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An Institutional Framework for Governance Convergence in Sport: The Case of India

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The purpose of this research was to examine the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in Indian sport. Governance convergence is defined as the adoption of four principles of good governance that are common in Western sport contexts—transparency, accountability, democracy, and social responsibility. To achieve the aim, a theoretical framework consisting of three interconnected levels—(a) the historically grown national institutional framework, (b) organizational field, and (c) organizational actors—was proposed, drawing primarily on institutional theory. A qualitative approach was used to empirically test the framework in the Indian sport context, where governance has been of key concern. The findings show that the framework is an effective tool for understanding the drivers and barriers of convergence with the defined principles of good governance. The development of this framework is important, given the link between the principles and positive organizational outcomes.

Keywords: globalization, institutional theory, nonprofit boards, organizational fields, sport convergence

Over the past three decades, researchers have been documenting the evolution of sport organizations as they go through a process of professionalization. This process has led to greater organizational bureaucracy, higher numbers of paid staff, and enhanced policy-making procedures across the sport sector (Dowling, Edwards, & Washington, 2014). Changing governance practices are also a key outcome of professionalization. Studies have illustrated the development of board roles, board strategic capability, and board leadership in this evolving context (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010, 2012; Hoye, 2006; McLeod, 2020; McLeod, Shilbury, & Ferkins, 2019). Furthermore, researchers and practitioners have attempted to establish principles of "good governance" in sport and assess the extent to which they are implemented (Chappelet, 2018; Geeraert, 2018b; Parent & Hoye, 2018). In particular, transparency, democracy, accountability, and societal responsibility are now widely considered to be important sport governance principles to uphold (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019).

In many Western countries (including the United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland, and Germany), the aforementioned principles have been enshrined in sport governance codes (Walters & Tacon, 2018). In non-Western sport organizations, however, research shows that those governance principles have not been embraced as eagerly. Dorsey (2015), for example, discussed the historical struggles with political interference and a lack of transparency in sport federations in the Middle East. Nevertheless, despite these long-standing issues, there have, in recent years, been examples of convergence with the good governance principles in some non-Western countries. The introduction of a rigorous new constitution promoting good governance principles in 2017 for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) was a pertinent illustration (Shekar & Saikia, 2016), as were efforts in Indonesian football to become more transparent by publishing financial information (Silviana & Potkin, 2019). There is, therefore, evidence of ongoing convergence with the so-called good governance principles in the global sport community. What is less clear, however, is an understanding of what is driving that convergence. This is an important gap to address, given the evidence that implementing those principles can help organizations to overcome issues with corruption and generally promote organizational success (Geeraert, Alm, & Groll, 2014).

The purpose of this research was to address the aforementioned gap by conducting an in-depth examination of the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in Indian sport. In this study, "governance convergence" refers specifically to the adoption of the so-called "good governance" principles (Geeraert, 2018b) in national sport federations (NSF). This research draws on the work of Khanna, Kogan, and Palepu (2006) in distinguishing between two forms of governance convergence. First, *de jure* convergence refers to the adoption of similar governance rules, such as in constitutions or codes. Second, *de facto* convergence refers to the convergence of the actual governance practices of organizations, meaning the governance rules are actually implemented.

To assess the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in sport, this research proposes and then empirically tests a theoretical framework drawing primarily on institutional theory. The proposed framework is an adaption of Jamali and Neville's (2011) multilevel institutional model. The model distinguishes between three interconnected institutional levels—(a) the national context, (b) organizational field, and (c) organizational actors. Jamali and Neville's work is considered a sound theoretical base for this study due, first, to the usefulness of institutional theory in explaining how and why organizations change. Convergence is by nature a change process, and institutional theory offers a potentially potent perspective for analyzing its drivers and barriers. Second, Jamali and Neville's interpretation of institutional theory accounts for interactions between different forms and levels of institutional pressures. Such an interpretation is appropriate for the present

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study, given the range of international, national, and local stakeholders that have the potential to influence organizational governance in sport (Washington & Patterson, 2011).

The explanatory value of the theoretical framework was then assessed in the Indian sport setting, with 32 interviews undertaken with key stakeholders operating in the sector. Indian sport represents a rich context in which to conduct this research. The country is known for its unique culture, has a history of colonialization, and has a rapidly developing economy (Cassen, 2016). Elements of India's sport industry are said to be professionalizing, yet there continue to be reports of corruption and failures of governance across the sector (Kamath, 2016).

This research makes three contributions. First, it develops a theoretical framework that illuminates the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in sport. Until now, the process of governance convergence in sport had not been explicitly theorized, yet this is critical, given the impact of governance on organizational success in sport (Geeraert et al., 2014). Second, this research adds to the understandings of institutional theory in sport by illustrating how isomorphic processes are influenced by a complex interplay of factors emanating from three different institutional levels. Third, the study adds new insight to the sport governance literature by examining the unique context of India. The findings also offer insight to Indian sport managers seeking to improve governance structures and processes.

Governance Convergence

The "convergence thesis" has its roots in economic theory and refers to the idea that countries and organizations from around the world will become increasingly similar as a result of globalization (Schmidt, 1989). As entities from disparate contexts become more exposed to each other, the thesis dictates that their heterogeneity will diminish as they adopt forms and practices that are perceived to be superior (Krenn, 2016). The convergence thesis has been examined in relation to political systems, consumer behavior, organizational structures, and business strategy (Toms & Wright, 2005). In contrast to the convergence thesis, the "divergence thesis" proposes that countries and organizations will maintain their diversity. This opposing perspective is based on the notion that contextual factors, such as a country's particular historical, cultural, economic, and political context, mitigate convergence pressures and that the benefits of differentiation encourage divergence (Jamali & Neville, 2011).

Corporate governance is a key area in which the convergence thesis has been explored. Within this literature, the concept of "governance convergence" predominantly refers to the adoption of Anglo-American governance systems by organizations outside that zone (Ntongho, 2016). Over the past decade, a body of empirical literature has emerged, highlighting why corporate governance convergence does or does not occur. The process is considered complex, and the extent of convergence has been found to depend on an interplay of contextual factors. In particular, exposure to global markets and the harmonization of accounting rules are found to drive global convergence with Anglo-American systems of corporate governance (Yoshikawa & Rasheed, 2009). In contrast, diverse cultural norms, protectionism, and path dependence are suggested to be barriers to governance convergence among corporations internationally (Ntongho, 2016). These factors may be relevant in sport, too, but research is needed to test this—particularly given that the sport context has many idiosyncrasies (e.g., regarding industry structure and stakeholder behavior) that may disrupt or enhance their impact (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

The sport professionalization literature provides further clues to what may drive governance convergence in sport. Previous research demonstrates that sport organizations are increasingly under pressure to adopt more "businesslike" structures and processes as they become exposed to commercialization (Clausen et al., 2018). International sport federations and national sport systems are also known to exert influence over the governance of NSF (Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle, & Giauque, 2015). However, the issue of governance convergence has not yet been specifically addressed in sport, and further work is needed to develop a robust understanding of the phenomenon. Developing this knowledge is of key importance due to the potential benefits sport organizations can gain from adopting governance principles that are widely considered to enhance organizational effectiveness and legitimacy (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019; Geeraert et al., 2014).

