# A Meta-Narrative Review of Isomorphism in Sport Organizations

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## ABSTRACT

Isomorphism is the process by which organizations become more similar to each other over time. The purpose of this study was to explore how previous research has examined this phenomenon in sports organizations. We used a semi-systematic approach to conduct the research. In conducting and reporting the review we followed the four stages that are outlined by Snyder (2019). A total of 126 articles underwent an abstract review process, from which 26 articles were extracted. Finally, 13 qualitative articles that related to the research objectives were reviewed. We conducted a content analysis of 13 articles on isomorphism in sport. The articles were published in a variety of academic journals between 1990 and 2023. 8 main themes are presented: Type of isomorphism, Mechanism of isomorphism, Consequences of Isomorphism in Sport Organizations, Function of Isomorphism, Strategies for response to pressure, institutional logics, Application of Isomorphism in Sports Organizations, Managing Isomorphism in Sport Organizations. Results showed isomorphism in sport organizations is driven by three primary mechanisms: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism. In conclusion, isomorphism is a complex phenomenon that can have both positive and negative consequences for sport organizations. By understanding the mechanisms of isomorphism and carefully managing its effects, sport organizations can leverage its benefits while maintaining their strategic autonomy and fostering a culture of innovation and adaptation.

## Introduction

The organization relies on numerous environmental factors and confronts uncertainty in meeting environmental demands (Robbins, DeCenzo, Coulter, & Anderson, 2014). While most organizational theories view the environment through a modernist lens, the symbolic-interpretive perspective, rooted in institutional theory, has gained prominence. Despite the increasing influence

of postmodern critiques, modernist ideas still hold sway in organization theory. The institutional theory facilitates the integration of the symbolic-interpretive viewpoint into discussions on organizational environments (Hatch, 2018). Widely prevalent in management studies, the institutional theory underscores the significant impact of the institutional environment in constraining organizations through laws, norms, values, and beliefs, while emphasizing the necessity for organizations to secure legitimacy by adhering to these institutions (Kerlin, Peng, & Cui, 2021). The new institutional theory posits that organizations are constrained by their environments (Suykens, George, De Rynck, & Verschuere, 2021). Institutionalists emphasize the social and cultural influences that shape organizational procedures and structures to attain societal acceptance and legitimacy (Jazairy & von Haartman, 2020). According to institutional theory, organizations are driven to conform to external pressures to safeguard or establish legitimacy (Abdul Majid, Ab Rahim, & Razak, 2023).

Scholars have utilized institutional theory to enhance their understanding of the organizational environment (Edwards, Mason, & Washington, 2009). Institutional theory seeks to explain similarity, known as isomorphism, in organizational practices and forms, and the causes of such similarity (Furusten, 2023). Institutional theory explains and predicts how even after radical changes, organizational fields will move towards isomorphism, that is, institutional equilibrium. The institutional isomorphism theory explains the similarity between organizations in the organizational field and supports the singularity of organizations (Jeyaraj & Zadeh, 2020) .

Isomorphism happens when organizations face pressure from other organizations or expectations in a specific social environment (Dos Santos, Borini, Pereira, & Raziq, 2020). In other words, isomorphism is the process by which organizations become more similar to each other over time. This can happen through three main mechanisms: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism (Luo & Qi, 2022). Coercive isomorphism occurs when organizations are forced to change to comply with external pressures, such as government regulations or industry standards. For example, a company that operates in a heavily regulated industry may be required to adopt specific safety procedures or environmental standards (Alyahya, Hijazi, & Harvey, 2018). Mimetic isomorphism occurs when organizations copy the practices of other organizations that they perceive to be more successful. This can happen because organizations are looking for ways to improve their performance or because they are trying to avoid the risk of failure. For example, a company that is struggling to compete may start to imitate the marketing strategies of its more successful rivals (Radu, Radu, Condurache, & Purcărea, 2018). Normative isomorphism occurs when organizations adopt the norms and values of their organizational field. This can happen through professional associations, trade groups, or other social networks. For example, a company that is part of an industry that values innovation may start to adopt new technologies or management practices to maintain its legitimacy within the field (Zhao & Ge, 2023).

