JOURNAL OF GLOBAL SPORT MANAGEMENT
https://doi.org/10.1080/24704067.2024.2327067

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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A Conceptual Model to Understand and Assess International Sport Federations' Organizational Performance

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ABSTRACT

While national sport federations' organizational performance has received considerable academic attention both in terms of conceptual and empirical studies, organizational performance of international sport federations remains undefined and thus unmeasurable. Due to repeated governance scandals in international sport federations, stakeholders' calls for greater accountability intensified, raising the question of what should be measured and monitored and how. Considering the important role of international sport federations from a social, economic, and environmental perspective, this paper tries to remedy the lack of a conceptual model to understand and measure their organizational performance holistically. To grasp the complexity of international sport federations' activities and environment, definitions, performance dimensions and examples of appropriate measures were identified through a literature review and combined in the multi-dimensional process model. The proposed model includes four variables (input, throughput, outcome, feedback) and 12 dimensions. It addresses persisting theoretical, methodological, and empirical challenges in measuring international sport federations' organizational performance. Several interviews with experts from within and outside international sport federations were conducted to test and adjust the conceptual model. The paper provides the first comprehensive analytical model that conceptualizes international sport federations' organizational performance. It allows academics and practitioners to understand, monitor and manage international sport federations organizational performance holistically.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 30 June 2023
Revised 5 January 2024
Accepted 22 February 2024

KEYWORDS
Organizational performance; international sport federations; institutional theory; multi-dimensional model; legitimacy

1. Introduction

International sport federations (ISF) are the custodians of international sporting rules and oversee the governance of their global sport system. They commit themselves to monitoring and developing their sport at world level. When ISFs occupy the headlines, the reasons are often unflattering: massive cost overruns of mega sporting events and increasing resistance of residents of bid nations and cities to

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stage these events (Scheu et al., 2021); governance scandals and cases of misconduct that have tarnished the reputations of some of the biggest sport organizations, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Football Federation (FIFA), and World Athletics. Associated with these negative headlines have been increased calls for greater accountability and transparency to stakeholders and society. While these evolutions have pressured IFSs and umbrella sport organizations to make proof of sound management practices and responsible utilization of resources, the question of their global organizational performance and, ultimately, their societal impact remains unanswered.

The main purpose of this paper is to draw on existing literature to conceptualize organizational performance of ISFs holistically. The concept of organizational performance is a well-researched topic in for-profit literature. Over recent decades, the non-profit sector has also acknowledged the growing need to respond to stakeholders' calls for accountability by providing reliable data on their performance. Contrary to for-profits, non-profit organizations' (NPO) primary mission is not profit maximization but generally some kind of social betterment. Academics have debated appropriate and useful measures of performance for NPOs for over two decades (Boateng et al., 2016; Forbes, 1998; Lecy et al., 2012; Poister, 2003). There is still no consensus on what actually constitutes NPOs' performance, and how it should be measured efficiently and effectively (Moxham, 2014). The heterogeneous nature of NPOs makes the conceptualization and measurement of their performance particularly difficult (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001). This paper neither seeks nor pretends to be a ready-to-use tool to measure ISFs' organizational performance.

2. Review of Literature on Organizational Performance

All organizations are designed to achieve specific objectives. To succeed in this task, organizations have to respond to various threats, seize the opportunities of their specific environment and use the available resources efficiently and effectively (Frankel, 2008). Performance measures enable organizations to systematically monitor progress toward defined goals, make adjustments if necessary and take informed decisions, thus increasing the likelihood of improved performance (Poister, 2003). Generally speaking, organizational performance describes an organization's capacity to achieve its goals (Sowa et al., 2004) and thus organizational success. But organizational performance also lies in the eye of the beholder as it is a subjective construct (Herman & Renz, 2008). The aim of this section is to provide an overview of how organizational performance is conceptualized and measured in NPOs in general and in non-profit sport governing bodies (SGB) in particular.

2.1. Organizational Performance Measurement in the Non-Profit Sector

Various tools have been developed over the years to measure the performance of for-profit organizations, including the balanced scorecard (BSC), the European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence Model, and the Economic Value-Added measure. In 2001, Kaplan (2001) reviewed the BSC and introduced non-financial metrics

such as relationships, processes, and strategy. Moore (2003) called this a welcome relief for NPOs. Though for-profit organizations increasingly integrate social and environmental performance, financial performance remains the dominant measure. The evaluation of NPOs' performance has always been more problematic and controversial (Boateng et al., 2016; Forbes, 1998; Glassman & Spahn, 2012; Sowa et al., 2004). Instead of pursuing financial goals, NPOs pursue a social or societal aim, which is often fuzzy, intangible, and sometimes even contradictory, thus making goal attainment particularly difficult to evaluate (Forbes, 1998; Lecy et al., 2012). Scholars often describe the organizational performance of NPOs as their ability to acquire the resources necessary for their survival (Boateng et al., 2016) and to use these resources efficiently and effectively to fulfil their mission (Baruch & Ramalho, 2006; McDonald, 2007).

As NPOs' missions differ and make it difficult to define an overall measure of success that holds true for all NPOs (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), various performance measurement models have been developed. The four most common models are: goal model, system resource model, internal process model, and multiple constituency model. The goal model is based on the idea that organizations are designed to achieve specific goals. Performance is measured in terms of how successful the organization is in meeting these goals (Forbes, 1998; Sowa et al., 2004). The often criticized limitation of the goal model in terms of considering organizations' dependence on external resources gave rise to the system resource model (Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967). In this model, performance is expressed in an organization's ability to compete for scarce and valued resources within a given environment. Instead of only looking at inputs and outcomes, the process model (Pfeffer, 1977) for its part focuses on the process of transforming resources to achieve a specific output. Efficient internal processes and procedures are the core measures of organizational performance. And finally, the multiple constituency model assumes that organizations are composed of and influenced by various interest groups and that performance is contingent on the varying perceptions of these groups. The four models have in common that they only look at one dimension of performance.

Though the models offer certain theoretical and empirical advantages, unidimensional approaches fail to capture the complexity of NPOs. Today, the multi-dimensional approach to organizational performance is widely acknowledged. The best-known multi-dimensional approach is the competing values model developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983). The multidimensional and integrated model of nonprofit organizational effectiveness developed by Sowa et al. (2004), on which our model is largely based, constitutes yet another approach. It assesses management and program effectiveness by looking in each case at capacities (structures and processes) and outcomes (goals) using both objective and perceptual measures. The combination of both measures allows for a more holistic understanding of the construct of organizational performance.

