Master's degree thesis

IDR950 Sport Management

Developing non-profit sport organizations and exploring inter-organizational relationships as catalyst tools: A multi-faceted case study of the Norwegian Teqball Federation

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Number of pages including this page: 95

Molde, 19.05.2023

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Preface

When I received the first notification from Molde University College two years ago that my application had been successful, I knew it was the beginning of a truly special part of my life. It had been a childhood dream of mine to come to Norway, and studying Sports Management was one of my biggest goals after my bachelor's degree in Hungary. I could not have imagined that the two would become a reality at the same time. But it was even beyond my initial expectations. These two years of my life have given me a really strong foundation to make my mark in the field of sports management. Moreover, I have had wonderful and unforgettable experiences while exploring Norway.

However, the aforementioned cannot even come close to the priceless feeling that the new friendships I have made here have given me. I am very grateful to you all for being part of my life and for supporting my professional and personal development through the good and bad moments. I could write a novel about what you have brought to me in these two years, but that would be out of place here, so I will just close by saying thank you for everything, you are the best.

I also owe a huge thank you to my Mother, who has supported me beyond her strength these two years. Without you, this dream of mine would certainly not have been possible. Wherever life takes me from here, I will know that I can always count on YOU. This thesis is dedicated to you.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the professors of the Department of Sport Management who have contributed to my professional development during the last two years in Molde. In particular, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Harald Dolles for his valuable teachings in the study programme, and especially for his advice and motivation during the preparation of this thesis.

I feel honoured to be able to tell that I lived, studied, and made life-long friendships here in the beautiful lands of Norway.

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Benedek Antal

Molde, 2023

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Abstract

Non-profit sport organizations are facing numerous challenges in today's competitive environment. This study explores the factors affecting the development of newly established non-profit sports organizations, focusing on inter-organizational relationships (IORs) as potential catalysts tool. The research covers six key areas: leadership, human resource capacity, promotion and marketing, financial resources, internal communication, and regulation.

The methodology follows Lewis and Thornhill's research onion approach, adopting a realistic research philosophy. The study employs an abductive approach and utilizes case study research, ethnography, and grounded theory. Expert interviews and participant observation provide valuable insights. Qualitative analysis is conducted on the insights from the interviews, and the participant observation data.

The key findings highlight the following: the importance of effective leadership in fostering organizational development; the crucial role of internal communication in preventing conflicts and promoting transparency; the effect of good governance on compliance, efficient operations, and stakeholder involvement; the importance of employee engagement and retention, supported by a clear vision and core values; sport promotion and marketing through media platforms, star athlete ambassadors, and targeted advertising; the necessity of adequate financial resources. Moreover, the contribution of IORs to organizational development by providing access to resources, expertise, and collaborations, thus fostering the six factors mentioned above, is also highlighted. These findings seen as important drivers for organizational development that should be taken into account by leaders of non-profit sport organizations.

The research using a personalized framework, by applying abductive reasoning. It can offer a good starting point for the non-profit sport sector that want to develop their organization. The case study approach, combined with ethnography and grounded theory, contributes to theory building and a rich understanding of the organizational development phenomenon.

The study contributes to the understanding of non-profit sports organizations and provides practical insights for their growth and sustainability.

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List of abbreviations

ANOCA - Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa

FITEQ - The International Teqball Federation (Fédération Internationale de Teqball)

FVI - Financial Vulnerability Index

GAISF - Global Association of International Sports Federations

HNTF - Hungarian National Teqball Federation

IOR - Inter-organizational relationship

NIF - Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports

NOC - National Olympic Committee

NPO - Non-profit organization

NPSO - Non-profit sport organization

NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data

NTF - Norwegian Teqball Federation

OCA - Olympic Council of Asia

ONOC - Oceania National Olympic Committees

1.0 <u>Introduction</u>

This chapter aims to provide the reader with the necessary background to understand the concepts of some of the major organizational development factors and Inter-organizational relationships (IORs) as a handful tool for sport organizations to foster these processes. First, the motivation to conduct a master thesis research on this topic arose. Second, addressing the background and the main focus of the study about IORs and organizational development. In addition, the research questions are presented, followed by the aim and research objectives. The chapter ends with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Motivation

During my academic years, I had the opportunity to attend several seminars and courses that enhanced my knowledge of contemporary topics in organizational development. In particular, the seminar in "Special Issues in Organization and Management"; "Sport Leadership and Innovation"; and "Sport and Event Marketing", provided me with valuable insights into how organizations can foster their innovation and development.

However, it was my internship at the Norwegian Teqball Federation that truly solidified my passion for these topics. As a newly established non-profit sports federation, they faced several challenges in their initial stages of development. As an intern, I had the opportunity to observe and analyse the organizational structure and operations of the federation which is led by non-paid, part-time individuals. This allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of the factors of organizational development and inter-organizational relationships in the non-profit sport sector.

Through these experiences, I realized that with the right capacities and resources, inter-organizational relationships could play a vital role in fostering innovation and development in non-profit sports organizations (NPSOs). By building strong relationships with other organizations, sports federations can share resources and knowledge, collaborate on projects, and ultimately drive growth and development in the industry.

However, I also learned that organizations must be willing to embrace change if they want to succeed in today's dynamic and competitive business environment. This realization has been a driving force behind my decision to undertake a master's thesis on the factors necessary for the

development of an innovative sports in a new region, as well as examine the effects of possible inter-organizational relationships on the most crucial factors in a federation's development.

1.2 Background and theoretical lenses

To ensure clarity on the process of the thesis, it is important to bring forward that this research started with observation and expert interviews and then tried to formulate the research questions and focus points during these processes. Thus, an abductive approach was applied to explore the organizational development factors influencing the success or failure of NPSOs and to examine IORs as a catalyst tool to foster these figures. Abductive reasoning can be highly effective as a method because it allows to generate hypotheses and possible explanations based on incomplete information. Abductive reasoning can be particularly useful in exploratory research, where the aim is to identify new patterns or relationships that may not be immediately obvious (Garbuio and Lin 2021). Abductive reasoning can also be useful in situations where there are several plausible explanations for a phenomenon and the researcher must use their own judgment to determine which explanation is the most likely based on the available evidence (Arteaga 2023). Through this process, this dissertation was able to identify organizational development factors that may influence the success of NPSOs.

This research examines the organizational development factors and IORs as a potential catalyst tool for them in non-profit sport organizational settings. Organisational development is a broad, open discipline of practice and research that promotes the improvement of organisations and their effectiveness. In recent times, this goal has become increasingly complex and challenging as we live in an era of rapidly changing environment (Basadur, Basadur, and Licina 2012). Small and medium-sized non-profit sports organizations are facing a number of challenges with their limited human and financial resources; insufficient communication level; promotion; governance; and leadership. In such circumstances, building and maintaining effective inter-organizational relationships with other organizations can be essential for their survival and growth (Winand et al. 2016; Peachey et al. 2018). IORs are the cooperative relationships that organizations develop with other organizations to achieve common goals. In the context of NPSOs, IORs can take various forms, such as partnerships and networks with other sport organizations, government agencies, and private sector organizations. "Collaboration, coordination, and cooperation are at the core of inter-organizational relationships (IORs), such as alliances, buyer-supplier relationships, and cross-sector partnerships" (Castañer and Oliveira

2020, 966). Inter-organizational relationships can offer NPSOs access to resources, expertise, and support that would be difficult to obtain on their own. Partnering with established organizations can also help to increase their visibility, credibility, and legitimacy within the community, attract potential supporters, volunteers, and donors, and ultimately contribute to sustainability and growth (Kanter 1994; Dacin, Oliver, and Roy 2007). Researchers can provide insights into best practices for creating and managing effective institutions by exploring the motivations, strategies, and outcomes of IORs in non-profit organizations. For example, in NPSOs, working capacity is a crucial factor in innovation and development (Misener and Doherty 2009). The right leadership and the creation of a trusting and rewarding environment are essential for organizational effectiveness (Martínez-Moreno, Cavas-García, and Díaz-Suárez 2021). In addition, actively promoting and marketing lesser-known sports through IORs can help attract more supporters and sponsors to NPSOs. As the CEO of Teqball Montenegro also stated in the expert interview:

> Milorad Sutulovic: *"I didn't mention the football federation…We figured it is really important to have them as a partner. And then they were our first partner… It was super important for us because we got their support. They promoted all of our activities through their social media and their website. They made their platform available for promoting all of our activities and that meant a lot because they actually aimed at our target group."*

Understanding the factors that influence the success or failure of IORs is key in overcoming the challenges NPSOs have to face in a highly competitive and resource-constrained environment (Phuong and Khuong 2021). This knowledge can inform policy and practice and help NPSOs better serve their communities and promote participation and development in sport.

1.3 Research Question

RQ1: What are the main organizational development factors at non-profit sport organizations, such as a small/medium-sized national federation?

RQ3: How can inter-organizational relationships contribute to the organizational development of small and medium-sized non-profit sports organizations?

RQ4: How can non-profit sport organizations manage the potential risks and conflicts that may arise from inter-organizational relationships, and what are the strategies for resolving these issues?

The above-mentioned research questions will be researched by using the Norwegian Teqball Federation as a case study.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This dissertation is organized into six chapters:

• *Chapter I – Introduction*

This chapter starts with a brief motivation to conduct a master's thesis research on this topic arose. Second, addressing the background and the main focus of the study about IORs and organizational development. In addition, the research questions are lined up.

• *Chapter II – Case Description*

This chapter aims to offer the reader a basic understanding of the sport of Teqball. It offers insights of the current status of the sport on international level. Moreover, it gives an overview on the Norwegian Teqball Federation.

• *Chapter III – Literature review*

This chapter provides the reader with a presentation of theoretical lenses and literature to underline the main topics used in the research study.

Chapter IV - Methodology

This chapter introduces the reader to the methodology used to analyse the data gathered and outlines the rationale for the selected approach to answering the research question.

• *Chapter V – Findings*

This chapter outlines the results of the study derived from the participant observation. The system is following a chronological order.

• *Chapter VI – Discussion/Analysis*

In this chapter, the author elaborates on the Findings chapter. The findings are situated in terms of the research questions and are interpreted and explained within the thesis.

• *Chapter VII – Conclusion*

This chapter is a summary of the main findings paired with the research questions and their answers. In addition, it offers theoretical and practical implications and suggestions for future research projects.

2.0 Case Description: Norwegian Teqball Federation

2.1 Teqball

Even though Teqball on an international level is not a main part of the thesis, as it mainly focuses on organizational development factors and IORs, it still reasonable to give a brief introduction. Especially because the research on these topics was conducted through a Teqball Federation, in Norway. Moreover, it shows that not only national federations but the sport as a whole is still in its development phase.

Teqball is a fast-growing sport that has gained a lot of popularity worldwide since its creation in Hungary in 2012. The sport is played on a curved table, known as the Teq table, and is based on football. Teqball has become a favorite pastime of athletes and amateur enthusiasts who are looking to improve their technical skills, concentration, and stamina. The game is highly inclusive and gender-neutral, as it can be played between two or four players, regardless of gender (FITEQ n.d.-c). The game is played on various surfaces, including sand, acrylic, or indoors, and follows a points-based scoring format. The maximum number of touches allowed before returning the ball to the opponent is three, making it a challenging game that requires great ball control and skill. One of the significant benefits of teqball is that it allows players to enjoy the purest use of a football, without the risk of physical contact (FITEQ 2020).

Teqball has gained a lot of momentum over the years, with an estimated 5,000 players from more than 100 countries around the world. There are currently over 2,000 clubs dedicated to the sport. Additionally, more than 2,000 referees have been trained by FITEQ, the International Teqball Federation. However, when it comes to the national level, based on Teqball's International Federation, FITEQ, they have 152 established National Federations, but just 99 of them have recognition from a National Olympic Committee / National Sports Authority (FITEQ n.d.-b, n.d.-d). Fortunately, the sport has gained recognition and support from various international organizations, including three Continental Olympic Associations, namely OCA, ANOCA, and ONOC. Teqball has organized four World Championships since 2017, attracting participants from all over the world. Moreover, the sport has been granted GAISF Full Member Status, which is a testament to its growing popularity and potential for future growth (FITEQ n.d.-c).

The sport in its short lifespan already achieved a lot, but there are still things has to be done, for example with the recognition of National Federations. These organizations have to meet the requirements of their respective National Sport Authority which never comes easy. They have to undergo several development processes while aiming to increase awareness of the sport. For these reasons, National Federation leaders could focus on the factors discussed in this thesis, and consider IORs as a supportive tool to foster their development phase. This would not be a completely unfamiliar approach, for example, the U.S. National Teqball Federation created a partnership with the U.S. Soccer Foundation to "…increasing access to sports opportunities for children living in underserved communities."(SoccerWire 2021) Through this two-year partnership, they will distribute hundred Teqball tables per annum. Similarly, The Town Futures Project has partnered with the U.S. Teqball Association to provide Teqball tables to community soccer organizations in the Oakland/East Bay region (The Town FC 2023). In addition to the main goal of providing sports opportunities for children in disadvantaged areas and bringing tables to clubs, U.S. Teqball is also raising its profile by taking its activities to these locations. They also show that although Teqball has already achieved a lot internationally, they are still in the development phase. Perhaps the biggest issue to be resolved at the moment is for each National Federation to succeed in gaining recognition from their respective Olympic Committee. But to do so, these Federations need to develop. This is another reason to gain insight into the factors that influence the organizational development of these institutions. And as mentioned in the American example, IORs are also worth paying attention to.

2.2 FITEQ

Founded in March 2017, the Fédération Internationale de TEQBALL (FITEQ) is the governing body for TEQBALL and Para TEQBALL. Based in Budapest, Hungary, FITEQ is responsible for managing and developing TEQBALL globally, establishing National Federations, sanctioning competitions, and promoting the sport's growth. With a vision to enable everyone to participate and reach their potential, FITEQ aims to inspire the world through sporting success while upholding values of respect, integrity, passion, inclusion, and ambition (FITEQ n.d.-a).

2.3 Norwegian Teqball Federation

The Norwegian Teqball Federation is a new non-profit sports organization established in 2021 with the primary goal of promoting and developing the sport of Teqball in Norway. Their main vision is to promote teqball to clubs, schools, and training centers throughout Norway, and to organize a series of games and tournaments both locally and nationally. The organization also aims to send suitable players to major international tournaments and to organize coaching and refereeing courses within teqball.

The federation is situated in Steinkjer, Trondelag, in a large sports facility spanning over 4,000 m² that offers a range of sports facilities, including a gym, padel, golf, and cageball. Steinkjer is known as a sports-driven city with multiple sports halls suitable for various activities.

The federation is made up of three Board members, all of whom are passionate about the sport of teqball and have experience in different areas. The President of the Norwegian Teqball Federation is also an entrepreneur and founder of an effective tool for injury prevention as well as rehabilitation. He has many years of experience in the fitness industry and has coached elite athletes, seniors, and young footballers. He aims to promote Teqball in Norway, as he believes the game has the potential to develop young footballers' technical football skills, reactivity, and agility to high standards. There are two other Board members in the federation. One of them is a head of sports at a training complex and has worked in the banking sector for fifteen years. His experience can help the organization navigate the complexities of managing finances, sponsorships, and partnerships. His banking experience has honed his skills in financial analysis, risk management, and strategic planning. The other member (the previous President) is a former World, European and Norwegian champion in freestyle football and has a passion for alternative ball sports. Today he works with his own brand to build street football, and freestyle football in Norway. He believes that Teqball will become a major sport and wants to promote the development of the sport in Norway. In addition to the three members, the Norwegian Teqball Federation also has one main sponsor representative who is not part of the Board. He is the owner of the official distributor company of Teqball products in Norway and has worked in the fitness industry throughout his career, mainly as a supplier of fitness equipment. He discovered Teqball - both the sport and the product - in 2017 and acquired the distribution rights for Teqball in Norway at the end of 2020.

As of now, there are two official Teqball clubs in Norway. One of them is located in Steinkjer and has two young players who have shown great potential in the sport. The other club is based in Oslo and is home to some of the best Teqball players in the country. This club currently is

ranked 37th out of 168 in the World Ranking of Teqball clubs. One of the players from Oslo is currently ranked 10th in the world in her respective category. At the previous World Championship in 2022 in Nürnberg, the players from Norway achieved decent results. In the Men's singles, they secured the 17th place. In the Women's singles, the 5th place. In the Women's doubles, the players earned 5th place. Finally, in the Mix doubles, they obtained the 9th place. With the support of the Norwegian Teqball Association, these clubs, and their players have the opportunity to develop their skills and participate in local and national tournaments (norgesteqballforbund n.d.).

