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스포츠 매니지먼트 석사 학위논문

Challenges of
Athletes' Commission Operation in
FINA Governance

2020 년 7 월

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체육교육과

Daulina Osmani



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Challenges of Athletes' Commission Operation in FINA Governance

지도교수 강 준 호

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Daulina Osmani

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위원장

김 기 한

부위원장

송 욱

위원

강 준 호



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Abstract

Challenges of Athletes' Commission Operation in FINA Governance

Daulina Osmani

Global Sport Management, Department of Physical Education

The Graduate School

Seoul National University

One of the growing good governance interests and its democratization concerns is involvement of stakeholders, particularly, athletes in decision making processes. Governing bodies of sport, do provide a voice for athletes either through limited membership of the body's decision-making forum or through the formation of an athletes' committee/commission linked to the main forum. Athletes Commission serves as a link between active athletes and sport organizations to which they belong. Athlete involvement in the management of IFs appears to have increased in recent years, however, their level of effectiveness or impact on decision making/policy making remains largely unknown.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the role of Athletes Commission in FINA Governance and to examine athletes' awareness about Athletes' Commission existence. In order to answer to different research questions, a combination of both approaches quantitative and qualitative was implemented. A survey was developed and applied to 207 athletes whom participated in FINA World Aquatic Championships 2019, whereas, for qualitative approach, 4 members of Athletes' Commission in FINA were interviewed. Descriptive statistics were used to interpret the awareness of athletes for Athletes' Commission, while, for analyzing the qualitative data of the study, an inductive thematic approach was used. Overall, 40.81% of athletes are "not aware at all" about Athletes' Commission existence, whereas, only 10.2% are even partially or totally aware. The "not at all aware" athletes mostly come from: age group 15-20 ($M=0.73$); athletes' whom are high school graduated ($M=0.98$); and athletes whose biggest achievement in FINA World Championships was to represent their national team ($M=0.97$). On the other hand, the results of qualitative data show that the members of Athletes Commission are well aware for the lack of athletes' awareness. From members' perspective, the lack of athletes' awareness is associated to their lack of education and interest to get

engaged with decision making processes. Athletes Commission has progress in terms of their constitutional rights for involvement in decision-making processes of FINA and their compliance with IOC guidelines for an effective Athletes' Commission. In terms of their operation, the results show: poor communication practices with current athletes, confusion over role clarity/responsibilities, and lack of transparency and accountability.

Keywords: Athletes' Commission, Decision-Making Processes, Athletes' Awareness, International Federations

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Governance has been a prominent word in international sport circles since the beginning of the twenty-first century (J.-L. Chappelet, 2018). In recent years, it has been considered as a central concern for sport organizations, sport management academics and practitioners. In a recent scoping review (Dowling, Leopkey, & Smith, 2018), only 18 of the 243 identified studies on sport governance were published between 1982 and 2003, with the remaining 225 published between 2004 and 2016. Governance problems have become evident in national sport organizations, professional sport, and inter-university sport (Donnelly, 2016). One response of governments, sport organizations, and independent agencies has been the development of suggested governance principles and guidelines designed to counter failures in governance, such as democratic structures/democracy, accountability, transparency, professionalization, control/supervisory mechanisms, fairness, solidarity/ social responsibility, equality, elected presidents, board skills

and term limits, separation of board chair and CEO roles, codes of ethics and conflicts of interest, **athlete involvement/representation**, **stakeholder participation/representation**, anti-bribery/corruption codes, equity, respect, autonomy/independence, evaluation, effectiveness, efficiency, planning standards, structure standards, and access and timely disclosure of information (Alm, 2013). Experts in sports management have displayed an increasing interest in the impact of stakeholders on the management of sports organizations (Esteve, Di Lorenzo, Inglés, & Puig, 2011).

A history of stakeholder distrust of sport leaders exists wherein many elite athletes feel that their priorities and values are not being represented in key policy decisions. (Hindley , Resource Guide in Governance and Sport, 2007) questioned stakeholders' involvement in the governance of organizations explaining that 'within international sports federations (IFs) and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) the notion of stakeholding has raised a number of pertinent questions concerning how the interests of groups such as athletes, volunteers and supporters are articulated. Beside the theory of network governance, stakeholder theory also has become, in many respects, the dominant lens through which to view the relationship between an organization and the

various internal and external groups with which it directly or indirectly interacts (Houlihan, 2013).

According to (Expert Group, 2013) utilizing the input and expertise of stakeholders, establishing representation and democratic standards for communications and formalizing the role, responsibilities and objectives of stakeholders is critical for effective sport governance. Moreover, despite “Principles of Good Governance in Sport” by EU Expert Group, also other good governance guidelines, including Basic Universal Principle of IOC, highlight the importance of “Stakeholder Representation” principle for implementation of good governance within the sport organizations. One of the growing good governance and its democratization concern is involvement of stakeholders, particularly, athletes (Thibault, Kihl, & Babiak, 2010). According to Kihl, Kikulis, & Thibault (2007), athletes have been recognized as the focal point and, as such, the organizational structure, sport infrastructure and decision making process have been adapted to support and respond to the needs, values, and objectives of athletes. Yet, few governing bodies of sport that do provide a voice for athletes do so either through limited membership of the body’s decision-making forum or through the formation of an ‘athletes committee/commission’ linked to the main forum, but safely

quarantined from any significant decision-making opportunities (Houlihan, 2004). Despite the fact that athletes are the "raison d'être" of the sport system (Clarke, Smith, & Thibault, 1994), sport policy is generally made for, or on behalf of, athletes, rarely in consultation with athletes, and almost never in partnership with athletes (Houlihan, 2004). On the other hand, a recent report of Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) stated:

“Athletes are starting to act more independently and autonomously, both individually and in groups. At the moment, athlete participation in the Games is defined through their NF/IF structures and systems. Already today, however, athletes are commissioning their own performance entourages and demanding their own terms of participation in sports competitions, a development that is likely to have significant knock-on effects. On the political front, emerging athlete groups are campaigning for a greater say in the decision making processes that impact them. At the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), this struggle for greater representation has attracted much recent media attention as athletes, principally from Western Europe and North America, have voiced their opinions regarding the situation of Russia and its athletes following the doping scandal at the Sochi 2014 winter Games. In such environment, where athletes have more direct

access to fans than ever before, it is logical that more of them are starting to ask for a larger piece of the pie” (ASOIF, 2016).

1.2 Research Purpose and Research Questions

Research Purpose

In the context of international sport organizations, there is evidence that athletes’ involvement in the policy-making process is increasingly being considered in the management and operations of these organizations. Athletes Commission is the body which serves as a link between the active athletes and the IOC (IOC, 2014). According to academic literature, there is lack of evidence on effectiveness of Athletes Commission in governing bodies in international sport organizations (Thibault, Kihl, & Babiak, 2010).

Therefore, **the purpose** of this research was to understand the role of Athletes Commission in FINA Governance, its challenges, and suggestions for future improvements. Part of the purpose of this research was also to examine the awareness of current athletes about Athletes Commission in FINA.

Research Questions (RQ)

Based on the purpose of the study, two research questions were developed:

RQ1. What is athletes' awareness about Athletes Commission of FINA?

RQ2. How does FINA's Athletes' Commission operates within FINA structure?

1.3 Significance of the Study

According to the fundamental principles of the Olympism, sports organizations within the Olympic movement - the IOC, IFs, NOCs, OCOGs, NAs, clubs, athletes, judges, referees, coaches, technicians and other organizations recognized by the IOC - shall have the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance are applied (Olimpismo, 2008).

Most of the work of sport organizations performance in relation of governance practices has been focused on the performance of non-

profit sport boards including structure power, boards composition, and leadership interactions. Although the link between board structure and organizational performance has been empirically found, the link between other governance principles and organizational remains lacking (Parent & Hoye, 2018). Athlete involvement in the management of IFs appears to have increased in recent years, however, their level of effectiveness or impact on decision making/policy making remains largely unknown (Thibault et al., 2010). Additional research is needed to investigate participation and the impact athletes have had on the governance of IFs. (Thibault et al., 2010).

According to Sport Governance Observer 2018, FINA does not have formal strategies or policies for including athletes, referees, coaches, volunteers, and employees in its policy processes. Moreover, looking at FINA strategic plan 2018-2021, one of the goals is “to apply good governance throughout FINA and its stakeholders”. FINA recognizes that a culture of good governance must permeate every aspect of aquatic sports. FINA will regularly scrutinize, and identify ways to improve, its own governance and help its National Federations adopt and implement the principles of good governance (Fina Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021). As the most visible stakeholders of the IFs, athletes provide organizations

with a perspective that may not always match the perspective of other stakeholders in the organization (e.g. coaches, officials, administrators, sponsors and media) (Thibault et al., 2010). Therefore, this research might be helpful for FINA or other IFs for their further planning strategies, in regard to athlete's participation and involvement in governance. It might also be useful for other scholars studying topics related to stakeholders' involvement in governance procedures and to propose new models for athlete's participation in governance.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Governance

The concept of governance isn't new, and yet it is very problematic to be captured in a simple definition. For long time now, governance has been present in both political and academic discussions, implying the general understanding to the responsibility of directing and controlling a government, or any other entity for that matter.

