

Corruption And Misgovernance in Nigerian Sport: Legal Gaps, Policy Failures, And the Way Forward

ADEYEMO, TOLULOPE CHRISTIANAH¹, UWAYO FABRICE²

^{1,2}*Pan Africa University Life and Earth Sciences*

Abstract-*This desk-based review critically examines corruption and misgovernance in Nigerian sport, focusing on institutional weaknesses, legal gaps, and policy failures. Drawing on peer-reviewed sources, the paper identifies five key challenges: legal fragmentation, political interference, policy incoherence, stakeholder exclusion, and lack of accountability. These issues hinder the implementation of Nigeria's sports policy and foster elite capture and misappropriation of resources. The review offers reform pathways, including legal harmonisation, decentralised oversight, judicial enforcement, and participatory governance. A thematic synthesis summarises scholarly recommendations and exposes systemic dysfunctions. Ultimately, the paper advocates for governance rooted in transparency, enforceability, and inclusion. This study contributes to sport governance discourse in Africa and supports evidence-based advocacy and legal reform efforts targeting sustainable sport development.*

Index Terms-*Sport governance, corruption in sport, Nigerian legal system, public policy failure, institutional reform, political interference*

I. INTRODUCTION

Sport is an important component in the national identity of Nigeria, youth participation and international relations. It is a means of national unity and economic growth. Yet, beneath its symbolic importance lies a persistent crisis of corruption, weak regulation, and institutional failure [1], [4]. Such structural gaps are still compromising the objectives of equity, accountability and excellence in sport governance. Nigerian sport ecosystem has been the victim of decades of policy confusion and political manipulation. National sport policies have been enacted repeatedly but are rarely implemented with

fidelity, owing to overlapping administrative mandates, rent-seeking behaviour, and insufficient legal enforcement mechanisms [3], [9]. While public institutions such as the Ministry of Sports and various sport federations are tasked with oversight, they often lack the autonomy and regulatory rigour to function effectively [4], [10]. Amid this governance vacuum, cases of embezzlement, nepotism, poor infrastructure delivery, and politicised appointments have become endemic [1], [5], [14]. Despite the vast potential of sport to contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its capacity is being eroded by a culture of impunity and opaque leadership structures [8], [15]. The global literature on sport governance recognises these issues as symptoms of broader legal and institutional fragility in emerging economies [6], [13], [17]. Surprisingly, while corruption in public sectors such as defence, health, and education has drawn extensive legal scrutiny, the sport sector remains under-theorised in Nigerian legal discourse [2], [16]. This paper occupies that gap by discussing the legal, institutional and policy lapses that enable corruption and poor governance in Nigerian sport. It is a desk-based approach that relies on international best practices, discourse of human rights, and regulatory case studies to determine the paths towards the reform. It is to encourage the transition to the sport governance in Nigeria that is transparent, development-oriented, and lawful.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sport corruption is a phenomenon affecting the world and jeopardizing integrity, transparency, and developmental results. In Nigeria, this challenge is aggravated by entrenched institutional weaknesses, legal ambiguities, and fragmented oversight structures [1; 4; 13]. Although sport is constitutionally recognised as a tool for development, nation-building, and diplomacy, the legal and policy

