

# THE NETWORK PERSPECTIVE APPLIED TO THE SPORT SYSTEM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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## Keywords

Social network analysis; sport system; public policy

## Aim

This research aims to perform a systematic review, in order to develop a network framework to examine the elite sport system.

## Theoretical background

The efficiency of the sports systems is highly enabled and/or constrained by different types of linkages between many actors. The need to examine the whole organizational network, conceived as a structure for collective action (Provan & Kenis, 2007) is emphasized from the perspective of systemic governance.

Network theory focus on the interconnections and interdependence within organizations, considering their structural, social and economic bonds (Provan & Milward, 2001; MacLean et al, 2011). Its model of analysis allows uncovering patterns of interaction between organizations in a system, determining the conditions under which those patterns emerge, or attempting to identify the consequences of specific structural patterns (Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008).

A network point of view is of significant interest for sports governance to understand how elite sport is delivered. However, different elite sport policy studies that analysed the factors that contribute to success, haven't considered the network perspective as an analytic instrument. That is also the case in the conceptual model on the sport policy factors leading to international sporting success (SPLISS model) comprised by 9 pillars (De Bosscher, et al).

## Methodology, research design and data analysis

Through a systematic literature review, this paper aims to analyze both conceptual and empirical research, regarding the network perspective applied to the sports systems. This will be done in order to develop an analytical framework (network key dimensions) that may add knowledge to SPLISS model, especially Pillar 2 (governance, organization and structure of elite sport policies) by integrating social network theory and analysis in this conceptual model.

A protocol for the review containing key words (grouped in three subsequent stages: sport system, network/linkages and some kind of outcome),

criteria for eligibility, inclusion and exclusion was set out, in order to assure validity, reliability and applicability.

The research was performed in four databases (SportDiscus, Web of Knowledge, Science Direct and Sage Journals) and the analysis was carried out with two scientific softwares: reference manager software EndNote X4 and qualitative data analysis in NVivo 9.

## Results, discussion and implications

A preliminary analysis of the results revealed that most of the research conducted used a dyadic level of analysis rather than a network level of analysis. In addition, significant amount of these studies were focused on the Canadian sport system. Furthermore, different analytic instruments and theories were applied and different variables considered, which makes eventual comparisons untreatable as well as a unique agreed model for future research.

The final results are not available at the time of abstract submission, but they will be at the time of the conference.

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