Good Governance in Sport

High-profile corruption scandals have brought sport governance to the forefront of public debate in recent years (McLeod, Adams, & Sang, 2020). International sport federations and NSF are consequently under increasing pressure to adopt governance practices that will mitigate unethical behavior and promote sporting success (Chappelet, 2018). In this context, codifying and assessing the implementation of "good governance" has emerged as a key focus for researchers and practitioners (Geeraert, 2019). To date, there is no universal code of good governance used by a broad group of sport stakeholders. Indeed, there are over 50 sport governance codes in existence. Throughout those codes, however, there is consistency in terms of the broad principles promoted. In particular, the principles of transparency, accountability, and democracy feature heavily across the codes (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019).

There are, nevertheless, important caveats to consider when assessing the similarity of sport governance codes. Parent and Hoye's (2018) recent review indicates that, while the aforementioned principles are widely used, the details of what they entail can vary. For instance, a code may view transparency narrowly, as the publication of annual reports, or it may involve a wider range of requirements, including the publication of board meeting minutes. Parent and Hoye (2018) also reported a variation in implementation requirements. Depending on the jurisdiction, adherence to a sport governance code may be a legislative requirement, a voluntary "opt-in" choice, or a prerequisite to receiving state funding. Furthermore, there is a lack of coherence regarding the language used to describe governance principles. For example, different codes have used terms such as "checks and balances" or "control mechanisms" to refer to similar governance practices (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019). Parent and Hoye (2018) argued that such inconsistencies hinder sport organizations and researchers in their attempts to understand which guidelines improve governance performance.

Notwithstanding the inconsistencies discussed above, a sufficient degree of congruity exists between the codes to assert that there is a general understanding of what good governance looks like in NSFs or, at least, in Western contexts, where the majority of these codes have been developed and researched (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019). For the purposes of this research, Geeraert's (2018a) four principles of good governance (see Table 1) are used to represent and operationalize this broader understanding of good governance. Geeraert's (2018a) work was considered an

Table 1 Principles of Good Governance in Sport

Principle	Description
Transparency	Principle refers to an organization's reporting on its internal workings, which allows others to monitor these workings.
Democratic processes	Principle entails free, fair, and competitive elections; the involvement of affected actors in decision-making processes; fair and open internal debates.
Internal accountability and control	Principle refers to both the implementation of the separation of powers in the organization's governance structure, as well as a system of rules and procedures that ensure that staff and officials comply with internal rules and norms.
Social responsibility	Principle refers to deliberately employing the organization's potential and impact in order to have a positive effect on internal and external stakeholders and society at large

Note. Source: Geeraert (2018a).

appropriate framework to guide this study due, first, to the similarity of his principles with those proposed in various other sport governance codes (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019) and due to his framework being specifically designed to assess governance in NSFs in any country.

There is evidence to suggest that the good governance principles outlined in Table 1 lead to positive organizational outcomes. Scholars (e.g., Kolstad & Wiig, 2009) and nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Transparency International) have long shown how transparency is an effective mechanism through which to mitigate corruption. Furthermore, a key element of the democratic processes principle is to involve affected groups, including women, in NSF decision making. There is an established body of research highlighting the benefits of women being represented on boards (Nielsen & Huse, 2010; Post & Byron, 2015). Regarding accountability and internal controls, failure to implement measures related to this principle can lead to corruption and a lack of effectiveness (Geeraert et al., 2014). Finally, there is a well-established "business case" for organizations to promote social responsibility (Schreck, 2011). The evidence presented here highlights the potential value of implementing the good governance principles. This strengthens the rationale for the present study, which aims to illuminate the drivers and barriers to the introduction of those principles in NSFs. It is, however, important to acknowledge that the evidence linking the principles to positive outcomes is largely implicit for NSFs (i.e., it has been conducted in other contexts), and, as Parent and Hoye (2018) argued, there is a need to examine this relationship more explicitly in the future.

Theoretical Framework

Institutional theory is one of the most dominant perspectives within organizational studies. At the core of the theory is a proposition that organizations are supported and constrained by institutional forces and that deliberate and subliminal choices lead organizations to mirror the norms, ideologies, and values of their organizational field (Scott, 2008). Within institutional theory, researchers have developed understandings of a number of key concepts, including organizational field, isomorphism, institutional logics, legitimacy, and institutionalization (Campbell, 2007). The concept of an organizational field is at the core of institutional theory. Traditionally, this concept was understood as a group of organizations that offer similar products or services, but recent research has extended its definition. In particular, Wooten and Hoffman (2008) conceptualized organizational fields as dynamic spaces where often disparate organizations and actors interact due to a shared interest in a specific issue.

The sport industry, with its diverse stakeholders from around the world, constitutes an organizational field and is the unit of analysis in this study. Washington and Patterson (2011) noted that, in addition to describing structural relations between organizations, fields also describe shared meaning systems. That is, "underlying any organizational field, there is a defined 'common meaning systems template' based on 'shared cognitive or normative frameworks'" (p. 4). This research argues that, within the organizational field of sport, the good governance principles outlined earlier in Table 1 represent a shared normative framework.

Isomorphism refers to the process of organizations within a specific field becoming increasingly similar in their structure, culture, and processes. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), organizations face three types of isomorphic pressures. Coercive pressures refer to formal and informal pressures placed on organizations by other organizations. This is often characterized by powerful organizations forcing less powerful organizations to comply with their demands. Mimetic pressures, on the other hand, involve organizations voluntarily adopting the structures and practices of other organizations in their field as a way of gaining legitimacy and other benefits. Normative pressures are linked to the concept of professionalization and professional networks. These networks are argued to act as mediums through which normative understandings of best practice are diffused to actors who, in turn, impart them onto individual organizations. This pressure leads to isomorphism at the field level.

A limited understanding of the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in sport was highlighted as an important research gap earlier in this paper. Institutional theory, and more specifically, the concept of isomorphic pressure, seems a highly appropriate lens through which to assess that gap. Previous research has shown that the theory is an effective tool for assessing drivers of organizational change in sport (Clausen et al., 2018; Washington & Patterson, 2011). For example, researchers have examined the isomorphic pressures placed on sport associations in Canada by their umbrella federation, which has led to the adoption of similar organizational structures (Edwards, Mason, & Washington, 2009). Researchers have also illustrated the impact of isomorphic pressures on the growing homogeneity of sport organizations' social media strategies (Naraine & Parent, 2016). Separately, studies have shown that organizational change can be mitigated by institutional pressures, which emanate from actors who benefit from the *status quo* (Scott, 2008). This insight from previous research suggests that institutional theory can provide a potent lens for assessing the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in sport.

