

## Improving Regional Sports Performance through a Governance Lens: An Analysis of Sports Governance in Lamongan Regency

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### Abstract

This study examines how sport governance contributes to improving regional athletic performance through a case study of Lamongan Regency. Employing a qualitative case-study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, policy document analysis, and limited observation, and were analyzed using Creswell's qualitative analysis procedures. The analytical framework draws on Henry and Lee's sport governance model—systemic governance, organizational governance, and political governance—engaged in dialogue with contemporary governance and public administration scholarship. The findings indicate that regional sport performance is shaped by the simultaneous interaction of these three governance dimensions. The study shows that weak cross-sectoral integration, particularly between sport and education, constrains the effectiveness of systemic governance; unequal internal participation undermines organizational governance; and misaligned political commitments among key actors impede the translation of political support into performance outcomes. The study's novelty lies in advancing the concept of performance-oriented sport governance at the subnational level, emphasizing cross-sectoral integration, balanced organizational participation, and aligned political governance as prerequisites for sustaining performance improvements. This study contributes to public administration and sport governance research and offers policy implications for strengthening subnational sport governance.

**Keywords:** *Sport Governance, Athletic Performance, Subnational Governance, Public Administration, Sport Policy.*

### Introduction

Developments in public administration scholarship indicate a paradigmatic shift from *government* to *governance*, emphasizing interaction and collaboration among the state, the private sector, and civil society in the formulation and implementation of public policy (Rhodes, 1996; Osborne, 2010). This shift reflects a reorientation from the dominance of state authority toward the management of plural, participatory, and network-based public interests (Kooiman, 2003; Ansell & Gash, 2008). In this context, public policy is no longer understood merely as an administrative instrument but as an arena of interest coordination and multi-actor accountability (Pierre & Peters, 2000).

The sport sector has become increasingly salient within a governance framework because it involves a wide range of actors, including government agencies, sport organizations, clubs, coaches, athletes, communities, and the private sector (Houlihan & Green, 2008; Shilbury et al., 2016). Sport functions not only as a recreational activity but also as an instrument for human capital development, collective identity formation, and the legitimation of governmental performance in the public eye (Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Coalter, 2013). Accordingly, improvements in sport performance may be viewed as a public policy outcome that reflects the effectiveness of sport sector governance.

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In Indonesia, sport has been institutionalized as a governmental function with a strong regulatory framework at both national and subnational levels. The National Sports System Law affirms the role of local governments in fostering, developing, and enhancing sport performance based on local comparative advantages. However, research suggests that increased budgets, facility development, and expanded participation do not automatically translate into sustained improvements in sport performance (Houlihan & Green, 2008; De Bosscher et al., 2015). This pattern indicates governance challenges, particularly in linking policy planning, resource allocation, and performance outcomes.

Empirically, Indonesia's sport performance across major international and regional multi-events has fluctuated despite increased state investment in the sport sector (Wiryadi et al., 2020; Nugraheni et al., 2020). At the same time, the national Sport Development Index has improved only gradually and remains in the medium category, limiting its capacity to support a sustainable high-performance development system (Kemenpora RI, 2023; 2024). Sport policy scholarship argues that such conditions reflect weak *throughput governance*, namely insufficient linkage between policy inputs and performance outputs (De Bosscher et al., 2015).

Similar issues are evident at the local level. Lamongan Regency, in East Java Province, has experienced declining sport performance in regional competitions such as POPDA and Porprov, even as budgetary support and the availability of facilities have relatively increased. Prior studies indicate that a mismatch between rising policy inputs and performance achievements signals weak subnational sport governance, particularly in actor coordination, policy consistency, and performance orientation (Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Sirait, 2021).

Empirical evidence from Lamongan Regency points to at least three key problems. First, weak integration between mass participation, talent identification, and high-performance development has resulted in high community participation that does not correspond to the production of competitive athletes (Houlihan & Green, 2008; Vaeyens et al., 2008). Second, budgeting and development programs have not been systematically coordinated between the local government and sport organizations, limiting the extent to which allocations generate measurable performance outcomes (De Bosscher et al., 2015; Sotiriadou et al., 2008). Third, unequal provision of facilities and infrastructure across sports, coupled with the absence of explicit local policy to guide long-term performance development, has constrained sustained achievement (Hylton & Bramham, 2018).