3.0 <u>Theoretical underpinning and literature review</u>

3.1 Theoretical frameworks

After researching the topics of theoretical frameworks for non-profit performances and development, two frameworks appeared to be the best fit for this master's thesis. One of them is developed by Brown (2005). It outlines the relationships within three major theories of non-profit governance (agency theory, resource dependence, and group decision-making), the six dimensions of Board performance developed by Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1993), and organizational effectiveness. Brown argued that agency theory can be used to explain the contextual dimension of Board performance, while resource dependency theory can explain the political and strategic dimensions. The remaining three Board competencies (analytic, educational, and interpersonal) relate to group and decision theories about how information is managed and used for decision-making. The second framework is developed by Schuh and Leviton (2006) which, compared to Brown's framework that focuses on the Board performance, is a more broader framework that put emphasize on the development and capacity aspect of the non-profit sector. It includes factors such as governance, financial resources, organization development, internal operations, and core services (Schuh and Leviton 2006). These two frameworks can be a very useful aid to the structure of this research, as they also explore aspects of organizational development that are the focus of this master's thesis.

However, it is important to consider the contingency theory, according to which organizational effectiveness depends on a number of factors, including the unique characteristics of the organization, its environment and the people within it. This can be interpreted as that no two sports federation are the same. Each of them has its own unique set of characteristics and challenges that require a personalized approach. According to Donaldson (2001), contingency theory is a comprehensive and intricate paradigm, rather than a unifying paradigm or a singular theory. This paradigm is based on the notion that organizational effectiveness is achieved by aligning organizational characteristics, such as structure, with the contingencies that reflect the organization's situation. The advantage of adopting a contingency approach is the recognition that what may work in one context or at a specific point in time may not necessarily be effective in another context. Therefore, efficiency is closely tied to the continuous alignment of different

contingencies (Donaldson 2001). With the incorporation of contingency theory, it made sense to create a tailor-made conceptual framework that considers the unique characteristics of the case organization. In doing so the research aimed to formulate more effective management strategies for a non-profit sport organization, like the before mentioned institution.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of organizational development factors

3.2 The role of leadership in organizational culture

In the following section aspects of leadership and organizational culture will be discussed to showcase their role in the success of organizations. In the context of amateur club sports, leadership style has been identified as a key element in strategic management, influencing the effort, efficiency, and satisfaction of employees (Martínez-Moreno et al., 2021). However, effective leadership must be complemented by a positive organizational culture, which can foster the growth and development of individuals and the organization as a whole (Hartnell & Walumbwa, 2011).

Leadership

According to Seippel (2019), non-profit/ amateur organizations are at risk due to their small size, lack of formal skills, and weak and undefined organizational structure. The non-profit sports sector has become increasingly complex (Trenberth and Hassan 2013; Megheirkouni 2019). To adapt to the competitive environment, organizations must show leadership and innovation (Burnard and Bhamra 2011; G. Williams 2020).

Martínez-Moreno, Cavas-García, and Díaz-Suárez (2021) explained that leadership style significantly affects effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction. Various theories exist concerning leadership, and among these, transformational leadership is the most widely accepted style, because it is directed towards the workers' sense of pride in their work, arousing high levels of motivation, satisfaction, and effectiveness. Today's leaders must be willing to play more proactive roles, support stakeholder initiatives, and adopt innovations (Maak, Pless, and Voegtlin 2016). These new needs favor the transformational leadership style, which has a significant impact on the organizational learning process and can improve innovation, performance, and competitiveness (Hill et al. 2012; Vargas 2015).

Leadership competencies

The concept of competence emerged in the late 1960s with the work of McClelland (1973) and Boyatzis (1982, 21) defined competence as "a basic characteristic of an individual that is causally related to effective or excellent performance on the job". Tett et al. (2000, 215) described competence as "an identifiable aspect of prospective work behaviour, attributable to the individual, which is expected to contribute positively and/or negatively to organizational effectiveness"

Leadership competencies in sport

Developing the leadership skills and competencies of non-profit sport organizations requires the identification of specific knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes needed to achieve organizational goals. One approach to identifying such competencies is the framework provided by Scott (2014), which includes critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, social skills, and knowledge. Other frameworks proposed in the sport management literature include the seven meta-competencies presented by Horch and Schütte (2003), such as accounting, finance, marketing, resource management, and others. And the framework proposed by Barcelona and Ross (2004) with four meta-competencies, such as management techniques, sport programming, business administration, and theoretical perspectives. Case and Branch (2003) provided ten competency frameworks for senior-level managers of sport facilities and seven competencies for entry-level managers. These competencies include budgeting, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, understanding legal issues, and staff appraisal skills. While Case and Branch's framework is specific to two levels of management, Horch and Schuette's and Barcelona and Ross's frameworks are general and can be applied to

managers in a variety of sport decision-making positions, such as team managers, sports and leisure centres, sports organizations including clubs, federations, agencies, unions and committees. These competences are essential for the development of leadership as a skill in non-profit sport organizations and for the development of leadership skills of individuals.

Organizational culture

Despite extensive research on transformational leadership, few studies have examined its relationship with organizational culture (Pawar and Eastman 1997; Walumbwa, Lawler, and Avolio 2007). Organizational culture, defined as shared basic assumptions that a group learns to solve external adaptation and internal integration problems, is a crucial factor in shaping the success of new organizations (Schein 2004). Leaders and founders play a vital role in establishing "common and accepted ways of doing things within an organization" (Davies et al. 2007, 47.) necessary for resolving ambiguity and uncertainty. Therefore, it is crucial to find a framework that is useful for an organization when discussing organizational culture. Although many frameworks exist, Edgar Schein's organizational culture theory stands out as a top framework and is useful when exploring work culture. His theory presents three levels of culture that are necessary to understand for effective leadership: artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions (Schein 2010).

Figure 2 Edgar Schein's model of three levels of culture (Resource: Árvai (2015))

Edgar Schein's framework provides solid points of cultural change for any organization and an understanding of the organizational culture. Schein's work draws on the role that leaders play so that they can successfully apply the principles needed to achieve organizational goals. Schein's framework allows organizations to freeze in place and examine the importance of the three levels of culture. By taking the time to look at a framework, an organization can strategize

how to identify and address challenges. Culture forms over time and can go through several changes, and a positive work culture can easily turn toxic. The changes can include employees, external and internal environments, changes in leadership, reorganizations, and more. Culture also includes how employees and the organization respond to problems in the organization.

Conclusion towards the current thesis

Within the leadership factor, leadership style, innovation, and organizational culture are the main organizational development factors at non-profit sports organizations. With effective leadership and positive organizational culture, non-profit sport organization leader could aim to foster the development processes. These two both have a positive effect on learning processes, innovation improvement, performance, and competitiveness. To measure their effectiveness on this matter, leaders could use Schein's framework to gather a better understanding and overview.

3.3 Effective communication for building trust and relationships

In this section, the importance of internal communication will be examined. The literature will shed light on how communication contributes to building positive relationships between employees and the organization. The impact of management on internal communication and employee outcomes will also be discussed. As well as the concept of symmetrical communication to promote employee empowerment and participation in decision-making processes. Finally, the benefits of effective symmetrical communication in promoting positive attitudes and behavioural outcomes will be included.

Internal Communication

Similarly, to organization-public relationships, which were defined by Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000, 18) as "the patterns of interactions, transactions, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics", the employee-organization relationships can be defined as the level of the trust, agreement on power relations, satisfaction, and commitment between the two parties. The quality of organization and employee relations are driving factors in developing organizational performance, goal orientation, and protecting organizational reputation and image (Men 2014). This underscores Rhee (2004)'s conclusion that states that employees who have a good relationship with their organization can, as corporate spokespersons, foster positive relations with the external public of the institution. It was proved by many researchers that well-

functioning internal communication helps in developing positive attitudes, like job satisfaction (Gray and Laidlaw 2004), identification with the workplace (Smidts, Pruyn, and Van Riel 2001), trust and commitment (Jo & Shim, 2005), and high level of employee-organization relationships. These results in productivity and performance improvement, and boost external relationships (Berger 2008). He also emphasized that internal communication "helps individuals and groups to coordinate activities to achieve goals, and it is vital in socialization, decision-making, problem-solving, and change-management processes" (Berger 2008, 2).

Leadership and Internal Communication

The leader also has an effect on the employee outcomes with his/her communication styles, competencies, and channels. As Holladay and Coombs (1993) suggested, leadership communication forms follower perception. Clear and persuasive communication about the organizational values and vision will increase the confidence of followers. In addition, Cameron and McCollum (1993) noted that two-way communication channels, like team meetings, group problem-solving sessions, and briefings develop employee-management relationships. Men (2014) also argued that organizational leadership provides a critical organizational context for internal communication.

Symmetrical Internal Communication

The creation of symmetrical communication was stimulated by Carter (1965) and Chaffee and McLeod (1968) concept of co-orientation. In contrast to traditional approaches that were mainly focused on developing messages that will change the attitudes or behaviour of the person receiving the message, co-orientation emphasizes how two people or levels of a system are oriented towards each other. Symmetrical communication, in an internal communication setting, is described as the communication and practice that focuses on "trust, credibility, openness, relationships, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, feedback, adequacy of information, employee-centered style, tolerance for disagreement, and negotiation" (J.E. Grunig 1992; J.-N. Kim and Rhee 2011). Symmetrical power emphasizes collaborations that aim to give some level of power to everyone within the organization that could benefit all in the institution. Thus, the internal symmetrical communication in the organization is grounded in the concept of employee empowerment and involvement on decision-making processes (J. Grunig and Grunig 2011). With this system, leaders and employees engage in dialogue and listen to each other, which in turn increases mutual

understanding. The counterpart, asymmetrical communication relies on one-way, top-down actions. As J.E. Grunig (1992) noted, asymmetrical use of power refers to the action, when managers maximize their power by controlling and lowering independence of followers. This style convinces or controls employee behaviour for the objectives of leaders. It is often associated with a centralized organizational system and authoritarian culture, where workers have limited opportunities to share their thoughts and inputs to the decision makers (J.E. Grunig and Dozier 2003; J.E. Grunig 1992).

Conclusion towards the current thesis

Based on the above-discussed sections, internal communication is a main organizational development factor at non-profit sport organizations. It is a central process that allows the organization's stakeholders, and employees to share information, build relationships, and develop organizational culture. The quality of organization and employee relations, which is fostered by effective internal communication, are driving factors in developing organizational performance, goal orientation, and protecting organizational reputation and image. Leaders also have an effect on employee outcomes with their communication styles, and competences. Clear and persuasive communication about the organizational values and vision will increase the confidence of followers. In addition, two-way communication channels, like team meetings, group problem-solving sessions, and briefings, develop employee-management relationships.

3.4 Athlete empowerment and non-profit sports governance

This part will examine the involvement of athletes in the non-profit sport's governance. To begin with, the importance of effective governance and the need to involve stakeholders, especially athletes, will be highlighted. The relevance of athlete-centeredness in policymaking processes will be discussed, and how deliberative democracy can be an effective approach to analysing this. The concepts of athlete representation and democratization of sport will also be discussed, as well as their implications for non-profit sport organizations.

Sport governance

Governance is a vital part of effective management within organizations (Yeh and Taylor 2008). One of the main concerns is the stakeholder involvement, mainly the athletes' class. Governance decisions highly affect athletes, nevertheless, they have insufficient decision-making rights (Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak 2010). Management of sport organizations is started

to realize the need of involving stakeholders in the development of policymaking. For these reasons, many organizations have implemented more athlete-centered actions to create a higher level of athlete involvement (Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak 2010).

As Houlihan (2004, 421-422) noted:

> *"...sport policy is generally made for, or on behalf of, athletes, rarely in consultation with athletes, and almost never in partnership with athletes… The few governing bodies of sport that do provide a voice for athletes do so either through limited membership of the body's decision-making forum or through the formation of an 'athlete committee/commission' linked to the main forum, but safely quarantined from any significant decision-making opportunities."*

Increasing stakeholder participation can make the quality and legitimacy of decision-making better. Leaders who are open to giving athletes a voice in decision-making, have to ensure that their (the athletes') needs are at the heart of the process. Moreover, they should be involved in discussions on decisions and policies that affect them. Kihl, Kikulis, and Thibault (2007) highlighted the significance of investigating sport policies through the lens of deliberative democracy which is also can be effective to analyse athlete-centeredness within the policymaking processes.

Deliberative democracy

"Good government is based on the will of the people, that ultimate political power should lie with the people as a whole" (Heater 2004, 22). Thus, deliberative democracy is a process of justified decisions made by citizens, their representatives, or the state (Gutmann and Thompson 2004). Habermass (1996) argued that citizen deliberation should emphasize interactions and opinion formations in a framework of reasoned argumentations. By considering the alternatives and rationally justifying decisions, organizations can become better informed about the overall interests of the group/individual and the policy rationale. Individuals participating in discussions are responsible to give reasoned justification for their decisions (Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak 2010). Citizen participation improves the legitimacy of decisions, as public policies are shaped based on the different perspectives of the stakeholders, in line with their values, interests, and experiences. Thus, policy decisions need to actively debate issues and be informed by the better arguments of the representatives (Habermass 1996). Decisions are based on the idea that policy issues are open to further debate when questions arise about them.

Representation

Including stakeholders in the decision-making processes can be an effective approach to improve legitimacy, and transparency. Nevertheless, it also carries some issues, such as it is impractical to involve every interested actor in policy debates (Habermass 1996; Parkinson 2006). To tackle this challenge, representatives should be elected who can speak on behalf of other stakeholders who are not involved in the discussion process. Legitimate representation also involves that representatives are empowered and held to account by stakeholders (Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak 2010). Representation is a way of deciding how the interests of citizens (athletes) are represented through voting and negotiation. Undeniably, the representation of athletes in committees offers a common platform for athletes to be involved in decision and policymaking. Through the concepts of deliberative democracy and representation, the changes in non-profit sport organizations, where athletes have started to receive more influential roles in the governance of their organization, could become more appreciated (Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak 2010).

Democratizing sport

A recent study of sport federations found out that executive bodies are facing main issues with a lack of independent ethics committees, low level of athlete involvement in decision-making, and unclear term limits for their executive leaders. All these matters are connected to a major organizational problem, the lack of democratic processes (Geeraert, Alm, and Groll 2014). Thus, if an institution is aiming for good governance, promoting democracy should be their primal and focal step for creating valuable organizational principles (Grigaliūnaitė and Eimontas 2018).

Promoting the democratization of sport organizations involves granting a platform to all stakeholders, both internal such as athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and managers, and external parties like media, sponsors, and governments. Athletes, in particular, have an investment in various issues such as team selection, resource allocation, programming priorities, competition schedules, and training conditions. To prioritize athlete interests, their representation in organizational decision-making is essential. According to AthletesCAN, the

national organization for Canadian athletes, athletes must take part in policy and practice development and decision-making processes (AthletesCAN 2004, 17).

Conclusion towards the current thesis

The main organizational development factors at non-profit sport organizations include effective governance, stakeholder involvement, and athlete-centeredness in policymaking processes. These factors can influence the development processes and effectiveness of the organizations by improving the legitimacy, transparency, and quality of decision-making. Increased stakeholder participation can ensure that athletes' needs are central to the process, and involving athletes in discussions on decisions and policies that affect them can improve the overall interests of the group and the policy rationale.

3.5 Exploring staffing complexity of non-profit organizations

The following part will discuss the topics of employee attraction and retention at non-profit sport organizations. It will include the responsibility of managing different types of funds, legal restrictions on distributing revenue, factors influencing employee commitment and retention, and strategies for enhancing engagement and commitment.

Attracting and retaining employees in non-profit organizations

Although NPOs can generate revenue, the surplus generated is typically used to achieve or to further the organization's goals, rather than being distributed as a payment to members or individuals within the organization (Kaine and Green 2013).

