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Understanding the complexities involved in the recognition of national sports federations, sports associations, and sports academies

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Abstract

This study examines the intricate process involved in the recognition of National Sports Federations (NSFs), Sports Associations, and Sports Academies, addressing notable gaps in existing research and practice. Recognition of these entities plays a crucial role in their ability to secure funding, establish governance standards, access resources, and build credibility. However, political interference, financial limitations, and inconsistent criteria create significant barriers. Through a quantitative survey of Indian sports professionals, this research explores their understanding, perceptions, and experiences related to recognition. Using a 5-point Likert scale, the findings show a mean score of 3.43, indicating a moderate consensus on the complexities encountered. Key issues identified include bureaucratic delays, unclear guidelines, and insufficient financial and infrastructural support. The study underscores the importance of transparency, awareness, and policy reform to make the recognition process more accessible. Recommendations focus on reducing political involvement, increasing financial aid, and simplifying administrative requirements. Addressing these challenges can create a fairer, more efficient recognition process, supporting the growth of a strong sports community in India.

Keywords: National sports federation, recognition, complexities, administrative

Introduction

In recent decades, the global landscape of sports has undergone a remarkable transformation, fueled by advancements in technology, globalization, and an increased emphasis on physical well-being. Within this evolving milieu, the role of National Sports Federations (NSFs), Sports Associations, and Sports Academies has become pivotal in shaping the direction of athletic development, talent nurturing, and competitive excellence at both national and international levels (Sharma, 2015; Patel, 2018) ^[16, 12]. Recognition of these entities holds immense significance, as it not only influences the administration of sports but also plays a crucial role in fostering athlete growth, enhancing sports infrastructure, and promoting sports culture (Verma, 2016) ^[20]. The concept of NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies recognition is deeply intertwined with the historical evolution of organized sports (Chaudhary, 2017) ^[2]. NSFs serve as overarching bodies responsible for governing and regulating specific sports within a nation (Rao, 2014) ^[14]. They play a critical role in formulating and implementing policies, coordinating national teams for international competitions, and fostering grassroots participation (Gupta, 2019) ^[4]. Similarly, Sports Associations operate at more localized levels, often focusing on specific sports disciplines or regions (Nair, 2013) ^[9]. They contribute to the growth of their respective sports by organizing events, providing training opportunities, and engaging with local communities (Kumar, 2016) ^[17]. On the other hand, Sports Academies, which have gained prominence in recent years, cater to elite athlete development by offering specialized coaching, state-of-the-art facilities, and personalized training programs (Joshi, 2020) ^[6]. Recognition of NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies is a multifaceted process that involves intricate evaluation criteria, administrative procedures, and adherence to established standards (Desai, 2017) ^[3]. It ensures that these entities adhere to ethical practices, maintain transparent governance structures, and contribute effectively to the holistic development of athletes (Reddy, 2018) ^[15]. Furthermore, recognition provides NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies access to financial support, technical expertise, and participation in international events – all of which are pivotal for sustaining a thriving sports ecosystem (Singh, 2019) ^[18].

The dynamics of recognition are not only relevant at the national level but also hold international implications (Mehta, 2017) ^[8]. The affiliation of NSFs with international governing bodies ensures their alignment with global standards and regulations, facilitating participation in international events such as the Olympics, World Championships, and regional competitions (Thakur, 2020) ^[19]. Consequently, understanding the intricate processes involved in the recognition of NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies is of paramount importance for researchers, policymakers, sports administrators, and stakeholders involved in the sports industry (Pandey, 2021) ^[11]. This research aims to provide a comprehensive review of the recognition processes associated with NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies, shedding light on the criteria, challenges, and implications of recognition (Bhatt, 2018) ^[1]. By delving into the historical context, regulatory frameworks, and the role of recognition in athlete development, this study seeks to offer valuable insights into the intricate world of sports administration and its wider impact on societal well-being (Patel, 2019) ^[13]. Through an exploration of case studies and comparative analyses, this research endeavors to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the evolution and optimization of sports governance, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that underpin a successful sports ecosystem (Sharma & Desai, 2020) ^[17]. In the subsequent sections of this research, we will delve into the historical evolution of NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies, followed by an in-depth exploration of the recognition processes, the challenges faced, and the potential avenues for future enhancements (Verma & Rao, 2016) ^[20]. Through this journey, we aim to highlight the symbiotic relationship between recognition and the holistic growth of sports, transcending boundaries and contributing to the overarching betterment of athletes, communities, and nations (Gupta & Kumar, 2019) ^[5]. The recognition of NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies plays a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of sports within a nation. Recognition grants these entities authority, access to resources, and legitimacy, which are essential for the effective development, regulation, and promotion of sports activities (Chaudhary, 2017; Reddy, 2018) ^[2, 15]. However, this process is laden with complexities due to diverse factors such as governance structures, politics, financial considerations, performance standards, and societal expectations (Nair & Joshi, 2020) ^[10].

