Ensure transparency and accountability in financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate Annual Financial Report/Audit • Report published on official platforms • Training of Treasurers on the minimum financial reporting standard 	Sitting allowance for six sittings	Working group	January to March 2026
	Transparency: Increase stakeholders' trust through clear communication and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a content calendar for the timely publication of meeting minutes and reports • Open access to policies and procedures • Regular updates 			
	Democracy: Representation of key stakeholder groups in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an inclusive voting process • Stakeholder consultations • Fair Representation 			
	Board Composition: Ensure a balanced representation on the Board for effective decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Balance • Term Limit • Skills diversity 			
3	Constitution and Regulation Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the constitution OF GNOC/ National Federations and internal regulations to include minimum governance Standards. 	Sitting allowance	GNOC Judiciary Committee	April to June 2026

4	Validation Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct the validation workshop to review and refine the draft 	Hire of a Hall/Banner/Transport refund/	Executive Board	September 2026
5	Board and General Assemblies' approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the Revised Constitutions and the Governance Model 	Hire of a Hall/Banner/Transport refund		October to December 2026
6	Implementation and Enforcement of the Code	Implementation of programs and activities based on the standard	N/A	All the Member National Federations	January 2027 onwards
6	Ongoing: Annual Code Compliance Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of annual reports by NFs Review of the activities of the National Federation for compliance 	N/A	GNOC Ethics and Compliance Committee	January to March every year, effective 2028

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Appendix One – Interview of the Chairperson of the National Sports Council

Dear Chairman Jawara,

I hope this message finds you well.

As part of my ongoing research on the governance of national associations in The Gambia, I am interviewing key stakeholders to gain deeper insights into the structures, challenges, and opportunities within our national sports governance framework. Given the National Sports Council's pivotal role in regulating and supporting National Federations, your perspective is invaluable to this study.

I would be grateful for the opportunity to ask you a few questions regarding governance practices, compliance mechanisms, and potential reforms. Your responses will contribute significantly to understanding how governance can be strengthened across the sector.

Attached, I have outlined a few questions that I would like to discuss during our interview.

Thank you very much for considering my request. I look forward to your positive response.

Kind regards,

Muhammed K Janneh
MEMOS Student

- 1. In your view, what are the key governance gaps within National Federations, particularly in the areas of accountability, democratic processes, board composition, and transparency?**

Response to Question 1

The governance landscape of National Sports Federations in The Gambia presents several challenges, particularly in areas of accountability, democratic processes, board composition, and transparency. These issues are compounded by the National Sports

Council's (NSC) difficulties in enforcing compliance and the broader systemic and cultural factors influencing sports governance in the country.

Key Governance Gaps within National Federations:

Accountability and Transparency: Many National Federations in The Gambia have been criticised for lacking transparency and accountability. Instances include failure to conduct Annual General Meetings (AGMs), absence of audited financial reports, and non-disclosure of operational activities. The lack of regular AGMs, audited financial statements, and clear communication channels contributes to a culture of opacity. This environment fosters mistrust among stakeholders and hampers the development of sports in the country.

Democratic Processes and Board Composition: There are reports of internal power struggles within federations, where elected executives remove key staff members based on perceived disloyalty rather than performance. Such actions undermine democratic principles and can lead to unfair treatment of athletes and coaches, manipulation of constitutions, and misleading stakeholders to maintain power.

2. **What are the main challenges the National Sports Council faces in ensuring that National Federations comply with its governance criteria and standards?"**

Response to Question 2:

Challenges Faced by the National Sports Council (NSC)

Enforcement Limitations: The NSC has established criteria for the registration and operation of national sports associations, including requirements for AGMs, audited reports, and regional representation. However, enforcement of these standards has been inconsistent, leading to non-compliance by several federations.

Resource Constraints: The NSC reportedly lacks specialists in policy formulation, research, and development, which hampers its ability to assess and drive key performance indicators for sports development. This deficiency affects the council's capacity to monitor and evaluate the implementation of sports policies effectively.

Political Interference and Power Imbalances: The governance structure in The Gambia exhibits power imbalances between the government and sports bodies like the Gambia National Olympic Committee (GNOC) and the Gambia Football Federation. Such dynamics can lead to duplication of responsibilities and hinder the effective implementation of sports policies. Their affiliation with their international bodies limits the NSC's intervention in some internal issues.

3. What strategies or reforms do you believe could help overcome these challenges and strengthen governance across National Federations

Response to Question 3

Strategies and Reforms to Strengthen Governance

Capacity Building: Investing in the training and development of NSC staff and federation administrators is crucial. Enhancing their skills in governance, financial management, and policy implementation will improve oversight and accountability.

Policy Implementation and Monitoring: The adoption of the National Sports Policy 2024–2034 provides a framework for sports development. The NSC must ensure rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are in place to track compliance and progress.

Legal and Structural Reforms: Revising the legal framework governing sports to clarify roles, reduce overlaps, and establish clear consequences for non-compliance can enhance governance. This includes enforcing existing regulations and ensuring that federations adhere to their constitutions and the NSC's guidelines.