Next to government regulations and generating revenue, one of the major challenges at non-profit organizations is to attract and retain employees (Bhati and Manimala 2011; Jones 2015). Volunteers could and tend to help out at times, but NPOs still in high need of qualified employees to help maintain and develop operations in the organization (Irwin et al. 2018). Since NPOs are not famous for earning profits, a sensible, but legitimate question arose: "…why would someone want to work for this type of organization, and how do nonprofits attract employees?" (Slatten et al. 2021, 1)

A question arose, what NPOs could do to better attract and retain employees? Slatten et al. (2021) have shown "Employee commitment"; Organization purpose, mission & values"; "Financial motivation"; and "Value" as some of the biggest diving factors within the attraction

and retention challenges. By understanding the before mentioned, organizational leaders can have a deeper understanding of talent acquisition and retention strategies. These skills can affect operational and strategic planning in a positive way (Slatten et al. 2021).
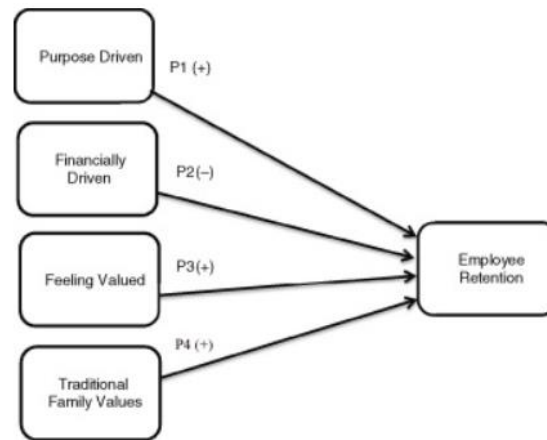
Figure 3 Model of small non-profit employee retention (Source: Slatten et al. (2021, 4))

Importance of employee engagement and commitment

The relationship between employers and employees has consistently proven to impact the attitudes and conduct of both parties (Cole and Bruch 2006). Therefore, the engagement of employees plays a crucial role in motivation (Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe 2004). According to Allen and Meyer (1990) and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), employee engagement includes a psychological attachment to an employer or organization. Employees who believe that their organization is committed to and supportive of them are more likely to be attached to the organization (Whitener 2001). Attachment to the workplace can also be situationally dependent, so managers must understand what drives employee engagement in different areas and how they can influence and facilitate it (Klein, Molloy, and Brinsfield 2012).

To enhance engagement at the individual level, Becker et al. (1996) suggest that individuals should be motivated in terms of their supervisor's goals and values through methods such as team building and socialization. Due to influence, employee engagement is a particularly important link in the mission of non-profit organizations, which often has at its core the attraction and retention of employees. Proper operationalization of the NPO's mission can engage employees and keep them committed to fulfilling the organization's purpose (Brown and Yoshioka 2003).

Managers can continually monitor employee feedback to effectively cultivate and maintain successful relationships, which can lead to greater employee satisfaction and engagement (Parish, Cadwallader, and Busch 2008). In smaller organizations, providing professional

development opportunities through participation in conferences and workshops can positively influence employee engagement (Bhati and Manimala 2011).

Importance of organization purpose, mission, and values

Organizational commitment is influenced by a number of key factors such as job satisfaction, including work environment, job security, relationships with managers and colleagues, and performance and productivity (Saha 2016). Employees in non-profit organizations are motivated by the values and mission of the organization rather than by salary (Bhati and Manimala 2011; Robineau, Ohana, and Swaton 2015). Goal-oriented employees are likely to have high expectations of themselves and work to achieve professionalism (Mesch 2010). However, NPOs may have difficulty with strategic planning due to limited resources (Hussain et al. 2018; Mara 2000). The development of a vision, mission statement, and core values can guide the achievement of the organization's goals (Hussain et al. 2018; Mara 2000). This is essential, because the chance of an employee accepting a job and remaining with an organization for an extended period may increase if the values of the organization are similar to the individual's (Slatten et al. 2021).

Financial motivation and its implications for staff retention

One of the main attributes that differentiate NPOs from for-profit organizations is that the latter entities have the power and resource to provide higher wages and more beneficial packages for their employees. On the contrary, NPOs frequently lack this ability, which can lead to staffing challenges such as only relying on non-paid, part-time employees which can result in high turnover rates. According to Preston (1989), some employees are satisfied with this wage differential because they see it as a contribution to the organization.

Conclusion towards the current thesis

Attracting and retaining employees are significant organizational development factors for non-profit sport organizations. Factors such as salary, working conditions, job satisfaction, and organizational policies are decisive in determining employee commitment and retention rates. The engagement of employees also plays a crucial role in motivation and effectiveness which are driving factors for organizational development.

3.6 Exploring the role of sports promotion and marketing

In this section of the thesis, the role of sports marketing in promoting sustainable sports development is explored, specifically in less popular sports. The challenges faced by less popular sports in gaining recognition and funding on a global scale are discussed. The section also covers the psychological factors that influence attraction to sports and how sport marketing can be used to increase fan interest, participation, and the consumption of sports-related products. Various components of the sports promotion mix are explained. Finally, the section touches upon the significance of star athletes and their impact on promoting sports.

Challenges of less popular sports

Some sports, despite being popular in certain regions, struggle to gain recognition and funding on a global scale. This discrepancy raises important questions about the role of sports marketing in promoting sustainable sports development. In January 2017, the Egyptian national football team played in the Africa Cup of Nations in Gabon while the Egyptian national handball team participated in the World Men's Handball Championship in France. Researchers randomly surveyed one hundred Egyptians, and 67% of the respondents were not aware of the handball championship. Nonetheless, the majority of Egyptians were passionate about the national football team. Consequently, the researchers aimed to explore the possibility of attracting audiences towards less popular sports. The interviewees suggested various elements, such as sports media, sports advertising, star athletes, sports sponsorship, and the performance of national teams, to attract audiences towards less popular sports (Sedky, Kortam, and AbouAish 2020).

Attraction

The psychological continuum model, developed by D.C. Funk and James (2001), identifies four stages to explore the psychological connection between individuals and sports: awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance. Attraction, which Bee and Havitz (2010, 40.) refer to as "interest" in a particular sport, is influenced by personal, psychological, and environmental factors, producing an "interest and liking for" a particular sport (D.C. Funk 2008, 110.). Interest, defined as the tendency to become involved in certain activities. It can be classified as individual interest, shaped by a person's knowledge and values, or situational interest, triggered by external factors (Silvia 2006). Situational interest can be sustained by continued exposure to external factors, allowing individual interest to develop (Silvia 2006). While individual interest

is linked to a person's background, situational interest can be promoted by motivators that encourage people to engage in a particular activity (Hidi and Renninger 2006).

Sport marketing

According to Ratten (2016), sports marketing can be useful for increasing fan interest, participation, and the consumption of sports-related products. Shank and Lyberger (2015) have identified the various components of the sports promotion mix, such as advertising, and sponsorship. Turner (2017) has analysed the integrated marketing communication tactics used during the Asian Cup 2015, which included advertising, publicity, public relations, sales promotions, and digital communications by the event organizers.

Based on the above mentioned, the importance of mass media in promoting sports has been widely acknowledged (D. Funk, Alexandris, and McDonald 2008). The amount of media attention given to a certain issue is called media coverage (Shank and Lyberger 2015), and it has been observed that it can affect the level of attention paid by individuals to that topic (A. Kim, Choi, and Kaplanidou 2015). Social media can also be used to promote sports when there is little or no TV media coverage (Vann, Woodford, and Bruns 2015).

Advertising is another tool used to promote sports (D.C. Funk 2008). Advertising during sports events can help create a positive response towards the advertised product due to the glamour associated with the games (Pyun and James 2011).

Star athletes, or players who excel in their performance and have outstanding popularity, can influence the decisions of young people to change brands (Dix, Phau, and Pougnet 2010). The image of the star is transferred to the product and from the product to the consumer, according to the theory of meaning transfer (McCracken 1989). The attractiveness of the star is the most important characteristic that can affect the young generation. Star athletes can also attract new fans to their teams and protect existing fans from being lost to other competing teams (Hoegele, L. Schmidt, and Torgler 2014). They can be used as endorsers to promote the products of sponsors and attract consumers (Tingchi Liu and Brock 2011).

The national team performance is another important element in building the reputation of the sport (Jang, Jae Ko, and Chan-Olmsted 2015). It influences consumers' intentions to buy products of sponsors and can moderate the relationship between sports marketing and attraction towards less popular sports (Ngan, Prendergast, and Tsang 2011; Cialdini et al. 1976; Kwak, Kwon, and Lim 2015).

Conclusion towards the current thesis

This section shows the importance of marketing and promoting factors in sports development, especially towards less popular sports. The psychological continuum model identifies attraction, as influenced by personal, psychological, and environmental factors, producing an interest and liking for a particular sport. Sport marketing, including advertising, sponsorship, and promotion, can be useful for increasing fan interest, participation, and consumption of sports-related products. Media coverage and social media are also identified as important tools to promote sports, and star athletes are seen as key elements to attract audiences. These are all ensuring a positive impact on organizational development, especially with lesser knowns sports, because of the possible outcome of increasing participation and awareness in the particular sport.

3.7 Financial stability and funding challenges of non-profit organizations

This section discusses the financial stability and financing challenges faced by non-profit sports organizations. The section begins with an overview of the financial situation of NPSOs. It then discusses the sources of funding for NPOs. The section also examines how the source of funding affects the level of Board involvement in fundraising activities and the financial vulnerability of NPOs. Finally, the section proposes the Financial Vulnerability Index (FVI) as a tool to measure the financial performance of organizations.

Financial overview of non-profit organizations

The financial stability of NPOs and NPSOs are influenced by a number of factors. These are the level of donor support, the sufficiency, consistency, and diversity of revenue streams, the efficiency of management, their ability to withstand fluctuations in revenue, and the amount of capital available (Tuckman and Chang 1991). Tuckman and Chang (1991) classified NPOs as financially vulnerable if they are likely to reduce their services immediately in the event of a financial shock. Non-profit sports organizations are facing a challenge because they need financial support from public and private sectors, but they also want to be independent in their organization activities. Therefore, they are willing to receive funding but do not want to be controlled (Norberg 1997; Winand et al. 2010). Active Board members are essential to achieving the goals of NPOs, given the high expectations for service and accountability (Carver 1997; Holland 2002). However, traditional sources of funding for NPOs have begun to change

in recent times. For example, private donations to NPOs as a percentage of total revenues have declined since 1964 (Weisbrod 1998), and government funding tends to fluctuate with changes in political leadership and public policy (Froelich 1999).
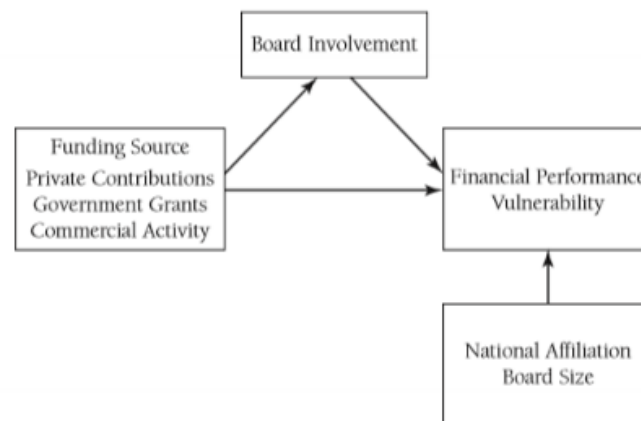
Funding source and board involvement

Non-profit organizations rely on three main sources of income. The first is private donations, which include individual contributions, corporate donations, and grants from foundations; the second is public support through government grants; and the thirds are commercial activity or payments from the private sector, such as membership fees and sales of products and services. Resource dependence theory argues that each source of revenue has advantages and disadvantages and creates different levels of dependence on external entities (Brooks 2000). Private contributions, for example, allow CEOs to freely allocate funds without strict reporting requirements or resource allocation mandates. In extreme cases, non-profit organizations that rely entirely on private donations may receive funds with minimal restrictions on their use (Weisbrod 1998). Private fundraising is time-consuming and requires administrative costs, although it offers strategic flexibility. Individual donations can fluctuate widely from year to year, requiring organizations that rely heavily on them to seek the support of Board members to manage the uncertainty inherent in this revenue stream.

Government funding, on the other hand, is seen as the most stable source of revenue for NPOs, as it is obtained through successful grant applications rather than extensive fundraising efforts. However, the stability provided by government grants is counterbalanced by the bureaucratic requirements of grant administration. Non-profit organizations that receive a significant portion of their funding from government sources often structure their administrative operations to meet grant renewal obligations rather than to facilitate fundraising through the Board of directors (Brooks 2000; Heimovics, Herman, and Coughlin 1993; Stone, Hager, and Griffin 2001). This creates a "subsidy trap" where organizations adapt to the requirements of public funding.

CEOs of non-profit organizations adapt their strategies to the level of risk and administrative maintenance required by each funding source (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). CEOs who rely on unstable revenue sources, such as private donations, are more likely to involve Board members in the planning and implementation of fundraising activities. CEOs of government- or commercially-funded organizations are less likely to rely on Board members for resource development. Board structure (Siciliano 1996) and past financial performance (Bryson 1995) are associated with Board involvement, but the funding source of the organization also

influences characteristics of processes, such as strategic planning efforts and the way meetings are conducted (Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolpin 1992).

Figure 4 Model of expected relationships among funding structure, board involvement, and financial performance (Resource: Hodge and Piccolo (2005, 173)

Board involvement and financial vulnerability

The Board of directors of an organization plays a critical role in determining the financial success of the organization (Duca 1986). The resource-dependent role of Boards, which involves acquiring and maintaining resources, is particularly important for organizations struggling to access them (J.L. Johnson, Daily, and Ellstrand 1996). Empirical evidence shows that Board participation is positively related to organizational performance (William Frederick Crittenden 1983; Judge and Zeithaml 1992; Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolpin 1992; Provan 1980).

Measuring financial vulnerability

One way of measuring performance and assessing financial vulnerability is the Financial Vulnerability Index (FVI) developed by Tuckman and Chang (1992) specifically for the tax-exempt sector. The FVI allows NPOs to measure operational efficiency and resource management effectiveness. Trussel, Greenlee, and Brady (2002) extended the FVI model to focus on the ability of a charity to deliver on its mission in the face of financial shocks. Non-profit organizations that control the allocation of assets and draw on multiple sources of funding are less vulnerable to financial shocks (Greenlee and Trussel 2000).

Research has shown that organizational size, national affiliation, and Board composition can affect strategy and performance for both non-profit and for-profit agencies (William F Crittenden and Crittenden 2000; Dalton et al. 1998).

It can be stated that the main organizational development factor of financial resource availability is highly dependent on donor support, sufficiency, consistency, diversity of revenue streams, and the efficiency of management. These factors influence the development processes and effectiveness of non-profit sport organizations by affecting their financial stability. For instance, the sufficiency, consistency, and diversity of revenue streams can influence the level of Board involvement in fundraising activities and the financial vulnerability of non-profit sport organizations. In addition, the funding source can affect the characteristics of Board processes, such as strategic planning efforts and the way meetings are conducted.

3.8 Inter-organizational relationships in non-profit sport organizations

This section will give an explanation of IORs and how they can become a solution for non-profit sports organizations to foster their development processes. The section will also focus on the determinants of forming IORs. Following this, the challenges in managing IORs, such as difficulties in negotiating joint purposes and communication, will be discussed. Lastly, the chapter will delve into the evaluation of IOR outcomes.

Inter-organizational relationships

Engaging in relationships with other organizations is one solution for non-profit sport organizations to obtain the necessary resources, knowledge, and other social advantages. The focus on inter-organizational relationships (IORs) as a useful, desired strategy has emerged from a shift in managerial mindset that got rid of 'good fences make good neighbours' in favour of "a marriage between entrepreneurial creativity and corporate discipline, cooperation, and teamwork" (Kanter 1989, 9-10). The swift environmental and economic changes have been forcing organizations to choose alternative approaches to conceptualizing their markets and ways of operating and to develop IORs as a solution strategy (Huxham and Macdonald 1992). IORs in sport is getting more spread, for instance, it forms an integral part of the new Canadian Sport Policy (Canadian Heritage 2002). The aim is to "strengthen and develop collaboration within governments, between governments, and between sectors to ensure the harmonized growth of the sport system and promote the overall benefits of sport" (Canadian Heritage 2002, 19) However, there is also a different side of this concept. Many sport managers in the public

and non-profit sectors are hesitant to form an IOR with the private sector due to concerns over privatization and 'the profit over goals' approaches (Glover 1999; Frisby, Thibault, and Kikulis 2004; Smale and Reid 2002). Therefore, it is highly essential to examine and conclude more research on how IORs are emerging as a strategy for handling limitations and challenges in public and non-profit sectors (Huxham and Vangen 1996; Thibault and Harvey 1997; Vail 1992). Focusing more on the cyclical relationships between negotiations, commitments, and executions of IORs, and the way they are born, develop, succeed, or end will lead to more profitable IORs and to deeper and more sophisticated theoretical backgrounds and frameworks to aid research (Ring and Van de Ven 1994)

Determinants of forming IORs

Oliver (1990)'s conceptual framework highlighted six determinants associated with the formation of IORs:

Necessity	Asymmetry	Reciprocity	Efficiency	Stability	Legitimacy
Comply with legal or regulatory requirements	Exercising power over another organization	Emphasizing cooperation and mutuality	Improving an organization's input/output ratio	Predictability	Reflecting existing norms, rules, and beliefs

Table 1 Six determinants framework of IORs (source: Oliver (1990))

Next to her six factors, Kouwenhoven (1993) identified two main purposes for joining into IORs. He emphasized the financial-economic motives that include diversifying risks and increasing expected returns. The other is the managerial-strategic motives because organizations could become more effective and efficient through joint efforts that sometimes involve forming IORs. Babiak (2003) figured that the non-profit sport organizations' main purpose behind entering an IOR was necessity, asymmetry, legitimacy, efficiency, and stability. These studies emphasize that it is necessary for sport managers to seriously consider and explain their motives when entering an IOR with another partner. It is important because it determines if the common initiatives will provide a clear image for them to understand if the IOR is successfully managed (Babiak 2003).

