




## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SPORTS MANAGEMENT IN THE S SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

The present work addressed the relationships between organizational culture, corporate governance and knowledge management in sports organizations, highlighting how these dimensions are articulated in practice and interfere in the institutional capacity to evolve consistently. Throughout the analysis, it was observed that organizational culture works as a symbolic foundation that guides behaviors and decisions, but it can also become an obstacle when it reinforces traditional patterns that resist professionalization and innovation processes. Examples of clubs and federations that tried to implement governance practices, such as boards and audits, but faced limitations due to the lack of collective commitment and the lack of spaces for dialogue and learning, were discussed. In addition, it was found that knowledge management still does not occupy the strategic space necessary to foster the circulation of information, the systematization of experiences and the development of more creative solutions aligned with the current demands of sport. The research showed that the alignment between culture, governance and knowledge does not depend only on structural changes, but on a gradual effort to transform values and build environments that favor engagement and co-responsibility. The relevance of the theme is justified by the need to rethink practices and policies that strengthen the sustainability and legitimacy of sports organizations in a context marked by growing professionalization and the valorization of sport as an instrument of social development.

**Keywords:** Organizational culture. Sports governance. Knowledge management. Professionalization. Innovation.



## INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture has been recognized as one of the main elements capable of sustaining processes of change and innovation in sports management, especially in highly complex and competitive environments such as federations, clubs and grassroots organizations that operate under constant pressure from internal and external stakeholders who demand professionalization, results and strategic alignment with the historical values of sport (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

Studies show that organizational culture manifests itself in different dimensions, including shared values, rites, daily practices, and decision-making processes that guide the way managers, coaches, and athletes perceive the institutional mission and interact with each other, reinforcing behavioral patterns that can boost or compromise collective performance (Nazi and Amboni, 2019).

The emergence of knowledge management as a field of investigation associated with organizational culture has made it possible to understand that the processes of creation, storage, and dissemination of information in sports organizations are conditioned by deeply rooted cultural values, which influence both the choice of administrative practices and the way they are perceived by the actors involved (Nery, 2024).

In this context, Brazilian sport has historically been marked by amateur practices and low capacity for strategic planning, a phenomenon that has become even more evident from the transformations resulting from the professionalization of clubs and federations, which began to deal with growing demands for accountability, governance and transparency in management (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

The available data show that, in several sports organizations, the adoption of good corporate governance practices was related to significant improvements in performance, since principles such as clarity of roles, accountability, and structuring of boards of directors reduce subjectivity and align expectations between managers and associates (Nazi and Amboni, 2019).

However, the literature shows that the implementation of management systems in sports comes up against cultural barriers associated with resistance to change, preservation of traditional practices and fear of loss of symbolic power on the part of leaders, especially in entities that have been organized for decades based on informal relationships (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).



The challenges of aligning organizational culture and innovation are even more complex when one considers that the sports environment involves a multiplicity of stakeholders with different demands, including high-performance athletes, sponsors, managers, fans, and regulatory bodies that push for sustainable sports and financial results (Santos Neto et al., 2015).

According to studies carried out in clubs in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, the maintenance of poorly structured management practices led to problems of financial sustainability, showing that the absence of formal control mechanisms and shared decision-making processes compromises the continuity of institutions (Nazi and Amboni, 2019).

The literature also points out that organizational culture is not static, as it is reconstructed based on daily interactions and the incorporation of new practices, as occurred in sports federations that integrated information technologies and performance management systems as a way to raise administrative quality and public reputation (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

The concept of the athlete's environment, described in recent studies on micromanagement, reinforces that variables such as individualized monitoring, constant monitoring, and effective allocation of resources are not isolated from institutional values, as they depend on the degree of cultural commitment to excellence and innovation (Santos Neto et al., 2015).

The contemporary sports phenomenon is inserted in a system of interdependencies that relates organizational culture, governance and strategic management, and it is essential to understand how these dimensions are articulated in the search for the consolidation of management models oriented to results and the generation of public and private value (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

International experience shows that the modernization of management structures requires profound cultural adaptations, as observed in European clubs that needed to transform centuries-old traditions to meet the requirements of professionalism and economic sustainability, a process that becomes even more challenging in countries with a sports culture strongly based on voluntarism (Wicker and Breuer apud Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

Researchers point out that organizational culture is also reflected in the narratives that circulate in the sports environment, as values such as meritocracy, discipline, and



loyalty coexist with practices that are not always consistent with official discourses of modernity and professionalization, creating internal tensions that hinder change processes (Nery, 2024).