To assess the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in sport, this research proposes a theoretical framework adapted from Jamali and Neville (2011; see Figure 1). Jamali and Neville's (2011) institutional framework was originally used to evaluate the diffusion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices in developing nations. Their framework combined two previous

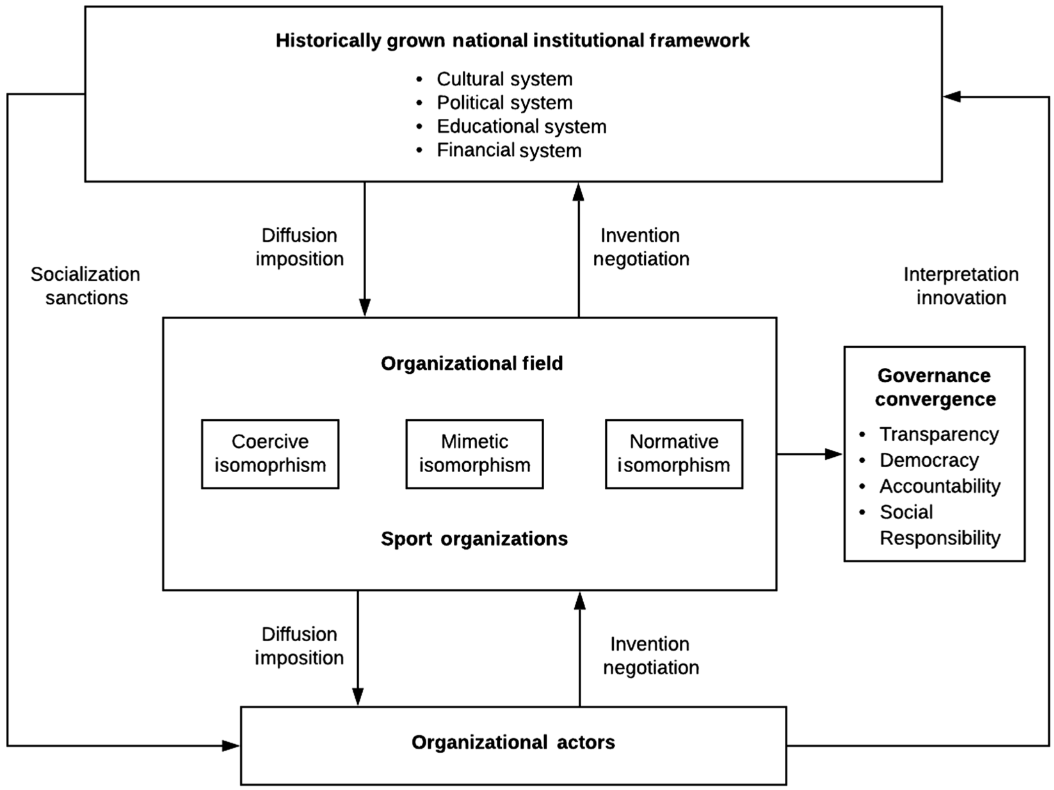

Figure 1 — A multilevel institutional framework for assessing governance convergence. Sources: Jamali and Neville (2011); Matten and Moon (2008); Scott (2008).

institutional models, those of Matten and Moon (2008) and Scott (2008). Jamali and Neville (2011) argued that, while Matten and Moon (2008)'s framework offers a useful insight into how context-specific institutional pressures influence the adopting of CSR practices, it is limited by an "artificial bifurcation or separation between national institutional pressures on one hand, and the organization and its organizational field on the other" (p. 605). Accordingly, the authors integrated it with Scott's (2008) multi-level model of institutional flows, which acknowledges the "complex interactions between different kinds and levels of institutional pressures" (Jamali & Neville, 2011, p. 600). This led to the development of a multilayered and embedded institutional framework for analyzing CSR in context.

Specifically, this research adapts Jamali and Neville's (2011) model by introducing a new concept, governance convergence (in place of CSR), as the outcome effected by the multilevel institutional environment (see Figure 1). The other elements of the framework remain unchanged. The framework consists of three levels: (a) the historically grown national institutional framework—this refers to a country's cultural, political, education, and labor systems; (b) the organizational field—in sport, this includes stakeholders, such as international federations and corporate sponsors; and (c) organizational actors—examples of organizational actors in the present study include NSF Directors, CEOs, and Office Bearers. These different institutional levels are argued to interact and, subsequently, shape the nature and extent of CSR convergence. The interaction is characterized by high-level institutions influencing, through processes of "diffusion" and "imposition," the actions of lower level institutions and individual actors. In turn, "counter-processes are at work by which lower-level actors/structures shape, reproduce, and change the contexts within which they operate," which the authors refer to as "invention" and "negotiation" (Jamali & Neville, 2011, p. 603). This research proposes that these processes (i.e., the diffusion and imposition of institutional norms) and counter-processes (i.e., the reinvention and negotiation of institutional pressures) that manifest across different institutional levels simultaneously act as drivers and barriers of sport governance convergence in complex ways.

The dynamic and iterative nature of the framework is particularly suited to the present study, given the range of international, national, and local stakeholders that have the potential to cocreate the institutional environment in which sport governance convergence does or does not occur (McLeod, 2018). Thus, this research proposes that the multilevel framework will yield high explanatory value when adapted to the concept of governance convergence because it captures the complexity of the social systems that drive and mitigate change processes.

The following explanation of Figure 1 is offered to assist readers in interpreting the framework. At the center of Figure 1 is the organizational field. Within this field, Indian NSFs are theorized to face three types of isomorphic pressures. These pressures are illustrated by the self-containing boxes within the organizational field box. The right-leading arrow from the organizational field box to the adjacent governance convergence box signals the prediction that institutional forces influence (i.e., drive or mitigate) convergence with the principles of good governance. The box at the top of Figure 1 represents India's historically grown national institutional framework, which consists of a cultural, political, educational, and financial system. The arrow leading down from that box illustrates how those systems lead to the "diffusion" and "imposition" of national institutional norms to Indian NSFs. In turn, those processes can act as facilitators or impediments to convergence with the good governance principles. Similarly, the arrow leading down from the organizational field box shows how institutional norms are diffused and imposed on organizational actors. The arrows leading upward from the organizational actors and organizational field boxes indicate the potential for those entities to "invent" and "negotiate" new institutional realities that eventually influence (i.e., drive or mitigate) governance convergence. The arrows that connect directly to the national institutional framework and organizational boxes highlight that these entities might influence each other through processes of socialization, interpretation, and innovation.

Method

This research is positioned within the interpretative paradigm, meaning the investigators attempted to construct knowledge from the interpretations of their research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). A qualitative research approach was considered appropriate in light of the study's epistemological perspective and the nature of the research aim, which involves generating deep insight into social phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Semistructured interviews were employed so that the theoretical framework could be examined in an in-depth and flexible manner (Wengraf, 2001).

Research Context

With a population of approximately 1.3 billion, India is the largest democracy in the world. The Indian economy has grown rapidly over the past decade and is predicted to become the world's third largest within the next 10–15 years (IBEF, 2019). Despite this, poverty levels remain significant across the country, and 22% of Indians are classified as poor (World Bank, 2016). Due in large part to its colonial past, India has significant Western influence—especially in the structure of its judicial and parliamentary political systems. There are 29 states and seven union territories in India. Great disparity exists between these areas with regard to language, religion, culture, and ethnicity. India is characterized by having an increasingly skilled and multilingual workforce and a middle and upper class that place strong emphasis on education. From a sociocultural perspective, India is considered to be a particularly hierarchical society, with high-power distance (Chelladurai, Nair, & Stephen, 2013).

India's sport system is structured as follows. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sport (MYAS) is the central government agency tasked with promoting sport and sporting excellence in the country. The Sports Authority of India is the operational arm of the MYAS and implements the government's sport policies. This largely involves the coordination of infrastructure, equipment, coaching, and competition to support sport activities. In this ecosystem, the NSFs are responsible for overseeing national sport strategies and sanctioning domestic competitions, including the professional leagues (Chelladurai et al., 2013).