Challenges with IOR management

Huxham and Vangen (2000) discussed how organizations struggled to achieve a collaborative advantage. They illustrated difficulties in negotiating joint purposes due to the variety of

organizational and individual goals involved. They also found difficulties in communicating because of the different professional languages and organizational cultures. Also, challenges in developing shared operational models were coming from that usually the IORs organizations have different internal procedures. Difficulties in dealing with the perceived power imbalances between stakeholders and the pairing difficulty of building trust were also frequent issues with these joint associations. Moreover, managing accountability and maintaining a satisfying level of autonomy at the same time for each organization, when sometimes one of the parties are based in physically remote locations (Huxham and Vangen 2000).

Babiak (2003, 246) argued that managers were uncertain "regarding roles, objectives, and strategies of the partnership" whilst "formal mechanism for support and control appeared not to be emphasized". She discussed that pressure increased between organizations involved in the IOR when one actor's decision "affected resource distribution, introduced new players into the system and further diffused valuable sport resources such as athletes, coaches, and sport organization partnerships" (Babiak 2003, 247).

Evaluating IOR outcome

Several authors stressed that IOR evaluation is critically overlooked both in practice and in the literature (Babiak 2003; Peng 2003). Some have suggested that inter-organizational relation results involving the public sector have to be measured on three levels. First, it has to be assessed from the community level that includes social capital, measuring costs to the community; second, the network level, where the creation of new social links and the cost of maintaining the network has to be surveyed; and third, the organization/participant level that includes client outcomes and resource procurement (Provan and Milward 2001).

Babiak (2003) proposed outcome examples based on Provand and Milward's framework and her responses from her own interviewees. She outlined "resource acquisition, performance success (i.e., sporting results of athletes), the strengths of the relationship, visibility, increases in the range and coordination of services offered to coaches and athletes, and the creation of social capital" (Babiak 2003).

Nevertheless, while there are some common points, it can be seen that this outcome evaluation is by no means a mature methodology, and it is a concept that is hard to unify. This is due to the diverse organizational properties. As Babiak (2003, 296) concluded her perspective regarding a sport IOR "…there was no clear consensus on outcomes among the partner organizations, nor was there any evaluation tool to assess what made a partnership effective".

Based on the previously mentioned information, sport managers and leaders should aim to gather more knowledge on how IOR formation, management, and outcome measurement are merged and evolve over time from the public and non-profit partners' point of view (Alexander, Thibault, and Frisby 2008).

Conclusion towards the current thesis

Inter-organizational relationships (IORs) have been identified as a useful strategy for non-profit sports organizations to obtain the necessary resources, knowledge, and other social advantages. However, managing IORs comes with challenges, such as difficulties in negotiating joint purposes and communication, developing shared operational models, dealing with perceived power imbalances, and maintaining autonomy for each organization. Non-profit sports organizations must carefully consider their motives when entering an IOR and put in place formal mechanisms for support and control. Evaluating IOR outcomes is also important but has been critically overlooked both in practice and in the literature. Overall, non-profit sports organizations must balance the benefits of IORs with potential risks and conflicts that may arise and develop strategies to resolve these issues.

4.0 <u>Methodology</u>

This chapter introduces the reader to the methodology that follows Lewis and Thornhill's (2009) approach used to analyse the data gathered and outlines the rationale for the selected approach to answering the research questions. It provides a detailed description of how the data is collected, processed, and analysed.

4.1 Research process

In order to achieve the desired outcome of a research, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) emphasize the importance of gathering and analysing data systematically to uncover relevant phenomena. To guide researchers in this process, they introduce the concept of the research process onion, which helps illustrate the factors influencing the selection of data collection methods. The research process onion comprises five layers, namely the research philosophy, research approach, research methodology, time perspective, and data gathering techniques (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009).
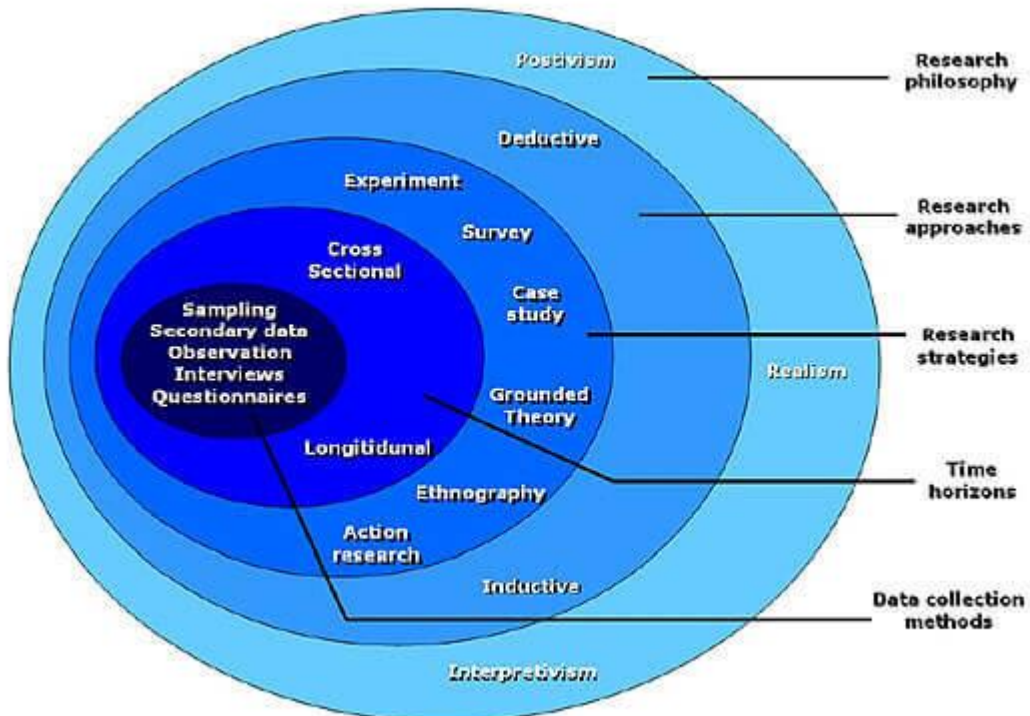

Figure 5 Research process onion by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) (source: Statswork)

4.2 Research philosophy

Scientific paradigm

Realism is often considered an appropriate paradigm for case study research due to several reasons. First, case study research often deals with contemporary and pre-paradigmatic areas such as relationship marketing (Boing 1994). Second, realism avoids the limitations of relativism that are associated with constructivism and critical theory, as it emphasizes the objectivity of the researcher (Hunt 1991). According to realism, there exists an external reality (Tsoukas 1989) that can be studied, but the complexity of this reality and the limitations of the researcher's mental capacity require triangulation of data to refine the observations. In the context of the current thesis, adopting a realist perspective allows for a comprehensive exploration of the organizational development factors within the Norwegian Teqball Federation. By recognizing the complexities of the external reality and the limitations of the researcher's cognitive capacity, a realist approach encourages the use of triangulation, combining multiple sources and methods, to refine observations. It facilitates a systematic exploration of the research questions by acknowledging the existence of an external reality and emphasizing the need for rigorous data collection and analysis techniques to gain a comprehensive insight into the complexities of organizational development within the case organization.

4.3 Research approaches

Abduction

Since the research started with observations and tried to formulate research questions and main aspects of the thesis based on the collected data an abductive approach was applied to explore the organizational development factors influencing the success or failure of NPSOs, like the Norwegian Teqball Federation, and to examine IORs as a catalyst tool to foster these figures. Abductive reasoning can be highly effective as a method because it allows to generate hypotheses and possible explanations based on incomplete information. Abductive reasoning can be particularly useful in exploratory research, where the aim is to identify new patterns or relationships that may not be immediately obvious (Garbuio and Lin 2021). Abductive reasoning can also be useful in situations where there are several plausible explanations for a phenomenon and the researcher must use their own judgment to determine which explanation is the most likely based on the available evidence (Arteaga 2023).

4.4 Research strategies

Case study research

This case study research aims to investigate the main factors that newly established non-profit sport organizations, like the Norwegian Teqball Federation, are required to foster to ensure their development process in a fast-paced environment. The study's focus is on small-sized federations and the opportunities and challenges they face during their establishment, and development phases. According to Yin (1994, 13), case study research methodology typically involves an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon, in this case, the organizational development, in its natural setting, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context may not be clearly defined. The case study approach is particularly useful to apply where in-depth insights are required to understand an issue, event, or phenomenon in a natural, real-life context. These can, for instance, help to better understand and explain the cause-and-effect relationships and linkages that emerge from a new initiative or development (Crowe et al. 2011). As Parkhe (1993), Tsoukas (1989), Yin (1993), and Yin (1994) suggest, case studies can also serve as a research methodology in various fields, including business and social sciences.

Ethnography research

Ethnography is a study of individual and group behaviour in their natural settings. Ethnography as a research discipline is rooted in the concept of culture and involves a combination of observation and interviews to capture the dynamics of behaviour. It relies on entering the researched subjects' natural environment. Whether it is referred to as on-site research, observational research, naturalistic research, or contextual research, ethnographic methods provide researchers with a unique chance to explore the actual situations that form an integral part of the group they are examining (Mariampolski 1999).

Ethnography offers a deep understanding of individual and group behaviour. This can be valuable in this thesis in exploring the main organizational development factors and understanding how these factors influence development processes and effectiveness in non-profit sport organizations. By expert interviews from two similar institution, and observations within the case organization this research can gain insights into their behaviours, decision-making processes, and interactions. Exploring actual situations and dynamics can be beneficial in addressing the research questions as it allows to capture the real-life context and complexities that shape organizational development. By immersing in the natural environment of non-profit

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sport organizations, the researcher can gain a deep understanding of their challenges, successes, and the factors that influence their development.

Grounded theory

Glaser's definition of grounded theory is, *"a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area"* (Glaser 1992, 16). Grounded theory emphasises the systematic approach to data collection, handling and analysis.

In ethnography research the researcher is often facing with a text-rich data. Thus, applying ground theory could help the examiner by categorizing and theory development. The different concepts should be coded through close examination Establishing a grounded theory involves the systematic collection of data through observations, interviews, meetings, and analysis of documents. The intention is to develop basic categories that offers explanation of the variations in the data. What is inherent to social research through grounded theory is that it seeks to approach the context under study, i.e., for example, an organization, its leaders and other stakeholders, their interactions and interrelations; thus mediating a conceptual understanding of the issues that constitute their environment (Van Maanen 1979). Following this reasoning, the current thesis implemented the grounded approach to systematically examine the expert interviews and participant observations through a set of categories highlighted as organizational development factors. This allowed to develop conceptual understandings that go beyond the specific context under study and can potentially be applied to similar situations.

4.5 Time horizons

Time horizons of a research refers to the time frame within which a study was carried out. On this basis, two categories are made by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009). These are the cross-sectional and longitudinal horizons. In a cross-sectional study, the subject under investigation is examined at a particular point in time, where the goal is to provide a snapshot of an ongoing process. On the contrary, in longitudinal research, the study goes over an extended period of time. The aim of this is to observe and investigate the change and development in a certain subject (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2009).

In this thesis, the time horizon was set as longitudinal, as the qualitative data collection was conducted over three months. This allowed to get a more comprehensive insight into the drivers

of organizational development and to understand the motivations behind IORs, rather than merely obtaining a snapshot of the situation at a particular moment.

4.6 Data collection method

Dubois and Gadde (2002) noted, it is essential to understand that conducting case study research can be challenging, and it is critical to invest in theory to improve the explanatory power of the findings and reduce the negative effects of equivocal evidence and biased views.

To address the potential risks mentioned earlier and ensure robust findings, this case study employs a participant observation approach as the primary qualitative research method. Participant observation involves the researcher immersing themselves in the research setting and actively observing and engaging with the participants in their natural environment. This method allows for a deep understanding of the context, dynamics, and nuances of the organizational development processes within non-profit sport organizations.

While the research primarily relies on participant observation, it is crucial to acknowledge the valuable insights gained from the expert interviews, even though they do not constitute formal research methods. These interviews played a significant role in shaping the direction of the research and will be duly recognized in the thesis for their contributions towards the development of the study.

As (Yin 1994) also stated, gathering information from multiple sources and methods in a case study is important for achieving a broader understanding of the research topic. The use of multiple sources allows for the investigation of a wider range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioural issues, and increases the convincingness and accuracy of the findings and conclusions.

Expert interviews

Expert interviews are an efficient and effective method for gathering data in the exploratory phase of a project, especially when access to a particular social field may prove difficult or impossible. Moreover, the institutional structures behind the experts can serve as a strong starting point of entry to the research field. Despite these advantages, methodological considerations cannot be ignored, as expert interviews may advocate a pre-reflexive definition of what constitutes an expert or grant undisputed relevance to expert knowledge (Bogner, Littig, and Menz 2009). Following these above-mentioned reasonings expert interviews were conducted to gather more insights about the main factors that an aspiring non-profit sport

organization, like the Norwegian Teqball Federation could face. These involved Péter Veres, the former secretary general at the Hungarian National Teqball Federation, and Mirolad Sutulovic, the leader of Teqball Montenegro. These were extremely helpful in discussing the possible research questions on the main development factors of this dissertation. They also offered an effective approach to screening the theoretical background by shedding light on the most important aspects they encountered in their development phase.

However, several impediments were encountered during the initial phase of the research. A significant delay in obtaining a response to the interview request was experienced, which prolonged the process. Additionally, the occurrence of personnel changes within the International Teqball Federation (FITEQ) resulted in the cancellation of the first scheduled expert interview. Thus, it was necessary to establish a new set of interviewees and initiate the process of contacting new individuals to participate in the research. This presented additional challenges and required extra effort and time to identify suitable candidates and arrange for their participation in the interviews.

Participant observation

As Dibben and Dolles (2013, 482-483) highlighted, based on other researchers, there are several reasons for a researcher to choose participant observation. First, participant observation focuses on behaviour rather than just comments received in interviews. This allows to gather more comprehensive and reliable data as active participation increases the range, relevance, and reliability of the data (Kluckhohn 1940; Bouchard 1976). Second, participant observation allows researchers to look at individuals, groups, and organizations from an integrated perspective, which is crucial for examining reciprocal relationships (L. Williams 1989). Third, participant observation helps to recognize differences that respondents may take for granted or are unaware of, which is essential for anticipating potential threats and opportunities (Dolles 1997; Jourard 1964). Fourth, participant observation demands a change of perspective, particularly in cross-cultural research, as the attention moves from an outsider's to an insider's perspective (Dolles 1997). Fifth, participant observation places the researcher in the context of discovery, facilitating the pattern of social research (Merton 1949). Finally, the participant observation technique allows gathering data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization being studied and discovering their interpretations of events (Becker, 1958). In order to achieve this, the observer has to achieve a member status within the community organization and play a part in a constellation of roles (Kluckhohn 1940). Overall, the expert participant observation method aligns with this research goals and will provide a rich and

nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation. As Dibben and Dolles (2013, 486) also stated:

> "In using participant observation, therefore, we argue there is considerable truth in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional character Sherlock Holmes' assertion, that 'it is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts'(Doyle, 1992[1892]: 5)."

Overall, participant observation can be a valuable tool for exploring complex phenomena, generating insights, and testing and refining and creating theories.