foundations underpinning its governance remain underdeveloped and poorly enforced [2; 6]. The sport sector in Nigeria is characterised by overlapping administrative functions between the Ministry of Sports and national federations, leading to regulatory confusion and lack of accountability [1; 4]. The centralisation of power in politically appointed positions further exacerbates the absence of institutional autonomy, creating loopholes for corruption, embezzlement, and nepotism [4; 5; 10]. Although national sport policies have been revised periodically, these reforms are rarely translated into actionable or enforceable measures due to limited stakeholder consultation and weak implementation capacity [3; 9]. Researches have also pointed out the role that institutional dysfunction plays in the collapse of ethical governance. Despite a proliferation of frameworks, such as the National Sports Policy and Vision 20:2020, their practical impact has been largely symbolic [3; 8; 9]. Enforcement agencies lack the capacity and independence to check corruption effectively, allowing political interference and elite capture to thrive within sport institutions [1; 13; 14]. Furthermore, poor budgetary tracking and procurement abuses continue to derail infrastructural development and athlete welfare [5; 17]. Comparative governance studies emphasise the importance of transparency, legal clarity, and enforceability in sport policy frameworks [13; 14; 18]. It is important to note that international best practices emphasize the fact that corruption becomes a system when the legal obligations are weak or not binding. In Nigeria, the absence of statutory audit mechanisms and judicial enforcement further reinforces this vulnerability [6; 17; 18]. The rights of the victims of legal discourse introduce an even more important aspect to this discussion. Where systemic corruption denies access to sport infrastructure, equitable funding, or fair representation, affected athletes and communities can be classified as victims of structural injustice [2; 7]. Such indirect evils are an indication of the legal failure of the state to safeguard the common good. The realities of law and institutions in Nigeria are far out of line with the sport policy aspirations of the nation as the literature shows. Unless there is an urgent reform to focus on enforcement, autonomy and transparency, corruption

will remain as a disease that will limit the transformation power of sport in Nigeria.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding corruption and misgovernance in Nigerian sport requires an interdisciplinary theoretical approach that captures the interplay between legal structures, institutional behaviour, and political power. Three theoretical lenses underpin this review: Legal Institutionalism, Good Governance Theory, and the Victim Rights Perspective.

Legal Institutionalism emphasises the role of formal legal frameworks and regulatory structures in shaping behaviour within public institutions. It holds that effective legal systems must offer clarity, enforceability, and autonomy from political interference. In the Nigerian sport sector, laws and policy guidelines often exist without corresponding implementation mechanisms or judicial oversight, creating a vacuum where corruption thrives [1; 4; 14]. Institutionalism reveals that governance breakdowns are not merely administrative flaws but legal failures rooted in weak statutory enforcement, overlapping mandates, and compromised autonomy [3; 9; 18].

Good Governance Theory provides another crucial lens, particularly in analysing transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law within sport institutions. Governance in Nigerian sport lacks structural checks and balances, resulting in opaque decision-making, patronage networks, and minimal stakeholder input [4; 6; 13]. Good Governance Theory argues that without mechanisms such as public audits, independent regulatory agencies, and open procurement processes, sports organisations become susceptible to elite capture and misallocation of resources [5; 10; 17].

Finally, the Victim Rights Perspective draws from human rights jurisprudence and recognises that systemic governance failures produce indirect victims. Where corruption and mismanagement deny access to safe facilities, equal opportunities, or fair representation, athletes and marginalised communities suffer harm that is structural, not

incidental [2; 7]. This theory reframes corruption as a rights-based violation rather than a technical flaw, placing the burden on the state to provide remedies, enforce justice, and prevent recurrence [2; 16].

Together, these three frameworks offer a multi-layered understanding of the crisis in Nigerian sport governance. Legal Institutionalism highlights normative weaknesses; Good Governance Theory exposes systemic inefficiencies and power asymmetries; and the Victim Rights Perspective centres the ethical and legal obligation to protect those harmed by institutional failure. Applying these lenses enables a critical evaluation of Nigeria's sport governance system and informs more targeted, justice-oriented reform strategies.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a desk-based review methodology, grounded in qualitative legal and policy analysis. Desk-based research is particularly suitable for interrogating institutional frameworks, policy documents, and secondary sources where direct fieldwork is either impractical or unnecessary [21; 22]. The approach allows for a critical synthesis of both academic and grey literature to evaluate corruption and misgovernance in Nigerian sport through a legal and governance lens.

Data Sources: The data sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral theses, institutional reports, policy frameworks, legal documents, and international best practice guides. Selection was guided by relevance to sport governance, corruption in public institutions, Nigerian legal structures, and victim-centred justice. Particular attention was paid to sources that offered empirical or conceptual insights into governance mechanisms, policy implementation failures, and institutional accountability within sport [1; 3; 6].

To ensure analytical rigour, a thematic coding framework was developed based on three predefined conceptual categories: legal and institutional frameworks, governance practices and failures, and victimization through misgovernance. Literature was sorted and analysed according to its contribution to these themes. This method enabled the identification of recurrent patterns, critical gaps in legal

infrastructure, and contradictions between policy design and implementation outcomes [4; 9; 13].