At the beginning it was indicated that governance is the synonym for the "act of authoritative direction of government". However, years later, it was pointed out that governance is a broader concept than government, and goes on to state: "Governance refers to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empoweremnts, and broad-based participation (Education, n.d.). Governance's elements apply power and authority over civil society, and they influence the policies and decisions concerning public life. Different international agencies such as UNDP, the Word Bank, the OECD and

other, describe governance as the act of authority or power in order for a country to manage its economic, political and administrative affairs. Such governance approach highlights issues of greater state responsiveness and accountability, and the impact of these factors on political stability and economic development (The World Bank, 1992).

Other than the organization's concepts, it is crucial to understand the academic literature on governance, which mostly originates from scholars working with international development. Governance in the academic dimension has numerous approaches. In sport literature, governance is a hybrid of corporate and political governance, known as systemic governance.

Essentially, governance was based only in corporate (or organizational) sector, aiming to understand organizational behaviors and practices in governmental and non-governmental organizations with stakeholders, rather than shareholders.

Later on, in order for sport to become more professionally structured and managed, sport has undergone some changes. Sport organizations have applied business principles to marketing their products, planning their operations, managing their human resource and other aspects of

organizational activities (Hoye, Smith, Westerbeek, Stewart, & Nicholson, 2013). With the introduction of business principles in sport, sport governance comprises multiple stakeholders. As a broad concept, governance is used for numerous practices: social, economic, and political. It includes, policy making, regulation, setting of rules, norms and standards or more broadly when it comes to the study of exercising authority (Bruyninckx, 2012). One of the most influential authors on corporate governance Bob Tricker, highlighted the importance of governance and its influence on organizational performance, he stated: “If management is about running a business, governance is about seeing that it is run properly” compliance (Hoye & Cuskelly, Sport Governance, 2007). Another definition of sport governance by (Hoye & Cuskelly, Sport Governance, 2007) says, organizational governance is the system by which the elements of an organization are directed, controlled and regulated. Based on (J. L. Chappelet, 2016a), governance has now become part of the common lexicon, thanks to the adoption by intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank and the European Union of the expression ‘good governance’ – a concept that applies just as much to public and not-for-profit organisations as it does to companies. The concept is an important issue for sport and for the

organizations that co-produce sport, which increasingly have to work in conjunction with public bodies, non-governmental organizations, other non-profit organizations and commercial companies, most notably sports equipments companies, sponsors, and the media (J. L. Chappelet, 2016a). Considering that the categorization of sport organizations lays on as either profit-seeking firms or nonprofit organizations on the basis of their governance, Cornforth argued that corporate and nonprofit sectors have suffered to understand how the governance game is played by nonprofit sport organizations. Both types of governance share similar governance elements as well as have important differences. The literature and practices, describe that characteristics of corporate governance are applicable to nonprofit organizations (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). However, the unique characteristics of sport organizations have created specifik framework of goevrnace for sport.

2.2 Sport Governance

Governance in sport is particularly self-steered oriented topic, ‘The world of sport has predominantly managed to live by its own set of rules and regulations and has for a long time objected to state intervention at the national and certainly the international level’ (Misener , 2014). The concept of governance in sport has been developed based on governance scandals. The term ‘governance’ first took hold in the language of international sport in 1998, during what would become known as the ‘Salt Lake City scandal’ (J. L. Chappelet, 2016). This scandal brought radical changes in the Olympic Movement. It introduced fundamental reforms to its governing structure that it helped IOC to mitigate the negative impact that the scandal had in the world of sport. One of the changes in regard to this case, was establishment of a democratic environment through involvement of different stakeholders in decision making processes (J. L. Chappelet, 2016). This is one of the reasons, why IOC started to accept new members representing its main stakeholders: athletes, NOCs and IFs. Jacques Rogge, the president of IOC from 2001 – 2013 mentioned: “Since sport is based on ethics and competition on fair play, the governance of sport must comply with the highest standards

in terms of transparency, democracy and accountability”. Since then, many of the international sport federations (IFs) within the Olympic system have been tarnished by corruption scandals of varying degrees of seriousness (J. Chappelet, 2018). These issues though years, have resulted that experts, academics, international organizations, intergovernmental organizations, national organizations, taking a close interest in the governance of sport organizations. The academics and research people, made a significant contribution in evolution and advancement of sport governance. Henry and Lee 2004 suggested seven principles for sports governance: Transparency, Accountability, Democracy, Social Responsibility, Equity, Effectiveness and Efficiency.

Gradually, with the increased importance of governing performance of sport organizations, the word governance appeared in the Olympic Charter for the first time in 2004 in article 19.3.2 ‘[The IOC Executive Board] approves all internal governance regulations relating to its organization’ (Olympic Charter 2004). More significantly, in 2011 governance was included in the IOC’s first mission: ‘To encourage and support the promotion of ethics and good governance in sport as well as education of youth through sport and to dedicate its efforts to ensuring that, in sport, the spirit of fair play prevails and violence is banned’ (IOC,

2011). In 2011, IOC also included in the Olympic Charter the fifth fundamental principle which closely linked the concepts of governance and autonomy. With the ongoing pressure from state governments, intergovernmental bodies, and other sport actors, in one of its seminars, IOC underlined the fact that good governance in sports organisations is ‘the fundamental basis to secure the Autonomy of Olympic and Sports organisations and to ensure that this autonomy is respected by our stakeholders. With other words, for a sport organization to be autonomous, it has to comply with good governance principles. One response of governments, sport organizations, and independent agencies has been the development of an increasing number of suggested governance principles and guidelines designed to counter failures in governance, such as democratic structures/democracy, accountability, transparency, professionalization, control/supervisory mechanisms, fairness, solidarity/ social responsibility, equality, elected presidents, board skills (instead of representation) and term limits, separation of board chair and CEO roles, codes of ethics and conflicts of interest, **athlete involvement/representation, stakeholder participation/representation**, anti-bribery/corruption codes, equity, respect, autonomy/independence, evaluation, effectiveness, efficiency,

planning standards, structure standards, and access and timely disclosure of information (Alm, 2013).

The enlargement of governance principles and guidelines developed in recent years was highlighted by (J.-L. Chappelet, 2018) who stated: since the beginning of the twenty-first century, governmental and intergovernmental bodies, national and international sport governing bodies and academics have put forward numerous lists—more than 30 in total—of governance principles for sport organizations”.

Autonomy and governance are of concern to non-profit sports organisations just as much as they are to public authorities (local or regional sports departments, ministries) and intergovernmental (European Union, Council of Europe, United Nations, etc.) and non-governmental (International Olympic Committee [IOC], international sport federations, Transparency International, etc.) organisations . Autonomy is a combination of the Greek words *auto* and *nomos*, meaning ‘those who make their own law’ (J. L. Chappelet, 2016a). Autonomy of sport can be understood as a range of sporting competences including the ability of sports bodies to establish and interpret sporting rules, to select sporting leaders and governance style, to secure and use public funding without any external influence in their decision-making processes. Considering

the specificity of sport nature, for many years, sporting justice was applied by those in the know, rather than those in the courtroom.

The first reference of autonomy in Olympic Charter exists since 1949, however, it came into attention during twentieth century. At the beginning, autonomy of sport in governing bodies of sport organizations was threatened by state governments. It was the period after the World War II, when state interference started to make itself felt (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). The concept of autonomy was reiterated in the 1992 European Sport Charter (based on the principles of the 1975 Sport for all Charter), adopted by the Council of Europe: ‘Voluntary sports organisations have the right to establish autonomous decision-making processes within the law (Committee et al., 2016). Both governments and sports organisations shall recognise the need for a mutual respect of their decisions.

There are nearly two decades of the twenty-first century since the concepts of ‘autonomy’ and ‘governance’ have become major issues in international, national and – sometimes – local debates over sport. They have largely replaced the issue of the ‘specific nature of sport’,

which was finally recognised in Europe in 2009 by article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty on the functioning of the European Union after the Declaration of Nice (2000) (J. L. Chappelet, 2016a). Autonomy and governance are of concern to non-profit sports organisations just as much as they are to public authorities (local or regional sports departments, ministries) and intergovernmental (European Union, Council of Europe, United Nations, etc.) and non-governmental (International Olympic Committee [IOC], international sport federations, Transparency International, etc.) organisations.