Isomorphism plays a significant role in organizations because it can help them achieve legitimacy, which is the acceptance and approval of their stakeholders. Legitimacy is important because it can give organizations access to resources, such as funding and customers, and make it easier for them to operate (Zheng, Ni, & Crilly, 2023). However, isomorphism can also have negative consequences for organizations. For example, it can lead to a loss of innovation and creativity as organizations become more homogenous. It can also make it difficult for organizations to adapt to change.

Researchers have explored various facets of institutional pressures within sports organizations and their members. These include identifying organizational pressures (Stenling & Fahlén, 2009), tracking their evolution over time (Slack & Hinings, 1994), understanding their influence on decision-making (Gammelsæter & Solenes, 2013), and elucidating policy outcomes (Strittmatter & Skille, 2017) .

As highlighted by O'Brien and Slack (2004), the sports sector offers a conducive setting for investigating institutional dynamics, delving into the fundamentals of organizational change through the prism of institutional isomorphism. The authors assert that all sports organizations operate within specific organizational contexts and face pressures from key stakeholders such as suppliers, resource and product consumers, competitors, and regulatory bodies. This underscores the significance of analyzing organizational changes within the organizational context .

Despite its potential, the utilization of institutional theory in the sports domain remains constrained. Previous studies from an institutional standpoint have examined the institutional progression of collegiate sports associations (Washington, 2004), the process of professionalization in English rugby league (O'Brien & Slack, 2004), and institutional paradoxes in the establishment of American college basketball (Washington & Ventresca, 2008). In the realm of soccer, Díez-Martín, Blanco-González, Díaz-Iglesias, and Prado-Román (2017) employed an institutional perspective to scrutinize the underlying justification strategies that facilitated the institutionalization of prominent soccer clubs in the Spanish league, specifically Real Madrid and Barcelona. Furthermore, Paramio-Salcines and Kitchin (2013) delved into the institutional logics and pressures shaping service organizations for disabled spectators in European soccer leagues.

Research has shown that isomorphism can have both positive and negative effects on sports organizations. While it can promote consistency and standardization across different countries and cultures, it can also stifle innovation and creativity. Therefore, it is crucial for sports organizations to find a balance between stability and innovation to stay competitive in the evolving global sports industry (Pentifallo & VanWynsberghe, 2016). Overall, isomorphism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has both positive and negative consequences for organizations. Organizations need to be aware of the different types of isomorphism and how they can be managed to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with this process. For example, sports organizations may adopt similar organizational structures, policies, and practices to comply with external pressures, such as government regulations or industry standards. They may also copy the practices of other sports organizations that they perceive to be more successful. Additionally, sports organizations may adopt the norms and values of their sport field, such as a focus on winning or a commitment to fair play.

The literature review shows that there have been limited studies on isomorphism in sport organizations. There is a research gap in identifying the next steps for studying this phenomenon in sport. This study aims to investigate how previous researches have explored isomorphism in sport organizations, along with their findings and the impact on sport organizations.

## Methodology

We used a semi-systematic approach to conduct the research. A semi-systematic or narrative review approach is designed for topics that have been studied differently by different groups of researchers in different disciplines and precludes a full systematic review process (Snyder, 2019). Once we begin to understand the different perspectives, we can summarize them into a comprehensive narrative and highlight what different research teams might learn from each other's approaches (Wong, Greenhalgh, Westhorp, Buckingham, & Pawson, 2013). In conducting and reporting the review we followed the four stages that are outlined by Snyder (2019) : 1- designing the review, 2- conducting the review, 3- analysis, and 4- writing up the review. Also, in conducting this study, we adhered to the principles mentioned byWong et al. (2013). There are various methods for analyzing and combining the findings of semi-systematic review studies. One of the most common is theme analysis or content analysis. It can be generally defined as a method to identify, analyze, and report patterns in the form of themes in the text (Snyder, 2019).

• Phase 1: design- This section includes some basic questions: What are the research questions? What is the approach and method to answer the questions? And what are the search strategies? We conducted searches in the electronic databases Scopus, Google scholar and Web of Science for articles published in English. Our keywords included a combination of the words Isomorphism, institutional theory, Sport, and Organization. Our criteria included publication year (after 1990), article language (English), and relevance to sports organizations.