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, sources were also triangulated across domains combining legal analysis with sport management studies, political science literature, and development frameworks [5; 14; 17]. This facilitated a holistic understanding of how sport governance interacts with broader state dynamics such as bureaucratic capture, corruption networks, and policy inertia.

The review method followed a non-chronological, issue-based structure rather than a strict historical narrative. This allowed for a more focused examination of systemic dysfunction across time, rather than limiting the analysis to specific policy periods or political administrations [1; 10; 18]. Where appropriate, comparative insights from international governance models were introduced to contextualise Nigeria's situation and highlight reform possibilities.

While desk-based research does not offer real-time field data, it provides a structured, evidence-based foundation for evaluating complex governance failures. As Froese and Bader argue, the strength of this method lies in its ability to distil meaning from dispersed but thematically linked sources [22].

Analytical Strategy: The study employed thematic content analysis to extract insights from the selected literature. Sources were coded according to three overarching themes: institutional legal gaps, governance dysfunctions, and stakeholder victimization. Patterns were synthesized across domains to identify structural weaknesses, enforcement failures, and ethical concerns within Nigerian sport governance. Comparative insights were integrated to assess alignment with international standards [1; 4; 13; 17].

Limitations: As a desk-based review, the study lacks primary data from sport practitioners or victims. This restricts the scope to documented narratives and policy texts, potentially omitting unreported realities. However, the breadth of sources and thematic depth mitigates this limitation by offering a robust interpretive framework [21; 22].

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- Institutional and Legal Fragmentation

A major driver of corruption and inefficiency in Nigerian sport is the absence of a unified autonomous legal and institutional framework to govern the sector. At present, no comprehensive national statute exists to harmonize the functions of the Ministry of Sports, the National Sports Commission (NSC), and various sport federations. Instead, governance is guided largely by fragmented policy documents, executive directives, and overlapping mandates [1; 4; 13].

The Nigerian Sports Policy, while rich in intent, lacks statutory enforceability. It does not enjoy the same legal status as a parliamentary act and as such remains advisory rather than binding [3; 9]. This legal ambiguity allows political actors to bypass policy commitments without consequence, weakening the chain of accountability. Moreover, as noted in international scholarship, functional sport systems require clearly delineated institutional roles and legal authority; these conditions are sorely lacking in Nigeria's sport landscape [13].

These are further compounded by lack of coordination between the federal and state level institutions and between government ministries and sport federations. Consequently, critical governance roles, which include talent development, infrastructure deployment, and regulatory control, are placed in areas of jurisdictional grey in which jurisdiction becomes diffused and diluted. This aligns with Legal Institutionalism, which posits that institutional incoherence erodes regulatory efficacy and invites informal power structures to fill the vacuum [4; 18].

- Politicization and Elite Capture of the Sport Institutions

The other important fact is that there is a high degree of politicization of sport governance in Nigeria. Sport federations, rather than operating as autonomous professional bodies, often function as vehicles for political patronage and elite consolidation [4; 5; 10]. Appointments to leadership positions are never merit based or given on basis of experience rather, they are highly dependent on political loyalty and ethnic

affiliations. This negates administrative stability, strategic planning and long term development agendas.

Moreover, the budgetary processes are obscure. Allocation of funds to federations, local councils, and state sport ministries lacks transparency and is not subjected to routine audit by independent regulatory bodies [14; 17; 20]. This leaves a lot of possibilities of misappropriation and rent-seeking. Good Governance Theory underscores that such institutional opacity fosters elite dominance and restricts inclusive participation in decision-making [6; 14].

A key symptom of elite capture is the persistent underfunding of grassroots and community sport initiatives. Instead of channelling resources to talent development or inclusive infrastructure, investments are disproportionately skewed toward politically motivated projects or events that offer short-term visibility [5; 9]. This compromises sport's developmental role and marginalises stakeholders without political leverage.