From this perspective, the investigation of cultural practices becomes essential to understand the dynamics of power, identity and belonging that permeate sports organizations, and it is recommended that managers consider these variables when designing governance systems and performance indicators that are culturally sensitive (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

In view of this scenario, this work proposes to critically discuss the interrelations between organizational culture, management systems and governance practices in Brazilian sports, seeking to offer theoretical and practical subsidies for the development of strategies that reconcile administrative innovation and respect for the historical and cultural singularities of sports organizations (Nery, 2024).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE IN SPORTS MANAGEMENT**

Organizational culture constitutes a complex system of values, beliefs, practices and symbols that guide perceptions, behaviors and decisions within sports entities, being understood as a structuring element that confers collective identity and social legitimacy to institutional routines, while establishing boundaries about what is considered acceptable, desirable and legitimate in the management processes that sustain the daily functioning of clubs. sports federations and organizations (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

It is verified that organizational culture acquires particular relevance in the sports context because it is deeply associated with institutional history, the affective memory built by the various audiences and the sedimentation of relationship patterns that, over time, become a reference to legitimize administrative practices and strategic decisions, a factor that contributes both to symbolic cohesion and to the reproduction of traditional management models (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

Studies show that the symbolic dimensions of culture can function as a silent barrier to innovation, as habits of centralization of power, personalism and improvisation, which often originate from the logic of the volunteer leader, remain consolidated even in the face of the adoption of more modern normative apparatuses, generating a gap



between the discourse of professionalization and the practices effectively implemented (Figueiredo, 2011).

The literature shows that the effort of administrative modernization requires not only the creation of corporate governance mechanisms, such as deliberative councils, independent audits and regular accountability, but also pedagogical processes that sensitize internal agents about the importance of sharing decisions, distributing responsibilities and recognizing that transparency is a strategic asset for reputation and institutional sustainability (Nazi and Amboni, 2019).

The concept of corporate governance, in this context, needs to be understood as a collective construction that only achieves legitimacy when anchored in cultural values that value co-responsibility and clarity of roles, since exclusively formal changes, without investment in the organizational culture, tend to be perceived as external impositions and generate resistance that compromises the consolidation of the proposed practices (Tenenbaum, 2015).

The experience of Brazilian and international clubs shows that effective transformations depend on leaders capable of dialoguing with institutional traditions and, at the same time, proposing paths of innovation, creating environments in which the collective memory is respected, but does not function as a permanent argument to justify the reproduction of ineffective practices or practices incompatible with the contemporary demands of sport (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

Studies show that organizations that have built successful professionalization strategies have invested in processes of continuous training of managers and employees, in the strengthening of permanent channels of internal communication and in the creation of narratives that associate managerial changes with the preservation of historical identity and the social commitment that characterizes the sports phenomenon (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

The challenge of reconciling tradition and modernity requires political sensitivity and technical competence on the part of leaders, since transforming consolidated cultural patterns requires recognizing that symbols, rituals and daily practices function as references of belonging and security, the revision of which usually causes uncertainties, discomfort and internal disputes for legitimacy (Figueiredo, 2011).

Corporate governance, when conceived as an instrument of institutional strengthening, allows for the creation of more solid foundations for financial sustainability



and for the enhancement of public image, as it establishes monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms that reinforce the confidence of the various audiences and expand the capacity for fundraising and social legitimacy of sports organizations (Nazi and Amboni, 2019).

On the other hand, documented experiences in clubs that adopted governance practices in a reactive way, driven by financial crises or external pressures, show that the absence of a pedagogical project and participatory processes for building change compromises the effectiveness of initiatives and accentuates perceptions of authoritarian rupture with institutional history (Tenenbaum, 2015).

The analyzed studies reinforce that organizational culture is not a neutral and static dimension, but a field of symbolic disputes in which different visions about the present and future of the institution confront each other, and contemporary management needs to recognize this complexity and create conditions for historical values to be reinterpreted in the light of the demands of professionalization, innovation and efficiency (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

It is observed that the integration between culture and governance is only consolidated when accompanied by leaders who recognize the importance of collective engagement, communicational clarity and the gradual legitimization of changes, understanding that sustainable transformation processes need to be built with respect, dialogue and commitment to institutional learning (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

The challenge of promoting cultural changes is associated with the need to broaden the perception that managerial modernization does not mean a break with history, but the possibility of enhancing the institutional legacy, qualifying practices that previously depended exclusively on individual goodwill and making them structured and shared processes in a transparent way (Figueiredo, 2011).