The IOC today describes autonomy as a necessity for the Olympic and sports movement, since autonomy guarantees the preservation of the values of sport, the integrity of competitions, the motivation and participation of volunteers, the education of young people and their contribution to the well-being of all, women, men and children, thereby contributing to its credibility and legitimacy (Jean-Loup Chappelet, 2010). The interference of intergovernmental bodies in autonomy of sport was evoked during 1995 with very well-known Bosman Ruling. The sports movement saw this ruling as interference in sporting affairs and led it to call upon governments to recognise the ‘specific nature of sport’ (J. L. Chappelet, 2016a). As a consequence, in

2004 the IOC's revised Olympic Charter reaffirmed: 'The NOCs must preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind, including but not limited to political, legal, religious or economic pressures, which may prevent them from complying with the Olympic Charter' (Olympic Charter 2004). With the ongoing pressure from state governments, intergovernmental bodies, and other sport actors, in one of its seminars, IOC underlined the fact that good governance in sports organisations is 'the fundamental basis to secure the Autonomy of Olympic and Sports organisations and to ensure that this autonomy is respected by our stakeholders. With other words, for a sport organization to be autonomous, it has to comply with good governance principles. One response of governments, sport organizations, and independent agencies has been the development of an increasing number of suggested governance principles and guidelines designed to counter failures in governance, such as democratic structures/democracy, accountability, transparency, professionalization, control/supervisory mechanisms, fairness, solidarity/ social responsibility, equality, elected presidents, board skills (instead of representation) and term limits, separation of board chair and CEO roles, codes of ethics and conflicts of interest, **athlete involvement/representation, stakeholder**

participation/representation, anti-bribery/corruption codes, equity, respect, autonomy/independence, evaluation, effectiveness, efficiency, planning standards, structure standards, and access and timely disclosure of information (Alm, 2013).

The enlargement of governance principles and guidelines developed in recent years was highlighted by (J.-L. Chappelet, 2018) who stated: since the beginning of the twenty-first century, governmental and intergovernmental bodies, national and international sport governing bodies and academics have put forward numerous lists—more than 30 in total—of governance principles for sport organizations”. It is considered that every governance framework has qualities and shortcomings for which it can be praised and criticized. Nevertheless, there is currently no universal code or standard of governance that is supported by a broad group of sport organizations and their stakeholders at the national and international levels (Mathieu & Christos, 2019).

The IOC’s deliberations concluded in February 2008 with the introduction of the ‘basic universal principles for good governance of the Olympic and sports movement’, or ‘BUPs’ (Olimpismo, 2008) organized into seven chapters. BUP 7 is called ‘Harmonious relations with governments while preserving autonomy’. Chapter 6 of BUP is:

Athlete's Involvement Participation and Care. The Olympic Movement has suffered two major crises in as many decades. In the late 1990s, a bribery scandal in connection with the awarding of rights to host Olympic Games combined with the epidemic of performance-enhancing drug use to produce a full-blown legitimacy crisis. In the present decade, a new threat emerged centered on Olympic Games bidding, and in 2013–2014 another major crisis ensued, one that remains on-going today. In a nutshell, fewer and fewer global cities were interested or able to bid to host the Olympic Games (MacAloon, 2016).

Citizens have lost trust in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) but also in other international sports federations, which can be explained by corruption scandals, a lack of transparency, questionable decisions in regard to event site selection or cost overruns in organizing this type of event (Schnitzer & Haizinger, 2019).

As a response to this situation, Thomas Bach—after being elected IOC President—made the Olympic Agenda his first major initiative. He was elected as the IOC president in September 2013. He made it immediately clear that he intended more than the usual new president's review of the overall organization (MacAloon, 2016). It started with a public debate with over 40,000 thoughts and 1200 ideas, which were

discussed in 14 working groups with experts in the field (OLYMPIC AGENDA 2020). The proposed ideas were summarized and presented in 40 recommendations for the IOC's future. Agenda 2020, represents recommendations with the intention to overcome the challenges faced by sport in the last decades. Beside the new philosophy on the bidding procedure, in order to encourage potential cities to organize games with the concept which respects the environment, feasibility and of development to leave a lasting legacy, the document addresses other topics for improvement of Olympic Movement through changes. One of the main focuses of OA is to drive a system which is athlete centered by covering numerous recommendations for them: The IOC to put athletes' experience at the heart of Olympic Games; engage with athletes by establishing a virtual hub for athletes; IOC's ultimate goal is to protect clean athletes by using extra USD 20 million. In regard to the topic of this study we will focus at the **Recommendation 38.2** which states: *The existence of an athletes' commission within the organization for representatives of IFs/NOCs*. This statement comes under the goal of "Implementing targeted requirement processes" – with other words: move from an application to a targeted recruitment process for IOC membership. Olympic Agenda 2020 was considered as the strategic

roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement. The 40 recommendations are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that, when you put together, form a picture that shows the IOC safeguarding the uniqueness of the Olympic Games and strengthening sport in society (Committee O. , 2014).

2.4 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory provides a framework through which to understand managerial decision-making by focusing on the groups and individuals (i.e., stakeholders) who can affect or are affected by an organization's actions, in general, and on particular issues as well (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, K. Ronald, Agle, R. Bradley, Wood, 1997). Stakeholder theorists are concerned with studying the relationship between a focal organization and its stakeholders (Parent, 2016). Jones and Wicks provided four principles for stakeholder theory: (a) A focal organization has relationships with many stakeholders; (b) stakeholder theory concerns itself with the nature (process and outcome) of the relationship between the focal organization and its stakeholders; (c) “the interests of *all* stakeholders have intrinsic value, and no set of interests

is assumed to dominate the others” (p. 207); and (d) the focus of the theory is on managerial decision making (Jones & Wicks, 2017). Stakeholder theory does, however, have opponents or criticisms that must be considered. More precisely, (Key, 1999) argued that (Freeman, 1984) stakeholder theory can be criticized in four ways: (a) It has an inadequate explanation of process, (b) it has an incomplete linkage between internal and external variables, (c) it pays insufficient attention to the actual business operating system and its levels of analysis, and (d) it has an inadequate environmental assessment. Nevertheless, stakeholder theory is still relatively young and these criticisms are being addressed and corrected (Parent, 2016). Central tenants of the theory advocates redistributing benefits to stakeholders, redistributing key decision-making power to stakeholders and bearing fiduciary relationship to stakeholders (Freeman, Phillips, 2002). The theory enables managers to move on from organization-based approaches in which stakeholders are seen as dependent bodies and managed exclusively for the organization’s own benefit, to an approach based on the relationship networks and concepts existing in any organization (Nguyen, Sheila; Menzies, 2010).

Sport organizations, whether as large as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) or as small as an interest-based volunteer club, have a variety of groups and individuals whose relationships with the organization are based on certain objectives (Friedman, Parent, & Mason, 2008). Each of these stakeholders has differing abilities and needs to achieve its goals. As such, managers need to meet the needs of those within their constituent environment or risk losing their support and/or participation, which could threaten the organization's success or even its existence. At the same time, however, all stakeholders are not necessarily equal in all circumstances (Friedman et al., 2008). For example, as can be seen in the case of the IOC, national governments, athletes and corporate sponsors have differing interests with regards to particular issues that impact the IOC. There have been a number of prominent sport-related issues on the public policy agenda that have arisen in recent years. All these challenges of international sport organizations (including IOC and other IFs) damage all its actors. Certain individuals and stakeholder groups emerged that were able to influence policy decisions by mobilizing resources and influencing other stakeholders. The evolution and role of stakeholders in sport system is well-described by (J. L.

Chappelet, 2016b) in “From Olympic Administration to Olympic Government”. He classifies the evolution of Olympic stakeholders in three stages. The classic Olympic System: involves five main stakeholders: the IOC, (local) Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), International Sport Federations (IFs) and National Sport Federations (NFs); The regulated Olympic System -- In the 1970s, the classic Olympic System saw the arrival of six new stakeholders who began to take an increasing interest in the Olympics because of the preeminence acquired by the Games, especially due to the Cold War. These stakeholders were governments, national and international sponsors, professional sports leagues and two specialist organizations; and The Total Olympic system -- At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the importance of many other stakeholders started to increase: SportAccord (formerly AGIFS), ASOIT, AIOWF, ANOC, the United Nations, European Union, athletes, their entourages, equipment suppliers, organizers of sports competitions of all sorts and of regional multisport games, fans, amateur sportspeople, parents, media, NGOs, public opinion (J. L. Chappelet, 2016b). This evolution and the addition of many stakeholders has increased the complexity of the management of the Olympic System over the years

from pure Olympic administration to Olympic network governance which must take into consideration more than 24 types of stakeholders, including governments and intergovernmental organizations (J. L. Chappelet, 2016b). The huge expansion of the IOC – and of the bodies connected with it – has been accompanied by equally large changes in the way the organization is managed. In short, it has moved from a relatively traditional form of administration without staff, a sort of club of co-opted and unpaid natural persons, which it still is according to the IOC's statutes, to a form of governance that has to take into account a diverse network of stakeholders who began exerting their influence during the last century and who, since the 1980s, have enjoyed substantial financial resources. These new stakeholders affect the management of the IOC, which must ensure its partners' strategies and operations are aligned with its own.

A good system of governance should then be one where managers take into account the interests of the different stakeholder groups (and have reasons to do so); controlling devices are thus mainly internal and notably mechanisms which favor negotiation between parties (Senaux, 2008). Experts in sports management have displayed an increasing interest in the impact of stakeholders on the management of

sports organizations (Esteve et al., 2011). Stakeholder theory has become, in many respects, the dominant lens through which to view the relationship between an organization and the various internal and external groups with which it directly or indirectly interacts (Houlihan, 2013). According to (Expert Group, 2013) utilizing the input and expertise of stakeholders, establishing representation and democratic standards for communications and formalizing the role, responsibilities and objectives of stakeholders is critical for effective sport governance. Moreover, despite “Principles of Good Governance in Sport” by EU Expert Group, also other good governance guidelines, including Basic Universal Principle of IOC, highlight the importance of “Stakeholder Representation” principle for implementation of good governance within the sport organizations.