Theoretically, this study builds on Henry and Lee's (2004) concept of sport governance, which conceptualizes governance through three dimensions: systemic, organizational, and political. This framework highlights the role of the state and sport organizations in structuring power relations, legitimacy, and decision-making mechanisms. However, several studies criticize the approach as relatively state-centric and insufficiently attentive to multi-actor collaboration and performance-oriented governance (Dowling et al., 2018; Geeraert et al., 2015).

More recent literature on *good governance in sport* underscores the importance of transparency, accountability, participation, and integrity in sport management (Arnaut et al., 2022; Geeraert, 2018). In parallel, the *grand sport governance* perspective highlights the complexity of sport ecosystems involving diverse cross-sectoral actors (Lam, 2014). Nevertheless, both approaches provide limited operational guidance on how governance principles are translated into measurable performance improvements, particularly in subnational government contexts (Wijaya et al., 2024).

Against this backdrop, this study addresses both empirical and theoretical gaps in the literature on subnational sport governance. Empirically, comprehensive explanations of the relationship between local sport governance and sport performance outcomes remain limited. Theoretically, there is still no subnational sport governance model that integrates Henry and Lee's (2004) systemic, organizational, and political dimensions with principles of collaboration and a performance orientation. The novelty of this study lies in developing a framework of *performance-oriented sport governance* at the local level, using Lamongan Regency as a case study. The study extends classical sport governance theory by incorporating multi-actor collaboration, policy integration, and the sustainability of performance development as key variables for improving regional sport performance. In doing so, it is expected to contribute to public administration scholarship in the sport domain and to offer governance-based policy recommendations for sustaining subnational sport performance improvements.

## **Literature Review**

### **1) Public Administration and Sport Governance**

From a public administration perspective, sport is understood as a public affair that requires accountable, results-oriented management of organizations, resources, and policy (Henry, 2018). Public administration offers analytical tools to assess governmental institutional capacity, including organizational design, budgeting mechanisms, performance management, and policy monitoring and evaluation systems. These instruments are particularly salient in sport, given the high dependence of performance-development systems on public policy support and public resources.

Public administration also emphasizes the linkage between policy planning, program implementation, and performance evaluation as an integrated policy cycle (Osborne, 2010). In sport governance, weak integration across policy stages can produce misalignment between increased inputs—such as budgets and facilities—and outcomes in the form of sporting achievement (De Bosscher et al., 2015). Accordingly, a public administration lens supports governance analyses that move beyond regulatory compliance to examine the capacity of policy systems to generate measurable performance and public impact.

Contemporary public administration further positions performance management as a core element of public sector governance, including in sport (Henry, 2018). This approach requires clear objectives, performance indicators, and accountability mechanisms that enable objective evaluation of policy achievements. Within this framework, effective sport governance demands integration between governance principles (collaboration and accountability) and public administration instruments capable of directing and steering performance-development systems over time.

### **2) Governance in Public Administration**

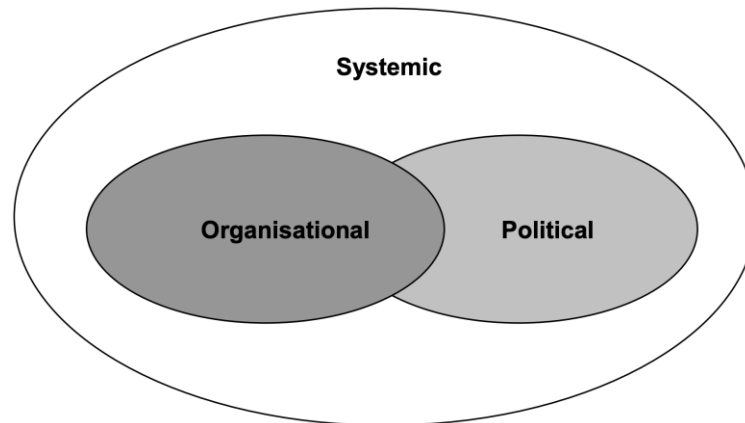
The concept of governance emerged in response to the limitations of hierarchical, state-centric models of government in addressing the complexity of contemporary public problems (Rhodes, 1996). In public administration, governance refers to mechanisms for managing public affairs through interaction and interdependence among state and non-state actors within horizontal, collaborative policy networks (Kooiman, 2003; Pierre & Peters, 2000). This approach underscores that governmental capacity to achieve public goals depends substantially on its ability to coordinate actors, resources, and interests dispersed beyond formal bureaucratic structures.