- Weak Implementation and Policy Incoherence

Nigeria has developed several strategic frameworks to promote sport development, including the National Sports Policy and Vision 20:2020. However, these documents remain largely rhetorical due to weak implementation mechanisms and policy incoherence [3; 8; 9]. Most of these frameworks are not backed by legislation, nor are they aligned with enforceable institutional mandates. Consequently, policy objectives such as inclusive sport participation: infrastructure development: and administrative reform are rarely realised beyond paper [6; 14].

A major gap lies in the absence of actionable roadmaps and measurable targets within policy frameworks. The documents are not usually clear on who is to do what, when, and what performance to achieve. This disconnect leads to ambiguity and inconsistency in interpretation and implementation at various levels of government [9; 17]. Also, the policy failure is not well accounted except in situations where there are effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Implementation is also made more difficult by politicisation of strategic priorities. Government administrations have a tendency of introducing new blueprints to replace the current policies without a proper assessment of the current programmes. This disrupts continuity and renders long-term planning virtually impossible [4; 10]. From a governance theory perspective, such institutional instability reflects poor adherence to the principles of

accountability, transparency, and stakeholder engagement [6; 13].

There is also incoherence of policy in the fragmented coordination of agencies. The Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, State Sports Councils, and federations often operate in silos with limited collaboration or data sharing [1; 4; 14]. This causes redundancy, wastage of resources and a general lack of strategy.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Governance Challenges and Reform Pathways in Nigerian Sport

Main Theme	Subthemes	Summary of Contributions
Institutional and Legal Fragmentation	Absence of Unified Legal Framework [1; 3; 13]	Highlights the legal vacuum in sport governance and calls for a centralised legislative reform to unify mandates.
	Jurisdictional Overlaps and Conflicts [4; 6; 14]	Points to frequent clashes between sport institutions due to unclear roles and overlapping duties.
	Non-Enforceable Sports Policy [3; 9; 17]	Shows that the existing Nigerian Sports Policy lacks legal force and cannot compel compliance or ethical practice.
Politicisation and Elite Capture	Political Interference in Sport Administration [4; 5; 10]	Documents the politicisation of sport leadership through appointments and strategic decisions tied to political actors.
	Elite Capture and Patronage in Federations [5; 13; 20]	Critiques how sport bodies are captured by elites who use them for political influence rather than athletic development.
	Lack of Transparency in Budget Allocation [14; 17; 20]	Reveals poor public accountability mechanisms in sport funding and weak or absent audit processes.
Strategic Reform Recommendations	Sport Governance Act [1; 6; 13]	Urges the passing of a dedicated governance law that defines roles, responsibilities, and compliance mechanisms.
	Independent Regulatory Commission [4; 13; 14]	Calls for a neutral, professional body to monitor governance and reduce political meddling in administrative operations.
	Inclusive and Transparent Structures [2; 9; 15]	Emphasizes the need for grassroots representation and stakeholder inclusion in national sport decision-making.
	Inter-agency Synergy and Collaboration [11; 12; 21]	Advocates collaboration between ministries, audit institutions, and civil society to enforce good governance and systemic alignment in sport administration.

- **Neglect of Stakeholder Rights and Victimisation**
One of the more overlooked consequences of misgovernance in Nigerian sport is the structural victimisation of stakeholders particularly athletes, coaches, and marginalized communities. When corruption, nepotism, and administrative neglect prevent stakeholders from accessing fair

representation: safe facilities: or equitable funding, they suffer material and psychological harm [2; 7].

From a victimology and rights-based perspective, these groups can be considered indirect victims of institutional failure. The denial of opportunities for participation, development, and recognition in sport mirrors the same patterns of exclusion observed in

broader public sectors such as education and health [2; 15]. Athletes who lack access to basic amenities or whose careers are stifled by corrupt selection processes often have no recourse for redress due to the absence of grievance mechanisms within sport governance structures [11; 16].