Sport in India has experienced significant commercialization in recent years. Since Cricket's Indian Premier League was introduced in 2008, 20 new professional sports leagues have been created, the majority of which have adopted the franchise structure. Many are owned and funded by the private sector (Ernst & Young, 2017). The commercial growth of sport in India has led to greater concern over governance standards in NSFs. For example, there have been various reports of corruption, nepotism, and malpractice in the NSFs for cricket, football, archery, and many other sports (Kamath, 2016; McLeod & Shilbury, 2020).

In 2011, the MYAS introduced the National Sport Development Code, which set out basic governance guidelines for NSFs. In theory, NSFs must comply with the code to receive "annual recognition," which gives them the power to control the sport in India and receive state funding (although recent reports suggest that this is not always enforced; Kannan, 2020). It is important note that the 2011 code's guidelines are limited in scope. The main provisions include a term limit of 12 years for office bearers and a recommendation to engage in strategic planning. The code is not comparable to other national governance frameworks (e.g., the U.K. Sport Code) that impose a more extensive and detailed range of requirements on NSFs.

In 2017, the MYAS commissioned an expert working group (composed of sport lawyers, athletes, seasoned sports administrators, and others) to draft a more rigorous sport governance code for India. At the time of this writing, that code has not come into effect due to reported resistance from influential politicians (who may also have roles in NSFs) and their allies in political and sporting decision-making circles (Hussain, 2019). This situation illustrates the complex relationship between sport and politics in India. On one hand, a central government agency has tasked a working group to develop a robust sport governance code, yet its ability to implement it is being constrained by political actors of the same party. This contradiction can arguably be explained by the prevalence of individual politicians in office-bearing positions in NSFs. A recent report showed that 47% of Indian NSFs have a politician as president (Team Bridge, 2018). Bhatia (2019) suggested that such individuals have resisted the introduction of a new code because it would limit their scope of influence in NSFs and make them more accountable.

Adding further to the complex interaction between politics and sport, India's Supreme Court intervened in 2018 to impose a new constitution on the BCCI that forced it to adopt governance practices in line with those proposed by Geeraert (2018a). This resulted from a public interest litigation and was justified on the basis of cricket being socially and culturally significant to Indian society. The BCCI continues to resist vociferously the judicial intervention, so far to little success (Shekar & Saikia, 2016). This section has provided a preliminary insight into the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in Indian sport and illustrated the appropriateness of using this context to pursue the research aim.

Sample

Given the specificity of the research aim, a purposive sampling approach was required (Etikan, 2016). To gain an understanding of the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in Indian NSFs, it was considered important to seek the viewpoints of a range of different stakeholders in Indian sport. As such, three groups of participants were recruited. This included, first, Executive Committee (ExCo) members of "large" NSFs. In this study, large federations are defined as those displaying high levels of professionalization in terms of having a large labor force, developed organizational structures, and significant funding sources. Second, ExCo members were recruited from "small" federations, meaning federations that display limited professionalizaiton and have limited resources. Third, individuals who are independent from the NSFs but are experts in the Indian sport sector. This includes sport lawyers, government officials, athletes, sport activists, and sport business professionals.

There are approximately 54 NSFs in India. Information from the websites of NSFs was used to decide whether they fitted into the "large" or "small" category. Eight of the NSFs were considered to represent large federations, and 46 were considered small federations. The sample size was contingent on theoretical saturation, and thus, recruitment was carried out on an ongoing basis. The research team attempted to make contact with leaders in all of the NSFs (with the exception of a small number where contact details could not be found). In total, 32 people were interviewed (10 from large federations, 11 from small federations, and 11 independents). Four large NSFs, eight small NSFs, and nine independent organizations are represented in the sample. The imbalance between the number of small and large federations in the sample is reflective of how there are fewer large federations in the sector. The titles of the ExCo interviewees included president (6), vice president (1), CEO (3), COO (2), general secretary (2), athlete representative (1), and general member (6).

Participant recruitment was a challenging element of the research due to unfamiliarity with the Indian context and limited connections with some segments of the Indian sport sector. The snowball sampling approach helped to secure six participants. Generally, however, the most effective approach for securing participation was reaching out to ExCo members (via contact details provided on the organizations' websites) on an individual basis, as it offered a greater degree of confidentiality. The reluctance of individuals to engage in the process of snowball sampling seemed to reflect a general sensitivity to discussing sport governance—likely due to the reported prevalence of integrity issues across the sector (Kamath, 2016).

Data Collection

Interviews were scheduled between May and August 2019, with the lead researcher making two 2-week trips to India. The interviews started with the researcher explaining relevant ethical issues associated with the study and clarifying the research aim. Following that, the researcher clarified to each participant the definitions and provided examples of the good governance principles being used (Geeraert, 2018a). This was an important step in the research process because the aim was not to investigate participants' perceptions of good governance. Rather, the aim was to examine the drivers and barriers of adopting predefined principles that are argued to reflect a general understanding of what good governance looks like in NSFs (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019). Thus, for the findings to have validity, it was paramount for the participants and the researcher to be aligned in their understanding of what convergence was being assessed against. Reaching this level of understanding with the participants was straightforward. A key reason for this was that the principles, as they are defined by Geeraert (2018a), have been central to the ongoing debate in India on improving sport governance in NSFs. The proximity of the participants to that debate, in addition to their seniority and experience as governance actors, meant that they were highly familiar with the principles.

The researcher then began to work through the interview guide, which focused on illuminating the drivers and barriers of governance convergence. The interview guide was adapted depending on whether the interview was with an ExCo member or an independent. For the former, interview questions were tailored to their specific organizations, while for independents, the drivers and barriers of convergence were discussed in a more general sense. Questions included, for example, "what do you think has been driving the development of governance in national federations?" and "what barriers are there to the adoption of good governance practices in India?" The questions were deliberately open-ended to allow the interviewees to form their own perspectives on the drivers and barriers of convergence.

Four of the participants did not provide permission for their interview to be recorded, so notes were taken instead. For the others, the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews lasted 50 min on average. It is important to note that the interviews represented the perceptions of individuals expressed within an interview setting and do not necessarily reflect an external reality. Sport governance has been a sensitive topic in India, and the researcher often sensed that some interviewees who were members of ExCos preferred not to go into detail about certain issues that could reflect badly on colleagues or other actors working in their sport. Data triangulation via interviewing independents was thus crucial in enhancing the reliability of the findings.

In the Findings and Discussion section, the respondents and quotes are coded in the following format "S-A1," "L-B2," and "I-C3." The first letter denotes whether the participant was from a small federation, large federation, or independent organization. The second letter concerns the range of different organizations within a category, and the number indicates the range of participants within specific organizations.

Data Analysis

This study drew on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic analysis, which involved (a) familiarization with the data through reading and rereading the transcripts, (b) initial coding, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes to create a thematic map of the analysis, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report. This method was useful in that it allows researchers to adopt a theory-driven analytical approach. The different elements of the theoretical framework, underpinned by institutional theory, constituted the a priori themes. Data with the assistance of NVIVO 10 software (QSR International, Melbourne, Australia). The software facilitated the iterative process of establishing, reviewing, and modifying the main themes and subthemes. The whole research team was involved in rechecking the analysis to enhance the reliability of the findings.