During this three-month participant observation at this start-up federation, this research utilized rapports that involved every actor who have a connection with the Norwegian Teqball Federation. This included all the Board members and in addition to them, players from Steinkjer and Oslo came under observation. During the participant observation, the researcher immersed himself in the federation to gain a better understanding of the culture, norms, and practices within the organization. From the beginning, the focus was on rapport building which involved synthesizing observations into coherent narratives and identifying patterns and themes. Nelson (1969) also stressed rapport building is important because it helps to establish trust and understanding between individuals or groups, which can aid in eliminating stigma and building a sense of normalcy in social systems. By engaging in activities and behaviours that are familiar to the individuals or groups being studied, such as physical work in work-oriented communities, researchers can minimize ambiguities and increase trust, ultimately leading to more accurate and insightful research (J.C. Johnson, Avenarius, and Weatherford 2006). Through the creation of detailed notes and records of the observations various aspects of the community, such as social interactions, communication patterns, and behaviours emerged as a focal aspect of the federation. This research method helped to gain an insider's perspective, which can be useful for identifying the nuances of the Teqball community that might be missed through other data collection methods.

4.7 Data analysis method

Analysis of the expert interviews

To analyse the data from the interviews, I used a qualitative research approach. I transcribed the interviews using software tools and then read through the transcripts to get a sense of the overall content and identify key themes and ideas that emerged. Once I had categorized the data, I analysed it to identify patterns and relationships. Based on my analysis, I drew conclusions about the organizational development factors involved in establishing a new Teqball federation. The expert interviews provided valuable insights into these factors, and the information gathered was crucial in formulating the research questions and selecting a suitable theoretical background for this dissertation.

Analysis of the participant observation

As a participant observer at the Teqball Federation, I conducted my research by observing and participating in the day-to-day activities of the organization. To analyse the data I collected, I employed several approaches to ensure a thorough and accurate analysis. First, I utilized immersion by repeatedly reviewing my notes and recordings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This helped me to identify significant points, moments, and events that I categorized into initial categories using the guidelines offered by the expert interviews. Next, I used axial coding to group these initial codes or themes into more significant categories or themes that helped me organize the data. This approach allowed me to identify the main themes and develop a narrative or theory that captured the essential features of the data.

As an outsider to the organization, I had some pre-assumptions about the nature of the Norwegian Teqball Federation's operations and the challenges. To address this, I immersed myself in their day-to-day activities as a Sport Management Intern. I emphasized creating a trusting and open relationship with all stakeholders. I relied on direct observation and discussions with key actors to gather data that is grounded in their perspectives and experiences.

I was aware that my personal experiences and beliefs could influence the analysis of organizational development factors in the Norwegian Teqball Federation. This may stem from the identity of Teqball and my national origin, which may create patriotic feelings towards this sport. Therefore, I focused to maintain objectivity and limit my biases by gathering and analysing data from multiple sources, and triangulating the findings to ensure their validity. This helped me to ensure the accuracy and reliability of my data.

By utilizing these approaches and acknowledging my subjective perspective and take steps to minimize any potential biases, I was able to conduct a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of my participant observation data and gain valuable insights into the organizational development aspects of non-profit sport organizations through the lens of the Norwegian Teqball Federation.

4.8 Research ethics

The Board of the Norwegian Teqball Federation was informed, already at the beginning of the initial meetings, about the aim of my internship. They were aware of my two roles as an intern and as an active participant observer. They involved me in all of their activities from the start providing me with all of the important information. However, their names are not used in this thesis in order to preserve anonymity. In regards to expert interviews, an NSD approval was not necessary for this research. The reasoning is that the interviews have not been on data collection, but on discussing the topic to formulate the basis direction for the research and the research questions. All agreed to be mentioned in the thesis because of the input they provided towards the thesis development (Sikt n.d.).

4.9 Validity, and reliability

Validity and reliability are crucial components of research. Paying close attention to these two factors can mean the distinction between excellent and poor research, and can go a long way in ensuring that fellow scientists accept the findings as trustworthy and credible. In qualitative research, this is even more important, because the researcher's personal opinions can easily influence the interpretation of data (Brink 1993).

Validity

Validity can be defined as a concept that refers to the degree to which the research findings are accurate and truthful (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, 32). In other words, a study is considered valid if it accurately demonstrates what exists in reality (Brink 1993). Thus, it is essential to use expert interviews and observations, because it will create more accurate and valid findings. To ensure this, triangulation was implemented in this research by cross-checking the observations with expert interviews and theories. This resulted in an increased validity of the research (Brink 1993).

<u>Reliability</u>

Reliability refers to

> "…the ability of a research method to yield consistently the same results over repeated testing periods. In other words, it requires that a researcher using the same or comparable methods obtained the same or comparable results every time he uses the methods on the same or comparable subjects." (Brink 1993, 35)

To ensure reliability, Creswell (2009) and Yin (2009) suggest documenting each step of the research process and using other reliability procedures such as checking transcripts, and writing category definitions and comparing them with the collected data. These suggestions were followed throughout this research as it was earlier stated in this chapter.

5.0 <u>Findings</u>

In this chapter, I present the results of my research on the Norwegian Teqball Federation with a focus on organizational development factors. The research involved expert interviews and a three months participant observation. The results highlighted some of the challenges that non-profit sport organizations (NPOs) are facing while managing their operations and achieving their goals.

5.1 Expert interviews

Interview with Milorad Sutulovic, Teqball Montenegro:

Teqball Montenegro was founded in August 2020 and was quickly recognized by the International Teqball Federation (FITEQ). With this recognition, FITEQ sent twenty-one Teqball tables free of charge to the federation. As soon as these arrived, they started to organize activities, starting with the training of coaches and referees. The aim was to create the necessary conditions for the development of the sport within a year.

To achieve this goal, the federation sought advice from other federations that were a lot ahead of Teqball Montenegro in the development phases of this sport in their respective countries. Based on these recommendations, they identified the need to recruit footballers, referees, and coaches from football organizations (clubs).

From the perspective of establishing a strong foundation of teqball, they were in a good position. Fortunately, the federation had good relations with the Ministry of Sport, the National Olympic Committee, and the Paralympic Committee, which provided the Teqball Federation with quick recognition and support. They also had a great level of experience in sport development themselves, because their organization developed 3x3 basketball in Montenegro. They started the 3x3 organization in 2017, and then, because of the popularity of the sport, they were able to immediately organize a tournament that had more than twenty-four teams. With Teqball, the initial obstacles were the lack of Teqball tables, and that no one had ever played it in Montenegro. To solve this problem, the Federation has placed tables in public places such as stadiums, sports centers, and recreational zones throughout the country. In the first year, twenty-eight tables were installed, and fifty more are planned for next year.

Teqball Montenegro has also partnered with the Football Federation of Montenegro to promote its activities on social media and their website. The Football Federation helped to target the

right audience and provided a platform to promote the activities of the Teqball Federation. The Teqball Federation organized promotions for each table that were put out, including presentations and media coverage. Local football clubs also sent their members to try Teqball, which helped to promote the sport to a wider audience.

Milorad Sutulovic explained that their success with Teqball was not only due to their relationships with the top executives of the umbrella organizations but also because they had funds from other activities in their company that they invested in the project. This financial investment was key in supporting the costs associated with promoting Teqball, practicing, and putting out the tables. They also actively sought partners from both the public and private sectors and applied for public tenders such as the ongoing Erasmus+ capacity building in sport. Although finding partners was initially challenging, their portfolio of six events, 28 hosted tables, and national team participation in international competitions made it easier to secure sponsors.

Milorad Sutulovic pointed out that he had to devote a lot of time to Teqball, which was a challenge, especially in the early stages, while doing it alongside a full-time job. He also admits that it is difficult to ask someone to leave a secure job for Teqball. However, he took the risk and left his job a few months ago to focus solely on Teqball. He acknowledges that his approach may not be right for everyone and stresses the need for focus and commitment at an early stage of a project like this. He reflects on the challenge of being asked to leave a regular job for Teqball and notes that he was lucky to be able to do so. Sutulovic highlights his financial investment in the sport, which aims to grow the project both inside and outside Montenegro. This has included initiatives such as the creation of the Adriatic Teqball League, the distribution of Teqball equipment, and the acquisition of the rights to be one of the host cities of the European Teqball Tour. It acknowledges that these endeavors involve financial risk, but believes that there is considerable potential for the growth of the sport in the long term.

Interview with Péter Veres, Hungarian Teqball Federation:

The National Teqball Federation was founded in June 2020 with eleven clubs members. The federation was legally established with the agreement of the required number of associations. The first inaugural general assembly took place in July 2020, at which the Board was elected. The association was initially called the National Teqball Federation, the Hungarian adjective was added later.

According to Veres, the federation first started to develop regulations, financial rules, disciplinary rules, transfer rules, competition rules, health rules, doping rules, and communication strategies. The primary objective of the federation was to create a competition system called National Championships, to which only the national federation was entitled. The federation had only six months to create these rules, which were done with the help of the human resources of the Phoenix Teqball Academy, as the federation only had part-time employees.

The federation has faced significant challenges during its formation and early stages. According to Péter Veres, different clubs operated in different ways and the federation needed to create a framework that brought them all under one umbrella. The federation had to establish a hierarchical system among the member associations of the Hungarian Teqball Federation, which accepted the support provided by the federation while respecting the guidelines set. One of the biggest difficulties was the workload of the staff, which was not good for Teqball as without full-time staff it was challenging to take responsibility or hold anyone accountable.

Networking with other organizations, clubs, and government bodies has been essential to the development of the federation. Through these relationships, opportunities have continued to open up. The Hungarian National Teqball Federation has initiated cooperation with non-profit organizations, government agencies, and for-profit companies. The association has also started a partnership with a Hungarian sports equipment company. Such partnerships have helped the association to move forward on its chosen path.

Another challenge was to secure adequate financial resources. The federation initially relied heavily on the support of the Phoenix Teqball Academy Sports Association. Although this allowed the federation to get off the ground, it was a challenge in terms of financial independence and long-term sustainability. The development of the sport was supported by a start-up fund provided by the first President of the federation which aimed to recruit full-time staff and cover operating costs. The federation also applied for state support for talent development programs in emerging sports, which could be used to pay coaches, rent premises and equip junior athletes. The federation's member associations also pay annual membership fees to support the federation's activities. However, the association has made significant progress in promoting and developing the sport of teqball in Hungary. It has successfully established a tournament system and worked to expand its membership base. The association has also secured additional financial resources through sponsorships and other partnerships. To

ensure that all clubs and players have access to the sport, the HNTF aims to keep membership fees and licensing costs affordable. The federation has involved seven to eight clubs across the country to bring the sport to as many cities as possible and supports organizers by providing professional supervision, referees, and tournament regulations.

The HNTF has taken several important steps to develop and promote teqball in Hungary. The Federation has worked with British Telecommunication as a competition naming sponsor who also produced marketing materials to promote the sport. Competition licenses and medical certificates were also introduced for players to ensure their safety during matches.

Veres stressed the importance of faith and commitment in the beginning, as establishing a new organization can be very difficult. In addition, to build relationships and move forward, the leader must have a good network of contacts, including those with diplomatic skills and commitment to the sport. He also stressed the importance of legal and financial knowledge, as it is necessary to understand how to plan and finance different initiatives. He noted that innovation and openness are particularly important for a modern leader in a new initiative like Teqball, as the sport is still finding its way and has often had to adapt.

In response to a question on advice for a new Teqball federation, he suggested that a well-structured team with a variety of skills should be created. This includes people with skills in marketing, competitions, social media, and finance. Veres emphasized the importance of building a team of professionals who can be counted on, as competent people are needed in leadership positions. Starting a new federation as a second job can be challenging, but having a sufficient number of people on the Board is crucial for establishing a thriving organization.

5.2 Participant observation

During the first two weeks of January, the Norwegian Teqball Federation suffered a major setback as a sponsorship deal with a big company collapsed, this resulted in no financial background to execute their main plans, such as hosting a national event. However, the federation regrouped and approached the teqball team in Oslo for a promotional event. The connection was that this team has their training in a popular arena for cage football. It is noteworthy that the owner of this arena was the former President (editor: now a Board member) of the Federation. Unfortunately, due to conflicts with the players' upcoming qualifying games in Madrid, the planned event had to be cancelled, leaving Board members including myself to look for new opportunities.

During this time, I took the initiative to discuss with the President the options for moving forward, which resulted in two ideas. The federation could approach local high schools and football clubs to offer them free Teqball tables as part of a promotional event to raise awareness of Teqball in the region and target young people to find the next generation of players. Alternatively, The President, who has many contacts in the area, could offer Teqball tables to football clubs and organize a promotional event around them. For both ideas, the federation could offer free tables because FITEQ gave twenty-one free tables for reasons like this.

It was decided that one-time payment sponsors should be sought for the tables that were to be distributed at these events. Companies could pay NOK 4,000 to have their logos featured on the tables. The money raised from the sponsorship would be directed towards a database system project, which could provide different training videos for existing and future clubs and players. Additionally, the system could be used to keep track of the number of registered players in Norway and their respective clubs. Furthermore, it could be used to schedule events and programs.

The implementation of these ideas started on the third week of January when together with the President, we created agreements with the local high school, primary school, and several football teams to offer them free Teqball tables with a promotional event around it. After the agreements with the hosts, we started looking for sponsors who would be interested in a one-off payment deal that would result in their logo being printed on the table. We visited the potential sponsors at their premises to present our goals and ideas on the events, and to show them what value could they earn by becoming a sponsor. After presenting the proposed plans and initiatives we signed a sponsorship contract with one local company on the 16th of January which was followed by a few others.

The day after, on the 17th, the federation received a notification from FITEQ about the problem of participation in the European Games. In August 2022, the NIF informed FITEQ that if the Norwegian Teqball Federation is not a member of their umbrella organization, we could not send players to the European Games. The delay of nearly six months in communicating this crucial information has forced the Norwegian Teqball Federation to face another challenge. As a result, the Board requested a comprehensive explanation from NIF in order to provide teqball players with a comprehensive explanation.

On the 20th of January Trønder-Avisa, a local newspaper made an interview with two players from Steinkjer.

Following the decision of NIF regards participation at the European Games, the Board reassessed its options over the course of several days to try to find a solution to this problem. Later that week, after several briefings with The President, I decided to develop a communication plan targeting both internal and external stakeholders.

On February 2, after emails clarifying NIF's decision, they informed us about a teqball player who had initiated a discussion with them about their decision regards participation at the European Games. This action happened without the Norwegian Federation knowing about it. The federation's reaction to this was professional, the President discussed these actions with the player in question. Additionally, to the problem of participation in the European Games Board contacted the Norwegian Football Federation to inquire about a possible entry option. They instructed us to send them an email outlining our plans and ideas. The federation entrusted me to create an email that includes all of the most important information about the Teqball Federation. If they were interested in forming an IOR with Teqball, it could bring NIF membership closer, which would allow players to participate in the European Games.

To tackle the occurred issues, on the 6th and 7th of February, I upgraded the communications plan. I included the introduction of regular meetings and the election of player representatives at each Teqball club to serve as spokespeople for their club. These changes were seen as essential aspects of any successful organization but had previously been absent within this federation.

Moving forward, through a contact of a teqball player who knew their administrative advisor, the Norwegian Table Tennis Federation offered us the opportunity to discuss the possibility to become a member of their federation. The President of the NTF had already held initial discussions with them in 2021 and they were interested in Teqball. However, at that time the Teqball Federation thought that they could develop the sport and become part of the NIF without the help of the Table Tennis Federation. After initial discussions, I was involved in the preparation of the application form in which one of the players from Oslo played a prominent role. We did not have to wait long, on the 14th of February, we received a reply from the Norwegian Table Tennis Federation which stated that they are still interested and will decide on our application at the next Board meeting. This potential Inter-organizational relationship could bring Teqball closer to NIF membership, which would allow players to participate in the European Games.

Two days later I had a meeting with the owner of the official distributor company of Teqball products in Norway. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the relationship between the company and the Norwegian Teqball Federation and the possibility of becoming a main sponsor for the federation in the future. It was suggested that registered clubs and players should receive a 15-20% discount and that an interactive map showing all the public teqball tables available in Norway should be added to the website of both the federation and the distributor company.

The following day we made a promotional event with the President at Steinkjer High School, where two of the local players are students. One of them was able to join with some of his classmates, so we ended up with a decent number of students participating. They had a great time and we recorded some clips to use on our social media pages. The school promised a new date for a second promotional event linked to an open-day event.

Between the 19th and 20th of February, I finalized the communication plan, which was reviewed and approved by the Board members. Later that day I sent it to all interested parties, including the players.

On the 21st of February, I interviewed the CEO of Teqball Montenegro, which provided insights on how to approach important factors in the development phase, such as working with other organizations, building employee capacity, creating awareness, building community, and securing funding. Based on the interview with Teqball Montenegro, over the course of a few days, I explored possible funding opportunities for sports development. I presented these to the Board, who agreed on the usefulness of these options, but we had to recognize that more hours were needed to implement such options, which the Federation did not have the capacity to do at the time.