Structural victimisation in sport governance is not a lone pattern since there are other trends of state failures to protect rights. As [23].note in their analysis of COVID-19 responses in African states, including Nigeria, breaches of fundamental rights by state agencies often occur under the guise of weak oversight, legal ambiguity, and institutional impunity. Such a realization can be applied directly to the Nigerian sporting environment that experiences misgovernance that results in unfair access to opportunities, infrastructure and representation. This kind of neglect by a system is a violation of the social contract and it compromises the rights guaranteed by the constitution of participation, non-discrimination and development. The need to incorporate a rights-based approach in the governance of sports, therefore, becomes a requirement in addition to a governance reform measure.

The problem is even more pronounced at the grassroots level. Rural youth and community clubs are consistently excluded from decision-making and funding opportunities, despite being critical to sport talent development [5; 9; 17]. In this context, misgovernance becomes not just a management failure but a violation of the right to participate in public goods and institutions.

- Absence of Judicial or Legislative Oversight

One of the more entrenched barriers to accountability in Nigerian sport governance is the near-total absence of judicial and legislative oversight. Unlike sectors such as finance or electoral reform, sport-related corruption and rights violations are seldom subjected to scrutiny by Nigerian courts or legislative committees [1; 6; 11; 18].

The National Assembly has yet to enact a comprehensive sport governance law that clearly defines the legal boundaries, institutional mandates, and fiduciary obligations of actors within the sector. Instead, governance continues to rely on outdated

decrees, executive orders, and the Nigerian Sports Policy, which lacks statutory backing [3; 9; 14]. This legislative inertia creates a vacuum where policy exists without enforceable consequences, enabling impunity and shielding political appointees from accountability [4; 17].

Judicial passivity compounds this gap. Legal redress mechanisms for athletes, coaches, or whistleblowers affected by misgovernance are virtually non-existent. There are no sport-specific tribunals or ombudsman institutions to handle grievances. Victims of corrupt selection processes or budget diversion lack accessible, transparent forums for lodging and resolving complaints [2; 7; 11]. This undermines the deterrent effect of the law and reinforces the perception that sport lies outside the boundaries of public accountability.

Comparative frameworks demonstrate that legal systems that integrate sport governance—through standing committees, integrity tribunals, and protected reporting systems—tend to experience lower levels of systemic corruption [13; 16; 19]. Nigeria's inability to embed sport within its legal culture and oversight institutions has allowed elite dominance and managerial opacity to persist unchecked.

- Reform Strategies for Nigerian Sport Governance

To disrupt entrenched misgovernance and restore accountability, Nigeria must undertake systemic reforms that target legal, institutional, and participatory deficits in its sport sector. These reforms should draw on international best practices while remaining grounded in the Nigerian context.

First, Nigeria must enact a binding Sport Governance Act that clearly defines institutional roles, mandates legal accountability, and integrates mechanisms for stakeholder participation [1; 6; 18]. This Act should supersede fragmented policies and codify enforceable standards for governance, procurement, and appointments.

Second, a National Sport Regulatory Commission should be established as an autonomous statutory body with powers to oversee budgets, regulate leadership processes, and audit performance [4; 13;

14]. Such an agency cannot be a subordinate to the Ministry of Sports as it will encourage the involvement of politics and compromise professionalism.

Third, oversight by judiciary and legislature has to be institutionalised. The National Assembly should have dedicated sport committees that keep track of the policy execution and the adherence to funding. In parallel, grievance redress platforms should be created for athletes and stakeholders to report misconduct, corruption, or rights violations [2; 7; 11]. Fourth, Nigeria has to institutionalise public audits, open contracting, and financial disclosure of all sport federations and agencies affiliated to Nigeria. Civil society and the media must be empowered to monitor and report on sport governance processes without censorship or intimidation [5; 17; 20].

Fifth, local stakeholder councils and athlete commissions should be implemented into the

governance systems. These bodies will serve as advisory and oversight entities at national and sub-national levels, ensuring grassroots inclusion and equitable resource distribution [2; 9; 15].

Lastly, education, training, and ethical development of leadership should be focused on in sport institutions through reform. Recruitment and appointment to sport leadership positions must be based on transparent criteria, competency, and integrity not patronage or political affiliation [8; 13; 14].