• Phase 2: conduct- In the second phase, we are searching for and selecting articles. In this step, we explain the search and documentation process. Finally, we will assess the quality of the articles. A total of 126 articles underwent an abstract review process, from which 26 articles were extracted. Finally, 13 qualitative articles that related to the research objectives were reviewed. So, both reviewers checked the titles and abstracts of the documents. All related documents were transferred

to the next stage. In the second stage, all the full-text documents were reviewed and the studies that did not meet all the entry criteria were excluded from the review process.

• Phase 3: analysis- In the third step, we seek to know what kind of information should be abstracted to achieve the goals of the research. At this stage, we will combine and analyze the information. Our goal was to identify documents that made a core contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon.

• Phase 4: structuring and writing the review- In the final step, we will deal with the reporting process. We will present and explain the results clearly.

The time of conducting this research was April to June 2023. For validation in the research, the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) tool was used in the process of evaluating the articles. CASP tool is the most commonly used tool for quality assessment in qualitative evidence synthesis endorsed by the Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group. The CASP is a versatile instrument designed to assess the merits and constraints of various qualitative research methodologies. It consists of a set of ten questions, each targeting a specific methodological facet of a qualitative study. (Long, French, & Brooks, 2020).

The research process is depicted in Figure 1.
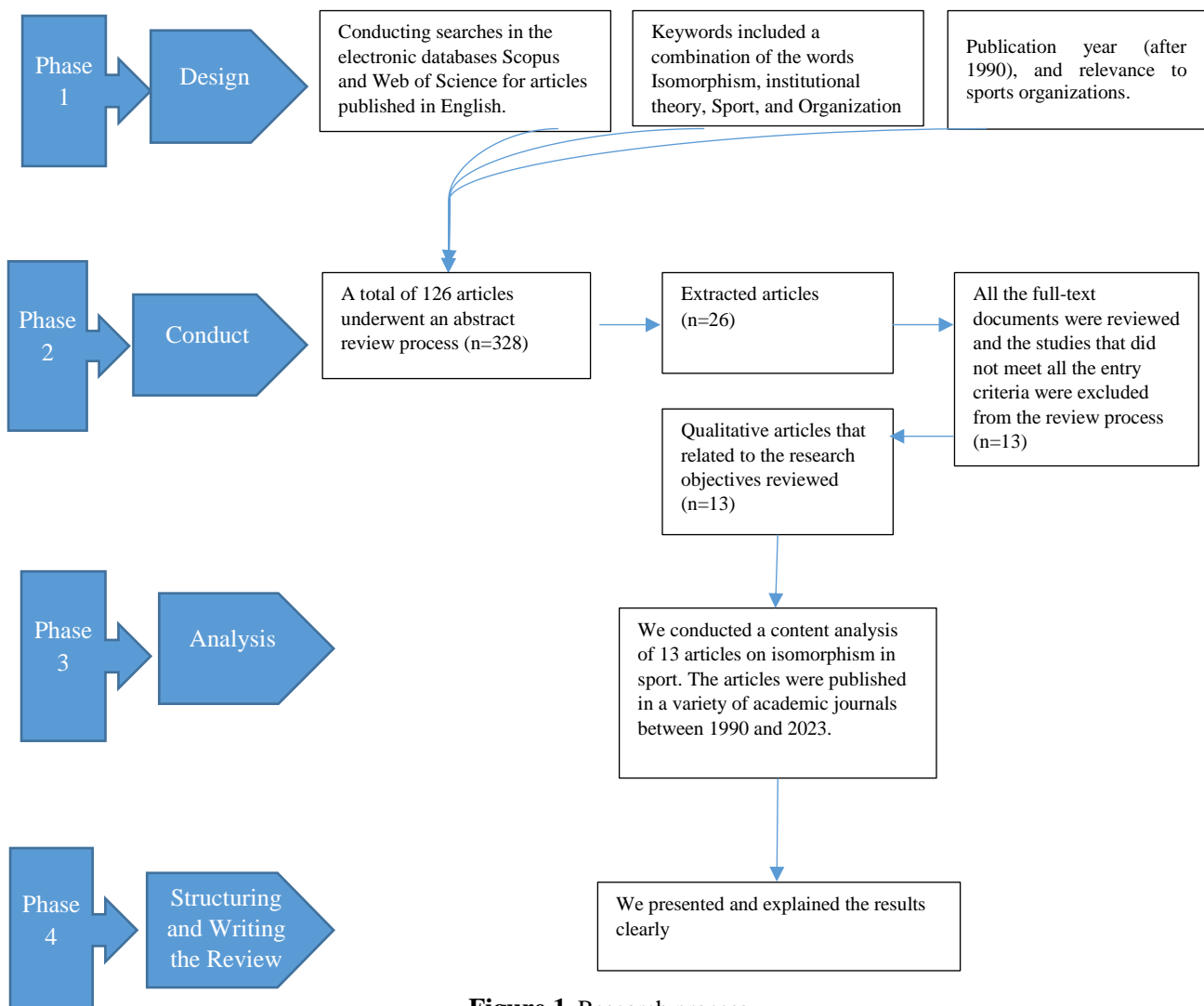