Subsequent developments conceptualize governance not only as relational patterns among actors but also as a set of norms and principles emphasizing accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and participation (Stoker, 1998; Osborne, 2010). Henry (2018) situates governance within contemporary public administration paradigms oriented toward public value, where policy success is assessed not merely through procedural compliance but through societal outcomes and impacts. In this view, public administration must integrate cross-sector coordination mechanisms with performance evaluation systems that connect policy inputs to public outcomes.

The collaborative governance literature further argues that the involvement of non-government actors in policy processes is not supplemental but often a prerequisite for sustainable solutions, particularly in complex and cross-cutting public sectors (Ansell & Gash, 2008). At the same time, research highlights that collaborative governance faces significant challenges related to clarity of accountability, power distribution, and goal consistency among actors (Wanna, 2008). Therefore, governance analysis in public administration should not remain primarily normative; it must also examine how governance mechanisms are operationalized to produce measurable policy performance.

### **3) Governance in Sport**

The governance-in-sport literature developed in response to the increasing complexity of contemporary sport systems, characterized by interactions between public and non-public actors within multilevel and multidimensional structures (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007; Shilbury et al., 2016). One foundational framework is proposed by Henry and Lee (2004), who conceptualize sport governance as a system of power relations and decision-making that cannot be explained through a single organizational dimension. They advance three analytical approaches—systemic governance, organizational governance, and political governance—which jointly shape how sport is directed, managed, and controlled.



### Three Approaches to Governance in Sport

**a. Systemic governance** refers to competition, cooperation, and mutual adjustment among organizations within business and/or policy systems. It focuses on major changes in how sport is organized and governed, often requiring mutual adaptation between sport organizations and stakeholders. Accordingly, systemic governance emphasizes inter-organizational relationships rather than relationships within a single organization (Henry & Lee, 2004).

**b. Organizational governance** concerns normative, ethically grounded standards of managerial conduct (Henry & Lee, 2004, p. 24). This approach focuses on accepted norms, values, and processes surrounding business and management behavior in sport organizations, including governance practices that involve the direct steering of sport organizations (Henry & Lee, 2004).

**c. Political governance** addresses how governments or governing bodies in sport “steer,” rather than directly control, organizational behavior (Henry & Lee, 2004, p. 24). The notion of political governance reflects a broader scholarly consensus—particularly in public administration—that the boundary between state and society has fundamentally shifted, although the extent to which power and control have moved remains contested (see Bevir & Rhodes, 2008; Marsh, 2008). Within this broader governance shift, governments increasingly seek to steer rather than row (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). For Henry and Lee (2004), political governance entails pursuing broader social and political objectives through strategic action involving mechanisms of direct and indirect intervention and control.

Together, these three approaches underscore that sport governance is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to a single aspect. Nevertheless, more recent scholarship suggests that Henry and Lee’s (2004) framework has limitations, particularly in explaining horizontal collaboration among actors and the direct linkage between governance arrangements and sport performance outcomes (Dowling et al., 2018; Geeraert, 2018). The framework privileges structures and power relations over performance orientation, making it less operational for explaining how governance concretely produces improved sport performance.