Between the 27th of February and the 1st of March, internal conflicts between players and the governing sporting federation reached a threshold. As a result, I submitted a proposal to the federation for a major meeting with all parties involved. The primary aim of the meeting was to resolve personal conflicts and to start a joint effort to develop the sport. The players initially expressed their wish to have a private meeting with me. So, my task was to bridge this gap and bring them together with the federation, which initially seemed a big challenge. After a discussion with the President, and the owner of the distributor company, we agreed that giving the players the role of club development representatives could be an effective strategy.

Later that week, on the 3rd of March, a promotional event was held at a primary school in Steinkjer. This generated great interest among the students, who enthusiastically participated in the sport.

Later that same day an online meeting took place between me and some of the players. They said that they had no opportunity to express their opinions and concerns within the federation. They also reported that they felt undervalued and unsupported by the federation, which led to a significant trust issue. Another issue was a Norwegian championship planned to be held in Steinkjer, however, the federation did not communicate the plans sufficiently with the players, which resulted in criticism from the players. In addition, the dates of the tournament were changed several times and finally cancelled a week before the event. Although the Oslo players offered to help, the federation rejected their offer. Players reported that their efforts, such as taking a big part in the application to the Norwegian Table Tennis Federation were not sufficiently appreciated by the federation. Also, the players were promised sponsorships but, in many cases, these promises were not fulfilled. Players primarily engaged in one-on-one dialogue with The President, which has resulted in misunderstandings and misinformation in the past. I have compiled an agenda that includes both the content of the current meeting and previous discussions and observations from my participation in the association.

The following week, on the 6th of March, the President was briefed on the agenda for the upcoming meeting and expressed uncertainty about certain aspects, such as the cancellation of the event and the decision not to allow players from Oslo to help. He acknowledged the possibility of a mistake.

> The President: *"Look, I cannot remember exactly what happened back then, but I might have made a mistake."*

> The President: *"I was working a lot for this federation and for the players. We are trying as much as possible, but our resources* (editor: both financial and working capacity) *are highly limited."*

He acknowledged that his main responsibilities as a full-time employee of the SSA and coach of the football team made it challenging for him to devote time to this effort without financial compensation.

> The President: *See, it is also not good. We are doing this just for "fun",* (editor: voluntarily) *thus we do not have enough time to fix everything for this sport."*

In the following days, critical issues were reviewed and the President became more receptive to their importance. Given the concerns raised by players about inadequate communication and broken promises, it is important that the federation addresses these issues and works to build trust with players. The agenda for the upcoming meeting should prioritize these concerns and seek solutions that benefit both the federation and the players.

Later that week, on the 9th of March, a meeting took place between the federation's management and the players. The meeting aimed to solve the personal and trust issues and to develop common goals and a cooperative environment. The meeting started with a discussion of future goals and everyone agreed that finding additional players and clubs was key. The players expressed their desire to build a community around the sport and to attract sponsors to support the association. The Board also stressed the importance of improving and developing the sport and creating a good environment for players. Their efforts to organize local events and to promote the sport to as many people as possible were described.

The meeting then turned to current issues. The Board went through personal changes that were not communicated to the players properly. The former President has been removed from the Board registration, but the details of the removal were unclear, as it was not initiated by the federation nor by the person himself. However, due to his other duties, he was largely absent from the federation's work and was difficult to reach, which continued to hinder decision-making. As a result, the federation believed that this person is currently not fulfilling his role. However, his close relationship with the Oslo players has caused some tension.

Players have expressed concern about the lack of communication and some have mentioned that they only hear about things from each other and not from the federation which leads to conflicting information. They stressed the need for better communication and a common room so that everyone is on the same page.

> Player 1: *"...Communication is probably the most important thing for us now. The President you are only talking to one of us at a time. We do not have a shared room. And some people are hearing this and some people are hearing that. And there is no consistency in what we hear. So, the communication level should be set higher."*

> The President: *" Yes, I totally agree. We have to create a good environment. We made mistakes in the past that we want to solve now."*

The President, who represented the Board, acknowledged the problem of low-level communication and that they should have informed the players about decisions that affect the athletes. They discussed their past mistakes and quarrels. The players brought up that they did not trust the federation's leadership and expressed frustration at the inconsistency of information they had received. The President asked what they expected from the federation and the discussion continued.

After discussing trust issues, the conversation turned to upcoming events and competitions. Players have expressed concerns about the organization and communication of tournaments, particularly scheduling, and logistics. They emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the dates, times, and locations of competitions in advance to avoid misunderstandings or last-minute changes.

Agreement on a future role as a Club Development Representative. All acknowledged this as an ideal suggestion, but right now no one wants to take this role because of other duties.

> The President: *"I need more hands because I do not have enough time to go out all the time to do events outside Trøndelag. So, that is also a reason why we should have a good relationship (to be able to cooperate)."*

The President started discussing the European Games. He says that the players are the main focus now. The priority is to solve the participation issues with the help of the Table Tennis Federation.

> The President:*" It is a whole new level, and I am not sure I am ready for it because it is a lot of policy, regulation, and law. But I can see it would be useful to learn from them. I see a lot of similarities in the way the two sports are structured. For example, the competitions, the point systems…"*

The President assured the players that the federation is actively working to improve its communication and organization. He encouraged players to provide feedback and suggestions to improve the tournaments.

A day after the meeting between the players and the Board, I had a short assessment meeting with the President, who expressed his satisfaction with the result. He appreciated my initiative in organizing the meeting and believed that it could have a positive impact on the development of the sport.

On the 17th of March, the last day of my internship, in a final meeting with the President he assured me of his commitment to continue the efforts generated during my internship, such as focusing on communication, finding more sponsors, and developing internal rules and regulations with player involvement, has demonstrated his leadership and commitment to the development of the federation. In addition, his excitement about the potential of the IOR and his pledge to continue to organize promotional events showed his willingness to innovate and promote the sport of Teqball in Norway.

In the following months, I stayed in connection with the President of the NTF. They continued to seek opportunities for promotion and development. Players from Oslo and Steinkjer secured interviews with two major television channels in Norway. These interviews were broadcasted on television which provided a platform to discuss the goals and initiatives of the sport, raising awareness of Teqball among a wide audience.

Furthermore, the federation established a partnership with the Norway Cup, one of the largest youth football tournaments in the world. Through this agreement, the federation will aim to promote Teqball to many young footballers and their families. This collaboration going to provide the federation with an excellent opportunity to showcase the sport and attract new participants.

6.0 <u>Analysis & Discussion</u>

In this chapter, I examine the main organizational development factors that I came across during my participant observation at the Norwegian Teqball Federation and the expert interviews. These factors are leadership, communication, availability of human resources, availability of financial resources, regulatory systems, and marketing and promotion. Although I am aware that these are frequently interlinked and there is likely to be overlap in the analysis as well, I have chosen to examine them as separate factors to get a comprehensive picture of the impact of each factor on organizational development. By doing so, I aim to gain insight into the specific challenges and opportunities that each factor presents and to identify possible strategies for addressing them.

Based on insights from expert interviews and the data collected from participant observation, I was able to formulate a conceptual framework for organizational development with the inclusion of inter-organizational relationship (IOR) as a potential catalyst tool to facilitate the enhancement of the six main factors.

Figure 6 Conceptual framework of organizational development

In the following, an analysis will be conducted of the key points of the conceptual framework. This will be supported by the insights gained from the expert interviews and the collected data from the participant observation at the Norwegian Teqball Federation. To complement and

reinforce these findings, relevant theories and concepts outlined in the theoretical background and literature review sections will also be incorporated.

6.1 Leadership Competencies in Non-Profit Sport Organizations

Megheirkouni (2017, 167) came up with two important questions which are:

1. What are the competencies used by sport leaders in non-profit organizations?
2. Why are they adopted?

Based on the insights from the expert interviews and the data from the participant observation at the Norwegian Teqball Federation, I found the following leadership skills to be of particular importance. One of the most influential leadership skills is risk-taking and commitment to the project. In the interview I had with Milorad Sutulovic, the CEO of Teqball Montenegro, he stressed the importance of commitment and focus for a leader in a new project. He took the risk of leaving his secure job to focus solely on Teqball, which demonstrates the importance of commitment to the project. It shows that leaders must be capable of taking risks and making sacrifices to achieve their goals. They also have to be committed to the project and willing to put in the time and effort necessary to make it a success.

> Milorad Sutulovic: *"You know, I was balancing in the first six months and then I said, okay, I'm going to risk it, and I'm going all in, you know, put all my time in, in this project. So, as I said, it's hard to ask somebody to do everything and focus on Teqball. It's a risk, you know. When someone has a regular job with a regular payment it's pretty hard to just leave that."*

> Milorad Sutulovic: *"I figured, in this process, especially in the beginning, you have to be devoted to, you know, and focused on, for the whole day. You know, you cannot really do it like when I first started with Teqball, I had another job, and then I did Teqball as well. But I left that job like six months ago, and now I'm solely focused on Teqball."*

Another important aspect of leading a new federation that I was able to interpret is the ability to adapt to a constantly changing environment. Péter Veres, the former general secretary of the Hungarian National Teqball Federation, stressed the importance of having a good network of contacts, diplomatic skills, and financial knowledge. He also underlined the importance of being open and innovative to adapt to a shifting environment. The importance of such competencies is in line with (Scott 2014), who cites critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, social skills, and knowledge as necessary skills to achieve organizational

goals. Other frameworks proposed in the sport management literature include the seven meta-competencies presented by Horch and Schütte (2003), such as accounting, finance, marketing, and resource management. Managers need to be able to identify opportunities and challenges in the environment and adapt their strategies accordingly. These findings can be an addition to the other competencies considered important by Storey (2016) such as inspiring followers, investing in development, and empowering others. The ability to influence followers' behaviour is also a fundamental aspect of the social interaction process of leadership, as emphasized by Yukl (2013).

> Péter Veres: "…*to be able to adapt easily… I think it is very important to be innovative. I think I have learned a lot about how to adapt. Obviously, it is a new initiative, it is a sport that is very much in search of its own way, it had to change direction a lot, and it had to adapt a lot. Partly a bit too much, so it is very important to be innovative, to be open-minded, and we have to be able to adapt to the problems of the moment.*"

The background and expertise of the Board members at the Norwegian Teqball Federation are satisfactory from the perspective of leadership competencies. The President of the Norwegian Teqball Federation has experience in the fitness and coaching field. The two other Board members' experience in banking and alternative ball sport provides the organization with a comprehensive set of skills that can help with the complexities of managing finances, partnerships, and sponsorships, as well as developing the sport.

Participant observation at the Norwegian Teqball Federation highlighted trust and commitment between the organization leaders and its players as a driving factor for organizational development. This can be directed toward the organizational culture, which is constituted by the unit's values, beliefs, norms, and expectations. It directs the behaviour of the unit's members and only exists when members exhibit a satisfactory level of agreement (Glisson and James 2002). The federation has mandated me to participate in projects that include key information about the Teqball Federation. The federation has also re-evaluated its options after repeated setbacks to find a solution to the problem of participation in the European Games. This demonstrates commitment and hierarchy culture values to coordinate, integrate, and control processes to ensure consistent, efficient, and timely delivery (Hartnell and Walumbwa 2011, 228).

6.2 The Importance of Effective Internal Communication

During my participant observation, I encountered several obstacles which were mainly due to inadequate communication. Thus, effective internal communication should be essential for the success and growth of any organization, and the Norwegian Teqball Federation is no exception. The information I gathered from the three months internship I spent at the federation underlines the need for a transparent environment where stakeholders have the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns. My participant observation revealed that there were significant gaps in internal communication between the athletes and the management of the federation. This caused frustration and confusion among players and Board members. It is possible to draw a line with Men (2014) statement on the quality of organization and employee relations. If we consider athletes as employees their relation with the federation is a driving factor in developing organizational performance, goal orientation, and protecting organizational reputation and image. This underlines Rhee (2004)'s conclusion which states that employees who have a good relationship with their organization can foster positive relations with the external public of the institution.

Players at the Norwegian Teqball Federation felt that they did not have a proper channel to express their opinions and concerns within the federation and that important decisions were taken without their input or knowledge. It also became an issue that the players mainly engaged in one-on-one dialogue with the President, which led to misunderstandings and misinformation. The lack of a common space and consistent communication resulted in players receiving conflicting information from each other and not clear, straightforward ones from the federation. The players' concerns underline the need for higher levels of communication and a common space to get everyone on the same page. This analysis highlights the importance of creating an open and collaborative environment where everyone has the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns which was also highlighted by Berger (2008). He also stated that internal communication "helps individuals and groups to coordinate activities to achieve goals, and it is vital in socialization, decision-making, problem-solving, and change-management processes" (Berger 2008, 2)

The significance of effective internal communication was made apparent during a meeting between the federation's management and players. This initiative was also supported by Cameron and McCollum (1993) who said two-way communication channels, like team meetings, develops employee-management relationships The discussion, that I facilitated,

focused on a lack of clear communication about personnel changes within the Board of directors, which caused players to express concerns about the lack of transparency. The players emphasized the need for better communication and a shared space to encourage open collaboration. This emphasized the importance of establishing a transparent and inclusive environment that fosters discussions and trust. This highlighted the importance of the symmetrical communication style. In an internal communication setting, it is described as the communication and practice that focuses on "trust, credibility, openness, relationships, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, feedback, adequacy of information, employee-centered style, tolerance for disagreement, and negotiation" (J.E. Grunig 1992; J.-N. Kim and Rhee 2011).

> *Player 1: "…Communication is probably the most important thing for us now. You* (editor: refers to the President) *are only talking to one of us at a time. We do not have a shared room. And some people are hearing this and some people are hearing that. And there is no consistency in what we hear. So, the communication level should be set more higher."*

The comment made by the player shed light on the issue with the centralized organizational system and authoritarian culture, where workers have limited opportunities to share their thoughts and inputs to the decision makers (J.E. Grunig and Dozier 2003; J.E. Grunig 1992)

The importance of clear communication was also reflected in players' concerns about tournament organization and communication, particularly with regard to scheduling and logistics. They stressed the need for clear communication of tournament dates, times, and venues in advance to avoid misunderstandings or last-minute changes. This shows that effective internal communication is also essential to organize successful events and to maintain a positive relationship with stakeholders.

In summary, the participant observation data highlights the importance of effective internal communication for the success and growth of the Norwegian Teqball Association. Lack of effective communication has led to conflicts, misunderstandings, and misinformation among stakeholders. Creating a transparent and collaborative environment, providing a common space for stakeholders to express their opinions and concerns, and clearly communicating information about events and changes are essential to achieving effective internal communication.

6.3 Regulatory Framework and Athlete Involvement for Good Governance

As Yeh and Taylor (2008) also stated, governance is a vital part of effective management within organizations. The Hungarian Teqball Federation has faced the challenge of creating a regulatory framework that brings the different clubs under one umbrella. These regulations helped to create a unified system for all member clubs, which facilitated the management of the federation's operations. It was also necessary to establish a hierarchical system between member federations to ensure that the guidelines set by the federation were respected.

> Péter Veres: "...*We created different sets of rules, financial rules, disciplinary rules, transfer rules, competition rules, health rules, doping rules, communication strategies, etc. So basically, the first big step was to create these regulations...*"

The importance of this regulatory system becomes even more evident when looking at the data of participant observations. When the NIF informed FITEQ that players and federations cannot participate in the European Games if they are not members of their umbrella organization. The Norwegian Teqball Federation was not a member of the NIF and therefore its players will not be allowed to participate in the European Games in the summer of 2023. This case highlights the importance for a newly formed sports federation to become familiar with its country's NOC regulatory system, thereby ensuring that its member federation follows the same guidelines as its country's sport governing body.