**Figure 1.** Research process

## Results

We conducted a content analysis of 13 articles on isomorphism in sport. The articles were published in a variety of academic journals between 1990 and 2023. Table 1 summarizes the title, methodology, and key findings of the studies being reviewed.

**Table 1.** Summary of the Information from the articles reviewed in this research.

| Title & Authors and year | Journal name | Data base/ publication | Place | Method | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Symbolic isomorphism and legitimacy: New Zealand's Ice Blacks and Ice Fernz (Phelps & Dickson, 2009) | International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing | Google scholar /Inderscienceonline | New Zealand | Qualitative (interviews and document reviews) | The study finds that the nicknames are similar to the names used by other New Zealand national sports teams. The frequent use of the terms by the print media is seen as a sign of approval of the names and a probable cause of wider community acceptance of the names. |
| Institutional pressures and isomorphic change: An empirical test (Slack & Hinings, 1994) | Organization studies | Scopus /Sage | English | Qualitative (interviews and document reviews) | Employing a sample of 36 national-level sport organizations, which faced environmental pressures from a state agency to embrace a more professional and bureaucratic structure, the study demonstrates that these organizations become more homogeneous over time. While there is a general trend towards a more professional and bureaucratic organizational model, certain structural aspects exhibit less change, indicating resistance to institutional pressures. |
| Stuck between | BMC Public | Scopus /Springer | Belgium | Cross- | The findings |

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| medals and participation: an institutional theory perspective on why sport federations struggle to reach Sport-for-All goals (De Bock et al., 2022) | Health | | | Sectional field study (Qualitative and quantitative) | showed that federations focused on high performance faced greater institutional pressure compared to federations focused on Sport-for-All. |
| The Institutionalization of an Elite Sport Organization in Norway: The Case of "Olympiatoppen" (Augestad, Bergsgard, & Hansen, 2006) | Sociology of sport journal | Scopus /Humankinetics | Norway | Content analysis of documents | Neoinstitutional theory can enhance our comprehension of the various ways nations establish structures for elite-level sports. |
| The Emergence of a Professional Logic in English Rugby Union: The Role of Isomorphic and Diffusion Processes (O'Brien & Slack, 2004) | Journal of Sport Management | Scopus /Humankinetics | English | Qualitative (Interviews) | The findings indicate that a new professional logic spread throughout the field through three different diffusion patterns: status-driven, bandwagon, and eventually, the social learning of adaptive responses, resulting in isomorphic change |
| Shifting Responses to Institutional Change: The National Football League and Player Concussions (Heinze & Lu, 2017) | Journal of Sport Management | Scopus /Humankinetics | | Longitudinal Case study | The National Football League (NFL) adopted different responses to institutional change over time, moving from reactive strategies to proactive attempts to control institutional change. |
| (Re)conceptualizing institutional change in sport management | European Sport Management Quarterly | WOS/Taylor & Francis | Norway | Analysis of the board meetings content of | The paper presents two concepts that explain institutional |