2.2. Organizational Performance Measurement of National Sport Federations

Assessing national sport federations' (NSF) performance is a recurring topic in academic literature (Barth et al., 2018). The staging of major international sport

events and international sporting success have become increasingly important for nations in terms image and geopolitics (De Bosscher et al., 2006; Reiche, 2015). Governments need to apply some sort of evaluation criteria to assist NSFs in generating international sporting success and to facilitate the distribution of grants to assist this process. In turn, government funding requires accountability and transparency regarding how NSFs use the funding. Consequently, NSFs' performance has attracted considerable interest among scholars in terms of conceptualization (e.g. Bayle & Madella, 2002; Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Winand et al., 2014) and evaluation (Madella et al., 2005; O'Boyle & Hassan, 2015).

NSFs are generally evaluated against the impact of their programs, notably as regards their sporting success in international competitions (De Bosscher et al., 2006), and their ability to attract new members and increase activities for their members. Various performance evaluation models developed for NPOs have been applied since the 1990s to assess the performance of NSFs, including the system resource model (Papadimitriou, 2002), the process model (Bayle & Robinson, 2007), the goal model (Millar & Stevens, 2012), the multiple constituency model (Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000), and models using composite indicators to appraise elite sport policies (De Bosscher, 2018; De Bosscher et al., 2007). The number of models used to evaluate NSFs' performance highlights the difficulty of defining the common ground of what should be measured, how and for what purpose. Also, only few studies have put these models into practice (Barth et al., 2018).

2.3. Organizational Performance Measurement of International Sport Federations

ISFs have become important actors in the global economy (Chappelet, 2018; Clausen et al., 2018). Their operating environment has changed drastically over the last three decades. The context in which ISFs pursue their mission is very different to that of NSFs. Many ISFs have grown from small organizations run purely by volunteers to large hybrid organizations with multiple stakeholders (Geeraert et al., 2015) and a mix of paid professionals and volunteers (Clausen et al., 2018). ISFs experience less governmental pressure to perform than NSFs as they do not receive direct public funding (Clausen et al., 2018). Yet, the commodification of sport has accelerated competition between ISFs, and pressure by a growing number of stakeholders has increased. The many stakeholders – including member federations, athletes, sponsors, and society at large – have varying expectations and beliefs, and thus different perceptions of ISFs' performance. The responsibility and engagement with multiple stakeholders mean that ISFs juggle numerous expectations. This makes it particularly challenging to define whose expectations should be prioritized to achieve strategic objectives that align with the ISF's mission. The Union of European Football Association (UEFA) is one of the first ISFs to have conceptualized and measured one aspect of its organizational performance. Through the combined expertise of an advisory panel, a SROI (social return on investment) model was developed to demonstrate the value of the benefits of amateur football participation (UEFA, 2020). The model mapping a total

of 23 economic, social and health measurable outcomes can be applied at the national, regional, district, club and football program level.

There is still a conceptual void in academic literature concerning both the conceptualization and the measurement of ISFs' global organizational performance. The paper tries to remedy this lack. For this purpose, we first suggest a definition of ISFs' global organizational performance. ISFs have a triple mission: govern, develop and organize their sport. A fourth goal, which is increasingly included in ISFs' vision statement, is to produce societal benefits. ISFs' mission and vision statements broadly define what the organization strives to achieve in the long term. They often refer to a vague social betterment such as 'globalize, popularize and democratize football for the benefit of the entire world' (FIFA, 2021). Based on the above, we propose the following definition of SGBs' organizational performance: '*the ability to obtain resources and the efficient internal processing of these resources to fulfill the organization's mission of governing, developing, and organizing their sport, resulting in a form of societal contribution that enhances the organization's legitimacy in the eyes of relevant stakeholders*'.

3. Conceptual Framework

ISFs' organizational performance and the pressure they experience to be performant in the eyes of influential actors of a dominant logic are closely linked to their institutional context. The conceptual framework we propose is grounded in institutional theory. Institutional theory is well-established in sport-management literature *via* the concepts of legitimacy, isomorphism and institutionalization (Robertson et al., 2022). More recent research argues that actors are not simply enduring institutional pressures, they can also shape institutional arrangements. Robertson et al. (2022) highlight the increased focus on agency within institutional research in sport. Going beyond the macrolevel-perspective (why are organizations similar?), this turn allows for a more holistic approach to institutional questions by further including the institutional logics collective and individual actors have of an organization and how they influence the organization (how and why do actors use, maintain, modify/disrupt rules and norms?) (Agyemang et al., 2018; Nite & Edwards, 2021).

ISFs operate in similar institutional environments and are thus subject to similar institutional pressures. Most of them are based in Switzerland. They have several and sometimes competing logics: social (e.g. contributing to health, development and education), business (e.g. selling of event and broadcasting rights), (geo)political (e.g. governmental funding of national sport governing bodies, boycotts). Bayle and Robinson (2007) therefore refer to SGBs as 'hybrid organizations'. Institutional actors are the carriers of institutional logics. They may have different interests and point of views which shape their decision-making. The conceptual framework on ISFs' organizational performance builds on two assumptions stemming from institutional theory: firstly, ISFs have become increasingly *isomorphic*. Public authorities (e.g. national law), umbrella organizations (IOC, ASOIF[1] and other regulatory bodies) as well as media and the general public can exert coercive pressure on ISFs through their ability to align the ISF with accepted rules and standards (governance). Mimetic

pressures can be seen in the copying of ISFs that are considered as being successful (e.g. professionalization, sustainability). And normative pressures emerge as the result of a high exchange of employees between ISFs, resulting in a transfer of know-how. Secondly, ISFs seek to maintain or regain *legitimacy*. Legitimacy is a social construct that increases organizational survival and positively affects other aspects of organizational success (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as 'a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions' (p. 574). ISFs' legitimacy as self-regulating non-profit organizations has come into question due to multiple governance scandals.

The dynamics associated with these two concepts have become the principal drivers of key performance indicators (KPIs) ISFs use to evaluate their events, specific programs and organizational strategies. KPIs presuppose the existence of strategic and operational goals. They allow to quantitatively measure progress towards the intended goals and objectives. However, they do not explain how different variables such as input, throughput and outcome are interrelated. The purpose of this paper is to conceptualize ISFs' organizational performance holistically.