Functioning and accountability of sports Body according to hierarchy

National Sports Federation (NSF): A National Sports Federation (NSF) is a governing body responsible for overseeing a specific sport or group of sports within a nation (Kumar R, 2016) ^[7]. NSFs play a vital role in setting policies, regulations, and standards for their respective sports, ensuring fair competition, athlete development, and the overall growth of the sport at the national level (Sharma, 2017) ^[22]. The hierarchy within an NSF typically includes:

1. **President/Chairperson:** The highest-ranking official in the NSF, responsible for strategic decision-making, representing the federation in national and international forums, and overseeing the overall functioning of the organization.
2. **General Secretary:** Often the chief administrative officer, responsible for coordinating the daily operations, maintaining records, and facilitating communication between various departments within the federation.

3. **Executive Committee:** Comprising elected officials and sometimes representatives from affiliated associations, the executive committee aids in policy formulation, strategic planning, and decision-making.
4. **Technical Committee:** This committee focuses on the technical aspects of the sport, including rule-making, standardization of equipment, and athlete development pathways.
5. **Athletes' Commission:** A platform for athletes to voice their concerns, the commission ensures that the athletes' perspectives are considered in policy decisions and provides a direct link between athletes and the federation.
6. **Development and Coaching Division:** This division oversees grassroots development programs, talent identification, coaching education, and athlete pathways to ensure a steady flow of talent into the sport.
7. **Events and Competitions Department:** Responsible for organizing national-level competitions, championships, and events, this department ensures that the sport remains active and accessible for athletes of all levels.
8. **Administrative and Finance Department:** Handling the financial affairs of the federation, including budgeting, sponsorship agreements, and financial reporting, this department ensures the sustainability of the federation's operations.

Sports Association: A Sports Association is an organization that focuses on the promotion and development of a specific sport or sports discipline within a particular region or locality (Agarwal N, 2015) ^[24]. SAs often collaborate closely with NSFs and serve as important intermediaries between local communities and the national governing bodies (Mehta V, 2018) ^[25]. The hierarchy within a Sports Association typically involves:

1. **President/Chairperson:** Similar to the NSF president, the head of the SA oversees the association's activities, represents it in local forums, and guides its growth.
2. **Secretary:** Responsible for administrative tasks, record-keeping, and communication within the association.
3. **Coaches and Technical Experts:** SAs involve coaches, technical experts, and experienced athletes who contribute to skill development, coaching education, and organizing local competitions.
4. **Events and Competition Coordinators:** In charge of organizing local tournaments, leagues, and events to provide opportunities for athletes to compete and showcase their skills.

Sports Academy: A Sports Academy is an institution dedicated to providing specialized training, coaching, and facilities to athletes aspiring to excel in a particular sport. Sports Academies cater to elite athletes and often collaborate with NSFs and Sports academies to bridge the gap between grassroots development and international-level competition (Rao, L, 2019) ^[26].

1. **Director:** The head of the academy responsible for strategic planning, overall management, and coordination of programs.
2. **Head Coaches and Technical Directors:** These individuals are experienced coaches or former athletes who oversee training programs, curriculum development, and athlete progression.
3. **Specialized Coaches:** Experts in specific aspects of the sport, such as technique, strength and conditioning,

mental training, and nutrition, contribute to comprehensive athlete development.

4. **Support Staff:** This includes physiotherapists, sports psychologists, nutritionists, and other professionals who ensure the holistic well-being of athletes.
5. **Athletes:** The core beneficiaries of the academy's programs, athletes undergo rigorous training, education, and competition under the academy's guidance.

Research Gap

The existing literature on the recognition of National Sports Federations (NSFs), Sports Associations, and Sports Academies is sparse, particularly in the context of how these entities navigate the recognition process within a complex and often opaque framework. There is a notable lack of awareness among sports professionals about the recognition process, which hinders the development and formal acknowledgment of these organizations. Furthermore, insufficient attention has been given to the role of financial constraints, political interference, and the lack of standardized criteria in shaping the recognition landscape. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing empirical insights into the challenges faced by sports professionals in gaining recognition, thereby contributing to a more transparent and efficient recognition process.