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| contexts: the unintended consequences of sport organizations' everyday organizational life (Fahlén & Stenling, 2019) | | | | two sport clubs | change in sport organizations. The concepts are "pools of proximate institutional raw material" and "problem-solution approximation". |
| Mimetic Isomorphism in Non-Profit Organisations (NPO): Sports Associations in the Nord Pas-De-Calais Departments (Moreau, 2021) | Societies | WOS/Mdpi | France | Qualitative analysis<br><br>Investigation through interviews with volunteer leaders of sports NPOs | Isomorphism operates on several levels in sports NPOs. Isomorphism leads to independent funding, diversification of activities, and increased need for skills. |
| Institutional Pluralism and Governance in "Commercialized" Sport Clubs (Gammelsæter, 2010) | European Sport Management Quarterly | WOS/Taylor & Francis | Norway | Descriptive | The paper outlines a typology of seven institutional logics in ''commercialized'' sport clubs. The paper discusses the implications for governance in these organizations. |
| Institutional pressures, government funding, and provincial sport organizations (Edwards et al., 2009) | International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing | Google scholar /Inderscienceonline | Canada | Qualitative analysis<br><br>Investigation through semi-structured interviews with Gioia methodology | Institutional theorists argue that APSOs face coercive pressures, leading other APSOs to adopt similar organizational characteristics in an effort to appear more legitimate in their operations and programs. |
| Institutional Isomorphism and Social Responsibility in Professional Sports (Joo, Larkin, & | Sport, Business and Management | Scopus /Emerald | South Korea | Qualitative approach (Gioia Methodology ) | Applying institutional theory, the recent study discovered proof of all three institutional |

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| Walker, 2017) | | | | | pressures leading to the institutionalization of CSR practices in the professional South Korean sports industry. The data demonstrated that CSR has become institutionalized in these leagues through isomorphic pressures – coercive, mimetic, and normative – as precursors to their CSR practices. |
| Exploring the conditions for strategic planning in nonprofit community sport (Morrison & Misener, 2021) | Sport Management Review | WOS/Taylor & Francis | Canada | Multiple-Case Study | The study showed that environmental factors such as a club's community image, competition between clubs, and the requirements of governing bodies all had an impact on strategic planning in CSOs. A supportive organizational culture and organizational capacity were also found to be important factors. The study also emphasized the pressures that CSO leaders face and how they respond to them through strategic planning. |
| Isomorphism and choice in the creation and development of an international sports federation: a review of the International | International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing | Google scholar /inderscienceonline | United States | Qualitative methodology, Incorporating heuristic inquiry and Social | Institutional theory illustrated the pressures on the emerging global federation. Strategic decision-making enabled |

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| Triathlon Union (Phelps & Dickson, 2009) | constructioni sm | the founders to innovatively fulfill the IOC requirements. |

Table 2 presents the main and sub-themes derived from the content analysis of the articles.

**Table 2.** Main and Sub-Themes derived from the content analysis of the articles

| Row | Main Theme | Sub-themes |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Type of Isomorphism | Coercive, Mimetic, or Normative |
| 2. | Mechanism of Isomorphism: | Regulation, Imitation, or Socialization |
| 3. | Consequences of Isomorphism: | Positive, Negative, or Both |
| 4. | Function of Isomorphism | Legitimacy and Approval, Efficiency and Effectiveness, Homogeneity and Standardization |
| 5. | Strategies for Response to Pressure | Dismissing , Decoupling, Co-opting |
| 6. | Institutional Logics | Idealism, Identity, Autotelism, Entrepreneurialism, Managerialism, Bureaucracy and Politics |
| 7. | Application of Isomorphism in Sports Organizations | Organizational Structure and Governance, Policies and Practices, Cultural Norms and Values |
| 8. | Strategies for Managing Isomorphism in Sport Organizations | Understanding the drivers of isomorphism, Engaging in strategic decision-making, Balancing conformity with differentiation, Fostering a culture of adaptation and innovation |

In the following, 8 main themes are presented as follows:

### 1- Type of isomorphism

The most common type of isomorphism in sport was coercive isomorphism. This is likely due to the fact that sports organizations are subject to a number of external pressures, such as government regulations, industry standards, and media scrutiny.