We reject the use of the four main unidimensional performance models in the context of ISFs due to their limitations. As regards the *goal model*, objective measurement of ISFs' goal attainment is difficult as these organizations have multiple stakeholders which may pursue different and sometimes even conflicting goals. While the goal model focuses on the ends, the *system resource model* mainly focuses on the means. However, the successful acquisition of financial and human resources does not necessarily equal organizational performance. The *internal process model* puts an emphasis on the organization's health, its smooth internal functioning. However, the model ignores that internal conflicts and external pressures may as much be a trigger of organizational change and increase performance as a well-functioning human resource management may. And finally, the *multiple constituency model* acknowledges that stakeholders may exert considerable pressure on an organization. However, constituency preferences cannot be measured adequately.

Taking into account above considerations, a multidimensional approach to measure ISFs' organizational performance was deemed most appropriate as it has more explanatory power (O'Boyle & Hassan, 2015; Winand et al., 2014). Similar to Winand et al. (2014) attempt to combine different views into a unified model, our proposed multidimensional and integrated model of ISFs' organizational performance (Figure 1) draws on traditional approaches with the objective of overcoming their limitations. The model comprises four variables which are linked to traditional performance models: input (system resource model), throughput (process model), outcome (goal model) and feedback (multiple constituency model). Potential performance criteria within each variable were determined based on a review of sport management literature, reports and other documents produced by or about ISFs. To reduce the multitude of aspects according to their relevance, we conducted interviews with managing directors of three ISFs (BWF, FIS, IWF),[2] three umbrella organizations (ASOIF, WADA,[3] ITA[4]) and with one renowned academic researcher.

We then defined indicators for each of the 12 dimensions through a two-phase approach. Following Sowa et al. (2004) suggestion, both objective and perceptual

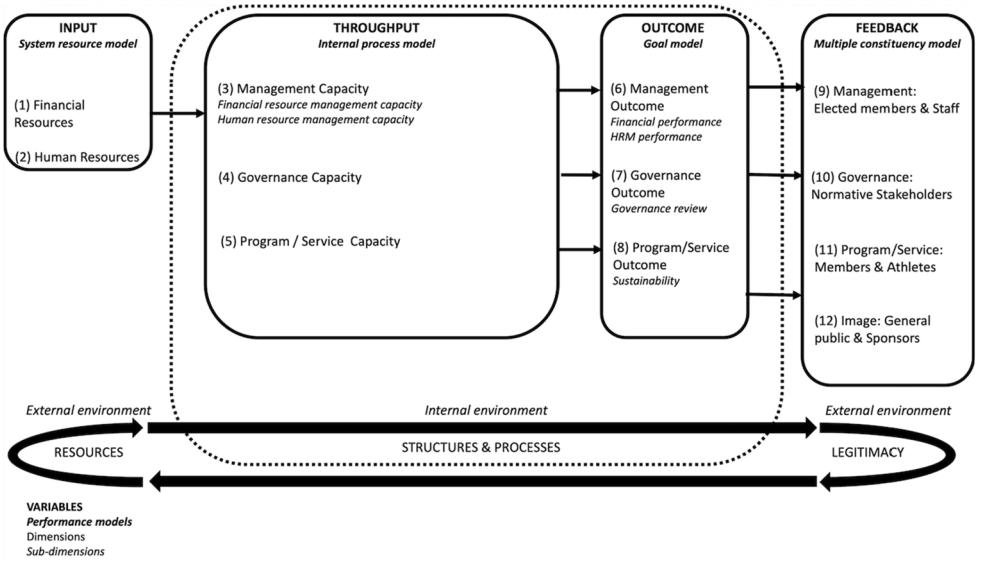


Figure 1. Global organizational performance model of ISFs – GOP.

indicators were included. Firstly, we conducted desk research. Data sources stem from three main streams of information: existing performance research and frameworks in the NPO literature in general (e.g. Kaplan, 2001; Poister, 2003; Sowa et al., 2004), performance research in sport management (e.g. Barth et al., 2018; Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Winand et al., 2014), and practical examples (e.g. UCI[5] Sustainability Report, European Athletics Event Impact Report). Desk research resulted in a total of 50 indicators. Secondly, to validate these indicators, we carried out an expert validation process. A total of five academic experts and four practitioners provided feedback including a rating of the indicators (basic, advanced, not relevant) and adding indicators that were missing in their opinion. The experts were chosen due to their academic and field experience with the topic.

Academic experts had a rather homogenous perception of the constituents of ISFs organizational performance, whereas practitioners' perception was very heterogeneous. The latter are influenced by their professional role, their experiences and interests and have less critical distance. Based on the expert validation, we have revised the list resulting in a total of 41 indicators: 18 Level 1 and 23 additional Level 2 indicators (Appendix A). Level 1 indicators constitute basic performance information that all IFs, regardless of their size, life cycle or level of professionalization should be able to provide (e.g. number of employees, active members). Level 2 indicators constitute advanced information (e.g. evidence of social contributions to health, education etc.). The more professionalized an ISF is, the more of the Level 2 information it should be able to provide.

3.1. Input

Sport organizations depend on external actors to acquire resources that are necessary to carry out their activities. Input relates to the financial and human

resources an organization acquires and commits to sustain its functioning and achieve intended outcomes. Organizations' survival further depends on their capacity to manage interdependencies. Consequently, their freedom is limited to the degree they can satisfy actors that provide them with the necessary resources. Resource acquisition through exchange with the environment constitutes the central performance dimension of the system resource model (Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967). Studies on NSFs' organizational performance generally distinguish two types of resources (Chelladurai, 1987; Madella et al., 2005; Winand et al., 2014): human and financial resources.

Historically, ISFs' main financial input has been membership fees and voluntary work. Today, ISFs employ professionals, their events have become increasingly profitable and Olympic ISFs receive a share of the Olympic Games' revenue. Therefore, ISFs' resource acquisition strategy has changed. Generating revenue is today crucial for ISFs to finance their activities and programs. Commercial revenues can help NPOs to become financially stable systems (Suykens et al., 2019). Clausen et al. (2018) have demonstrated the importance of event revenues in Olympic ISFs' business model. Input of human resources relates to the hiring of professional staff and the work of volunteers (Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Clausen et al., 2018). The need for specific skills and qualifications in ISFs has made the hiring of professional staff almost indispensable. Paid staff have gradually taken over a growing number of roles that were traditionally fulfilled by volunteers. Nevertheless, volunteers remain crucial human resources for sport organizations.