These limitations have stimulated the development of *good governance in sport* and *elite sport governance* research, which seeks to integrate normative principles—such as transparency and accountability—with a results focus and performance outcomes (De Bosscher et al., 2015; Arnaut et al., 2022). However, this integrative effort still leaves theoretical space, particularly at the subnational level, to develop sport governance frameworks that connect systemic, organizational, and political dimensions with collaborative mechanisms and performance-oriented evaluation.

### Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine sport governance practices in improving subnational sport performance. This approach is appropriate because the study focuses on processes, meanings, and the dynamics of inter-actor interactions within a public policy context that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The research site is the Lamongan Regency Youth and Sport Office (*Dinas Pemuda dan Olahraga*), which serves as the leading sector for policy formulation, resource management, and coordination with local sport organizations, making it a relevant setting for analyzing the implementation of sport governance at the subnational level (Henry, 2018; Henry & Lee, 2004).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, policy document analysis, and limited observation as part of a data triangulation strategy to enhance the credibility of the findings (Denzin, 2012; Patton, 2015). Interviews were conducted with key actors involved in subnational sport governance, while documents were analyzed to capture the normative and administrative foundations of sport policy (Bowen, 2009). Data analysis followed Creswell's (2018) qualitative procedures, including data organization, coding, theme development, and interpretation by linking findings to the dimensions of systemic governance, organizational governance, and political governance. This approach enables analytical conclusions that are not merely descriptive but also contribute to the development of sport governance scholarship within a public administration perspective.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **1) Systemic Governance in Subnational Sport Governance**

The findings show that sport governance in Lamongan Regency operates through a multi-organizational system involving the Youth and Sport Office (*Dispora*), KONI, KORMI, and NPC. The functional division across these organizations is structurally consistent with Henry and Lee's (2004) concept of systemic governance, which conceptualizes sport as a complex social system composed of actors with distinct yet interdependent functions. The presence of mandate-specific organizations reflects the functional differentiation typical of contemporary sport systems.

However, the empirical evidence indicates that inter-actor connectedness within this system has not been substantively established. The primary weakness lies in the lack of integration between the sport system and the education system, particularly in early-age athlete development. The Education Office, as a major feeder of youth talent, is not operationally connected to *Dispora*, resulting in talent identification and early development processes that are decoupled from the regency's performance-development system. This condition suggests that Lamongan's sport system remains sectoral and administrative rather than constituting a coherent governance system.

When interpreted through network governance and collaborative governance perspectives in public administration (Pierre & Peters, 2000; Kooiman, 2003; Ansell & Gash, 2008), these findings suggest that systemic governance is not sustained merely by the presence of actors; it is determined by the quality of relationships, coordination mechanisms, and binding rules that structure inter-organizational interaction. In Lamongan, inter-agency collaboration emerges as a practical necessity given institutional capacity constraints, yet it has not been institutionalized through local regulations that mandate cross-sector integration.

Accordingly, this study shows that subnational systemic sport governance requires more than organizational structures; it demands cross-sector integration and local regulatory support as the binding mechanism of the system. The novelty of this dimension lies in strengthening Henry and Lee's (2004) framework by demonstrating that, at the local level, local regulation and integration with the education sector are critical preconditions for systemic governance to generate sustainable sport performance outcomes.

### **2) Organizational Governance and the Quality of Decision-Making**

Within the organizational governance dimension, the findings reveal marked differences between governance practices in *Dispora* and KONI in Lamongan Regency. *Dispora* appears to apply principles of transparency, accountability, democratic deliberation, and effectiveness and efficiency through mechanisms that involve internal and external actors in decision-making. This practice aligns with Henry and Lee's (2004) emphasis on deliberative processes and internal legitimacy in sport organizational governance.

In contrast, governance within KONI exhibits limitations in managing internal resources. Uneven member participation and the dominance of particular actors affect decision-making quality, especially in setting sport priorities and allocating budgets. Although effectiveness and efficiency are pursued through prioritization, this approach produces a governance paradox: an intensive focus on "flagship" sports constrains systematic and long-term athlete development across the broader sport ecosystem.