### 2- Mechanism of isomorphism

The most common mechanism of isomorphism was regulation. However, imitation and socialization were also common mechanisms.

The specific mechanism of isomorphism that is most prevalent in a given situation may depend on several factors, including: 1- The level of external pressure: If external pressures are high, coercive isomorphism is more likely to occur. 2-The level of uncertainty: If uncertainty is high, mimetic isomorphism is more likely to occur. 3-The strength of social norms: If social norms are strong, normative isomorphism is more likely to occur. 4- The organizational culture: An organization's culture may also influence its susceptibility to different mechanisms of isomorphism.

### 3- Consequences of isomorphism in sport organizations

The consequences of isomorphism in sport were mixed. Some articles found that isomorphism had positive consequences, such as increased legitimacy and efficiency. However, other articles found that isomorphism had negative consequences, such as a loss of innovation and creativity. So, isomorphism can have both positive and negative consequences for sport organizations:

#### *Positive Consequences*

Increased legitimacy and approval: By adopting practices and structures that are in line with external pressures, industry standards, and social norms, sports organizations can gain legitimacy and approval from stakeholders, including government bodies, sponsors, and the public. 2- Improved efficiency and effectiveness: Isomorphism can promote efficiency and effectiveness by standardizing practices, reducing uncertainty, and facilitating benchmarking against other organizations. 3- Enhanced coordination and collaboration: Isomorphism can contribute to homogeneity and standardization within sport fields, enabling easier coordination, collaboration, and communication among organizations.

### *Negative Consequences*

Reduced innovation and creativity: Isomorphism can stifle innovation and creativity by encouraging organizations to conform to established practices and norms, potentially hindering the development of new ideas and approaches. 2- Homogenization and loss of distinctiveness: Excessive isomorphism can lead to a homogenization of sport organizations, making it difficult for individual organizations to differentiate themselves and attract unique stakeholders. 3- Overemphasis on conformity over adaptation: Isomorphism can lead to an overemphasis on conformity and compliance, potentially hindering an organization's ability to adapt to unique circumstances and challenges.

## 4- Function of isomorphism

Isomorphism serves several critical functions for sports organizations:

Legitimacy and Approval: By adhering to external pressures and adopting practices of successful organizations, sports organizations gain legitimacy and approval from stakeholders, including government bodies, sponsors, and the public.

Efficiency and Effectiveness: Isomorphism can promote efficiency and effectiveness by standardizing practices, reducing uncertainty, and facilitating benchmarking against other organizations.

Homogeneity and Standardization: Isomorphism contributes to homogeneity and standardization within sport fields, enabling easier coordination, collaboration, and communication among organizations.

## 5- Strategies for response to pressure

Strategies for managing Isomorphism in Sports Organizations include understanding the drivers of isomorphism, engaging in strategic decision-making, balancing conformity with differentiation, and fostering a culture of adaptation and innovation.

## 6- Institutional logics

The results showed 7 inclusive logics included Idealism, Identity, Autotelism, Entrepreneurialism, Managerialism, Bureaucracy and Politics.

## 7- Application of isomorphism in sports organizations

Isomorphism manifests in various aspects of sports organizations:

Organizational Structure and Governance: Sports organizations adopt similar organizational structures, such as hierarchical management systems and board governance models, to align with industry standards and maintain legitimacy.

Policies and Practices: Sports organizations implement similar policies and practices, such as anti-doping protocols, athlete welfare guidelines, and talent development programs, to comply with regulations and emulate successful organizations.

Cultural Norms and Values: Sports organizations embrace shared cultural norms and values, such as sportsmanship, fair play, and gender equity, to conform to industry expectations and maintain a positive public image.

## 8- Managing isomorphism in sport organizations

Sport organizations need to carefully manage the effects of isomorphism to balance conformity with differentiation and maintain their strategic autonomy. Here are some strategies that can be employed:

Understanding the drivers of isomorphism: Organizations should be aware of the external pressures, industry norms, and social expectations that may be driving isomorphism in their field.

Balancing conformity with differentiation: Organizations should not blindly follow the lead of others but instead assess which practices and structures are truly in line with their strategic goals and unique circumstances.