2.4 Democratic Representation

In determining legitimate representation and deciding who is most affected by a policy decision, a problem of scale arises as it is often unfeasible for everyone to be included in policy discussions (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). Representatives are therefore selected to speak on

behalf of citizens unable to be involved in the deliberative process. Who is represented, what process is used to determine selection, and what stakeholders are represented will vary according to the purpose of the deliberative body (Catt & Murphy, 2003). (Parkinson, 2006) stated that ‘the memberships that individuals consider relevant, the representatives’ roles vis-à-vis their principals, the selection process, and the issue of proportionality all depend on the topic at hand and the aims of the representative body’. Legitimate representation also requires that representatives are both authorized by, and accountable to, their stakeholders. In general, three types of representation exist: (1) an agent who acts on behalf of his [/her] principal (i.e. principal-agent model); (2) a person who shares some of the characteristics of a class of persons (descriptive representation); and (3) a person who symbolizes the qualities or identity of a class of persons (symbolic representation) (Birch, 1971). First, principal-agent models are typically used in the context of decision-making deliberative processes, where delegates are selected through voting (Pitkin, 1972). (Parkinson, 2006) contended that the principal-agent bond requires backand- forth discussions between the principal and their agent(s). (Young, 2000) considered this representation as a relationship

where she argued that ‘we should evaluate the process of representation according to the character of the relationship between the representative and the constituents’ and the failure of representative systems can be attributed to the lack of connection between representatives and their agents. The relationships between athletes and their agents are critical for holding them accountable for their decision making. The principal-agent model also includes selected representation where delegates are appointed from deliberative authorities (Street, Wt, Thibault, Kihl, & Babiak, 2010). Selected representation is generally used for information gathering and not decision making. Legitimacy issues are created due to concerns relating to accountability and hierarchical power. Appointed representatives are not accountable to citizens but to the authorities who appointed them (Street et al., 2010).

2.5 Athletes Commission

In recent years, an important group of stakeholders in sport – high performance athletes – have started to play an increasing role in the development of sport policies and decisions affecting them Kihl, Kikulis, & Thibault (2007). Leaders of national and international sport

organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of involving stakeholders in the development of policies (Thibault et al., 2010). One of the growing good governance and its democratization concern is involvement of stakeholders, particularly, athletes. (Thibault et al., 2010). According to Kihl, Kikulis, & Thibault (2007), athletes have been recognized as the focal point and, as such, the organizational structure, sport infrastructure and decision making process have been adapted to support and respond to the needs, values, and objectives of athletes. Yet, few governing bodies of sport that do provide a voice for athletes do so either through limited membership of the body's decision-making forum or through the formation of an 'athletes committee/commission' linked to the main forum, but safely quarantined from any significant decision-making opportunities (Houlihan, 2004). Despite the fact that athletes are the "raison d'être" of the sport system (Clarke et al., 1994), sport policy is generally made for, or on behalf of, athletes, rarely in consultation with athletes, and almost never in partnership with athletes (Houlihan, 2004).

A history of stakeholder distrust of sport leaders exists wherein many elite athletes feel that their priorities and values are not being represented in key policy decisions. (Hindley , Resource Guide in Governance and Sport, 2007) questioned stakeholders' involvement in

the governance of organizations explaining that ‘within international sports federations (IFs) and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) the notion of stakeholding has raised a number of pertinent questions concerning how the interests of groups such as athletes, volunteers and supporters are articulated. Furthermore, (Hindley , Resource Guide in Governance and Sport, 2007) called for the need to ‘evaluate mechanisms for stakeholder participation – for example, coach/athlete associations, supporter groups – how are their views represented? Along similar lines, (Katwala, 2000) contended that efforts to reform governance will require inclusiveness where sport’s key stakeholders maintain a central role in ‘the decision-making processes, seeking to reconcile their vital interests on the basis of the values of sport as a whole. In the context of international sport organizations, there is also evidence that athletes’ involvement in the policy-making process is increasingly being considered in the management and operations of these organizations. This outcome was briefly discussed in (Mason, Thibault, & Misener, 2006) research on corruption within the IOC. As the IOC was attempting to redress some questionable organizational practices in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it chose to become more athlete-centered by providing greater representation of athletes on its Athletes’ Council and

increased athlete input and participation in its decision-making processes. Houlihan, criticized the IOC's Athletes' Commission as being micro-managed and the representation of athletes as being a tokenistic one. Along similar lines, (Jackson & Ritchie, 2007) determined that 'despite claims by policymakers and other stakeholders within the sport system that athlete-centeredness should be a central priority, athletes have not been significantly involved in decision-making processes with respect to a policy [on anti-doping] that significantly affects their working lives. Due to these arguments notwithstanding, (Thibault et al., 2010) suggest that the presence of athletes around the decision-making table indicates that they are having a growing influence on policy making and that representation is a necessary first step to more involved decision making and voting rights. (Thibault et al., 2010) analysis describe that out of 33 IFs, 24 (73%) have athletes' commissions/committees and that the average year of the creation of these commissions/committees is 2000 (range 1989–2010). The status of athletes' commissions in 33 winter and summer IFs provided us with an overview regarding of the extent to which athletes are considered in the governance of these organizations. But, yet there are authors who criticize that athletes have not been significantly involved in decision-making processes with respect to a

policy that significantly affects their working lives. An athlete-centered high performance sport system is much more than an investment of resources in support programs to ensure appropriate access to quality training, coaching and facilities; it also includes athlete involvement in discussions about decisions and policies that most affect them (Thibault et al., 2010).

The Athletes' Commission was created at the decision of IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch following the XI Olympic Congress held in Baden-Baden (Germany) in 1981. Athletes Commission serves as a link between the active athletes and the IOC. The Commission thus represents athletes within the Olympic Movement and also upholds the rights and obligations of the athletes. The Commission members take part in the work of the main IOC working groups and commissions to provide the opinions of the athletes. It also works with the athletes' commission of the Continental Associations, National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and National Federations (IFs). However, it was not until the 1990s that a more concerted effort was made in both actions and policies with explicit athlete-centered goals and initiatives by government and nonprofit associations responsible for the governance and provision of high performance sport. A big effort was done in the

last decade where Athlete's Commission became a "forced" recommendation as part of Agenda 2020 – Recommendation 38.2. Pursuant to the recommendation of the IOC 2000 Reform Commission that "*athletes should be well represented at all levels of the sports movement: IOC, IFs, NOCs and NFs*" and the Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympic and Sports Movement, and in view of Rules 2.7 and 28.1.3 of the Olympic Charter, the IOC encourages International Federations (IFs) and National Federations (NFs) to form their own Athletes' Commissions (Committee I. O., 2019). IOC created Guidelines related to the creation of an effective International Federations' Athletes Commission. Athletes must be represented within the International Federation (IF) through an Athletes' Commission established in accordance with the IOC guidelines for the IFs Athletes' Commissions. These guidelines include: AC Mission; AC Objectives; AC Composition; Representation of the Commission within IF; and Meetings of the Commission. Representatives of the Athletes' Commission must be part of the decision-making bodies. Having an Athlete's Commission is a clear demonstration of an organization's commitment to good governance, benefiting both the athletes and the organization (Athletes, IOC, 2017). Olympic Agenda 2020

recommendations, support the importance of having effective Athletes' Commissions.

Chapter 3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

This chapter describes the research design and explains methodological considerations for the study.

To conduct the study, the researcher used quantitative and qualitative approaches. (Bryman, 2006) describes the rationales for combining quantitative and qualitative research within one study. One of the arguments for doing so, is when both methods are used to answer to different research questions.

Qualitative research is considered the appropriate approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014) and it is used to answer questions about experiences, meanings and perspectives, most often from a standpoint of participants (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016). To discover more about the phenomena being studied - from the perception of Athletes' Commission members - and to obtain deep and valuable information, this study uses a qualitative approach to answer to research questions – RQ 2.

On the other hand, in order to answer the RQ 1– which seeks to understand athletes’ awareness was applied a survey. Quantitative methodology involves the use of numeric-based information that can be measured, compared and analyzed statistically (Wassong, 2018).

3.2 Data Collection

This part describes the process of data collection for the study. Considering that the research includes both types of research approaches, the description is divided in two parts – details per each approach: process of data collection, participants, and the instrument used for quantitative data collection. The researcher has participated in the FINA World Aquatics Championship, Gwangju 2019, where the majority of the data has been collected.