Compared with the good governance in sport literature (Geeraert, 2015; Arnaut et al., 2022) and organizational governance perspectives in public administration (Pierre & Peters, 2000; Kooiman, 2003), the findings suggest that organizational governance effectiveness is shaped not only by formal structures or budget availability but also by balanced internal participation and the quality of deliberative

mechanisms. Where participation is uneven, organizations lose adaptive capacity to respond comprehensively to performance-development needs.

The novelty in this dimension lies in underscoring that the effectiveness of subnational sport organizations depends critically on balanced internal participation and the capacity to institutionalize corrective mechanisms—such as engaging external actors—when internal capacity is uneven. This extends Henry and Lee's (2004) framework by adding *internal participation balance* as a key factor in effective subnational sport organizational governance.

### **3) Political Governance and the Alignment of Actor Commitments**

The findings indicate that political governance plays a central role in steering the sport system in Lamongan Regency. Support from top local leadership and the head of *Dispora* for high-performance sport development reflects political steering as conceptualized by Henry and Lee (2004), whereby political authority is used to shape policy priorities, allocate resources, and confer legitimacy on sport organizations.

Nevertheless, the evidence also reveals misalignment of political commitment among sport organizations, particularly within KONI. Although political support is strong at the top leadership level, it is not fully transmitted to sport organizations as the primary implementers of performance development. From a political governance perspective, this condition reflects a failure of *political transmission*, namely a disconnect in the flow of political influence from the policy arena to the organizational arena.

In dialogue with contemporary political governance theory (Bevir & Rhodes, 2008; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) and the good governance in sport literature (Geeraert, 2015), these findings suggest that effective political steering depends on the alignment of commitments across actor levels. Political support that is symbolic or concentrated at elite levels is insufficient to improve system performance unless it is matched by aligned, performance-oriented leadership within sport organizations.

The novelty of this dimension lies in advancing the concept of *aligned political governance*, emphasizing that improvements in subnational sport performance require continuity and alignment of political commitment from top local leadership to implementing sport organizations. This extends Henry and Lee's (2004) framework by showing that fragmented political commitment within sport organizations is a major constraint on the effectiveness of subnational sport governance.

Overall, this study demonstrates that improving subnational sport performance is an outcome of the simultaneous interaction among integrated systemic governance, balanced organizational governance, and aligned political governance. Failure in one dimension weakens the others and constrains overall system performance. On this basis, the study advances the proposition that sustainable improvements in subnational sport performance are more likely when systemic governance is integrated across sectors, sport organizations enact balanced internal governance, and political commitments are consistently aligned across key actors. This proposition strengthens the theoretical contribution of the study by extending sport governance scholarship to the subnational level through a more operational and context-sensitive perspective.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **1) Conclusions**

This study concludes that improvements in subnational sport performance result from integrated sport governance rather than from the mere availability of budgets or facilities. The findings show that sport performance in Lamongan Regency is shaped by the simultaneous interaction of systemic governance, organizational governance, and political governance. Weak cross-sector integration—particularly between the sport and education systems—constrains the effectiveness of systemic governance, while unequal internal participation within sport organizations undermines organizational governance. Moreover, strong political support at the level of local executive leadership does not necessarily translate into performance-development outcomes due to misaligned political commitments across organizations. Theoretically, this study extends the sport governance framework by underscoring cross-sector integration, balanced internal organizational participation, and aligned political governance as prerequisites for sustainable improvements in subnational sport performance.

## 2) Recommendations

Based on these findings, local governments should strengthen sport governance by institutionalizing local regulations that integrate cross-sector roles—especially between sport and education—and by ensuring that coordination among sport organizations operates systematically. Subnational sport organizations should improve internal governance by promoting more balanced participation and by adopting deliberative and accountable decision-making mechanisms. In addition, alignment of political commitment across actors—from local executive leadership to implementing organizations—should be maintained so that political support can be consistently converted into performance-development capacity and sport performance outcomes. Future research should test these findings in other subnational contexts to strengthen the generalizability of the performance-oriented sport governance model.

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