Engaging in strategic decision-making: Organizations should make informed decisions about adopting new practices or structures, considering their potential impact on innovation, efficiency, legitimacy, and distinctiveness.

Fostering a culture of adaptation and innovation: Organizations should cultivate a culture that encourages innovation and experimentation, allowing them to adapt to changing environments while maintaining legitimacy within their field.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was A meta-narrative review of Isomorphism in Sport organizations. The process of institutional isomorphism has been observed in various sports organizations, including elite sport in Norway (Augestad et al., 2006) and provincial sport organizations in Canada (Edwards et al., 2009). These studies highlight the impact of institutional pressures on the structure, operations, and decision-making of sport organizations.

Results showed isomorphism in sport organizations is driven by three primary mechanisms: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism. Coercive isomorphism occurs when sports organizations adopt practices or structures to comply with external pressures, such as government regulations, industry standards, or accreditation requirements. For instance, sports organizations may adopt specific safety protocols or adhere to anti-doping regulations mandated by governing bodies. This type of isomorphism is often driven by the threat of sanctions or penalties for non-compliance. Mimetic isomorphism occurs when sports organizations emulate the practices of perceivably successful counterparts, seeking to replicate their strategies and achieve similar outcomes. This can be observed in the adoption of popular coaching methods, training techniques, or marketing campaigns by sports organizations. This type of isomorphism is often driven by uncertainty and the desire to reduce risk by following the lead of organizations perceived as successful. Normative isomorphism occurs when sports organizations align with the norms and values of their respective sport fields, driven by professional associations, industry standards, and social pressures. For example, sports organizations may adopt ethical codes of conduct or emphasize fair play principles to maintain legitimacy within their field. This type of isomorphism is often driven by a desire for social acceptance and a sense of belonging to a broader community.

The findings of this content analysis suggest that isomorphism is a common and important phenomenon in sport. Isomorphism can have both positive and negative consequences for sports organizations. Sports organizations need to be aware of the different types of isomorphism and how they can be managed to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with this process.

Results showed sport organizations use different strategies for institutional change. For example Heinze and Lu (2017) stated Organizations have the option to adopt different strategies, such as dismissing, decoupling, and co-opting, when faced with pressure to change. 1- Dismissing: The National Football League (NFL) initially responded to institutional change by dismissing the concerns related to player concussions.2- Decoupling: The NFL also employed decoupling as a reactive strategy, which involves creating a separation between the organization's public image and the issue at hand.3- Acquiescing: Another reactive strategy observed in the NFL's response to institutional change was acquiescing, which involves passively accepting the demands for change without actively engaging in addressing the issue.

Another part of the findings dealt with institutional logics in sports organizations. The results showed 7 inclusive logics included Idealism, Identity, Autotelism, Entrepreneurialism, and Managerialism. Bureaucracy and Politics. Institutional logics refer to the different sets of ideas, beliefs, and values that shape prevailing conceptions of what an organization should be doing and how it should be judged (Gammelsæter, 2010). Institutional logics refer to the socially constructed and historically developed patterns of beliefs, practices, and rules that guide the behaviors and decisions of individuals and organizations within a particular institutional context. These logics shape the way people perceive the world, make sense of their environment, and understand their roles and responsibilities within a given social system. Institutional logics can be found in various social institutions such as government, education, healthcare, and business, and they often reflect the dominant values, norms, and ideologies of a particular society or community. These logics are not static and can change over time in response to social, political, and economic developments. One key aspect of institutional logics is that they are not mutually exclusive, but rather coexist and interact within a given institutional field. This means that individuals and organizations may be influenced by multiple logics simultaneously, and may experience tensions or conflicts between different sets of beliefs and practices. Understanding institutional logics is important for scholars and practitioners in fields such as organizational theory, sociology, and management, as it can help them to better understand the dynamics of social institutions and the ways in which individuals and organizations navigate and negotiate their roles within these systems. By examining the interplay of different logics, researchers can gain insights into the complexities of institutional change, power dynamics, and social inequality. Institutional logics are social products that subject an actor to the identity of an institutionalized group or organization. In the context of commercialized sport clubs (cscs), there are multiple institutional logics that coexist and influence the governance and management of these clubs. The coexistence of different institutional logics in cscs creates a challenge for governance and management, as these clubs have to navigate and adhere to multiple "rules of the game". Leadership plays a crucial role in creating organizations that can effectively manage multiple institutional logics and establish a consistent organizational identity.