Factors Influencing Recognition

Recognition is influenced by a variety of factors, including organizational structure, adherence to international standards, governance transparency, accountability, financial stability, and adherence to ethical codes. The relationship between NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies is also a determining factor, as seamless coordination between these entities is essential for a holistic sports ecosystem.

Significance of Proper Recognition

Proper recognition establishes a framework for effective sports administration and governance. Recognized NSFs, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies are better equipped to secure funding, access training resources, engage in international competitions, and promote grassroots sports development. Recognition also enhances the credibility of these organizations in the eyes of athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders.

Challenges in the Recognition Process

The recognition process is rife with challenges such as political interference, lack of standardized criteria, conflicting interests, disputes between entities, inadequate infrastructure, and governance issues. These challenges can lead to inefficiencies, bias, and disparities in the recognition process, hindering the overall growth of sports.

Methodology

The research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a survey method to gather data from national sports players. The survey was administered using a Google Form, though self-structured Questionnaire and face validation done by senior professor of University of Delhi a 5-point Likert scale to capture respondents' perceptions and experiences related to the recognition process of National Sports Federations (NSFs), Sports Associations, and Sports Academies. Attitude was assessed using likert scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree on a five point scale. Scoring shall be in a range of 1 to 5

An appropriate statistical tool (Calculation of mean) was used for the analysis of the collection of data.

The data was also shown in graphical representation.

Norms for Likert Scale

Scale	Value	Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Not Aware	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly Agree	5	4.21- 5.00

How to Calculate Likert Scale Total Scores

To calculate the total score for a Likert scale, each response is multiplied by its corresponding score (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5). The formula is as follows:

$$\text{Total Score} = \sum (f_i \times \text{Likert scale score})$$

Where: f_i = Frequency of each score (Number of respondents for each option)

i = Likert scale score, where options are: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)
For example, in a study, the attitude test total score was calculated as follows: $\{(38 \times 1) + (152 \times 2) + (110 \times 3) + (296 \times 4) + (124 \times 5)\} = 2476$

How to determine Likert Scale Mean Scores

The mean score is determined by dividing the total score by the number of respondents:

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\sum (f_i * \text{Likert Item Score})}{\text{Number of Respondents}}$$

In the study, the awareness test mean score was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{[(38 \times 1) + (152 \times 2) + (110 \times 3) + (296 \times 4) + (124 \times 5)]}{720}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{2476}{720} = 3.43$$

Using this approach, a mean score of 3 indicates a neutral response. A score below 3 represents a negative attitude, and a score above 3 represents a positive attitude. The interpretations for the Likert scale mean scores are as follows:

- 1.0-2.4: Negative Attitude
- 2.5-3.4: Neutral Attitude
- 3.5-5.0: Positive Attitude

Participants

The study sample comprised Sports Professionals who were actively involved in various sports disciplines across India. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that only those with direct experience or knowledge of the recognition process were included.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was designed and Face validation has been done by different University Professors to assess multiple dimensions of the recognition process, including awareness, challenges faced transparency, and the impact of political and bureaucratic factors. The responses were collected from 30 Sports Professionals. The Likert scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing for nuanced responses across various statements.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the participants' responses. An appropriate statistical tool (Calculation of mean) was used for the analysis of the collection of data. Additionally, the responses were cross-tabulated to identify any significant relationships between different factors influencing recognition.

Result

Given the mean score of 3.43 from the Likert scale data (2476 ÷ 720), the score falls in the range of "Agree" according to the norms.

Analysis

1. **General Perception:** The respondents, on average, agree with the statements or questions related to the complexities involved in the recognition of National Sports Federations, Sports Associations, and Sports Academies. A mean score of 3.43 suggests that while respondents recognize these complexities, their level of agreement is moderate.
2. **Understanding of Challenges:** The score indicates that there is a moderate level of awareness or agreement among the national players regarding the issues surrounding the recognition processes, governance, and operational complexities of sports organizations. Respondents may recognize the need for improvements or changes in how these entities are recognized and regulated.
 - **Possible Areas of Complexity:** The moderate agreement may point to issues such as:
 - **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Respondents might feel that the processes for recognition are bureaucratic or lengthy.
 - **Lack of Clear Guidelines:** There could be a perception of unclear or inconsistent guidelines governing recognition.
 - **Inefficiency in Regulation:** The complexities may stem from inefficiencies in the regulation or evaluation of these bodies.
 - **Resource Allocation:** There could be challenges in accessing adequate resources or support for smaller or emerging associations and academies.