Quantitative Approach

The Instrument

For the quantitative component of the study, the researcher applied a survey to athletes who participated in FINA World Aquatic Championships, Gwangju 2019. The instrument was developed based in the review of the literature. The survey consists of two parts. **Part I** – General information about awareness of athletes’ for Athletes’ Commission; and **Part II** – Demographic Questions. First part of the survey was based on a study of high performance athletes in Canada. It provides a comprehensive examination of athlete’s social and economic characteristics, including athlete’s representation on governing bodies of Canadian sport organizations (Report, 2005). This study is considered as e key contributor to the development of athletes support policies at Sport Canada (Canada, 2005). The survey structure and content was supported by experts in the field of governance and sport policy as: Ian Lindsey and Borja Garcia. Furthermore, the researcher has conducted two pilot tests. Firstly, the survey was tested with students from batches of DTM program. After recommendations and suggestions, the survey

was tested with 30 athletes (swimmers) from 5 different countries: Ukraine, Kosovo, USA, Germany, and Serbia. The data collection was administrated by using the online survey tool: Google Forms. The participants of quantitative component were athletes who participated in the 18th FINA World Aquatic Championships, Gwangju 2019.

Qualitative Approach

The Process

4 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with Athletes' Commission members of FINA. The interview questions were developed based on the literature interview: Good Governance Principles; Network Governance and the newest version of IOC's Guidelines related to the creation of an IF Athlete's Commission. In addition, the participants were asked, also for their point of view about athlete's awareness related to Athletes Commission in FINA.

There was no set of criterion for selection of the members to be interviewed. The decision of the chosen participants has been done by the Athletes Commission itself, after their acceptance to participate in

the study. Two of the interviews were face-to-face interviews, conducted during the researcher's participation in the event, while the other interviews were conducted 5 weeks after the Championship through Skype. Moreover, with the permission of participants, the interviews were recorded for research purposes. The total length of interviews results in 192 minutes.

Participants

Three of the interviewees represent athletes into executive positions of Athletes Commission: The Chair, the Vice-Chair, and the Honorary Secretary, while the other interviewee has the status of member within the Athletes Commission and represents athletes voice within Technical Swimming Committee of FINA. The participants have been part of the Athletes Commission in FINA from 2-18 range of years. All of them have the background of "Former Athletes" and their careers were in the sport of swimming and open water swimming competitions.

3.3 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis

The descriptive statistics of the quantitative approach, were analyzed with the software: Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

To analyze the qualitative data of the study, was used an inductive thematic approach. Qualitative data analysis covers processes and procedures that convert the data that have been collected, into forms of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations. One of the techniques of qualitative data analysis is Thematic analysis – which was consider as the most appropriate one for this study. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which frequently goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topics (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is particularly useful method when the investigation is about an under-researched area, or working on participants whose views on the topic are not known (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analyzing approach is inductive, meaning that the themes

identification is very strongly linked to the data themselves (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With the aim of developing meaningful themes the six-phase guide of (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used: Become familiar with the data; General initial codes; Search for themes; Review themes; Define themes; and Write up. The first initial stage of the data analysis process, was transcribing the recorded interviews. The process of transcription, helped becoming more familiar with the data. The transcripts were read repeatedly, in order to get the depth and breadth of the data content and create ideas about coding process. Through coding process, the amount of raw data was reduced and grouped relevant to research questions. As final product of data analysis process are 4 themes: Awareness; Commission's Operation; Athletes Commission in the Network Governance; and Improving Athletes Commission in FINA.

Chapter 4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the results of data analysis. It includes two main parts: survey results and qualitative results. Quantitative results represent the athletes' point of view and are described as follow: Demographics, and Descriptive Statistics, whereas, qualitative part refers to Athletes' Commission member's perspective and is described based on the themes identified through the data analysis process: Awareness; Operation of Athletes Commission; and Challenges and Suggestions.

4.1 Quantitative Results

Demographics

Among the 211 completed surveys, 4 respondents with missing data were disregarded, leaving 207 useable samples. The sample varied in demographic and sport career characteristics. The respondents, represent athletes from 71 countries, with greater number of American and European countries. Among them, 114 (55.1%) were males and 93 (44.9%) were females. All the participants have an educational

background, whether high school graduated or university graduated – no responses were recorded for “no school qualification”. Among them, 122 (58.9%) were swimmers, 47 (22.7%) divers, and 38 (18.4%) were Water Polo athletes. In consideration of athletes’ best performance in FINA World Championships, 60.4% were athletes whose biggest achievement was only the participation in the event, 21.2% were qualified whether in semi-finals or finals and 18.4% at least won one world medal. Table 1 depicts in details the profile of participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristic (Respondents – 207)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	114	55.1%
	Female	93	44.9%
Age	15 - 20	56	27.1%
	20 - 25	113	54.6%
	Over 25	38	18.4%
Education	No School Qualification	0	0%
	High-School Graduated	103	49.8%
	University Graduated	104	50.2%
Nationality	Europe	66	31.9%
	America	64	30.9 %
	Asia	29	14%
	Oceania	25	12.1%
	Africa	23	11.1%
Sport Discipline	Swimming	122	58.9%
	Diving	47	22.7%
	Water Polo	38	18.4%
Best Performance	Represented my team	125	60.4%
	Qualified on final/semi-final	44	21.2%
	Won medal	38	18.4%

Descriptive Statistics

Basis for examination of athletes' awareness were 3 items of the survey. Table 1 provides an overview of the frequency (and percentage) for athletes' awareness: 83 (40.1%) of athletes are not at all aware about existence of AC, 46 (22.2%) heard about it, 57 (27.5%) are aware about their existence but don't know how it works, while 21 (10.2%) are even partially or totally familiar. Additionally, only 6 athletes were able to name the current Chair of AC, while 6 other, knew how many athletes represent their sport in AC.

Table 2. Athletes' Awareness about Athletes' Commission of FINA.

Awareness Level	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	83	40.1%
I've heard about it	46	22.2%
I know it exist but don't know how it works	57	27.5%
I partially know how it works	19	9.2%
I know everything about it	2	1.0%

The descriptive statistics associated with athletes' level of awareness for Athletes Commission (AC) are reported in Table 3. The table shows the means of athletes' awareness as a function of gender, age, education, sport, and performance. The mean for level of awareness of

males (M=1.10) and females (M=1.08) are very similar. By comparison, athletes of age 15-20 (N=56) have the smallest numerical mean of awareness (M=0.73), while age of over 25 (N=38) have the biggest numerical mean of awareness (M=1.50). Similarly, the diver-athletes, score the lowest numerical mean (M=0.83) comparing with athletes from other sports.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Awareness.

Groups	Categories	N	<u>Awareness</u>	
			<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>
Gender	Male	114	1.10	1.097
	Female	93	1.08	1.024
Age	15-20	56	0.73	0.863
	20-25	113	1.12	1.045
	Over 25	38	1.50	1.225
Education	No school qualification	/	/	/
	High School graduated	103	0.98	1.075
	University graduated	104	1.19	1.043
Sport	Swimming	122	1.17	1.066
	Diving	47	0.83	1.070
	Water Polo	38	1.13	1.018
Best Performance	Team representative	125	0.97	1.008
	Qualified final/semi-final	44	1.14	1.091
	Won a medal	38	1.42	1.062

Qualitative Findings

4.2 Awareness

Athletes Commission members are well aware about the lack of athlete's awareness. They were asked – How much do athletes know about Athletes Commission? – their assumptions were relevant to athlete's perspective. Participant 2 stated: *“Athletes might not even be aware that we exist, or even if they are aware of our existence they don't really know what we are doing”*. This statement, matches 186 of athlete's responses in the survey. The participants argue that the reasons that athletes lack of awareness are: lack of education and lack of athletes' interest. They argue that despite their attempts to communicate and build relationship with athletes, they are not interested to be engaged. However, citizens engagement requires the education of all citizens by providing the necessary information so that they understand issues and are able to participate on key policy issues and is characterized by ongoing discussions throughout the policy process (Phillips, Orsini, Network, & De La Famille, 2002). The lack of athletes' interest can be viewed from two different approaches: athletes' willingness to get engaged with decision making processes and athletes' trust in their representatives in