3.2. Throughput

Though financial and human resources are important for an organization to survive, organizational performance is largely determined by the way in which these resources are subsequently used (De Bosscher et al., 2006). Following the multidimensional model developed by Sowa et al. (2004), the throughput variable of the proposed model assesses the structures and processes in place to achieve organization-specific goals. In addition to the two dimensions of management and program capacity proposed by Sowa and colleagues, we include the dimension of governance capacity. While management relates to the control of day-to-day operations and allocation of resources, governance is about setting goals as well as establishing and overseeing an accountability framework. In the wake of numerous governance scandals, ISFs' governance is being looked at with an increasingly critical eye (Chappelet, 2018). Scandals have compelled the IOC to monitor ISFs' governance practices, both for its own reputation and to promote a better culture of governance among ISFs.

3.2.1. Management Capacity

Management capacity can be divided into two subdimensions: financial and human resource management capacity. The first describes how well an organization manages its financial resources to achieve desired outcomes. As selling event hosting fees,

broadcasting rights and sponsorship deals has become increasingly profitable, ISFs have come to largely depend on private sources of revenue (Clausen et al., 2018). While particularly popular sports attract financial resources more easily, smaller Olympic ISFs depend heavily on the Olympic revenue distribution. Rather than looking at overall revenues, Wicker and Breuer (2013) suggest that non-profit sport organizations should focus on revenue diversification. Revenue diversification can help NPOs reduce revenue volatility (Carroll & Stater, 2009). A focus should therefore be on the number and relative importance of a federation's income sources as well as allocation of resources. A transparent cost structure further increases the ISF's accountability (ASOIF, 2022; Henry & Lee, 2004).

The concept of human resource management (HRM) emerged in the early twentieth century (Rotich, 2015). HRM not only describes the process of recruiting, employing, training/developing and compensating people, it is also about strategies to retain them and development of workplace policies. The effect of HRM on organizational performance is often linked to the idea of employee involvement and commitment (Wood & Wall, 2007). Properly managed human resources ultimately benefit the organization. While this belief is now fairly recognized in the business world, it is not necessarily the case for sport organizations. A study by Horch and Schütte (2003) on the skills of sport managers in German sport clubs and sport federations revealed that paid managers see HRM as an accessory skill rather than a necessary qualification. Yet, growing professionalization in ISFs requires managers to adopt certain managerial instruments such as strategic planning and people management. Several subtopics lend themselves to assess HRM at the throughput level: recruitment, retention strategies, training of individuals, diversity management.

3.2.2. Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Considering the need for specialized individuals, academics advocate for sport organizations to adopt recruitment and retention strategies for both paid staff (Bayle & Robinson, 2007) and volunteers (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Østerlund, 2013), for instance by defining specific skills and expertise the applicants should contribute. Employee skills are key for an organization's success. To recruit skilled employees, a workplace needs to be attractive. Workplace attractiveness can be analyzed by looking at the number of applicants for different job positions and turnover rates. ISFs also need to ensure they have sufficient and qualified volunteers. This includes both board members and sporting officials. Firstly, board members should be elected based on complementary knowledge and skills. Secondly, as board members are not primarily motivated by financial reward, ISFs should create an environment that fosters board members' commitment. And thirdly, the CEO-board dynamic – board-led, CEO-led, balanced (Ferkins et al., 2009; Hoye, 2006) – may have a substantial influence on the strategic capability of the board (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). Ensuring the stability of voluntary engagement of sporting officials is a recognized challenge in sport management literature. Retention efforts may reduce recruitment efforts (Cuskelly et al., 2006).

3.2.3. Training of Individuals

Sport organization's performance is also determined by its capacity to develop human capital through the training of individuals (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Millar & Stevens, 2021). Millar and Stevens (2021) analysis of Canadian NSFs demonstrates that the training of individuals results in a positive performance change. Employee development can increase job satisfaction and, ultimately, the organizational capability of the federation. Sporting officials, for their part, generally acquire expertise in their free time. To ensure these volunteers are adequately qualified to support strategic sport development outcomes, sport organizations should offer them training programs and initiatives (Cuskelly et al., 2006).

3.2.4. Diversity Management

Diversity management includes both workforce in general and gender in particular. Even though the potential of gender diversity to enhance organizational performance has been recognized, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions in SGBs (Lee & Cunningham, 2019; Wicker et al., 2020). Several sport management scholars advocate for greater gender diversity efforts (Adriaanse, 2016). Two measures seem appropriate to assess ISFs' gender diversity results: firstly, the percentage of women in decision-making positions and secondly, evidence of actions taken by the ISF to eliminate diversity imbalances (e.g. quotas, equal pay). Diversity management also includes workforce diversity in terms of gender, race and age. Investigating employee diversity management practices in Division III intercollegiate athletic institutions, Fink et al. (2003) found that a proactive approach to employee diversity positively impacts individual outcomes, organizational creativity and increases the organization's capacity to attract and retain talented employees.

3.2.5. Governance Capacity

The demand for increased accountability due to numerous governance scandals in ISFs resulted in ASOIF's 'Review of IF Governance'. The review provides measurable, comparable information about governance practices in Olympic ISFs and their evolution in this regard (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2019). It distinguishes five dimensions of governance: transparency, integrity, democracy, development, and control mechanisms. Transparency relates to measurements of disclosure, including statutes, rules and regulations, organizational structure, strategy, information about members and officials, financial data as well as reports on decision-making (ASOIF, 2022). The concept of integrity in sport still lacks a precise definition (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2013). ASOIF notably looks at measures put in place by the ISF to guarantee the integrity of its sport and main stakeholders, such as having 'a unit or officer in charge of ensuring that the IF abides with the WADA World Anti-Doping Code', or gender balance in the board (ASOIF, 2022). Democracy encompasses, among other indicators, democratic processes and policies to elect the president and board members, term limits for elected officials and the representation of key stakeholders. For the relatively broad concept of development, ASOIF makes no distinction between development of or through sport. ASOIF includes education, environment, legacy, anti-discrimination, and disabled sport. ISFs should ensure the allocation of resources

for development is transparent and monitor their subsequent use. Control mechanisms assess to what degree the ISF applies internal controls and appropriate procedures to its own activities and decisions. This can be done through a system of checks and balances, including a separation of power between the management and the board (Geeraert et al., 2014), or by the existence of an independent audit committee.