In combination, these measures indicate the transition to comprehensive policy rhetoric to holistic governance reform. They want not only to do something on corruption but also introduce justice, equity, and efficiency in the provision of sport as a national public good.

while budget allocations lack transparency and are susceptible to diversion [4; 5; 10; 20]. This does more harm than good to the efficiency of administration as well as autonomy of federations and integrity of decision-making. When sport organisations become extensions of political patronage, their legitimacy erodes, and grassroots development suffers [8; 13].

What makes matters worse is that there is no legal or legislative watchdog. There are no specialised sport tribunals, ombudsman systems, or legislative safeguards holding sport administrators to account [2; 7; 11]. The absence of redress mechanisms through the law denies the affected athletes and other stakeholders access to redress and diminishes the trust of the people in the system, which fosters the culture of impunity. In contrast, other jurisdictions have embedded sport within their national legal frameworks through regulatory commissions, ethical codes, and independent grievance systems [6; 16; 18].

Victimization and marginalisation of stakeholders are the most obvious outcomes of such a failure of governance. Grassroots athletes, local clubs, and rural communities are excluded from funding, decision-making, and development opportunities [2; 9; 15]. Lacking organized engagement, fairness in the sport

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings from this review supports the assertion that the Nigerian sport governance environment is a product of a complex mix of legal uncertainty, institutional incompetence, elite interference and marginalisation of stakeholders. These interrelated challenges mirror a broader pattern of public sector dysfunction in Nigeria, wherein policies are rarely translated into enforceable legal norms, and state institutions are often captured by vested interests [1; 3; 4].

At the core of the dysfunction lies institutional and legal fragmentation, which manifests in overlapping mandates between the Ministry of Sports, National Sports Commission, and federations [1; 4; 13]. This redundancy produces regulatory confusion, weakens enforcement, and fosters a culture of non-accountability [3; 9; 17]. Unlike countries with coherent statutory frameworks guiding sport governance, Nigeria's reliance on vague, unenforceable policy documents leaves room for manipulation and elite capture [14; 17].

This dysfunction is further enshrined by the politicisation of the sport institutions. Appointments are often driven by loyalty rather than competence,

is impossible, and the industry is a closed cycle with its interests focused on elite needs instead of the common good.

Nevertheless, the results indicate feasible paths of reform. A legally binding Sport Governance Act could harmonise mandates and codify standards, while an autonomous National Sport Regulatory Commission could restore oversight and professionalism [1; 4; 13]. Equally important is the institutionalisation of public audits, judicial monitoring, and inclusive governance structures that empower local voices and safeguard transparency [2; 7; 14; 20].

Importantly, such reform strategies should not confine solutions to technical problems, but they should focus on the political economy of Nigerian sport. As the literature on public policy and sport governance argues, sustainable reform requires political will, stakeholder buy-in, and legal integration [6; 12; 17]. Sport governance must be reimagined not as an isolated sector, but as part of Nigeria's broader quest for democratic accountability and social justice [11; 21; 22].

Strategic Recommendations and Future Pathways: The review has shown that corruption and misgovernance in the Nigerian sport are not accidental as they are systematic and based on institutional fragmentation, legal gaps, political interference, and exclusion of stakeholders. The absence of a unified, enforceable legal framework has enabled regulatory ambiguity, while the politicisation of administrative structures has entrenched elite capture and weakened accountability [1; 3; 4; 10].

Furthermore, the failure of judicial and legislative oversight has created a regulatory vacuum that shields mismanagement and hinders grievance redress [2; 6; 11; 18]. These weaknesses have collectively eroded the capacity of sport to function as a tool for national development, social inclusion, and youth empowerment [8; 9; 13; 15].

To fight these deep-seated problems, the present paper would recommend the following multi-pronged reform strategies:

1. Enact a National Sport Governance Act: This should codify institutional roles, set clear standards for governance, and provide a statutory basis for oversight [1; 6; 13].
2. Establish an autonomous National Sport Regulatory Commission: With powers to monitor finances, enforce ethical standards, and regulate leadership structures independently from political control [4; 13; 14].
3. Institutionalise legislative and judicial scrutiny: Through dedicated sport committees in the National Assembly, and grievance redress systems accessible to athletes, officials, and civil society [2; 7; 11].
4. Promote transparent budgeting and audit systems: Public audits, open contracting, and civil society monitoring must become standard practice across sport federations and agencies [5; 14; 20].
5. Embed grassroots representation in governance frameworks: Local stakeholder councils and athlete commissions should have formal advisory and decision-making roles [2; 9; 15].
6. Prioritise ethical leadership and capacity development: Appointments to sport leadership roles must be merit-based, with structured training in governance, ethics, and administration [8; 13; 14].