Nevertheless, one of the teqball players initiated a meeting with the NIF without the knowledge and agreement of the Norwegian Federation. Such cases can cause confusion and conflict and an internal regulatory system is needed to manage such situations. As Péter Veres also stated:

> "...*I think the biggest difficulty, not difficulty, but rather a challenge, was to get these people into the same framework, so that they were not so independent, with different* rules. *Because some clubs said I do things this way, and the other club said okay, but I do things that way. So, we had to create a framework, which we tried to adhere to very strictly at the beginning so that they could not deviate from it. Obviously creating a hierarchical system between the member associations of the Hungarian National Teqball Federation was also part of this process.*"

Besides avoiding conflicts, a regulatory system can also ensure to preserve the integrity of the sport and involve more stakeholders, such as athletes in the decision-making processes. This is in line with Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak (2010) findings that state management of sport organizations are started to realize the need of involving stakeholders in the development of policymaking. For these reasons, many organizations have implemented more athlete-centered actions to create a higher level of athlete involvement

The approach of involving athletes to increase good organizational governance was mentioned by Péter Veres. He stated that in the beginning, his colleagues were two of the most successful players in Hungary. This shows a concept of the importance of player empowerment. This can be connected to AthletesCAN (2004, 17) which states that to prioritize athlete interests, their representation in organizational decision-making is essential. According to AthletesCAN, the athletes must take part in policy and practice development and decision-making processes. However, it also carries some issues, for example, it is impractical to involve every interested actor in policy debates (Habermass 1996; Parkinson 2006). To tackle this challenge, representatives should be elected who can speak on behalf of other stakeholders who are not involved in the discussion process. Legitimate representation also involves that representatives are empowered and held to account by stakeholders (Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak 2010). This was also discussed internally at the Norwegian Teqball Federation. Both the athletes and the Board realized the importance to involve the players to the processes more than before to ensure that the decisions are also in line with the athletes' expectations. This would also increase democratization. As Grigaliūnaitė and Eimontas (2018) also stated if an institution is aiming for good governance, promoting democracy should be their primal and most focal step for creating valuable organizational principles.

6.4 Challenges of workforce management in non-profit sports organizations.

As Bhati and Manimala (2011) and Jones (2015) described, next to government regulations and generating revenue, one of the major challenges at non-profit organizations is to attract and retain employees. In line with this, the expert interviews and participant observations highlighted the workforce challenges faced by non-profit sports organizations. In particular, in terms of operating with part-time staff, who often do not even get paid for their work. This issue was highlighted by the findings of Sanders and McClellan (2014) which states that NPOs are

legally prohibited from distributing revenues or profits to directors or shareholders. Although NPOs can generate revenue, the surplus generated is typically used to achieve or to further the organization's goals, rather than being distributed as a payment to members or individuals within the organization (Kaine and Green 2013).

The expert interviews with Milorad Sutulovic and Péter Veres underlined the difficulty of finding committed individuals willing to devote significant time and effort to building a successful organization, especially given the limited resources and capacity of such organizations. One of the main challenges highlighted by Péter Veres was the workload of part-time employees, which made it difficult to take responsibility or hold anyone accountable. To solve this problem, he suggested creating a well-structured team with different skills, including marketing, competitions, social media, and finance. Veres pointed out that this is a very difficult challenge for a newly formed organization at first. However, it would allow for more efficient and effective use of resources and ensure that the organization has the expertise and leadership to succeed. This is an essential aspect because the influence of individual workers on the organization's performance usually outweighs that of the whole organization. Thus, employees are often regarded as one of the most important assets of the organization (McDowell et al. 2018; Ali, Lei, and Wei 2018; Mesch 2010).

> Milorad Sutolovic: "*Just imagine if you are having a full-time job, with a normal salary at some other federation, and I was saying this: 'Hey, quit your safe job for Teqball'… it's hard to tell this to someone, you know, I cannot really tell you 'go quit your job'. I was lucky that I can go six months without payment. Because I do not have a payment right now as a president of the federation, but it is an investment from my side and I believe we can grow this enough so I can have a paid job.*"

> Péter Veres*: "I, as one of the leaders* (editor: now former leader) *of the organization, thought then and still think now that one of the biggest difficulties is the employees' working percentage. I think it is not very good for Teqball when you do not have full-time staff in a federation, because it is terribly difficult to take responsibility for anything or hold anyone accountable…The momentum is good, it lasts in the beginning, but obviously, it is not going to work for the rest of your life. So, it was obviously a very big difficulty that everybody saw it as a second job."*

Both quotes from interviews shed light on employee engagement and commitment. How can workers maintain their drive towards being focused and committed to a project when for

example they have more secured jobs? To enhance engagement at the individual level, Becker et al. (1996) suggest that individuals should be motivated in terms of their supervisor's goals and values through methods such as team building and socialization. Due to influence, employee engagement is a particularly important link in the mission of non-profit organizations, which often has at its core the attraction and retention of employees. Proper implementation of the NPO's mission can engage employees and keep them committed to fulfilling the organization's purpose (Brown and Yoshioka 2003).

My participant observation at the Norwegian Teqball Federation also highlighted these challenges. And that they are particularly difficult for organizations where members are volunteers and do not have the capacity to devote significant hours to the organization. This was highlighted by the President of the Norwegian Teqball Federation, who noted that he would require more people to organize events because he did not have enough time himself.

> The President: *"I need more hands because I do not have enough time to go out all the time to do events outside Trøndelag. So, that is also a reason why we should have a good relationship* (the author: with the players, to be able to cooperate)*."*

In connection with his words and my experiences from the participant observation, it becomes clear that non-profit organizations often struggle with employee shortages. To tackle this issue the development of a vision, mission statement, and core values can guide the achievement of the organization's goals (Hussain et al. 2018; Mara 2000). This is essential, because the chance of an employee accepting a job and remaining with an organization for an extended period of time may increase if the values of the organization are similar to the individual's (Slatten et al. 2021)

6.5 Promotion strategies for increasing awareness and participation

In the case of the Egyptian national handball team's participation in the World Cup in France, 67% of Egyptian respondents were unaware of the team's participation, but most of them were enthusiastic about the Egyptian national football team when the Egyptian national football team played in Gabon at the African Nations Cup. This also shows that less known sports are challenged to promote their activities to a wider audience. It was suggested that various elements, such as sports media, sports advertising, star athletes, sports sponsorship, and the performance of national teams can attract audiences towards less popular sports (Sedky,

Kortam, and AbouAish 2020) This is also the case with Teqball, which is a relatively new sport that is becoming increasingly popular in different countries. In Montenegro, for example, the Teqball Federation has faced this problem, as no one had ever heard about or played the sport in the country. To overcome this challenge, the federation has worked with the Football Federation of Montenegro, who offered its help to promote teqball on their social media sites. Through this, the sport reached a wider audience. Sutulovic also pointed out the importance to install teqball tables in public places, stadiums, sports centers, and recreational zones throughout the country. Promotions and media coverage were organized for each table, and local football clubs sent their members to try Teqball, which helped to promote the sport more widely. The success of the initiative is evident, with twenty-eight tables being set up in the first year and the association plans to set up a further fifty next year. With these activities, they targeted to increase the interest, which supports Silvia (2006) views on individual interest. As it is shaped by a person's knowledge and values, or situational interest, triggered by external factors. It can be sustained by continued exposure to external factors, allowing individual interest to develop.

> Milorad Sutulovic: "*I always draw a parallel to 3x3 basketball. Because our organization developed that sport in our country as well in 2017. We started the 3x3, organization in 2017, and then immediately in June we organized a tournament that had more than 24 teams. You know, so what I want to say is almost everybody plays basketball... but with Teqball, nobody ever did it before…*"

Similarly, the Hungarian Teqball Federation has also made significant steps in the development and promotion of the sport. Seven or eight clubs have been involved in bringing the sport to more cities across the country. They also immersed the mass media in promoting the sports by working with British Telecommunication to produce marketing materials for the sport. The importance of media coverage has been widely acknowledged (D. Funk, Alexandris, and McDonald 2008) because the amount of media attention can affect the level of attention paid by individuals to that topic (A. Kim, Choi, and Kaplanidou 2015).

> Péter Veres: "*…those were very important, as well as being able to bring British Telecommunication into the National Championship as a supporting and naming sponsor and working with them to produce marketing materials. We appeared on…various YouTube channels. So, I think it was also an important thing that we had a multi on our side.*"

In Norway, efforts were mainly directed towards the local promotion of teqball. The federation approached local schools and football clubs to offer them free teqball tables as part of a promotional event. The aim was to raise the profile of teqball in the region. As well as targeting young people, with the hope to find the next generation of players. Promotional events were held in local secondary and primary schools, generating outstanding interest from students and children who were enthusiastic about participating in the sport. By offering free teqball tables to schools and clubs, the federation was essentially trying to accelerate the spread of teqball in the region and generate a buzz around the sport. This approach was particularly effective in targeting young people, who are often more receptive to trying new sports and activities. By involving some of the active players the characteristic of the star player can influence the young generation (Hoegele, L. Schmidt, and Torgler 2014). They can be used as endorsers to promote the products of sponsors and attract consumers (Tingchi Liu and Brock 2011). The Federation was also able to showcase the sport and its unique characteristics when organizing promotional events. In addition, by recording clips of events and sharing them on social media, the federation has been able to further promote the sport and attract the interest of a wider audience.

The Norwegian Teqball Federation also demonstrated resilience and adaptability in finding alternative ways to promote the sport. The ongoing efforts of the federation, including the interviews with NRK and TV2, as well as the partnership with Norway Cup which. The positive impact of advertising during sports events, like the Norway Cup, was also highlighted by Pyun and James (2011) who stated that a greater response can be expected towards the advertised product due to the sparkle around the event. These initiatives also indicate the NTF's commitment to expanding the reach and popularity of Teqball in Norway.

By introducing more people to the sport through the federation and existing players, the Norwegian teqball family aims to increase its player base, which could lead to more interest in the sport. The promotion of the sport to young people has been identified as a particularly important element as it can help to develop the next generation of teqball players.

6.6 The Importance of Financial Resources for the Growth and Development

Tuckman and Chang (1991) described NPOs as financially vulnerable if they are likely to reduce their services immediately in the event of a financial shock. This statement confirms the issue that I experienced during the three months I spent at the Norwegian Teqball Federation.

Additionally, also from the expert interviews, it becomes clear that funding is a fundamental aspect of sport development. This is particularly true for emerging sports such as teqball. The success of teqball as a sport, both in terms of its popularity and its development, is closely linked to the availability of adequate financial resources. This is evident from the experiences of various teqball organizations, including Teqball Montenegro, the Hungarian National Teqball Federation, and the Norwegian Teqball Association. This is also confirmed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) who introduced the theory of resource dependence. They aimed to examine how an organization's strategy, structure, and survival depend on its resources and its dependence on external institutions. They found that 'the ability to acquire and maintain resources' is central to organizational survival.

A key factor in the success of Teqball Montenegro has been the financial investment made by Milorad Sutulovic and his team. Sutulovic and his team recognized that the promotion of the sport of Teqball would require significant financial resources, so they invested funds from their company's other activities in the Teqball project. This investment was crucial in supporting the costs of promoting Teqball. Next to its positive side, that allows CEOs to freely allocate funds without strict reporting requirements or resource allocation mandates (Weisbrod 1998). Organizations that decide next to this approach need to rely more on the Board members to manage the uncertainty inherent in this revenue stream because of its fluctuating nature (Siciliano 1996). In addition, the team actively sought partners from both the public and private sectors and applied for public tenders to secure funding, such as the ongoing Erasmus+ sport-related capacity building. However, organizations have to be careful, because this could create a "subsidy trap" where organizations adapt to the requirements of public funding (Brooks 2000).

> Milorad Sutulovic: *"We had funds from, other activities in our companies that we invested in Teqball. I know that like many federations, many countries do not really have any funds that they can invest, but we could… This all sounds good, you know, free practices, promotion, table placement, but they all cost money. We had money to invest in this project. So that is really, really important."*

> Milorad Sutulovic: *"Really important to mention other than that, we are always trying to get partners both from the public and the private sector. We are always trying to look for public calls, you know, both on a national and international level. For example, there is Erasmus+ capacity building in the field of sport that is ongoing right now."*

Similarly, the Teqball Association in Hungary faced significant challenges in securing adequate financial resources for the association. They were able to hire full-time staff and cover operating costs through a grant from the start-up fund provided by their first president.

> Péter Veres: *"…One of the purposes of this was to have a full-time person to work with Teqball and its development. That was me from January 2021, and he gave me a start-up fund, which was basically enough for that particular year. And the goal was obviously to bring in donors, sponsors and go for public funding."*

Although the federation relied heavily on the support of the Phoenix Teqball Academy Sports Association to get off the ground, achieving financial independence and long-term sustainability was a challenge. To address this, the federation applied for government funding for talent development programs, which could be used to pay coaches, rent premises and equip junior athletes. The federation's member clubs also pay annual membership fees to support the federation's activities. The federation has also secured additional financial resources through sponsorships and other partnerships.

> Péter Veres: *"If you have to sum up, a very tiny slice of our income is the membership fees…. Obviously, we are trying to create pricing that it is affordable for our clubs so it does not discourage a player from starting his career because of the money. The larger part of our income, let say, 60 to 70 percent, comes from state subsidies, and then we try to solve the remaining one-third part, with the help of cooperative, supportive partners."*

My observation period at the Norwegian Teqball Federation also underlines the importance of funding for the growth and development of teqball as a sport. Due to an unsuccessful major sponsorship deal, the Norwegian Teqball Federation suffered a serious setback. At this time the resource-dependent role of Boards was also really important, discussing possibilities with them, which involves acquiring and maintaining resources, is particularly important for organizations struggling to access them (J.L. Johnson, Daily, and Ellstrand 1996). Empirical evidence shows that Board participation is positively related to organizational performance (William Frederick Crittenden 1983; Judge and Zeithaml 1992; Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolpin 1992; Provan 1980). To overcome this obstacle, the Board agreed to pursue one-time paid public sponsors for teqball tables that will be distributed at events. Interested companies could pay NOK 4,000 to have their logo displayed on the tables. This enabled us to sign sponsorship contracts with several local companies, which allowed us to continue with the planned events. The federation

has also looked into the possibility of the official Norwegian distributor of Teqball products becoming a main sponsor in the future. Finally, different financing options for sports development were examined, based on the interview with Teqball Montenegro. The committee acknowledged the usefulness of these options but recognized that they would require more hours to execute, which the federation did not currently have the capacity to do.

6.7 Exploring Inter-Organizational Relationships as a Catalyst for Organization Development

I have approached inter-organizational relations not as a factor, but as a means of supporting the six factors listed above. In this study, I examine the effectiveness of non-profit sport organizations, focusing on the impact of factors such as staffing complexity, leadership competencies, sport promotion, financial stability, internal communication, and regulations. In support of these factors, inter-organizational relationships as a catalyst tool will be discussed.

The swift environmental and economic changes have been forcing organizations to choose alternative approaches to conceptualizing their markets and ways of operating and to develop IORs as a solution strategy (Huxham and Macdonald 1992). IORs in sport is getting more spread, for instance, it forms an integral part of the new Canadian Sport Policy (Canadian Heritage 2002). The aim is to "strengthen and develop collaboration within governments, between governments, and between sectors to ensure the harmonized growth of the sport system and promote the overall benefits of sport" (Canadian Heritage 2002, 19) This approach has become an increasingly popular theme for the growth and success of organizations in the two Teqball Federation I interviewed. In addition, the data gathered from my participant observation shows that the Norwegian Teqball Federation repeatedly considered this possibility.

These relationships offered the Hungarian and Montenegrin Federation a number of benefits, including access to resources, knowledge, and expertise that helped their organizations to achieve their goals more effectively. Milorad Sutulovic explained that Teqball Montenegro's good relations with the Ministry of Sport, the National Olympic Committee, and the Paralympic Committee have provided them with quick recognition and support. Likewise, they have also partnered with the Football Association of Montenegro to help promote their activities on social media and their website. These partnerships have enabled Teqball to expand its reach and attract more players, fans, and sponsors which is described by Babiak (2003) as a desired outcome of a successful IOR.

> Milorad Sutulovic: *"We figured it's really important to have them as a partner* (editor: Football Association of Montenegro). *And then they were our first partner... It was super important for us because we have got their support. They promoted all of our activities through their social media to their website. They made their platform available for promoting of all of our activities and that meant a lot because they actually aimed at our target group."*

Veres highlighted the importance of building relationships and entering collaborations with other organizations, clubs, and government bodies in the development of the federation. Through these relationships, opportunities have continued to open up and the federation has initiated cooperation with non-profit organizations, government bodies, and for-profit companies. These relationships have helped Teqball not only to raise funds but also to build a positive reputation and credibility in the industry.

> Péter Veres: *". I think that being in contact with other organizations, clubs and so has been a fundamental point in our development and obviously opportunities have been constantly opened up through that…I think that this is very important. Obviously not just for the transformed service provided, but to really move the sport forward and move the organization forward on the path that we have set out. Without them, it would be terribly difficult. So, I cannot say anything else, it is very important."*

My participant observation at the Norwegian Teqball Federation also highlighted the potential for involvement in an IOR, first with the Norwegian Football Federation and then with the Norwegian Table Tennis Federation. The Board's main motivation for an IOR highlights one aspect of the six determinants of Oliver (1990) conceptual framework. This is the determinant of compliance with a legal or regulatory requirement. These potential IORs could bring Teqball closer to NIF membership, allowing players to participate in European Games and other major international tournaments.