3.2.6. Program/Service Capacity

Program/service capacity evaluates 'how well programs are designed and operated' (Sowa et al., 2004). ISF's programs/services can be broadly categorized into two domains: social/societal programs (e.g. fostering regular physical activity, environmental sustainability) and sport development performance (e.g. membership increase, event calendar). In line with Sowa and colleagues, we suggest putting the focus on two measures: firstly, financial and human resources the ISF allocates to a program/service and secondly, means employed by the ISF to document change triggered or accelerated by a program/service.

3.3. Outcome

Output and outcome are often used interchangeably, yet they are different. Output and intermediate outputs describe the services effectively delivered without measuring their impact. Outcome describes the realization of expected long-term results, the actual added value. The model only refers to outcomes. Outcome dimensions are congruent with the three throughput dimensions of management, governance and program/service capacity.

3.3.1. Management Outcome

Management structures and processes are supposed to support and drive organizational success (Sowa et al., 2004). For the staff to transform inputs into outputs and outcomes, organizations need adequate management structures. Structures constitute a coordination tool to ensure the necessary work is done. Capable organizations have a strong financial and human resource management. In the proposed model, management outcome as the expression of the success of ISFs' management structures and processes encompasses two sub-dimensions: financial performance and HRM performance.

3.3.2. Financial Performance

To maintain and develop their services, ISFs need to be financially viable. Three documents provide information about ISFs' financial performance: balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement. Using these documents, we suggest to adapt the four financial ratios proposed by Winand et al. (2012) for NSFs to assess the financial performance of ISFs. Firstly, revenue diversification: as ISFs do not receive direct public funding, Winand and colleagues' first and third category (public fund dependence, attraction of resources) can be combined to 'revenue

diversification'. Revenue diversification can be measured by dividing the various revenue streams by total revenue to determine their respective weight. Secondly, financial balance and reserves: 'financial balance is measured by ratios of benefits (total revenue divided by total expenses) and benefits in comparison with revenues (net revenues divided by total revenue)' (Winand et al., 2012, p. 230) and is an indicator of an organization's financial stability. We suggest to add reserves as these may serve as a contingency plan, especially when dealing with future uncertainty and in times of lower revenue. Thirdly, service investment: ISFs are mandated by their members to develop the sport, oversee sporting rules and conduct the overall governance of the sport. The two primary measurements are non-management expenses divided by total expenses, and the membership financial return. Membership financial return refers to the ISF's spending for its members and is calculated by dividing members and elite services investment through total expenses (Winand et al., 2012).

3.3.3. HRM Performance

In the 1990s, the US Department of Labor (1993) coined the term 'high performance work organization' in reference to organizations that foster a performance culture based on employee involvement and incentives. Following this, scholars and practitioners began to merge HRM with high performance management (Wood & Wall, 2007). As ISFs are essentially service sector organizations, the human factor and thus HRM plays a central role in the achievement of organizational performance. One of the most frequently used and most simple indicators for HRM performance is the organization's employee turnover rate (Darwish & Singh, 2013).

3.3.4. Governance Outcome

The concepts of governance and organizational performance are interrelated (Parent & Hoye, 2018). Following calls for better governance in sport, a plethora of governance principles and indicators has emerged in recent years. Governance outcome should not only describe whether the ISFs has adopted good governance principles, but also whether practices are effectively implemented. Two measures are deemed appropriate to assess ISFs in this regard: firstly, ISFs' performance in the ASOIF 'Review of IF Governance' and secondly, current or recent scandals and misconducts. The reviews are an indicator for good/better governance and allow to establish time series indicating ISFs' progress. Based on the ASOIF reviews, the IOC provisionally withdrew the recognition of the international boxing association (IBA) in June 2019. In June 2023, and due to continuous failure to fulfill Olympic governance standards, IBA became the first ISF to have been expelled from the Olympic movement. As the review is based on ISFs' voluntary self-assessments and reviewed by a sports governance consultancy company, scandals and misconducts are suggested as an additional indicator. ISFs may score well in the review because governance principles have been formally adopted, thus providing the organization an external, symbolic legitimization. Yet formal adoption is not to be equated with actual and effective implementation (Geeraert, 2019, 2021). Constandt and Willem (2021) question for instance the effectiveness of codes of ethics in sport organizations and warn against

their misuse as hypocritical lip service if the development of codes of ethics is not accompanied by measures to effectively implement and enforce them. Governance scandals and bad press on any form of misconduct related to an ISF seem an appropriate compromise to remedy some limitations of the ASOIF governance review.

3.3.5. Program/Service Outcome

ISFs' contribution to society is more than a question of goodwill. It is a moral obligation and sets an important benchmark to measure their organizational performance. The increasing business objectives of ISFs and revenues accrued from commercial activities intensify the need to explain the socio-economic benefits delivered by these NPOs. The degree to which ISFs achieve their program and service objectives can be used to assess their performance in terms of sustainability (Moon et al., 2021). We differentiate between sustainability outcomes for people (societal performance), for sport and its federal system (sport development performance) and for the environment (environmental performance).

3.4. Societal Performance

Sport and regular physical activity have a positive impact on people's health and fitness and may contribute to individuals' personal growth, enjoyment, and social integration. Several international sport organizations already collaborate with World Health Organization (WHO) to 'support and strengthen the promotion of health through sports and the sports for all agenda' (WHO, 2021). In 2017, ISFs issued a formal declaration on their role to promote health and identified an action plan (ASOIF, 2017). Despite their formal commitment, a study shows that, in 2019, not even half of Olympic ISFs had solid programs or promoted physical activity (Mountjoy et al., 2019). The main barrier identified by the authors was a lack of political support within ISFs. Similar to UEFA's SROI model, ISFs' programs and promotion of physical activity constitute a useful indicator for future measurement.