Actionable Insights

- **Policy Improvements:** Based on the moderate agreement, there may be a need to streamline processes, create more transparent and standardized guidelines, and ensure efficient oversight of sports organizations.
- **Capacity Building:** Efforts to enhance the administrative capacity of sports federations, associations, and academies could reduce complexity and improve their functioning.
- **Further Research:** Since the score is not overwhelmingly high or low, it would be beneficial to identify specific areas of concern through further qualitative feedback from stakeholders.

This analysis suggests that while respondents acknowledge the complexities in recognition, there is room for improvement and intervention to address these challenges.

Discussion

The survey results provide insightful perspectives on the recognition process for National Sports Federations (NSFs), Sports Associations, and Sports Academies. While many respondents were familiar with the process, a significant

number lacked awareness, highlighting a crucial area where educational outreach is needed (Singh, 2019) ^[18]. This discrepancy underscores the importance of developing comprehensive educational programs to bridge the knowledge gap about the recognition procedures. One common concern among respondents was the lack of transparency in the recognition process. Most participants felt that the process should be more open and have clearer guidelines, a sentiment that aligns with findings from Patel and Reddy (2020) ^[32]. They found that sports governance in India often suffers from opacity, which complicates stakeholders' understanding and trust in the system. Financial constraints emerged as a major issue, with many sports professionals reporting that limited resources hindered their organizations' ability to gain recognition. Sharma (2018) ^[34] similarly highlights that financial difficulties are a significant barrier for sports organizations in India. This financial strain, coupled with inadequate infrastructure, was a major hurdle identified in the survey. The need for increased government investment in sports infrastructure is evident and consistent with Kumar's (2021) ^[31] findings on the impact of infrastructure deficits on sports development. Political interference was another pressing concern for respondents, with many acknowledging its negative impact on the recognition process. This aligns with Rao's (2020) ^[33] research, which emphasizes how political involvement can distort sports governance and rule enforcement. To address this, stricter regulations and independent oversight may be necessary, as suggested by Verma (2019) ^[36]. Communication regarding the criteria for recognition was a significant frustration for many respondents. This lack of clear communication echoes Jain and Sinha's (2017) ^[30] observations that ambiguity in recognition criteria can hinder progress and create confusion among stakeholders. Improving communication to make the criteria more transparent is essential for ensuring that everyone involved understands the process. Regarding government support, respondents were divided. While half agreed that the Sports Ministry and other government bodies actively facilitate the recognition process, others were less convinced. This reflects the mixed findings of Desai and Mehta (2021) ^[29], who found varying levels of satisfaction with government support in the recognition of sports bodies. Additionally, the survey indicated that administrative procedures have not been streamlined effectively, a point that Chopra (2022) ^[28] also emphasizes, highlighting the need for reduced bureaucratic red tape. Government funding and grants were another area of concern, with many respondents feeling that these are not easily accessible. This concern is consistent with the issues raised by Kumar (2021) ^[31], who notes that financial support for sports organizations is often inadequate. There was also mixed agreement on whether the government actively promotes and develops NSFs, with some professionals expressing dissatisfaction. This mixed sentiment further underscores the need for more robust support mechanisms. In total the survey and interpretation reveal several critical areas for improvement in the recognition process, including transparency, financial support, infrastructure, political interference, and communication. Addressing these issues will require targeted interventions, such as enhanced educational outreach, increased investment in sports infrastructure, clearer guidelines, and improved government support. By tackling these challenges, the recognition process can be made more effective and equitable, ensuring that sports organizations receive the support and recognition they deserve.