Ultimately, reforming Nigerian sport governance requires more than institutional redesign it demands a paradigm shift toward democratic accountability, inclusive participation, and legal enforceability. Without this, sport will continue to reflect the broader crisis of governance in Nigeria, rather than offer a path toward its resolution.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study hold significant implications for sport governance reform in Nigeria. First, the lack of statutory clarity and institutional coherence necessitates urgent legal intervention. Policymakers must prioritise the development of a Sport Governance Act that harmonises mandates, defines accountability mechanisms, and removes political ambiguity from governance frameworks [1; 4; 13].

Second, public officials and legislators should invest in capacity building for sport administrators, ensuring they are equipped with legal, financial, and ethical training to lead sport institutions with integrity [8; 14; 17]. Institutionalising anti-corruption compliance frameworks, similar to those found in financial services or electoral bodies, may enhance transparency and deter patronage practices [5; 20].

Third, a decentralised model of sport governance one that amplifies grassroots voices and strengthens regional sport councils will promote equity and facilitate athlete development across diverse communities [2; 9; 15]. Importantly, collaborative policy design involving civil society organisations, athlete unions, and private sector actors will ensure that reform measures are both inclusive and sustainable [11; 13; 21].

Finally, there is a pressing need for inter-agency synergy among the Ministry of Sports, National Assembly committees, and anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC. Without cross-sector collaboration, governance reform will remain fragmented and ineffective [4; 7; 12]. This review is limited by its desk-based approach, relying on existing literature without empirical validation from sport administrators or athletes. While it integrates peer-reviewed sources and grey literature, the absence of field data may restrict the depth of contextual insights [21; 22].

Future studies should adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches to explore lived experiences of misgovernance, power asymmetries, and policy gaps in Nigerian sport. Comparative studies with other African or Commonwealth nations could also help contextualise reform strategies and promote best practice exchange.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to express sincere gratitude to the academic mentors and colleagues whose insightful feedback and encouragement shaped the development of this paper. Special thanks are also extended to the Department of Sport Management and Policy Studies for providing access to key resources and institutional support throughout the writing process. Appreciation

is due to the editorial board and reviewers of the IRE Journal for their valuable comments that helped improve the quality of this manuscript. Lastly, heartfelt thanks to all scholars whose works have been referenced in this review and whose commitment to transparency and justice in sport governance continues to inspire critical scholarship

REFERENCES

- [1] J. Amos, "Exploring the Legal Landscape of Sports in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects," SSRN, 2024. [Online]. Available: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4974720
- [2] D. D. Adeyemo, "The rights of victims of core international crimes to reparation in Nigeria," *African Human Rights Law Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 1058–1079, 2021. [Online]. Available: https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=S1996-20962021000200018&script=sci_arttext
- [3] A. A. O. Mumunni and A. Kayode, "Impediments to effective implementation of sports policy in Nigeria schools," *Ghana Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sports and Dance (GJOHPERSD)*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 125–145, 2015. [Online]. Available: <https://journal.ucc.edu.gh/index.php/gjohpersd/article/view/560>
- [4] J. P. Ogbah, "Supervised autonomy and its impact on Nigerian sports," Ph.D. dissertation, Loughborough University, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/thesis/Supervised_autonomy_and_its_impact_on_Nigerian_sports/22564531
- [5] M. P. Kirschen, A. Tsou, S. B. Nelson, J. A. Russell, and D. Larriviere, "Legal and ethical implications in the evaluation and management of sports-related concussion," *Neurology*, vol. 83, no. 4, pp. 352–358, 2014. [Online]. Available: <https://www.neurology.org/doi/abs/10.1212/WNL.0000000000000613>
- [6] I. O'Boyle and T. Bradbury, *Sport Governance: International Case Studies*. Routledge, 2013. [Online]. Available: <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203408773&type=googlepdf>