At a micro level, ISFs also have an influence on the personal development of various groups and individuals, including staff members. Due to limited financial resources, sport organizations often lack systems of training, development and education. Investing in the individual development of staff members may not only increase organizational efficiency and performance but is also likely to increase individuals' job satisfaction. Sporting officials constitute the largest part of ISFs' volunteers. They plan, organize and deliver sport activities and programs and ensure that rules and fair play are being respected during sporting competitions. While the throughput dimension HRM capacity assessed structures and processes in place in terms of training of individuals, the outcome dimension should rather evaluate the effective number of paid staff and sporting officials that have acquired specific skills that are necessary for their respective tasks.

3.5. Sport Development Performance

The viability of sport organizations also depends on their ability to attract, maintain, and foster athletes at all levels. The importance for SGBs to develop their

membership and representation through athlete participation at major sporting events has long been recognized by scholars (Bayle & Madella, 2002). Global sport development is a strategic priority for many ISFs and is often included in their mission. Different measures can be taken into consideration to assess ISFs' global sport development performance. These include but are not limited to the number and evolution of active members (i.e. NSFs that organize national championships and international sporting events); number and evolution of elite and amateur athletes; number and evolution of events (e.g. per continent, on the international calendar, the Olympic program); infrastructures such as international, national, or regional training centers or other sporting facilities maintained or supported by the ISF.

3.6. Environmental Performance

The increasing number of catastrophic events related to climate change over the last decade has intensified sport organizations' engagement with environmental sustainability. Partnerships between ISFs and environmental organizations have further raised awareness and fostered actions that embrace the concept of environmental sustainability (Santini & Henderson, 2021). Many sport organizations have signed the Sports for Climate Action Framework launched by the IOC and UN Climate Change in 2018 (UN, 2020). While this is good news, signing the framework says little about the actions taken by sport organizations and even less about the effectiveness of these actions. In 2021, only four summer Olympic ISFs had a strategic plan on environmental sustainability in place (Santini & Henderson, 2021). ISFs' environmental actions and efforts to measure their effectiveness constitute useful indicators.

3.7. Feedback

Stakeholder satisfaction 'has been the most consistent determinant of performance in literature' (O'Boyle & Hassan, 2014, p. 307). Noland and Phillips (2010) argue that stakeholder engagement 'must be integral to a firm's strategy if it is to achieve real success' (p. 39). The feedback variable is a subjective measure of organizational performance. It asks stakeholders to evaluate how well the federation is performing.

ISFs' stakeholder network has grown massively over the years (Chappelet, 2021). Stakeholders' perceptions are linked to their needs, interests and expectation and influence an ISF's legitimacy. Stakeholder feedback on ISFs' organizational performance should encompass four levels of stakeholders: (1) internal stakeholders, meaning elected members (board, commissions, committees) and staff members; (2) stakeholders of the direct ISF-system, meaning member federations (NSFs, CCs) and athletes; and external stakeholders, including (3) normative stakeholders (e.g. IOC), and (4) sponsors and the general public. The feedback variable is consistent with the three dimensions of analysis: management, governance and program/service. Ideally, stakeholder feedback should be collected for both the throughput and the outcome variables.

3.7.1. Elected Members and Staff (Management)

The satisfaction of personnel at the ISF-headquarters is partly reflected in the staff and executive turnover rate. Executives (CEOs, secretary generals, director generals) are generally the highest-paid persons in an organization and bear strong responsibility for the organization's success (Stewart & Diebold, 2017). Their term of office is inevitably linked to various performance expectations. Staff members, for their part, deal with the ISF's operational activities on a daily basis. They not only constitute the acting hand of decisions delegated top-down, but they are also a rich store of knowledge. High staff turnover means high knowledge drain. Retaining competent members of staff can reduce organizational instability and increase effectiveness as knowledge and institutional memory are constantly expanding rather than having to be reconstituted (Frisby, 1986; Parent et al., 2020).

Staff turnover may be linked to organizational culture and climate. Organizational culture refers to a set of shared beliefs, values, norms and meanings. Despite decades of debate, systematically measuring organization culture remains a methodological challenge (Chatman & Choi, 2022). Though sometimes used as synonyms, organizational climate is rather an element of organizational culture. An organization's culture forms the organization's climate. Organizational climate can be a driver or inhibitor of individual motivation and thus organizational performance. Surveys constitute an appropriate method to measure organizational climate. ISFs could carry out regular assessments of organizational culture by asking individuals what motivates them to join or quit the organization and what positively or negatively influences their commitment towards the ISF. We further suggest including questions on perceived board performance. Some scholars claim a direct correlation between NPO's board performance and organizational performance (Brown, 2007). Board performance is influenced by various factors including board members' emotional commitment (Preston & Brown, 2004) and board members' competences (Brown, 2007). Responses may provide useful information in terms of staff and board members' perception of the federation's performance.

3.7.2. Normative Stakeholders (Governance)

Normative stakeholders are those that can exert a strong influence on the ISF, including regulatory bodies (e.g. WADA) and umbrella organizations in sport with strong political influence (e.g. IOC, ASOIF). The ISF' legitimacy may be considerably impacted by the feedback of this group of stakeholders. Legitimacy is strongly influenced by what normative bodies define as being appropriate or what groups share in terms of norms, values and beliefs. As the group of normative stakeholders is generally relatively small, data collection through semi-structured in-depth interviews appears most promising. Interviews have several advantages. Not only do they provide much more detailed information than surveys, but they also give stakeholders a voice and allow the researcher to understand the topic as perceived by the respondent.

3.7.3. Affiliate Members and Athletes (Program/Service)

ISFs are service providers to their affiliate members – continental and national federations – and consequently to their athletes. While affiliated members

traditionally participate in the ISF's general assembly, athletes literally had no voice in the ISF's decision-making body until the creation of athletes' commissions. Feedback at the throughput level may include communication from the ISFs to members (management capacity), transparency regarding strategic decisions and financials (governance capacity), and support in terms of members' development (program/service capacity). Feedback at the outcome level focuses mainly on the societal performance of the ISFs. This may include gathering feedback from NSFs regarding the quality of trainings for sporting officials (coaches, technical staff, etc.) and sport development performance (e.g. number and description of development projects supported by the ISFs). Athletes can provide valuable feedback on event and sport formats, grassroot and elite support, safeguarding in sport or the ISF's supportive function in terms of career development.