Findings and Discussion

This study aimed to examine the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in Indian sport from an institutional perspective. A theoretical framework (Figure 1) was adapted to explain this phenomenon. Broadly, the interview data provide strong support for the framework. The results support the prediction that different levels of the framework (national institutional level, field level, and organizational actors) act as drivers and barriers simultaneously. In this section, the institutional forces driving convergence are analyzed first, and the barriers of convergence are discussed thereafter. Within the drivers and barriers subsections, the different institutional levels are analyzed in turn, beginning with the organizational field, followed by the national institutional environment, and finally, organizational actors.

Drivers of Convergence: Organizational Field

Coercive pressures. When asked to describe any factors that were driving the adoption of "good governance" in Indian sport, many participants from large federations referred to the influence of commercial sponsors. There was a common perception that sponsors want federations to practice good governance to ensure that their brand is represented in a competent and ethical manner. Furthermore, there was a view among the relevant participants that federations must comply with this expectation or they will be at risk of losing their financial support. An ExCo member of a large federation, for example, talked about how a lack of transparency can deter sponsors:

> Commercial institutions are saying to themselves "He has been involved with the federation for 20 years, we don't know how he runs it. There is no information on what happens at tournaments. There could be some questions about the financials." So they do not know what they are getting into or how their image will be represented. Then the safe thing to do is not get involved. (L-D2)

The previous quote illustrates how coercive isomorphic pressures to improve governance practices are placed on Indian NSFs by commercial sponsors operating within the organizational field of sport. This supports a central proposition of the theoretical framework (Figure 1), where coercive pressures from the field are said to influence governance convergence. The data also show that field-level coercive institutional pressure accentuates when corruption or governance failings are uncovered:

> There was some corruption which came to light through a whistle-blower. So, when all that hit the roof, the Federation was at a crossroad. Some sponsors walked away and more would have done the same . . . . So, we had to save the sport. And we had to let people know that we mean business. And it couldn't be that one man had the power to do everything. So what we did is we clipped the President's powers, we brought decision making on larger platforms. One person could not decide. (L-B2)

Coercive pressures exerted by sponsors only appeared to drive convergence among large NSFs. The participants from smaller federations did not report any pressures from sponsors because they had not yet attracted significant sponsorship deals. In turn, they claimed not to face the same kind of pressure from external organizations to alter their governance practices in line with normative global standards. Such insight represents a development to the existing body of work on good governance in sport, which has predominantly focused on measuring good governance against key indicators (Geeraert, 2018a; Pielke et al., 2020). Specifically, these findings advance the field by showing how institutional forces drive the adoption of good governance. Geeraert et al. (2014) showed that international federations and governments often influence the governance of NSFs. This study also built on that work by highlighting how different kinds of organizations, namely commercial sponsors, can play that role.

Mimetic pressures. In support of the theoretical framework (Figure 1), the data highlight the existence of mimetic pressures in Indian sport, which ultimately facilitates governance convergence. There did not appear to be a difference between large and small federations in terms of the prevalence of these pressures. One participant from a large federation discussed the imitation processes through which his organization converged with the social responsibility principle proposed by Geeraert (2018a):

> When we wanted to launch our grassroots and community initiatives . . . . We studied the models in the UK and Germany before we came up with something . . . . We ended up with something close to the German model, which is really well respected around the world. (I-D2)

Another participant discussed how Indian NSFs are converging with the good governance principles in a more general sense, with the aim of gaining legitimacy and subsequently attracting investment from commercial companies into their sports:

> When you have these international big commercial giants looking at you, and they are seeing the opportunity for a lot of growth in terms of the Indian economy . . . . Then obviously you need to fix certain things in the system, right. So, you'll attract that. (I-C1)

Despite this, in many Indian NSFs, there appeared to be little desire to engage in mimetic isomorphism. In such organizations, convergence is more likely to be driven by coercive rather than mimetic pressures. A prominent sport industry professional explicitly acknowledged this: "Governance is being imposed on [the federations] . . . . It is not happening by their own volition" (I-I1). The data offered valuable insight into why there is not a voluntary push to adopt the defined governance principles (for reasons of efficiency or legitimacy) in some NSFs. Namely, it is because organizational actors are mobilizing to protect their personal interests and reinforce the status quo (this issue is discussed in-depth in the "Barriers" section later).

A number of interviewees suggested that the general disinclination of some federation leaders to adopt the good governance principles by their own volition impacts the nature of convergence. While coercive pressures were considered to be effective in driving *de jure* convergence (e.g., constitutional rules), for there to be *de facto* convergence, there was a perception that powerful actors must personally see value in adopting good governance principles (i.e., there is mimetic rather than purely coercive pressure). One of the independent participants asserted this as follows:

> They [the federations] are under pressure from all sides, and yes, from the perspective of the constitutions there has been improvement. Whether it is then actually given effect is another matter. You still have people who are used to running it a certain way—sometimes for many, many years, and they will not want to change. So, I have my doubts. (I-D1)

The view expressed in the previous quote highlights how some Indian NSFs may be engaging in a form of "symbolic conformity," which involves the ceremonial adoption of certain structures due to coercive pressures, while internal behavior remains unchanged (Glynn & Abzug, 2002). Such behavior has been recognized in a range of other studies that have examined how organizations respond to isomorphic forces (Jamali & Neville, 2011; Kraatz & Love, 2009). These finding are also supported by Geeraert et al., (2014), who argued that self-regulation (i.e., an internal drive to adopt good governance policies) is absolutely instrumental if good governance is to be adopted in sport federations. The imposition of regulation by external bodies is not in itself sufficient.

The view that there is a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* convergence was, however, disputed by a large number of other interviewees, including many independents. Although almost all participants acknowledged that there have been issues in the past with constitutional rules being flouted, it was argued that the federations themselves and the Sports Authority of India now implement much stricter compliance mechanisms. As an ExCo member from a small federation stated, "there is a strict process of compliance throughout the year that is linked to our annual recognition" (S-F1). Thus, from this perspective, institutional forces are driving *de jure* and *de facto* convergence equally. That said, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the risk that ExCo interviewees may have been presenting an idealized picture when describing strong compliance with constitutional rules.

Normative pressures. The data suggest that normative isomorphism is a strong driver of governance convergence in Indian sport. This was particularly pertinent in large federations and, to a lesser extent, in small federations. The participants reported that one of the key ways in which Indian NSFs have developed in recent years is through the professionalization of their workforce. It was suggested by multiple interviewees that people with limited business training, administrative experience, or background in sport have traditionally controlled the governance and management of many Indian NSFs. However, this was said to be changing in recent years, with more Indians travelling internationally (e.g., to Australia and the United Kingdom) to study sport management and other pertinent subjects. The data suggest that, when these people return to take up roles in Indian NSFs, either at the ExCo or management levels, they are promoting the norms of good governance that are institutionalized in Western university academic programs. As put by a participant from a large federation:

> There is need for people who have done a masters degree in sport management to get involved in sports federation. In our federation, we have seen the benefits. We are updated with the best [governance] practices used all over the world. (L-A3)

Another participant suggested that international professional networks in the area of sports coaching have also influenced governance convergence among Indian NSFs:

> So, when [colleague] heard and saw the organization they had abroad, he wanted to bring that organization down to this country . . . . Tournament organization, the way elections are run, things like that. (S-C2)

The evidence presented here supports the theoretical framework (Figure 1) by illustrating how normative isomorphic forces influence governance convergence in Indian sport. Specifically, norms of good governance that are institutionalized in Western university academic programs and in international professional sport networks are suggested to have been diffused to the Indian context, thus facilitating governance convergence.