Conclusion

The findings reveal several insights into the recognition process for sports federations, associations, and academies, highlighting prevalent challenges and areas for improvement. Key insights reveal a lack of awareness, transparency concerns, political interference, and bureaucratic hurdles, which together make the process difficult for many sports professionals. Although 66.6% of respondents understand the recognition process, a substantial 33% lack sufficient knowledge, indicating a need for better information dissemination. Furthermore, many believe the process should be more transparent, with several respondents expressing doubts about the current level of openness. A significant number of sports professionals 83.3% find it challenging to meet the eligibility criteria for recognition. This struggle is compounded by financial barriers, as 76.7% report a shortage of funds that limits their ability to achieve official recognition for their organizations. Additionally, fairness and reasonability are in question, with 40% of respondents disagreeing with current practices, and another 30% unsure about them. The lack of infrastructure is seen as a major obstacle, with 86.7% of participants stating that inadequate facilities prevent progress in the recognition process. The survey also indicates a widespread lack of awareness, with 93.4% of respondents stating that sports professionals and individuals in the field have limited understanding of the recognition requirements. Political interference is another significant factor affecting the process; 93.4% of respondents believe that it often leads to rule changes that complicate recognition efforts. Bureaucratic challenges are also present, with 66.6% feeling that these hurdles are a reality, while 20% are unaware of their impact. Clear communication of recognition criteria seems to be an area for improvement. Nearly half of the professionals, 46.7%, feel that criteria are not well communicated by authorities, with 16.7% reporting a lack of awareness on this matter. Delays in obtaining recognition are another common complaint, with 90% of participants acknowledging these setbacks as a recurring issue. Government support shows mixed responses. While 43.3% of professionals believe the government provides adequate support and resources, an equal percentage disagrees. There is also a divide on the level of active facilitation by the Sports Ministry, with half agreeing that the ministry is engaged, but 36.7% expressing disagreement. Furthermore, only 33% of respondents feel that administrative procedures are streamlined and that paperwork has been simplified for recognition purposes, while a notable 73.3% do not share this view. Access to government funding also seems limited, as 60% report difficulties in securing financial assistance, and 16.7% are unaware of available funding options. Government promotion and development of sports entities receive some support, with 56.7% agreeing that these efforts are active, while 30% disagree. Communication between sports federations, associations, and government bodies is seen as inadequate by 56.6%, and 10% are unaware of the effectiveness of these interactions. In terms of support from recognized bodies during the recognition process, 36.6% find it adequate, while 26.7% disagree, suggesting room for improvement. Collaboration and networking opportunities show mixed perceptions as well. While 46.6% agree that such opportunities are available to aid recognition, 36.6% feel otherwise. When it comes to addressing unique challenges faced by sports organizations, 40% agree that they are considered, though 26.7% disagree, and 33.3% are unaware of any consideration. Platforms for sharing best practices seem to be underutilized, as 40% of respondents

recognize their existence, but 30% lack awareness. A call for improvement is strong among respondents, with 93.4% supporting the need for reforms in the recognition process. Ambiguities in criteria and eligibility requirements concern 66.7% of participants, while 20% remain uninformed on the subject. Additionally, 83.3% feel that there is a significant lack of awareness and understanding among sports professionals regarding the recognition process for sports bodies. In summary, the recognition process for sports federations, associations, and academies faces numerous obstacles, including transparency, eligibility challenges, political and bureaucratic barriers, and resource constraints. To address these challenges, there is a clear need for enhanced communication, better support, and opportunities for collaboration, all of which could streamline and improve the recognition process for sports organizations in the country.

Recommendations

To make the recognition process for sports federations, associations, and academies more accessible and effective, several improvements are recommended. One of the primary needs is to increase transparency. Currently, many people perceive the process as confusing or unclear, so governing bodies should ensure that all guidelines and procedures are straightforward and easily available to everyone involved. By making this information more accessible, the process would become more approachable and less intimidating for those seeking recognition. Another key area is awareness. A significant number of people, including sports professionals, are unaware of the recognition process and its requirements. Launching awareness campaigns and educational initiatives could help bridge this knowledge gap, ensuring that more people understand how the process works and what's required of them. Reducing political interference is also essential to maintain fairness. Setting up independent bodies or enacting strict regulations could help shield the process from external influences and create a level playing field for all applicants. Financial support is a critical need as well. Many sports professionals and organizations face financial constraints that make it difficult to achieve or sustain recognition. Increased funding from governments and sports governing bodies would provide these organizations with the necessary resources to grow and thrive. To address complaints about administrative hurdles, simplifying and streamlining procedures would be beneficial. Many find the bureaucratic aspects overwhelming, so reducing complexity in these steps could save time and enhance the overall experience. Encouraging collaboration and networking between national sports federations, associations, and academies is another valuable step. By sharing insights and learning from each other, these organizations can strengthen their efforts and improve their likelihood of success. Improving sports infrastructure is also important. Investing in facilities and equipment can not only support the recognition process but also elevate the quality and accessibility of sports programs for participants. Additionally, reviewing eligibility criteria could make the process more inclusive. By assessing and possibly adjusting these criteria, authorities could ensure they are fair and reasonable for all applicants. Another recommendation is to enhance access to government funding by making the application process for grants more transparent and providing clear information on available resources. A commitment to continuous improvement in the recognition process is also necessary. Actively seeking feedback from stakeholders and making adjustments based on their input

would help make the process more efficient and responsive to their needs. Creating platforms to share best practices among recognized sports associations would be highly beneficial. By learning from successful examples, organizations could improve their approaches and better navigate the recognition process. Finally, promoting understanding through workshops, seminars, and information sessions can further demystify the recognition process. Helping sports professionals and others gain a deeper understanding of what's involved will empower them to engage confidently and effectively. Implementing these recommendations would make the recognition process fairer, more transparent, and more efficient, ultimately supporting the growth and success of the broader sports community.

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