Isomorphism has several implications for organizations. First, it can help organizations achieve legitimacy, which is the acceptance and approval of their stakeholders. Legitimacy is important because it can give organizations access to resources, such as funding and customers, and make it easier for them to operate. Second, isomorphism can help organizations to reduce uncertainty. By adopting the practices of other organizations, organizations can reduce the risk of making mistakes or failing. Third, isomorphism can lead to a loss of innovation and creativity. As organizations become more similar to each other, they may be less likely to develop new and innovative ideas. Fourth, isomorphism can make it difficult for organizations to adapt to change. If organizations are too focused on maintaining legitimacy, they may be slow to respond to changes in their environment.

Isomorphism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has both positive and negative consequences for organizations. Organizations need to be aware of the different types of isomorphism and how they can be managed to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with this process. Isomorphism plays a significant role in shaping the structure, practices, and culture of sports organizations. While it can promote legitimacy, efficiency, and homogeneity, it can also lead to a loss of innovation, creativity, and responsiveness to unique organizational needs. Sports organizations should carefully navigate the dynamics of isomorphism, balancing conformity with differentiation to achieve their strategic objectives.

In conclusion, isomorphism is a complex phenomenon that can have both positive and negative consequences for sport organizations. By understanding the mechanisms of isomorphism and carefully managing its effects, sport organizations can leverage its benefits while maintaining their strategic autonomy and fostering a culture of innovation and adaptation.

Research on isomorphism in sport organizations has made significant contributions to our understanding of how these organizations adapt and respond to external pressures. However, there are still gaps in the existing literature and opportunities for future research in this area. Some potential gaps and future directions in isomorphism research for sport organizations include:

- Cross-sector isomorphism: While much of the existing research has focused on isomorphic pressures within the sport sector, there is a need to explore how isomorphism operates across different sectors. Understanding how sport organizations are influenced by isomorphic pressures from other sectors, such as business or government, can provide valuable insights into their strategic decision-making processes.
- Dynamics of isomorphism: Most research on isomorphism in sport organizations has focused on static snapshots of isomorphic pressures and responses. Future research could explore the dynamic nature of isomorphism, including how isomorphic pressures evolve over time and how organizations adapt to these changes.
- Comparative studies: Comparative studies across different types of sport organizations (e.g., professional sports teams, non-profit sports clubs, sports governing bodies) can help identify commonalities and differences in isomorphic pressures and responses. This can provide a more nuanced understanding of how isomorphism operates in different organizational contexts.
- Impact of isomorphism on performance: While some research has examined the effects of isomorphism on organizational outcomes, such as legitimacy or resource acquisition, there is a need to investigate the impact of isomorphism on performance outcomes in sport organizations. Understanding how isomorphic pressures affect performance can help organizations make more informed strategic decisions.

Role of leadership and governance: Research could also explore the role of leadership and governance structures in shaping how sport organizations respond to isomorphic pressures. Investigating how leaders influence the adoption of isomorphic practices and how governance mechanisms facilitate or hinder isomorphic change can provide valuable insights for organizational effectiveness.

Overall, by addressing these gaps and exploring these future directions, researchers can advance our understanding of isomorphism in sport organizations and contribute to the development of more effective strategies for organizational.

### *Research Limitations*

The primary limitation of the study was the heterogeneity of included papers. Selection papers encompassed a variety of studies with diverse methodologies, populations, and outcomes, making it challenging to synthesize results and draw meaningful conclusions. Future studies can concentrate solely on papers within the same genre and with a homogeneous methodology.

The second limitation was the utilization of a meta-narrative approach in the research. While this method has its strengths, it also faces criticisms and drawbacks. Subsequent research can consider alternative approaches for their research and analysis.

The third limitation was associated with the language of the articles. In this study, only English articles were chosen. Subsequent research could encompass articles in non-English languages such as French, Spanish, etc.

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