Previous sport governance research has predominantly analyzed the development of governance through this lens of professionalization, with governance considered a barometer against which the extent of professionalization can be measured (Dowling et al., 2014; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011, 2015). Such studies highlight stakeholder expectations and culture as causes of professionalization and suggest that this ultimately leads to the adoption of businesslike governance structures in sport (Clausen et al., 2018). The findings presented in the preceding sections build on the professionalization literature by highlighting the role of isomorphic forces in driving the development of governance. Furthermore, this study adds to the literature that uses institutional theory in sport. Scholars in this field have illustrated the impact of isomorphic forces on organizational structures (Edwards et al., 2009) and social media strategies (Naraine & Parent, 2016). The present study extends this by illustrating that isomorphic forces also drive global convergence of sport governance. The institutional perspective thus helps to form a more complete understanding of the global sport governance landscape.

Drivers of Convergence: National Institutional Pressures

The data show that governance convergence is also driven in Indian NSFs by pressures at the national institutional level. For example, many of the interviewees mentioned the role of India's Supreme Court (i.e., a feature of the political system) in imposing a new constitution on the BCCI. This resulted from a high-profile public interest litigation raised by a sport activist in light of concerns over the organization's governance practices. Despite resistance from the BCCI, the Supreme Court, acknowledging the central role of the BCCI in administering India's most popular sport, decided in favor of the petitioner. Wide-ranging governance reforms, drawn from global conceptions of "good governance," were subsequently enforced on the BCCI (Shekar & Saikia, 2016). As an independent interviewee noted, "the changes [to the constitution] have been root and branch, with strict rules around transparency and conflict of interest, amongst many other things" (I-D1). As Geeraert et al., (2014) noted, this form of regulatory pressure is needed from external bodies, along with internal self-regulation, if good governance standards are to be maintained in sport.

Many participants also cited the changing role of sport in India as a driver of governance convergence. It was mentioned frequently that Indians increasingly view sport as a way of improving health and fitness, they take interest in a wider range of sports, and they treat sport as a serious profession as opposed to merely a pastime. This cultural shift was said to be putting pressure on the federations. There was a strong consensus from across the sample that NSFs have had to enhance their policies and procedures (i.e., the internal accountability principle) in response to this change in attitude toward sport, with Indian society now expecting higher standards of administration and governance. This represents a coercive-type pressure, emanating from the national cultural system, and appeared to impact both small and large NSFs. The following quotes from ExCo members exemplify this view:

> Sport, is now an increasing part of daily life [in India]. Whether that be people jogging, going to the gym or playing amateur sport. And I think as people get more and more interested in sport, they demand better organization, better governance. (S-B1)

> Sport is not seen as a waste of time anymore. Richer kids are coming into sport, whereas in the past parents would say "concentrate on your education!" And their parents are well prepared, so if something is wrong, if there is some oppression or whatever, they are not averse to writing angry letters, and maybe even taking matters to court. Protecting yourself against that through good governance and procedures is very important now. (L-A4)

The theoretical framework proposes that governance convergence has the potential to be influenced by features of the national institutional environment through the diffusion and imposition of institutional norms. The evidence presented in this subsection supports that idea. In particular, India's cultural and political systems have been shown to act as drivers of convergence. Unlike in previous studies (Jamali & Neville, 2011), however, the financial and educational systems did not emerge as important drivers of institutional change. Furthermore, these findings contradict previous researchers (e.g., Matten & Moon, 2008), who have framed national contexts predominantly as forces of divergence. The present data, on the other hand, emphasize the propensity of national institutional environments to drive convergence.

Drivers of Convergence: Organizational Actors

The analysis shows that individual organizational actors have played a key role in driving convergence with good governance principles in some Indian NSFs. This has manifested as organizational leaders (namely CEOs, presidents, or similarly powerful actors) attempting to infuse new beliefs about how the organization should be governed in ExCo meetings and during informal events. This would appear to be a direct example of organizational actors seeking to establish new institutional forms by engaging in "invention" and "negotiation" counter-processes (as per the theoretical framework in Figure 1).

The behavior of organizational actors, as outlined above, suggests that they are acting as "institutional entrepreneurs" (Misangyi, Weaver, & Elms, 2008). Institutional entrepreneurs are actors who use social skill to overcome skepticism and persuade others to believe the accounts they advance about the benefits of their ideas (Dorado, 2005). In line with this definition of institutional entrepreneurship, one interviewee highlighted the importance of social skills and influence as crucial characteristics for any actors seeking to initiate governance changes in Indian NSFs: "To do that [adopt good governance], you need good leaders. Someone who is influential and has that charisma and power to change people" (L-A2). It should be noted, however, that the data suggest that institutional entrepreneurs are somewhat uncommon in Indian sport. This helps to explain, in part, why governance convergence is not occurring in a uniform way across the sector. If governance standards are to improve across Indian sport, there is a clear need to encourage more institutional entrepreneurship.

Commenting on the motivation of these institutional entrepreneurs, one participant stated, "it is really about one or two people who have been honest and want to make things better" (S-C1). However, further analysis indicates that deeper processes are facilitating this behavior. The organizational actors said to be promoting change are generally those that have been exposed to international organizations or networks in which good governance principles have long been institutionalized. This suggests that those networks or organizations may be influencing the behavior of the individual actors, which reflects a form of normative isomorphism. This insight, in which normative pressures at the field level influence the actions of individual actors within organizations, again reflects the interactive and multilayered nature of the theoretical framework.

Barriers of Convergence

While many features of the Indian sport's institutional environment are driving governance convergence, there are many other forces impeding this process. The participants from independent organizations were generally the most insightful when discussing barriers to convergence, while the participants from the federations were less forthcoming. This is unsurprising, given that the subject matter requires ExCo members to speak about their organization, colleagues, or themselves in a potentially negative manner. The value of interviewing independent actors was thus crucial in attaining a holistic understanding of the barriers of governance convergence in Indian sport. The data indicate that barriers to governance convergence include both top-down national institutional norms and bottom-up counter-processes instigated by organizational actors. These two forms of institutional pressure are discussed in the following sections.

The organizational field element of the theoretical framework is not discussed in this section on "Barriers to Convergence." Across the interviews, there was no evidence that Indian NSFs faced institutional pressure from the organizational field to maintain governance arrangements that contradict the principles proposed by Geeraert (2018a). This is arguably logical, given that the principles are institutionalized to a far greater extent among the powerful constituents of the sport field (e.g., sponsors and international federations) than in Indian NSFs. In those circumstances, isomorphic forces should be expected to facilitate the convergence (rather than divergence) of governance. The empirical evidence supports this. The participants conveyed the organizational field exclusively as a driver of convergence.