FINA. As full time athletes, their first (and possibly only) priority is to train and perform in international sport competitions (Thibault et al., 2010). Athletes may disadvantage their potential contribution for representation of athletes' voice in FINA structural reforms. On the other hand, governance literature suggests that one of the key benefits of accountability is the establishment of a relationship based on trust – as results of transparency and open contact. Participant 1 stated *“I've heard that athletes' are still saying that they have no voice...that they have no one to talk too”*. Similarly, participant 2 *“...athletes say: AC is a body that doesn't do anything...they don't appreciate our work...I don't really know how to get to those people...especially those who already have a voice (famous athletes)”*. Appointed representatives (as in FINA's Athletes Commission), lack a legitimizing bond to keep stakeholders accountable, where the stakeholders being represented lack the authority to hold the representatives accountable (Thibault et al., 2010). Another way of approaching the issue of accountability is the communication with athletes. In order to maintain quality relationships with stakeholders, organizations must design a range of communication strategies that cater for each stakeholder group, according to its desires and needs relative to certain issues (Alm, 2013). They have to set a coherent information flow,

able to circulate in two directions: internally, inside the organization (departments and administrative units, employees, athletes, associated clubs and organizations), and externally, towards the environment outside the organization (television, radio, press, governmental agencies, companies interested in sponsoring sport events, and the population at large) (Moisescu & Moisescu, 2012). One of the initiatives taken by Athletes Commission to enhance and improve the awareness of aquatic athletes, was by trying to increase the communication with them. Contemporary organizations not only describe their communication environment in terms of transparency but also prescribe it as a proper managerial response (Alm, 2013). For communication, Athletes Commission follows two models: face-to-face communication and online platforms. Face-to-face interaction occurs occasionally during the competitions events. Participant 4 stated: *“you get to meet athletes time to time...you see them on very limited time”*. Generally, they face challenges to communicate effectively during competitions, due to athletes’ lack of time because of their priority for sport performance. Alm 2013, argues that sport organizations need to look for the appropriate communication models and tools best suited to address specific issues and concerns. The emergence of new technologies has changed the

communication process and patterns. Participant 1 stated: “...*now we have an Instagram account...*”. Online platforms, are the other model of communication used by Athletes Commission. Participants explained that they receive emails from athletes very rarely, thus, the email is not an effective form of communication. Moreover, this year (2019) they have been trying to communicate through social media accounts – “*we opened an Instagram account...but it is going so slowly*”. The literature explains that the goal of public communication activities is to build a long-term relationship with strategic publics. Sport organizations are particularly attached to the traditional communication style, even though those fail to bring the desired results (Alm, 2013). In the highly-socialized world of modern communication, traditional communication styles must give way to the more effective contemporary ones (Alm, 2013). Even though, for online platforms to be effective, it requires involvement of experts from public relations field. Whereas, the online accounts of Athletes Commission are maintained by the members themselves. Using online platforms appropriately is an easy way to enrich the relationship with stakeholders – athletes.

4.3 Athletes' Commission Operation

This theme is divided into two sub-themes. First sub-theme – Athletes Commission within FINA network, describes the Commission as a special unit established by FINA itself. While, the second sub-theme – Internal operation of Athletes Commission, shows the internal activities and processes implemented by the Commission.

Athletes Commission within FINA Network

In the time of data collection during the World Championships, the international governing body of aquatic sports, passed a number of rule changes at its annual General Congress. Alongside with other amendments, significant changes happened in regard to representation of athletes' voice in FINA executive level: seven members of Athletes Commission will have the right to vote in the FINA Congress; the Chair of Athletes Commission became a full voting member of FINA Bureau; and from 2021, out of 15 members of Athletes Commission – 8 members will be elected by current athletes. These changes are elaborated and considered during the discussion.

The IOC's directions and recommendations to empower the voice of athletes in decision making processes, together with the pressure coming from active athletes (big-players), have influenced international federations to reconsider athletes' representation in their executive level. According to participants, these are the two main reasons why they gained the right to vote in the Bureau and General Congress. Table 3 demonstrates the representation of Athletes Commission in FINA structure and their voting rights within committees.

The Chair of Athletes Commission is not a member of FINA executive board but occasionally the Chair receives invitation to participate in board's meetings. Furthermore, members of Athletes Commission provide input in technical committees of FINA. Since 2017, they are full voting right members. FINA consists of 6 Technical Committees – one per each sport discipline. Participant 2 stated: *“a very important duty of mine as a member of Athletes Commission, is me representing athletes in technical committee...main discussions and decisions related to the sport itself, are made there...I do have a big voice there”*. IOC's guidelines recommend that athletes should have a full voting right-representative in executive board (Athletes, n.d.), but this is not the case in FINA. Participant 3 emphasized: *“...we need to get*

involved directly into decisions or discussions done at the executive level". (Kihl et al., 2007) argued: athletes' might have voice in the decisions that affect them but this voice does not necessarily translate into a vote on the executive body.

FINA Structure	Athletes' Representation	Voting Right
General Assembly	√	7 Votes
Bureau	√	1 Vote
Executive Board	—	—
Technical Committees	√	1 Vote

Table 3. Athletes Representation in FINA structure.

With the constitutional changes that happened in Gwangju, Athletes' Commission gained 7 votes in General Assembly and 1 vote in FINA Bureau. Considering the power of General Assembly in decision making processes (i.e. electing the president), this is a great opportunity for athletes to get directly involved in major decisions' of FINA. Participant 1 stated: "*...FINA is involving athletes' point of view way more than before*". Participant 4: "*...we made progress with getting those changes in Bureau, but ideally we need to have more voting rights within FINA*". Moreover, the Chair of Athletes Commission became a full voting right representative in FINA Bureau. However, participant 3 stated: "*I believe one vote doesn't change anything...there are 26 in the Bureau*". Relevant

to this situation, (Thibault et al., 2010) argued that leaders of International Federations should also recognize that providing athletes with one vote may not result in outcomes that favor an athlete-centered approach. (Houlihan, 2004) criticized that just because international multi-sport organizations have modified their structures to include athlete representatives, this has not meant that the individual and collective values of athletes are given priority. In addition, all athletes' representatives in Athletes Commission, Technical Committees, Bureau and General Assembly, particularly are appointed by FINA executive structure, and appointed representation is generally used for information gathering and not for decision making (Thibault et al., 2010). Even though, the members are purely appointed, yet, FINA has granted some constitutional decision making power to athletes. On the other hand, considering this increased involvement in decision making – this pool of votes for Athletes Commission, it is very important to have clear internal rules and regulations, that identify the power and the role of those votes within Athletes Commission and FINA in general. Participant 3 stated: *“when it comes to formal approvals or voting, we need to get sure that we follow the right process”*. Participant 2 mentioned: *“...you never know in what pattern they are going to push it...”*. Without doubting,

athlete commission provides a platform for athletes to participate in decisions, actions and policies, however, issues are created due to concerns relating to accountability and hierarchical power – usually appointed representatives are not accountable to citizens (athletes) but to the authorities who appointed them. (Habermas, 1996) argued that when discourse ethics is not used to establish fair procedures by which negotiations and bargaining power is evenly distributed then those in power ultimately hold the trump card in the policy decisions.

Organizational structures can be complex, especially if they have adopted a representative model to facilitate the involvement of a wide range of diverse stakeholders. IOC Guidelines emphasizes that Athletes Commission should build support throughout the organization, from high level of leadership to the athletes community and administration (Athletes, n.d.). Participants highlight FINA's support for their development and operation. Participant 2 quoted: *"I really appreciate FINA about the support and importance that they give to us... it hasn't been like this 10 -15 years ago – not at all...this shows development"*. All expenses related to Athletes Commission's travelling, meetings, and other procedures, are covered by FINA. Notwithstanding, they argue that their operation is financially limited. Beyond the financial support, the

participants affirmed that in this last year (2019), the top executive members of the federation started to participate in Athletes Commission meetings. Participant 4 mentioned: “*FINA is really coming around to the idea of the importance of AC...the president and executives come to our meetings every time we invite them...this didn't happen 4 years ago*”.

As an international unit of FINA governance, Athletes Commission is dependent in FINA support in many terms. Participant 2 stated: “*...we are a body within a political body...*”. Taking into account, that Athletes Commission is established and appointed by FINA structure itself, it is very important to understand and elaborate the power and role that FINA has within Commission. (Hoye & Cuskelly, Sport Governance, 2007) discussed that resources dependence theory proposes that organizations are dependent on other organizations for survival and therefore need to manage their relationships with other organizations to ensure they get the resources and information they need. Similarly, (Alm, 2013) discusses that members of international organizations are financially depended on their corresponded organizations – he interprets that there is nothing wrong with funding your members per se – on the contrary, it reflects solidarity and development of sport. However, this kind of approach entails certain risk in terms of the influence and power

that the funder can use in the beneficiary. (Forster & Pope, 2004) state that the recipient can become benevolent or even servant to the funder. Funds, for instance can be used to ensure votes, to support a certain agenda or to ensure the re-election of officers (Forster & Pope, 2004). . Usually sports governance could be defined as a hierarchical pyramid structure. In this hierarchical pyramid, Athletes Commission is positioned at the bottom of the structure. Thus, the support and influence of FINA in Athletes Commission, together with commission's financial dependency and their new voting power, has to be properly managed and structured in order to ensure that athletes' voice is being heard.

Internal Operation of Athletes' Commission

This sub-theme consists of: Composition of Athletes' Commission; Meetings of Athletes' Commission; and Decision Making Processes of Athletes' Commission.

Composition

Democracy constitutes a type of political system in which the sovereign powers reside in the people (as a whole) while political

decisions are exercised either directly by them or by representatives elected by them (Mittag, Sportwiss, & Putzmann, 2006). In comparison with International Federations that are membership organizations, and have membership-based control structure (Geeraert, Groll, & Alm, 2013), the Athletes Commission has an appointed membership-based control structure. This entails that top structures of FINA, appoints the members of the Commission and they control their activity. Moreover, the Athletes Commission of FINA, has an executive structure. After member's appointment in 2017, for the first time since their existence, the members itself elected the executive structure of the Commission. (Thibault et al., 2010) discuss that appointed representatives are assigned based on their level of expertise or on particular characteristics. FINA Constitution determines the powers and duties of Athletes Commission, but it lacks the procedures of members' appointment. It is considered that appointed representatives are not accountable to athletes but to the authorities who appointed them. This generates a concern about the perpetuation of the athletes' lack of voice and input that may persist with organizations that appoint specifically chosen athletes to represent all athletes (Thibault et al., 2010). The criteria to candidate for appointment as a member of Athletes Commission is that: The National Federation has to nominate

its candidate and then it's FINA who appoints them. Participant 2 stated: *“first, all those who want to be or can be appointed, need to be nominated or submitted by their National Federation, thus, if your National Federation doesn't put your name forward, you cannot be part of Athletes Commission...and then is FINA who appoints us”*. Participant 4: *“we are a small community so probably I was the only one nominated”*. This procedure, raises the question whether the nominated candidates in national level are appointed or elected? The results show that National Federations seem to be more selective and less strategic in nominating athletes.