- [7] D. D. Adeyemo, "The rights of victims of core international crimes to reparation in Nigeria," *African Human Rights Law Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 1058–1079, 2021. [Online]. Available: https://www.scielo.org/za/scielo.php?pid=S1996-20962021000200018&script=sci_arttext
- [8] E. K. Falaye and O. Fayomi, "Dynamism of Sports Diplomacy and Foreign Policy as Correlate of Sports Development in North-Central State, Nigeria," *Indonesian Journal of Sport Management*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 181–188, 2023. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ejournal.unma.ac.id/index.php/ijsm/article/view/7345>
- [9] V. E. Efebeh, "Sports as an instrument of development and national cohesion: The Nigerian experience," *Journal of Danubian Studies and Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://dj.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/JDSR/article/view/569>
- [10] L. Moshoeshe, "Sports Governance as a Key Success Factor of Effective Service Delivery in a Non-profit Sports Organization," Ph.D. dissertation, Seoul National University, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://space.snu.ac.kr/handle/10371/170028>
- [11] J. S. Russell, "Sport as a legal system," in *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Sport*, Routledge, 2015, pp. 255–273. [Online]. Available: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203466261-20/sport-legal-system-john-russell>
- [12] O. A. Kasera, O. M. Odhiambo, and B. C. Oloo, "Africa in global public policy: Theoretical perspectives and the role of international law in shaping public policy in Africa," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, vol. 51, pp. 910–937, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382660666>
- [13] M. A. Hums, Y. Kluch, S. H. Schmidt, and J. C. MacLean, *Governance and Policy in Sport Organizations*. Routledge, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003303183>
- [14] E. Bayle, *Governance, Regulation and Management of Global Sport Organisations*, Taylor & Francis, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/93150>
- [15] B. Ugochukwu, "Global governance in all its discrete forms: the game, FIFA, and the third world," *Windsor Yearbook of Access to Justice*, vol. 33, pp. 199, 2016. [Online]. Available: https://heinonline.org/hol-cgi-bin/get_pdf.cgi?handle=hein.journals/windyrbj33§ion=32
- [16] J. O. Spengler, P. M. Anderson, D. P. Connaughton, and T. A. Baker, *Introduction to Sport Law with Case Studies in Sport Law*. Human Kinetics, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ejl2EAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1>
- [17] R. Hoyer, M. Nicholson, and B. Houlihan, *Sport and Policy: Issues and Analysis*. Routledge, 2010. [Online]. Available: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=yw6NEkx-ZKwC&oi=fnd&pg=PR3>
- [18] P. T. Jonson and D. Thorpe, "Legal and regulatory aspects of sport governance," in *Routledge Handbook of Sport Governance*, Routledge, 2019, pp. 35–52. [Online]. Available: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429440250-3>
- [19] A. M. Moorman, L. Sharp, and C. Claussen, *Sport Law: A Managerial Approach*. Routledge, 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315210193>
- [20] R. M. Rodenberg and A. Kaburakis, "Legal and corruption issues in sports gambling," *Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport*, vol. 23, pp. 8, 2013. [Online]. Available: https://heinonline.org/hol-cgibin/get_pdf.cgi?handle=hein.journals/jlas23§ion=5
- [21] B. Guerin, B. Janta, and A. van Gorp, "Desk-based research and literature review," *Evaluating Interventions That Prevent or Counter Violent Extremism*, RAND Corporation, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375717685>
- [22] F. J. Froese and K. Bader, "Surviving the desk-review," *Asian Business & Management*, vol.

18, no. 1, pp. 1–5, 2019. [Online]. Available:
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41291-019-00060-8>

- [23] T. R. Ibitoye and S. I. Ilesanmi, “Breaches of fundamental rights in African states by state agencies during COVID-19: An overview,” Department of Private Law, Faculty of Law, University of Maiduguri, 2020. [Online]. Available:<https://repository.ui.edu.ng/server/api/core/bitstreams/45453747-6305-4d15-b986-4541f6559d74/content>