National institutional pressures. From the national institutional perspective, the cultural and political system of India appeared to act as barriers to convergence. As discussed earlier in the findings, the data show that India's cultural system also acts as a driver of convergence. The dual role of national culture as both a driver and barrier of governance convergence in NSFs should not be surprising, given that scholars have long acknowledged the tendency for culture to be laden with contradictions (Maitland, Hills, & Rhind, 2015). Research shows that culture does not typically provide straightforward and unambiguous behavioral "instructions." Rather, it influences (through processes of socialization and diffusion) the actions of organizations and actors in complex and paradoxical ways (Kondra & Hurst, 2009).

The participants discussed how gender equality in Indian sport governance, which is a key element of the societal responsibility and democratic processes principles (Geeraert, 2018a), is constrained by elements of India's cultural system. Many participants asserted that, in Indian culture, there is a strong expectation for women to take on domestic caregiver roles, particularly after marriage. This was said to limit the opportunities for women to pursue careers in the sport industry. The impact of gender norms on governance convergence appeared to be equally as prevalent in small and large federations. As one female participant commented,

> In India, once you get married there are so many pressures of looking after home and heart and all that. For me, I got in involved at a time when my children had left home and I had a lot of time on my hands. If they were smaller I would not have been able to get involved in the way I did. (S-E1)

There was a common perception that this cultural expectation is more embedded in Indian society than in Western countries. Unless or until this changes, the majority of participants argued that Indian NSFs will continue to lag behind Western sport organizations with regard to female representation in governance. This highlights how national institutional norms are acting as a constraint to field-level isomorphic pressures. While gender equality is increasingly seen as a core element of "good governance" in international sport, the data presented above show that national culture can mitigate the field-level isomorphic forces driving convergence with this principle. This corroborates the theoretical framework, where the national institutional environment is theorized to interact with organizations and actors through processes of socialization and the diffusion of institutional norms (Scott, 2008). In this context, it is India's patriarchist cultural norms that are being diffused to Indian NSFs and organizational actors, and this limits any coercive, mimetic, or normative pressures to improve gender equality in governance emanating from the organizational field. However, it should be noted that India is not alone in lacking gender diversity in governance. As Geeraert's (2018a) report shows, only 38% of the sampled NSFs have formal policies that require women to be represented in decision-making positions.

Furthermore, recent reports have highlighted a distinct lack of female representation in international sport federations (Geeraert et al., 2014).

Another feature of India's national institutional framework that appears to act as a barrier to governance convergence is a culture that emphasizes displaying respect to individuals who have a particular standing in society. It was frequently mentioned by the participants that, as a consequence of this broader cultural norm, individuals are regularly appointed to NSF ExCos without necessarily having the expertise to add value. Rather, they are appointed out of a display of respect due to their social status or a sense of loyalty from existing board members. Commonly, this has been manifested through the appointment of people in powerful political positions to federation boards, despite them having no background in sport or other skills or experiences that would allow them to contribute toward a federation's strategic aims. A number of participants claimed that this practice has led to many ExCos becoming oversized and inefficient, as one respondent noted: "there is this need for people to be accommodated for who they are . . . and it is totally inefficient" (S-H1). It emerged from the interviews that it is typical for NSF boards to have well in excess of 20 members.

The evidence previously presented supports the theoretical framework, in which national institutional pressures are theorized to, through processes of diffusion and imposition, constrain isomorphic forces driving governance convergence at the field level (Jamali & Neville, 2011). Thus, the evidence supports the notion of an interaction between the national context and the organizational field, where a culture of nepotism mitigates isomorphic pressures driving convergence. More broadly, these findings are corroborated by the broader institutional theory literature that has shown how embedded culture can negate isomorphic pressures in a diverse range of contexts, from corporations to nonprofits (Beckert, 2010; Kondra & Hurst, 2009).

The presence of politicians on NSF boards does not only appear to be reflective of India's cultural norms, but is also a consequence of the country's political systems. It was mentioned in a number of interviews that the government in India invariably owns sporting facilities (e.g., stadiums and training centers). Thus, India's political system is characterized by state control over infrastructure, and a recurring theme in the data was that recruiting politicians to boards can ease access to vital facilities:

> There's a reason why politicians are put as Presidents of a lot of federations. It's not only power, it's because . . . most infrastructure is government infrastructure. So almost all cricket pitches or cricket stadiums, almost all football stadiums and indoor arenas. If I want to do any major events, I cannot avoid the government. If I want to run a successful league, I need them onside. (I-E1)

As the previous comments indicate, the nature of India's political system is influencing the governance arrangements in some NSFs, where politicians are accommodated on boards because they can facilitate access to infrastructure. However, there was a common perception that this comes at the expense of having sporting experts in key governance roles who would offer greater strategic capability. The emphasis on state control thus appears to act as a barrier to convergence with so-called "good governance," in which having sport-specific expertise is prioritized (Geeraert, 2018a).

The data indicate that deficiencies in India's educational system may also be acting as a barrier to governance convergence. In particular, there was a perception that domestic sport management programs are underdeveloped in the country, and thus, India is lacking a key mechanism through which the importance of good governance principles is typically taught in other parts of the world. As one participant acknowledged, "We need to get more people learning sport business that can be a building block . . . . Right now you have courses in the big cities . . . but it is not a big market" (I-C1). However, as noted earlier in the findings, many Indians travel abroad to study sport management and thus good governance principles, and their impact on sport organizations are transfused to India through normative isomorphic pressures emanating from international educational networks. Despite this, the lack of established programs in the domestic context remains a barrier to convergence.

The analysis highlighted that the financial system underpinning the Indian sport context was another barrier to convergence. Participants from across the sample noted that Indian NSFs are predominantly dependent (with the exception of the BCCI) on grants from the central government as their principal source of income. Furthermore, there was a view that this means budgets are often constrained and, consequently, many Indian NSFs lack the resources to implement good governance practices. For instance, the accountability principle promotes the separation of governance and management roles. However, due to financial limitations, many NSFs struggle to implement such a separation. This was particularly problematic in small federations. This finding is corroborated by the professionalization literature, which has long illustrated the link between funding and weak governance structures (Nagel et al., 2015; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

These findings extend the sport governance literature by illuminating some of the barriers to convergence with so-called good governance. Existing research assessing such barriers has primarily done so through the prism of professionalization (Nagel et al., 2015). Such studies show that a lack of organizational resources and the traditional culture of sport as a volunteer-driven pastime act as barriers to professionalization and, subsequently, the adoption of formal governance structures (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). These findings, however, build on this insight by showing how institutional forces emanating from the national context mitigate convergence with good governance principles. Bearing in mind the findings presented in previous sections, this study has shown how the national institutional environment can act as both a driver and barrier to convergence simultaneously, with contradictory institutional norms being diffused to organizations. Again, this goes against previous research, which has primarily conceived of national contexts as barriers to field-level isomorphism (Matten & Moon, 2008).