The current Athletes Commission of FINA was appointed in 2017 (FINA, 2017). The composition contains re-appointment of members and appointment of six new members. Based on FINA Constitution (2017), Athletes Commission is considered as a specialized committee consisting of up to 12 members (Congress, 2017). Representation by sport discipline, by gender and by different regions in the world are important elements in the composition of athletes commissions (Thibault et al., 2010). Considering that FINA is the umbrella of 6 aquatic disciplines, Athletes Commission consists of: one male and female representative from each discipline, ensuring

geographical representation. However, presently, the Commission consists of 17 members – well covering the geographical, gender, and sport discipline balance. The added number of members was explained as a need to have a better geographical representation. Moreover, based on the interviewees, Athletes Commission tries to have a good mixture of active and former athletes as members. The inclusion of recently retired athletes is not in an appropriate level. Based on the names that compose FINA Athletes Commission – the range of years that members finished their active career is from 2-18 years calculated with the current year. Participant 1 mentioned: “*we actually have few of recently retired members’ ...couple of us have been there for a long time now...and there has been some criticism around that*”. The results show that one of the main challenges in relation to composition of the Commission and member’s background is the inclusion of current athletes. This has been argued by (Thibault et al., 2010) from the perspective of doubting if active athletes have the time and knowledge to represent all their peers. Participant 1 quoted: “*...it is not easy, especially with active athletes...the other members have to fill the gap and be around because they are competing...*”. The main challenge faced by active athletes is time issues in relation to meeting attendance. On the other hand, they are

considered to be very close to the sport and athlete's concerns. Considering the difficulties faced by the Commission to gather the information from athletes in the field, it is very important to have current athletes' representatives in the commission. However, their role and effectiveness should be explored more. Participant 3 stated: "*current athletes need to focus into doing both...competition and representation in AC*".

Meetings

Beside their communication through emails, Athletes Commission officially meets twice per year. They run two different types of meetings: meetings during competitions and off the competitions. They organize only one meeting "off the competition" which usually occurs in FINA Headquarter, while the other meetings happen during the competition. World Championships or Short Course Championship are the events where they organize the second meeting within a year. During these major events – which lasts from 6 – 16 days, they meet more than three times. Additionally, beside these major events, at least three members of the Commission, meet during other FINA events as

Champion Swim Series – which includes three circles of competitions. This event was established in 2019, giving them the opportunity to meet much more often than before. Thus, since the beginning of 2019, the Athletes Commission had the chance to interact much more as a group. Moreover, the Honorary Secretary of Athletes Commission is in charge of keeping the “meeting minutes”. Athletes Commission of FINA, complies with IOC Guidelines in terms of meetings frequency (Athletes, n.d.).

In FINA Constitution it is defined that one of Athletes Commission’s duties is to bring input of athletes’ experience to the organization (Congress, 2017). In order for the Commission to prepare and present their recommendation for FINA, despite gathering the information from athletes in the field, they should ensure to organize their meetings on time. Participant 1: *“my concern is that we have to have the meetings on time so we can present our recommendations to the Bureau”*. FINA organizes most of their meetings during competition events, and this arises another issue for Athletes Commission – current athletes’ input. This is directly related to athletes’ issues with time, and somehow to their interest to get involved into decision making processes. Representatives who are uninterested to be well versed in the issues cannot guarantee the

they will be able to give voice to the views they represent (Thibault et al., 2010). The lack of current athletes' ability to attend the meetings, can be addressed by recently retired athletes. They have the sporting experience in the sport system, they are familiar with the issues and they have the time to invest in the commission's work.

Decision Making Processes

Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympic and Sport Movement (Movement et al., 2008), emphasis that clear regulations allow understanding, predictability and facilitate good governance. All participants indicated that Athletes Commission doesn't follow specific rules or regulations in their internal decision making processes. Participant 3 stated: "*...the procedures of how we want to interact as a group, is being drafted at the moment...*". Considering their challenges to gather athletes' opinion, it results that the power of decisions making for recommendations given in athletes' name, lays under members' opinion. Nevertheless, Participant 3 indicated: "*...we still have issues with involvement of athletes in decisions related to them*". In terms of their procedures followed to make internal decisions, the other participants, made similar statements, confirming that they still

don't follow clear regulations in terms of their internal operation. The IOC guidelines for establishment of an Athletes Commission within sport organizations, states the need of having "terms of reference" in order to ensure democratic operation of the Commission.

The word 'governance' is used primarily as a synonym for 'management', implying that good governance can be achieved largely through judicious decision-making and adherence to moral standards (Jedlicka, 2018).

Allegations of vote buying in particular have arisen in the international governing bodies of sport in the last two decades (Alm, 2013).

All participants agreed that they don't have issues related to decision making processes, because they do have similar views and objectives. Moreover, the decisions done have to be presented to FINA executive structure. The Chair of Athletes Commission, puts forward the recommendations and concerns in the Bureau or Executive Board meetings.

4.4 Challenges faced by Athletes' Commission

Although we can see an increasing athletes' participation within governing body of aquatic sports, yet there are numerous challenges that Athletes Commission is facing. In this section, are disgust the major challenges emphasized by participants as members of Athletes Commission.

FINA is the governing body of 6 aquatic sports – it is the shelter of athletes from six different sports. One of Athletes Commissions challenges is covering and representing the views of all athletes from all sports – this is somehow similar to the structure and operation of IOC. Participant 4 stated: “...*they compare us to IOC...they have lot more money and financial support*”. Furthermore, they revealed that the link between national Athletes Commission and FINA Athletes Commission is significant to ensure a democratic and effective representation of athletes' voice in decision making processes. Another challenge for them is that FINA, (including other IFs and IOC) don't oblige sport organizations to establish Athletes Commission. (OLYMPIC AGENDA 2020) doesn't require it, but it strongly recommends to have an Athletes Commission as a tool for athletes' representation within the organization.

The approach that FINA took to safeguard this issue is by having it as a criterion for National Federations to have an athlete representative in Athletes Commission. Participant 1 stated: *“In order for a NFs to put a name forward for an athlete representative, they have to have either AC or at very least athlete’s representatives on the top structure...those who don’t have, FINA will help them to establish it”*. Equivalently, this requires managerial mechanism and financial resources to have and deal with representatives from all over the world. Even though, the interviewees, highly appreciate FINA’s support, yet, they argue that they have resources challenges to build and maintain their network relationships. Participant 3 stated *“...there are a lot of things that we can try to do...maybe FINA can help us with bit more funding to bring all athletes’ into account”*. (Thibault et al., 2010) argues that money is needed to bring all these people together and to ensure that they have the necessary information, knowledge, and skills to active participation in the process – but it is an initiative well worth of investment if we are to have truly democratic organization.

An essential element of managerial performance is communication (Moiescu & Moiescu, 2012), and as key challenge mentioned from all participants is, communication with athletes.

Participants complained that beside many attempts to advance the communication with athletes', it is the lack of athletes' interest that is hampering the process of interaction. The challenge here is to ensure a proper communication strategy which is interconnected with education of athletes for importance of Athletes Commission. In relation to this, during the last Championship, the Commission managed to establish an Athletes Commission booth within the athlete's village. Participant 2 stated: "*...the booth idea came during our discussion on how to raise the awareness of athletes*". From participant's point of view, the booth was effective to educate athletes and start a relationship with them. They express the concern of having this booth in every event, due to accommodation setting. The continues implementation of booth idea, is related to the relationship of Athletes Commission with Organizing Committee of the event. Participant 3 stated: "*...OC is responsible for everything...we need to be more involved in the preparation of events*". . . The results show, that Athletes Commission has well developed communication system with those in executive, but lacks on communication with its stakeholders (athletes). In addition, the members argue that for improvement of Athletes Commission it requires time – since it is a process within a network of processes. If we look back to the

history of IOC's Athletes Commission (the first Athletes Commission), we identify that it was established in 1981. While (Wassong, 2018), brings evidence that the need to implement an athletes' representation within the IOC was already developed in the preparation before the Xth Olympic Congress in Varna in 1973. Even after their establishment it took years for improvement of athlete's involvement in decision making processes (even today, it is still criticized). Similarly, FINA's Athletes Commission was established in 1991 – and even today they still face major challenges on their performance. Participant 3 stated: *“we are still facing challenges to get the basics right...education of athletes for doping and decision making processes, are basic...we should get the basics right in order to aim more”*. An interesting finding, was that Athletes Commission members were so limited into giving suggestions on how can the role and performance of the Commission within FINA be improved.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

FINA Athletes Commission shows progressive attempts to comply with IOC Guidelines – they increased their voting pools within FINA structure and got the constitutional approval for membership election. However, additional research is needed to understand how effective these guidelines are. Considering that voting has been adopted and unquestioned as “the way” to ensure an athlete-centered system and to demonstrate a democracy by giving athletes the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect their lives (Kihl et al., 2007), this seems to be a progress in the right directions. To ensure that the voice of athletes is being heard, the organization should consider providing more jurisdictional power to Athletes’ Committee. Moreover, legitimacy issues are created due to concerns relating to accountability and hierarchical power. The main benefit of accountability is the establishment of a relationship based on trust, as a result of transparency and open contact (Alm, 2013). On the other hand, athletes’ awareness about Athletes Commission in FINA seems to be in critical level. From Athletes’ Commission members’ perspective, the lack of awareness is associated to their lack of education and interest to get engaged. The

literature states that deliberative democracy requires the education of all citizens by providing the necessary information so that they are informed on issues and are able to participate in deliberations on key policy issues. Taking into account that these kind of processes require citizens to actively participate in discussions, it is necessary that athletes get informed accordingly with plans and operations of Athletes' Commission.