Evidence from expert interviews and participant observations demonstrates the importance of effective IORs to the success of organizations. Therefore, it should be a priority for non-profit organizations to build and maintain strong relationships with other organizations, clubs, and government bodies.

While IORs can bring many benefits, they also present challenges. One of the biggest challenges is that a number of sports managers in the public and non-profit sectors are reluctant

to form an IOR with the private sector due to concerns over privatization and 'the profit over goals' approaches (Glover 1999; Frisby, Thibault, and Kikulis 2004; Smale and Reid 2002). Maintaining clear communication and coordination between partner organizations. Without effective communication, misunderstandings and conflicts can arise, leading to a breakdown in partnership. Huxham and Vangen (2000) discussed how organizations struggled to achieve a collaborative advantage. They illustrated difficulties in negotiating joint purposes due to the variety of organizational and individual goals involved. Also, challenges in developing shared operational models were coming from that usually the IORs organizations have different internal procedures. Difficulties in dealing with the perceived power imbalances between stakeholders and the pairing difficulty of building trust were also frequent issues with these joint associations. Moreover, managing accountability and maintaining a satisfying level of autonomy in the same time for each organization, when sometimes one of the parties are based in physically remote locations (Huxham and Vangen 2000).

7.0 <u>Conclusion</u>

7.1 Research questions & answers

This dissertation aimed to highlight some of the main organizational development factors within non-profit sport organizations through the case of the Norwegian Teqball Federation. To execute this goal, a three-month participant observation was taken place where I immersed myself as an intern in the day-to-day activities of this newly established institution. For understanding the main factors that are present in this organization I formulated the following research questions:

> *RQ1:* What are the main factors influencing the organizational development at non-profit sport organizations, like the Teqball federations?
>
> *RQ2:* How can inter-organizational relationships (IORs) contribute to the organizational development of small and medium-sized non-profit sports organizations (NPSOs)?
>
> *RQ3:* How can NPSOs manage the potential risks and conflicts that may arise from inter-organizational relationships (IORs), and what are the strategies for resolving these issues?

RQ1: Through this research, I was able to identify six main factors that have a high influence on the federation's organizational development processes. These are the following:

1. <u>Leadership</u>

This factor was highlighted as an integral part of organizational development. Leaders at non-profit sport organizations, such as the Norwegian Teqball Federation, have to focus on developing the right competencies. The most important ones are risk-taking, commitment to the project, ability to adapt to a constantly changing environment, and being innovative. Honing the before mentioned skills, non-profit sport organization leaders could ensure a well-functioning organizational culture. This is essential to create trust and commitment between the organization leaders and its players which is a key element for organizational development.

2. <u>Internal communication</u>

One of the most crucial factors in fostering organizational development is the internal communication. The importance of effective internal communication for the success and growth of non-profit sport organizations, like the Norwegian Teqball Federation, is highlighted

through the research. Lack of effective communication will lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and misinformation among stakeholders which will hinder the development processes. Creating a transparent and collaborative environment, providing a common space for stakeholders to express their opinions and concerns, and clearly communicating information are essential to achieving effective internal communication. Due to the help that internal communication offers to individuals and groups when coordinating activities to achieve their objectives, it is an essential factor for organizational development.

3. Good governance and athlete empowerment

Governance also plays a key role in organizational development in the life of NPSOs. In the case of a sport federation, it helps to bring different clubs under one framework. This will create a unified system for all member clubs, which facilitates the management of the federation's operations. A unique feature, which is not essential for all NPSOs but is vital for sports federations, is knowledge of the NOC regulatory system in a given country. This ensures that the federation in question follows the guidelines set by the governing body of the sport in its country. A regulatory system can also ensure to preserve the integrity of the sport and involve more stakeholders, such as athletes into their decision-making processes. Overall, governance in NPSOs, particularly in sport federations, contributes to organizational development by establishing a unified system, promoting efficient operations, and involving stakeholders in decision-making processes.

4. Employee engagement and retention

Due to the highlighted workforce challenges faced by non-profit sports organizations. In particular, in terms of operating with part-time staff, who often do not even get paid for their work, employee engagement, and retention are also highly important factors in the development of NPSOs. To tackle this issue of employee shortages, the development of a vision, mission statement, and core values can guide the achievement of the organization's development. Because the chance of an employee accepting a job and remaining with an organization for an extended period may increase if the values of the organization are similar to the individual's.

5. Sport promotion

Sport promotion and marketing play a crucial role in the organizational development of non-profit sport organizations, like Teqball federations. The reason is that less known sports facing challenges in promoting their activities to a wider audience.

Promoting Teqball through sports media platforms, such as television, and newspapers helps increase visibility and generate interest. Engaging star athletes as ambassadors for Teqball creates attention and enthusiasm. Reaching out to the younger generation through social media and organizing promotional events in schools and clubs is an effective approach. By leveraging social media platforms popular among young people, non-profit sport organizations can create awareness and cultivate interest in their activities. Advertising sports during larger-scale sporting events take advantage of existing audiences and media coverage to showcase the sport to a diverse group of individuals who are enthusiastic about sports.

6. Financial resources

Another crucial factor determining the organizational development of non-profit sports organizations, such as the Norwegian Teqball Federations, is the availability of adequate financial resources. Funding plays a key role in the growth and development of lesser known sports such as teqball. To develop the sport and the organization, leaders should focus on financial vulnerability, because it poses a significant challenge for non-profit organizations (NPOs). It can hinder their organizational development by limiting investments in growth initiatives, infrastructure, and talent development. Thus, adequate funding is fundamental for the development of emerging sports like teqball, encompassing promotion, training, equipment, and operational costs. The resource dependence theory further emphasizes the crucial role of financial resources in organizational strategy, structure, and survival. Organizations actively seek financial support through investments, partnerships, sponsorships, and government funding to ensure their growth and sustainability. To overcome funding challenges, organizations explore alternative options, engage the Board for resource acquisition, and pursue creative solutions such as one-time paid public sponsors and local sponsorship contracts to continue planned events and overcome setbacks. Non-profit sports organizations that are able to secure stable financial resources from the above-mentioned options can expect smoother, more sustainable development processes.

RQ2: With the right approach inter-organizational relationships (IORs) will contribute to the organizational development of small and medium-sized non-profit sports organizations (NPSOs) by providing access to resources, knowledge, and expertise. For instance, with knowledge transfer, leaders can learn from each other by widening their understanding of other organizations' processes. In the case of a federation, IORs can be also an effective approach to comply with NOC regulations. Moreover, expanding their reach and building a positive reputation in the industry. Through IORs, NPSOs can enter collaborations with other organizations, clubs, and government bodies, which can help them raise funds and promote their activities. Effective management of IORs can help NPSOs achieve their goals more effectively and grow.

RQ3: NPSOs can manage the potential risks and conflicts that may arise from IORs by maintaining clear communication and coordination between partner organizations, negotiating joint purposes. Moreover, it is important to develop shared operational models, deal with power imbalances between stakeholders, build trust, and manage accountability while maintaining a satisfying level of autonomy. It is important for NPSOs to prioritize creating strong relationships with other organizations, clubs, and government bodies, while also being mindful of the challenges that may arise from these relationships, such as concerns over privatisation and conflicting goals.

7.2 Theoretical implications

Since the research started with observations and tried to formulate the research questions based on the collected data abductive reasoning was applied to explore the above-mentioned factors. In addition, which was indeed helpful for my research, abductive reasoning can be useful in situations where there are several plausible explanations for a phenomenon, in this case, the organizational development factors, and the researcher must use their own judgment to determine which explanation is the most likely based on the available evidence (Arteaga 2023). This allowed me to first highlight the factors, and then formulate the appropriate theoretical background with the most fitting literatures.

I used Brown (2005)'s framework on non-profit performance as an initial starting point. However, later, during my participant observation, I extended it by incorporating contingency theory and creating my own conceptual framework. I realized that a personalized framework is needed due to the unique characteristics and challenges of each organization. This framework

enabled me to gather the most appropriate theories and literature pertaining to the factors of organizational development specific to NPSOs, like the Norwegian Teqball Federation.

7.3 Methodological implications

The use of a case study approach helped to conduct an in-depth examination of this particular case in its environmental context, which led to a better understanding of the interaction between the phenomenon being studied and its context. Moreover, this thesis used ethnography research and grounded theory. By doing so, the chances of getting more comprehensive and diverse findings will considerably increase. Ethnography offered a wider range of investigation of attitudinal, and behavioural matters in its real environment. Grounded theory ensured a symmetrical data analysis process by examining the wider range of ongoing events through defined categories. These approaches increased the convincingness and accuracy of the findings and conclusions. This study used expert interviews to gather insights that helped to formulate the research directions and the research questions, and participant observation as the main data collection method.

The expert interviews showed their efficiency and effectiveness in gathering data in the exploratory phase of a project. They were influential in offering lenses on the key factors that the research should focus on in the phase of participant observation. However, methodological considerations cannot be ignored, as expert interviews may advocate a pre-reflexive definition of the concept of expert or may attribute unquestionable importance to expert knowledge.

To balance this gap of expert interviews, this dissertation used participant observation to collect data. This approach is a valuable method for gathering data because it focuses on behaviour rather than just comments received in interviews. By doing so, the research on organizational development factors at the Norwegian Teqball Federation, this study gathered more comprehensive and reliable insights as active participation increased the range, relevance, and reliability of the data. Participant observation also allowed the researcher to look at individuals, groups, and organizations from an integrated member perspective, which showed its crucial impact on examining reciprocal relationships. In addition, it helped to identify differences that the actors took for granted or were unaware of. This proved essential in anticipating potential threats and opportunities. This technique allowed a more diverse data collection through participation in the daily life of the organization under study and exploration of the interpretation of events.

Using both expert interviews and participant observation in a research project can provide a balanced and complementary approach to gathering information. While expert interviews offer a quick and efficient means of obtaining specialized knowledge, participant observation provides a more comprehensive and integrated view of behaviour within a particular social field. By combining these methods, researchers can obtain a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied by triangulating the data, which can lead to more robust and meaningful findings.

7.4 Practical implications

This research discusses the six critical factors that the participant observation and the expert interviews showed as essential for non-profit sports organization development. These include workforce, marketing and promotion, leadership, financing, regulations, and communication. The development and sustainability of sports organizations rely on effective leadership skills, funding, regulations, and communication. Meanwhile, a well-structured team with different skills, effective marketing, and promotion can help attract and retain committed employees, increase the sport's popularity, and sustain individual interest.

The thesis also underscores the role of IORs as a catalyst in fostering these six factors, emphasizing the significance of establishing clear objectives, effective communication channels, building trust, and acknowledging power imbalances. Continual evaluation and adjustment are necessary to ensure that the IOR remains beneficial for all parties involved.

Based on the information provided, here are some recommendations for the non-profit sports industry and within that for newly established Teqball Federations:

1. Workforce: Create a well-structured team with different skills, a clear mission statement, and core values. Engage employees through team building and socialization to create a work environment that aligns with their values and motivates them towards achieving the organization's goals.

2. Marketing and Promotion: Promote less-known sports such as Teqball through various elements such as sports media, sports advertising, star athletes, sports sponsorship, and the performance of national teams. Utilize social media and target schools and clubs with promotional events to attract a wider audience, especially targeting the younger generation.

3. Leadership: Develop effective leadership skills that are crucial for the success of non-profit sports organizations. This requires risk-taking, commitment to the project, the ability to adapt to a constantly changing environment, and a comprehensive set of skills. Trust and commitment between the organization's leaders and its players are also key factors for organizational development.

4. Financing: Secure adequate financial resources for the operations of the sports organizations, particularly in emerging sports such as Teqball. This can be achieved through investments from private companies, public tenders, and sponsorships. Boards of organizations struggling to access funding can play a vital role in discussing possibilities and finding solutions.

5. Regulations: Establish a regulatory system for effective management of the newly formed sports federations. This helps create a unified system for all member clubs and ensures that the federations can participate in regional and international competitions. Involving athletes in decision-making processes is also essential for good organizational governance.

6. Communication: Prioritize effective internal communication within the sports organizations to foster positive relationships, and goal orientation, and protect organizational reputation and image. Create a transparent and collaborative environment, provide a common space for stakeholders to express their opinions and concerns, and clearly communicate information about events and changes.

Inter-organizational relationships (IORs) can be a valuable catalyst tool for fostering the development of non-profit sports organizations in several ways. First, forming IORs can provide access to resources, expertise, and networks that individual organizations may lack, such as funding, marketing, and access to new markets. Second, IORs can facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among member organizations, leading to improved workforce skills, innovative approaches to leadership, and better communication practices. Finally, IORs can help to create a stronger collective voice, enabling member organizations to advocate for their interests, influence policy decisions, and achieve greater visibility and legitimacy.

When forming an IOR, leaders should be aware of the potential challenges and risks. Before organizations join an IOR, it is essential to settle their aims and objectives. This will ensure that they are in line with the mission and values of the organization. By doing so leaders can

overcome concerns like privatization and 'the profit over goals' approaches that were highlighted by many other researchers (Glover 1999; Frisby, Thibault, and Kikulis 2004; Smale and Reid 2002). Moreover, a governance structure, with defined roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, and mechanisms for resolving conflicts are essential to ensure a smooth-running collaboration. Communication and trust-building are the other critical points of the success of IORs, thus leaders should prioritize regular and open communication with other member organizations and build relationships based on mutual respect and transparency. Based on the participant observation, expert interviews, and the theories provided in the literature review chapter, to ensure an effective IOR that works for all involved actors, leaders should implement several practices. Firstly, they should establish a shared vision and mission for the IOR, along with clear goals and objectives, and identify the areas where collaboration can bring the most benefits. Second, leaders need to create a culture of cooperation and knowledge sharing. This could encourage member organizations to share their experience, expertise, and resources, thus fostering the development of the organizations. This can be achieved through regular meetings and training sessions. Thirdly, leaders should prioritize the development of effective communication channels to facilitate information exchange and engagement among member organizations. Finally, leaders should foster transparency and accountability by clear mechanisms for reporting and monitoring progress, and for addressing any issues or concerns that arise.

In summary, forming an IOR can be a powerful tool for non-profit sports organizations to develop and sustain their workforce, marketing and promotion, leadership, financing, regulations, and communication. However, success requires careful planning, strong communication and trust-building, and a commitment to collaboration and knowledge-sharing among member organizations. By following these practices, leaders can create an effective IOR that works for all involved actors, and achieve greater impact and success in the non-profit sports industry.

7.5 Outlook and future research

The dissertation identified a scope of the main organizational development factors within non-profit sport organizations, using the case of the Norwegian Teqball Federation. The research used abductive reasoning to identify six key factors that influenced organizational development. It conducted expert interviews and participant observation to gather the data. The study found that inter-organizational relationships can contribute to the development of non-profit sports

organizations, and offered recommendations for facing the potential risks and conflicts that may arise from these. The research used a personalized conceptual framework and applied a multimethod qualitative research approach to gather comprehensive and reliable insights. However, to develop deeper insights of these results, I, therefore, make the following suggestions for possible future research:

1. A longitudinal study with a larger sample size would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The participant observation of my study was limited to only three months; thus, a longer-term study could provide more valuable insights.

2. I suggest that future research should use mixed methods by implementing both qualitative and quantitative methods such as surveys, questionnaires, or experiments that provide a more objective picture of the phenomenon under study.

3. Replicate the study with other non-profit sport organizations: This study focused on the Norwegian Teqball Federation, which may have unique characteristics and challenges. To generalize the results of this study, replication in a different setting like in another industry or region would be an effective way.

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Appendix

Expert interview guide

1. Please start with a short introduction, where you state your role at the respective federation.

2. How long has your teqball federation been active?

3. What were the first steps that your organization did to ensure a smooth establishment process?

4. What were the biggest obstacles at your federation when it comes to establishing a newly formed organization?

5. What do you consider to be the main factors contributing to the success of your teqball federation?

6. What role has collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders played in your success?

7. What strategies have you implemented to promote the growth and development of teqball in your region?

8. Can you share any successful initiatives or programs that you have implemented in your teqball federation?

9. How have you managed to secure funding for your federation and what advice do you have for other aspiring federations in this regard?

10. What do you believe are the key qualities and skills required for leaders in a successful teqball federation?

11. Finally, what advice would you give to other teqball federations that are just starting out or looking to improve their success?