3.7.4. General Public and Sponsors (Image)

Print, TV and social media provide useful feedback on how the ISF is perceived by the general public. Mega sporting events attract considerable global media coverage which can contribute to the host city's marketing. Even small sporting events can nowadays be promoted through various media channels to help non-profit sport organizations attract sponsors. There are four types of media that appear relevant to the performance analysis of ISFs: TV broadcasting, online streaming services, social media and print media. To evaluate an ISF's TV broadcasting performance, researchers could look at the evolution of the ISF's major events in terms of the number of countries in which the events are broadcast, TV audience and total viewer hours. The advent of over-the-top (OTT) Internet and mobile video streaming services is shaking up the traditional viewer model. Online streaming services particularly appeal to younger generations who consume sport on multiple screens at any given time or place (Hutchins et al., 2019). ISFs have recognized social media has an important relationship tool and the COVID-19 pandemic further boosted ISFs' digital transformation. Social media creates visibility, encourages engagement and allows for spontaneous interactions. Regarding print media, we suggest a thematic analysis (e.g. positive/negative reporting) in addition to the overall number of articles dedicated to an ISF or event in print media. Additionally, interviews with main sponsors can provide useful insights on sponsors' reasons to start, extend or end a sponsorship contract with the ISF.

In summary, ISFs should be aware of stakeholders' expectations and compare them with the results they have achieved. Understanding stakeholders' perceptions allows ISFs to critically reflect upon their performance, can trigger corrective action and is an efficient exercise to manage expectations. However, not every discrepancy necessarily needs to be addressed. Instead, it is key to define whose perception of the federation's organizational performance is important. This may change with the ISF's life cycle.

4. Discussion

The discussion is organized around three suggestions which cover aspects of theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges for the practical application of the

model. First, the model is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Second, define and address ISFs' specific performance priorities through action research. And third, consider legitimacy as a key concept of ISFs' organizational performance and, consequently, acknowledge the importance of stakeholders' expectations regarding the federation's life cycle.

4.1. Not a One-Size-Fits-All Approach

Since the turn of the century, a succession of scandals and misconducts involving some of the biggest ISFs (Bayle & Rayner, 2018; Krieger, 2018) but also smaller ones (boxing, weightlifting) gave rise to a hyper-concentration on governance when it comes to research on ISFs. As a result, their global organizational performance has been totally neglected. To conceptualize ISFs' performance, it seemed most appropriate to develop an integrative multilevel model that takes account of ISF's mission, structure, processes, and external environment. Meanwhile, the proposed model is not to be understood as a one-size-fits-all approach, nor as a benchmarking tool. It explains the articulation of dimensions which literature and experts associate with of ISFs' organizational performance and suggests a set of indicators as a practical guideline. At the same time, the authors recognize that each IF is a unique ecosystem. The degree of professionalization, the life cycle stage, the economic model, the performance priorities, the organizational culture and governance structure may differ considerably between ISFs. These differences need to be taken into account when operationalizing and implementing the model. In addition, practitioners' differing perceptions of organizational performance translate into different foci and strategies. ISFs facing governance issues will focus on governance practices, while ISFs seeking to increase their global spread will focus on new markets. An ISF's organizational performance is therefore tied to specific objectives and expectations. The federation's board sets the objectives (e.g. strategic plan), but expectations and requirements may vary across the stakeholders (e.g. national federations, IOC, athletes, sponsors). One possibility to evaluate an ISF's organizational performance is therefore to analyze its capacity to achieve its objectives and satisfy its stakeholders.

4.2. Application through Action Research

An impactful performance evaluation should offer a pathway for improvement (e.g. targets versus actual performance, benchmark, ranking, progress). Due to their heterogeneous nature, ISFs' have different priorities and different incentives for change. For the application of the model, we therefore suggest an action research approach using four phases (Kemmis et al., 2014). By conducting collaborative research, the participating ISF has ownership of the choice of topics to be analyzed and of actions to enhance the federation's organizational performance. Addressing worthwhile practical purposes from the perspective of the federation increases the potential for organizational learning. In the reconnaissance and situation analysis (phase 1: planning), the researcher introduces the ISF to the project and discusses or helps the ISF to identify a particular focus (or foci) for the performance

evaluation. This may include defining additional indicators. During the performance analysis (phase 2: acting), relevant data is collected, analyzed and interpreted. Data interpretation should be reflexive, recursive and dialectical. In the research intervention and action phase (phase 3: observing), researchers together with the ISF design solutions and define intervention ideas to enhance the federation's performance in the predefined domains. The ISF implements the interventions and researchers monitor the process of this phase. Following the implementation, effectiveness of the change can be evaluated (phase 4: reflecting). This can be done through evaluation interviews.

4.3. Legitimacy as a Key Concept of Organizational Performance

Organizational performance as a field of research draws on various theories (e.g. resource dependence, agency theory, contingency theory, stakeholder theory). These theories are used independently or in combination. The multidisciplinary nature of organizational performance has resulted in different and even diverging definitions depending on the theoretical stance. We have applied an institutional perspective, linking the model closely to the concepts of isomorphism and legitimacy. Legitimacy is itself a multifaceted concept (Lister, 2003). In institutional theory, legitimacy increases the acceptance of an organization by its environment and the dominant actors thereof. Legitimacy is a form of organizational performance. For future studies, we suggest a greater focus on analyzing legitimacy as a form of ISFs' global performance and to consider stakeholders expectations and the federation's life cycle. A first methodological challenge is that many studies on organizational performance of NPOs are not grounded in any theory specifically and often fail to define appropriate measures and indicators for their specific research context (Fowler, 1997; Richard et al., 2009). Secondly, individuals perceive performance differently as perceptions are influenced by both objective aspects and subjective elements such as emotions, values, preferences, personal characteristics and an organization's life cycle. They may share the same perception (intersubjectivity), several perceptions may coexist, and two or more perceptions may coexist as contradictions, simultaneous opposites or incompatibilities resulting in paradoxical performance results (Cameron, 1986). One empirical challenge is that strategic priorities change over time. Evaluating ISFs' performance against their objectives is thus highly context dependent.