Considering the complexity of sport organizations, the number of stakeholders and units involved for an effective operation, for Athletes' Commission and FINA in general, it is necessary to find a balance between top-bottom and bottom-up communication. Athletes Commission is the unit in the middle of top structure of FINA and athletes' in the field. They seem to have a well-developed communication system with those in the executive, but lacks on communication with other stakeholders - particularly with athletes. Contemporary organizations not only describe their communication environment in terms of transparency but also prescribe it as a proper managerial response (Alm, 2013). The establishment of athletes' committees is one strategy to provide athletes with a voice in the organizations about issues that affect them, though it

may not necessarily lead to a true athlete-centered approach. Just recently, some of FINA's athletes (swimmers) established their Athletes Union. Regardless the improvements of involvement of Athletes Commission in decision making processes of FINA, yet, athletes don't consider Athletes Commission as the right vehicle to represent their voice in top structures of the federation. Despite the importance of these findings, there are several limitations in this study. Prior to data collection, the researcher aimed to figure it out quantitatively: "How do athletes evaluate Athletes Commission performance in FINA governance?" Due to lack of athletes' awareness for Commission's existence, the researcher was unable to examine the perceived effectiveness. Moreover, another limitation for the author, was the limited access to interview current athlete-members of Athletes Commission. In order to gain a better understanding of athletes' perspective for Athletes Commission, the future researcher may consider to conduct in-depth interviews with elite sport athletes.

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Appendix I – Interview Questions

	<p><i>Discussion about athlete’s knowledge for AC</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you describe athletes level of information about you as AC member? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Apart from your former athletic career and your achievements, what is your opinion, what are the information that athletes know about you as AC member? b) According to FINA official webpage, the information shared about AC, are your names and your distribution in TC. In your opinion, what information do athletes know about AC members beyond the information provided in FINA official webpage? 2. How often do you receive issues of concerns from athletes? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How do you deal with those concerns? (How do you try to solve those issues?) (Why in that way?) b) What are the most common concerns brought by athletes? c) How do athletes reach you? How do they contact you? (email, phone, during WCH) 3. How do you communicate with athletes? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How do you inform them about your activities and work? 4. In your opinion how much are athletes familiar with IOC Guidelines for developing an effective AC within IFs?
	<p><i>Discussion about AC functioning</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Talking about IOC Guidelines, how do operate/function in order to accomplish the required standards for an effective AC? b) How often do you have meetings? c) How do you organize the meetings, since all of you come from different countries, in terms of time, cost and administration processes? d) What are the objectives or goals of AC within FINA? (Based on their responses, I can ask them: Why, How, What?) e) How hard is it for you to represent athlete’s rights and interests within FINA? What are the main challenges that you face? f) What are the projects that you are working in FINA now? (What is the purpose of this project? How is it important for athletes?) g) As representative in TC, how would you describe your position there? How do you represent athletes’ needs in TC? (Did you vote?) To what level you are involved in decision making processes in FINA? What is one of the latest meetings in TC? h) What are your initiatives when it comes to protection and supporting athletes toward a clean and fair competition? i) Based on the current situation, what are the main challenges faced by AC? What do you think are the solutions for those challenges?

- j) When it comes to AC in National Federations, how do they function and do they have any duty toward FINA's AC? How do you keep in contact with them?
- k) What about your AC composition, what are the criteria to become a member of AC? Who can candidate for an AC member position? What is the procedure? Do you have election?

Discussion about “What are the factors that would strengthen AC’s involvement in decision making processes in FINA

1. When it comes to the composition of the AC, IOC suggests that there should be a balanced distribution of active and recently retired athletes, what is your opinion based on your experience toward this statement? (Why is it so?)
 - a) In your opinion which is more effective having active or retired athletes? (Why?)
 - b) Considering commitment needed in sport training, and the time that it takes, how do you manage to participate in projects and meetings? (If the member is an active athlete)
2. What is your opinion when it comes to IOC statement that AC members must never have received any sanction in relation to the World Anti-Doping Code? Can you think of any case that this situation would be optional or exception?
3. The Chair of AC, represents athlete’s voice in EB. How does it work? Does he participate in every meeting? Do you guys have meetings before, or how do you decide about what he’s going to represent in EB? Could you tell me how do you ensure that athlete’s voice is being represented in EB?... Having only one representative in EB, is it enough? Why, what are the limitations or benefits? What is your opinion, how many representatives of athletes should be in EB? Why?
4. When it comes to voting rights, we know that AC representative in EB doesn’t have the right to vote? What is your opinion about it? Being there without the right to vote, how effective is it? How do you ensure that EB will make decisions based on athlete’s needs? In your opinion, how can we solve this issue? Why?
5. Let’s move to AC communication with athletes. Considering the fact that FINA has 6 sports and a big number of athletes, what is the best form of communicating with them? What would be the benefit of having an online platform where all aquatic athletes have access? Or what about organizing an Athlete Forum? – What are the challenges of organizing this forum?

For the end, can you give any other suggestion how could we strengthen athlete’s voice within FINA governance?

Appendix II – Survey

Dear Champion,

Hello 😊

My name is Daulina Osmani, currently a Master's Candidate in Sport Management at Seoul Nation University. As an athlete, you are the main reason for sport's existence. You are the central stakeholder of the sport system. You are thus the focal point of this research. The main goal of this study is to find out more about your – our collective – knowledge, involvement, and participation in FINA governance. Receiving your feedback is fundamental. It is key in evaluating the current situation and the future development of both athlete involvement and participation in FINA's decision-making processes. Appreciating your time and effort, the survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous and voluntary. The data will be used only for research purposes. If you have any question or concern, you can email me (daulina@snu.ac.kr), or the director of this thesis, Professor Joon-Ho Kang (kngjh@snu.ac.kr). Feel free to contact us!

Thanks in advance for your time and attention. You rock!

PART I - Awareness about Athletes Commission

Please choose one of the following options regarding your information, involvement and participation in FINA

1. Do you have Athletes Commission in your National Federation?
 YES, we have NO, we don't have I DON'T KNOW, if we have

2. Are you a member of your national Athlete Commission?
 YES NO We don't have Athletes Commission

3. Are you aware of Athletes Commission in FINA?
 Not at all
 I've heard about it
 I know it exists but do not know how it works
 I partially know how it works
 I know everything about it

4. How many athletes represent your sport in FINA's Athletes Commission?
If you don't know, leave blank

5. Do you know who are the athletes that represent your sport in FINA's Athletes Commission?
 YES NO PARTIALLY

6. Can you name the current Chair of FINA Athlete Commission?
If you don't know, leave blank

7. Have you ever brought an issue of concern to FINA Athletes Commission?
 YES NO

8. Why you never brought an issue of concern to Athletes Commission?
Answer to this question ONLY if your answer of the previous question was NO.
 Because I never had an issue to share with them
 Because I didn't know that I can share my issues with AC
 Because I don't know how to reach them
 Because I don't know how to reach them

9. Have you ever voted in election of FINA's Athlete Commission?
 YES NO

10. Have you ever been informed or updated by Athletes Commission for their activities in FINA?

- YES NO

PART II – Demographic Questions

1. What is your nationality?

2. What is your gender? MALE FEMALE

3. What is your age?

- 15-20 20 – 25 Over 25

4. What is your highest level of education?

- No School Qualification High School Graduate University Graduate

5. To which sport discipline do you belong?

- Swimming Diving
 Open Water Artistic Swimming
 High Diving Water Polo

6. For how long have you been competing in your sport? (in years) _____

7. What is your best performance in FINA World Championships?

- Represented my team in World Championships Qualified on Semi-Finals
 Qualified on Finals Won a medal in World Championships

Thank you very much for your time. You Rock! I would love to share the findings of this research with you. If you are interested to receive a preliminary report of the research findings, please write your email below. _____