Organizational actors. While Indian NSFs face pressure from their organizational field to adopt good governance, the data show that organizational actors often attempt to resist and mitigate these isomorphic forces (in Figure 1, this process is described as "invention and negotiation"). A prominent theme in the interviews was that individuals do this to protect their personal interests. The literature refers to this phenomenon as "rent-seeking," which means that "governance structures can persist even after they have become demonstrably suboptimal because of the presence and actions of parties who resist change, because it would reduce their private benefits of control" (Yoshikawa & Rasheed, 2009, p. 393). Two independent interviewees highlighted this, as follows:

> People are used to running those organizations the way they like. Essentially, like family run organizations. And they like

> the thrill of being in this powerful position in the public eye. That is what drives many people . . . . Those are the people who are resistant towards change, bringing in better governance, because they could lose their position. (I-C1)

> A lot of the time people are not the most qualified for those roles [executive board members], but there are nice perks and so people cling on. (I-E1)

Rent-seeking emerged as a significant barrier to *de jure* governance convergence in Indian sport. To illustrate this, many participants referred to how a new sport governance code for India, which was drafted by an expert working group in 2017, had not yet been implemented by the sports authorities. A common view among the independent interviewees was that this sport governance code, which is perceived to be robust, is not being implemented due to rent-seeking actions. The new code is known to encourage skill-based board appointments and block political influence in sport federations (Hussain, 2019). Yet, for the code to be implemented, politicians and bureaucrats must approve it. There was a common perception that approval has not be granted because those stakeholders stand to lose personally. One participant summarized this situation in these words:

> As you can imagine, there is very little political will to make it happen [implement the new sport governance code]. Because it means they are making themselves ineligible for powerful and prestigious positions. (I-H1)

The previous quote is indicative of the view that the rent-seeking actions of organizational actors are mitigating pressures on Indian NSFs, emanating from the organizational field, to adopt good governance principles. This provides further support for the theoretical framework (Figure 1), which proposes that organizational actors can, through social processes referred to as "invention and negotiation" (i.e., resistance and subversion), dilute isomorphic pressures placed on organizations from other organizations within their field (Jamali & Neville, 2011; Scott, 2008).

Rent-seeking also appeared to act as a barrier to *de facto* governance convergence. Although term limits (which represent a key aspect of the internal accountability principle) were said to now be common across Indian sport, some participants mentioned that these rules are often circumvented. It was suggested that, in some cases, individuals who have served the maximum number of years possible on an NSF ExCo encourage their close family members to succeed them. This allows them to achieve their goal of maintaining influence in federations indirectly. Thus, although there is compliance with term limit rules on paper, in practice, the rules are undermined. A representative from an independent organization acknowledged this: "There's always a suspicion that you have CEOs or Presidents coming and going, but the old guard are still pulling the strings behind the scenes." (I-D1)

The perceived rent-seeking actions of individuals, as illustrated in the above quotes, appear to obstruct the isomorphic pressures driving governance convergence in Indian sport. The findings thus show how Indian NSFs are exposed to contradictory top-down and bottom-up institutional forces. These forces are suggested to simultaneously drive and mitigate governance convergence, creating a form of "institutional duality," as suggested by Kostova and Roth (2002). The findings mirror the theoretical framework, in which governance convergence is predicted to be influenced by a complex institutional environment where structures and actors on multiple levels interact to shape the extent of governance convergence. Specifically, the rent-seeking actions of NSF leaders represent an example of, as Jamali and Neville (2011) asserted, lower level actors changing "the contexts within which they operate" (p. 603) in response to higher level institutional pressures.

These findings extend the sport governance literature by highlighting the barriers of convergence with good governance. Although previous research has pointed out barriers to governance through the lens of professionalization (Nagel et al., 2015), this research has illuminated counter-processes, such as rent-seeking, that mitigate the institutional drivers of convergence with good governance. Again, this is significant because governance has been problematic in many sport contexts (Forster, 2006) and convergence with the principles of good governance could improve organizational effectiveness.

Conclusion

This research set out to examine the drivers and barriers of governance convergence—defined as the adoption of so-called good governance principles—in Indian sport. An adaption of Jamali and Neville's (2011) multilevel institutional framework was used to explain these phenomena. The findings show that the framework (Figure 1) is an effective tool for explaining the drivers and barriers of governance convergence in Indian sport.

The first contribution of this study is the development of a framework that explains the process of how governance convergence occurs in sport. The framework illuminates the drivers and barriers of convergence from an institutional perspective. This represents an important extension of the literature on good governance in sport. While previous research has focused predominantly on how good governance can be measured (Geeraert et al., 2014), this study analyzes the antecedents of convergence. This contribution is significant, given the link between implementing good governance principles and organizational effectiveness (Geeraert, 2019). Furthermore, although previous research has highlighted the role of international sport federations and governments in influencing the governance of NSFs, this study has shown how different kinds of organizations—namely, commercial sponsors—can play a prominent role driving governance change in NSFs. In doing so, this study has helped to formulate a more holistic understanding of how convergence with good governance occurs in international sport.

This study makes its second contribution by generating new insight into how isomorphism works in the sport context. Use of the isomorphism concept and institutional theory is well established in sport management research. However, as Washington and Patterson (2011) argued, those studies typically only show that isomorphism processes are at work in sport, while failing to analyze how those processes work. This study addresses that gap by demonstrating how the isomorphism of governance systems in sport is influenced by a complex interplay of drivers and barriers emanating from three different institutional levels. This complex process leads convergence and divergence to coexist in dynamic ways. Furthermore, this study has offered new insight to institutional theory by showing how national institutional environments can act as drivers and barriers of isomorphism simultaneously. This helps to advance the broader conversation on institutional theory, which until now, has proposed national contexts to be constraints to isomorphic forces emanating from the organizational field (Jamali & Neville, 2011; Matten & Moon, 2008; Scott, 2008).

This study makes a third contribution by examining sport governance in the unfamiliar context of India, and the findings have implications for Indian sport practice. Leaders in Indian sport set on bringing good governance principles into the sector could learn from this study by developing strategies to overcome the barriers identified (i.e., rent-seeking actions and cultural norms). Such strategies may include policy initiatives, but far more pertinent seems to be shifting cultural attitudes toward good governance principles, including transparency and accountability. This is naturally a more challenging endeavor, but it must be pursued if Indian sport is to achieve convergence in a *de facto* sense. Indian sport could also benefit by tracking its progress against key good governance indicators. Geeraert (2018a) provided a robust mechanism through which to do this.

There are limitations to this study that warrant consideration. First, the research has adopted a somewhat narrow conceptualization of convergence. Houlihan (2012) noted the tendency for researchers to adopt overly simplistic definitions of convergence that do not account for the potentially various dimensions of the concept in a particular context. This study heeded that warning to an extent by acknowledging the crucial distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* convergence. However, there is the potential to break down the concept of governance convergence into more specific dimensions. Houlihan (2012) proposed that sport policy convergence occurs across seven dimensions (motives, aspirations, values, inputs, implementation, momentum, and impact). It may be useful to consider some of the dimensions proposed by Houlihan (2012) in future studies on sport governance convergence to build on this research and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Examining a range of drivers and barriers of governance convergence in this study has inevitably meant that each factor could not be analyzed in significant depth. There is scope for further studies to focus in on different elements of these findings. In particular, future research could examine in detail the phenomenon of rent-seeking by directors, which has received little attention in the sport governance literature. Researchers could also seek to assess the explanatory value of the framework by applying it to other sport governance contexts.

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