4.4. Contributions, Limitations and Challenges

The paper's contribution is fourfold: firstly, it offers a first definition of organizational performance which can be applied to any sport governing body; secondly, it proposes a first set of indicators which are directly linked to the model and have been validated by experts; thirdly, it outlines how the model can be implemented in the very heterogenous field of ISFs; and finally, the paper discusses theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges of the model. The paper has several limitations which can also be seen as prospects for future research. The focus on sport governing bodies is very narrow and specific, thus limiting the generalizability of

the model to other NPOs. Secondly, the proposed model focuses on the conceptualization of organizational performance and only suggests a theoretical list of indicators. The identification of appropriate performance criteria (what to measure) and measurement indicators (how to measure) is, however, key to an effective performance measurement model. The application of the model to specific cases will enable further specification. ISFs are today highly scrutinized by the public opinion. Requests for increased accountability and transparency exert some coercive pressure on them. However, in reference to Bovens (2007), any performance model for ISFs will face at least three challenges: how should ISFs best account for their performance (e.g. validity of key performance indicators), in which form (auto-evaluation versus independent external evaluation), and to whom considering ISFs' monopoly status and the absence of a counterbalance or control body?

Notes

1. ASOIF – Association of Summer Olympic International Federations.
2. BWF – Badminton World Federation, FIS – International Ski Federation, IWF – International Weightlifting Federation.
3. WADA – World Anti-Doping Agency.
4. ITA – International Testing Agency.
5. Union Cycliste Internationale – International Cycling Union.

Disclosure Statement

The author has no connection to parkrun although he is a regular parkrun participant and volunteer.

Funding

This work was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation under Grant 100013_192468.

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Appendix A

Variables	Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Indicators		Level
Input	Financial Resources		Total income		1
			Financial assets		2
	Human resources		N° of employees and evolution		1
			N° of elected executive volunteers (e.g. board)		1
			N° of technical volunteers (e.g. judge)		2
			N° of external consultants		2
Throughput	Management capacity	Financial resource management capacity	Financial planning: does the federation have a budgeting system including allocation of resources?		1
			Financial reporting: does the federation issue publicly available financial statements?		1
			Financial monitoring: do board members have the required financial knowledge to read and interpret financial reports and statements?		2
		Human resource management capacity	Skills, recruitment/ selection and retention	Strategy/principles/ measures to recruit and select skilled employees	2
				Strategy/principles to attract and retain sporting officials (referees, judges, coaches)	2
			Training, development and education	Employees: description of training, personal development and education support and/ or formal systems of training	1
				Sporting officials: description of measures and/or formal systems of training	2
			Diversity management	Gender diversity: measures against gender imbalance	1
				Workforce diversity & inclusion: measures to foster diverse workforce	2
	Governance capacity	Transparency	Evidence of disclosure practices: e.g. statutes, rules and regulations, organizational structure, strategy		1
			Latest scoring and evolution in the ASOIF governance review since the first review		
		Integrity	Evidence of measures to ensure integrity: e.g. integrity officer		1
			Latest scoring and evolution in the ASOIF governance review since the first review		
		Democracy	Evidence of democratic structures, processes and policies: e.g. elections, term limits, stakeholder representation		1
			Latest scoring and evolution in the ASOIF governance review since the first review		
		Development	Evidence of objective criteria and transparency in monitoring the distribution of funds to member federations: e.g. transparent allocation of funds, required proof of use		1
			Latest scoring and evolution in the ASOIF governance review since the first review		
		Control mechanisms	Evidence of an internal system of checks and balances: e.g. separation of power, independent external audit		1
			Latest scoring and evolution in the ASOIF governance review since the first review		
	Program/service capacity	Resources	Human and financial resources allocated to specific development projects of and through sport		2
		Impact evaluation	Existence of measures to evaluate change triggered or accelerated by a program/service		2

(*Continued*)

Appendix A. Continued.

Variables	Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Level
Outcome	Management	Financial performance	Revenue stability: Revenue diversification and stability of income sources over the years	1
			Financial balance: ratios of benefits (total revenue/total expenses) and benefits in comparison with revenues (net revenues/total revenue)	2
			Reserves: Liquid Unrestricted Net Assets/(Total Annual Expenses – Annual Depreciation) x 12 months	2
			Service investment: membership financial return (members and elite services investment/total expenses)	2
		HRM performance	Employee turnover rate	2
			Training, development and education of employees: N° of employees reached through measures and/or formal systems of training Impact of measures targeting training, development and education of individuals (e.g. higher job satisfaction, greater in-house expertise)	1
			Training, development and education of sporting officials (referees, judges, coaches): N° of officials reached through measures and/or formal systems of training Impact of measures targeting training, development and education of individuals (e.g. reduced n° of complaints against the decisions of sporting officials)	2
			Gender diversity: Percentage of women in decision-making positions Impact of measures against gender imbalance (e.g. n° of women running for decision-making positions)	1
			Workforce diversity: Age, cultural background, physical abilities, gender, etc. Impact of measures targeting diverse workforce	2
	Governance	Governance review	ASOIF Review of IF Governance Performance in the latest review (scoring) Evolution (progress, stagnation, regression)	1
			Report of current and/or recent scandals and misconducts related to the IF	2
	Program/Services	Societal performance	Which social contributions in terms of health, education, equality, and peace derive from the IF's activities and/or are actively strived for/supported by the IF? Examples: Description of IF's major social orientations and related projects, initiatives etc. Total n° of social and civic projects, initiatives carried out or supported by the IF (+ impact of those, if somehow measured N° of people practicing the sport (n° of license holders + estimation of grassroot athletes) SROI (crime reduction, reduction of health costs, etc.)	2
		Sport development performance	Evidence of sport development achievements n° and evolution of active member federations n° and evolution of registered events per category (age, men/women) infrastructures maintained/supported by the IF	1
		Environmental performance	Does/How does the IF mitigate the environmental impact of its activities? Examples: Carbon footprint of events: calculation, certifications and/or measures to reduce/offset gashouse emissions Use of resources at the headquarters (building, heating/cooling, transport) Description of a strategies/measures and their impact	2

(*Continued*)

Appendix A. Continued.

Variables	Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Level
Feedback	Management	Elected members and staff	Survey on perceived organizational culture and climate staff satisfaction	2
	Governance	Normative stakeholders	Semi-structured in-depth interviews with IOC, ASOIF, ITA, WADA on perceived governance	2
	Program/service	Affiliate members and athletes	Survey with NFs, CCs and athletes on perceived communication, financial transparency, support, quality of training, events, formats, etc.	1
	Image	General public and sponsors	Analysis of media data TV: country reach, audience, total viewer hours Online: audience, total viewer hours Social media: followers, views, engagement Print media: thematic analysis (neutral/positive/negative)	2
			Semi-structured in-depth interviews with sponsors on perceived image and performance of the IF	2