Promoting Transparency and Accountability: Mandating regular AGMs, publication of audited financial statements, and transparent decision-making processes will build trust among stakeholders. The NSC should lead by example, ensuring its operations are transparent and accountable.

Stakeholder Engagement: Fostering collaboration between the NSC, federations, athletes, and other stakeholders can create a more inclusive governance environment. Regular forums and consultations can facilitate dialogue and collective decision-making. Addressing these governance challenges requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders involved in sports in The Gambia. By implementing these strategies, the country can build a more robust and transparent sports governance system that promotes development and excellence.

Appendix Two – Qualitative Survey Questionnaire.

Subject: Request for Participation in Sports Governance Study

Dear President, dear Secretary General,

I hope this message finds you well.

I am currently pursuing a master's program in Executive Master's in Sport Organizations Management (MEMOS). As part of my research, I am conducting a study on the governance of sports organizations in The Gambia. Your insights and experiences are invaluable to this study, and I would greatly appreciate your participation.

I kindly request you to complete the attached questionnaire, which should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: Accountability, Transparency, Democratic Process, and Board Composition. I would be grateful if you could complete it by April 10th, 2025.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. Your participation will significantly contribute to the success of my research.

Kind regards,

MuhammedKJanneh
MEMOS Student

Section 1: Accountability

1. How would you rate the overall accountability of your sports organization?

- Very Poor
- Poor
- Excellent

2. Does the organization have clear policies and procedures for holding executive board members accountable for their actions?

- Yes
- No
- Partially

3. How effectively does the organization communicate its accountability measures to stakeholders?

- Very Ineffective
- Ineffective
- Very Effective

4. How does the organization handle breaches of conduct or ethical violations of executive board members?

- Very Poorly
- Poorly
- Very Well

5. Are there regular financial audits or reviews to ensure accountability within the organization?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

6. How confident are you in the organization's ability to hold its leaders accountable?

- Extremely Confident
- Not Confident
- Completely not Confident

7. What mechanisms are in place for stakeholders to report concerns about accountability?

[Open-ended response]

8. Is the organization governed in an accountable manner?

- Yes, the organization is governed in a highly accountable manner.
- No, the organization lacks accountability in its governance.
- The organization has some accountability measures, but they are not fully effective.

9. What is the reputation of the organization?

- The organization is known for corruption.
- The organization is governed well and has a positive reputation.
- The organization is seen as ineffective in its governance.

Section 2: Transparency

1. How transparent is the organization in its decision-making processes?

- Not Transparent
- Slightly Transparent
- Very Transparent

2. Are financial reports, AGM Minutes and other key documents readily accessible to stakeholders?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

3. If your answer is yes to the above question, how are these reports shared?

- Email
- Hard copies
- Whatsapp

4. How frequently does the organization update stakeholders on important developments?

- Never
- Frequently
- Occasionally

5. What improvements would you suggest to enhance transparency within the organization?

- [Open-ended response]

6. Does the organization provide clear and timely information about its performance and outcomes?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

7. How accessible are the organization's leaders to members?

- Not Accessible
- Slightly Accessible
- Moderately Accessible

8. Are there communication channels with members?

- Yes, there are communication channels.
- No, there are no communication channels.
- There are limited communication channels.

9. If your answer is yes to the above question, what are the form communication?

- Telephone
- Email
- Whatsapp
- Letters

10 . What are the barriers to achieving transparency within the organization?

- [Open-ended response]

Section 3: Democratic Process

1. How inclusive is the organization in involving Athletes, member clubs and Women in decision-making?

- Not Inclusive
- Slightly Inclusive
- Very Inclusive

2. Are stakeholders given opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns during Annual General Meetings (AGMs)?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

3. How satisfied are you with the democratic processes in place within the organization?

- Very Dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

4. Can you describe any recent instances where stakeholder input significantly influenced a decision?

- [Open-ended response]

5. How well does the organisation facilitate stakeholder participation in elections or key decisions?

- Very Poorly
- Poorly
- Very Well

6. Are there regular meetings or forums for stakeholders to engage with the organisation?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

7. How effective are the organization's methods for collecting and incorporating stakeholder feedback?

- Very Ineffective
- Ineffective
- Very Effective

8. What suggestions do you have for improving the democratic processes within the organisation?

- [Open-ended response]

Section 4: Board Composition

1. How well does the board represent the interests of all stakeholders?

- Very Poorly
- Poorly
- Very Well

2. Does the organization have policies in place for term limits or rotation of board members?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

3. If your answer is yes to the above question, what is length of election period and terms?

- 8years for two terms
- 4years for two terms
- 2 years for two terms

4. How transparent is the process for electing board members?

- Not Transparent
- Transparent
- Very Transparent

5. What criteria should be prioritized when electing new board members?

[Open-ended response]

6. How diverse is the board regarding skills, experience, and background?

- Not Diverse
- Slightly Diverse
- Very Diverse

7. Does the board include representatives from all key stakeholder groups, including athletes and Women?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

8. How effective is the board in fulfilling its governance responsibilities?

- Very Ineffective
- Ineffective
- Effective

9. What changes, if any, would you recommend to improve the board's composition and effectiveness?

[Open-ended response]