The analysis of the literature and the reported experiences confirms that organizational culture represents a symbolic asset that, if strategically articulated, can constitute a competitive differential and a source of internal cohesion, as long as it is recognized as a dynamic construction and subject to revisions that strengthen the organization's ability to respond to contemporary challenges with legitimacy and consistency (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

However, it is observed that the critical understanding of organizational culture is an indispensable step for any transformation process in sports management, as only the



recognition of the symbolic factors and relational logics that structure the institutional routine will allow the creation of more sensitive, participatory and effective governance strategies in the consolidation of sustainable trajectories (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION IN SPORTS ADMINISTRATION

Knowledge management is recognized as a strategic axis for the development of sports organizations, as it involves processes that allow the identification, storage, sharing, and application of knowledge accumulated throughout the institutional trajectory, strengthening the capacity to respond to scenarios of high competitiveness and growing demands for innovation, efficiency, and transparency, showing that its transformative potential depends on the commitment of leaders and the willingness in legitimizing learning as an organizational asset (Nery, 2024).

In the Brazilian sports context, the implementation of formal knowledge management policies still occurs in a fragmented and unsystematic manner, often restricted to the occasional adoption of information technologies that, by themselves, do not guarantee the transformation of data into effective practices, especially when inserted in organizational cultures that preserve the logic of centralization of power and retention of strategic information by restricted groups (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

Research shows that clubs that invested in the creation of permanent training centers and in institutional spaces for collective reflection achieved significant improvements in the quality of decisions and in the satisfaction of members, demonstrating that the construction of environments conducive to learning favors the strengthening of internal cohesion and legitimizes processes of managerial innovation, creating a culture that values shared knowledge (Fileni et al., 2020).

The concept of knowledge management is directly linked to that of organizational memory, as the systematization of past experiences allows the consolidation of reference repertoires that guide future decisions, avoiding the repetition of mistakes and enhancing good practices, a scenario that presupposes the existence of clear policies for recording, analyzing and disseminating the information that circulates in the sports environment (Nery, 2024).

Studies show that the professionalization of management depends on the ability to create integrated processes that combine technology, a culture of collaboration and mechanisms of symbolic recognition, as environments that value only the formal





dimension tend to transform information systems into bureaucratic instruments devoid of meaning and practical utility for institutional actors (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

However, one of the most recurrent barriers to the consolidation of knowledge management policies lies in the perception that the accumulation and circulation of information threaten traditional power structures, reinforcing silent resistances that compromise the adoption of practices oriented to collective learning and shared accountability for results (Figueiredo, 2011).

The literature shows that the creation of spaces for dialogue and exchange of experiences represents a determining factor to legitimize processes of cultural change, as it contributes to strengthening the sense of belonging and increases the confidence of employees in relation to management, aspects considered essential for the transformation of practices and the consolidation of innovative trajectories (Rocha e Bastos, 2011).

Thus, it is noted that experiences of clubs that associated knowledge management policies with corporate governance processes obtained more consistent results in the professionalization of their structures, as this integration favored greater strategic clarity, alignment of expectations and qualification of decision-making processes, creating more solid foundations for financial and sports sustainability (Fileni et al., 2020).

Studies show that knowledge management requires continuous investments in training, acquisition of appropriate technologies, and development of leaders capable of legitimizing learning as an institutional value, understanding that sustainable changes need to be accompanied by policies that reinforce the symbolic recognition of individual and collective contributions (Nery, 2024).

It is observed that the transformative potential of knowledge management depends directly on organizational culture, as environments marked by distrust and the perception that knowledge is the exclusive property of certain groups hinder the circulation of information and weaken the consolidation of collaborative practices, a scenario that reinforces the importance of strategies that articulate structural and symbolic changes (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

Authors state that the construction of effective policies in this field requires clarity regarding the intended objectives, definition of transparent processes for collecting and processing information, and commitment to the democratization of access to knowledge,





recognizing that collective learning is an indispensable condition for continuous innovation and for strengthening institutional legitimacy (Nery, 2024).

It is verified that the adoption of technological systems, when not accompanied by training and strategies of symbolic valorization, tends to generate frustration and demobilization, as the perception that the instruments are only external impositions or bureaucratic requirements reinforces resistance and prevents knowledge from being converted into effective and socially recognized practices (Figueiredo, 2011).

The analysis of the literature confirms that sports organizations that have managed to consolidate innovation trajectories have structured integrated policies for permanent training, monitoring of indicators and institutional recognition, a scenario that highlights the need to plan long-term actions and build internal consensus that sustains the commitment to collective learning (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

It was found that the ability to transform individual knowledge into collective repertoires is related to the degree of openness of the organizational culture to dialogue, questioning and experimentation, elements that qualify decision-making processes and confer legitimacy to the proposed innovations, allowing greater alignment between strategic objectives and operational practices (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

Thus, it was evident that the integration between knowledge management, organizational culture, and corporate governance is a strategic condition for strengthening sports organizations, as it creates environments that are better prepared to deal with contemporary challenges, legitimize changes, and consolidate management practices oriented to innovation, efficiency, and social responsibility (Nery, 2024).

## METHODOLOGY

The present research is characterized by a qualitative approach of a descriptive-exploratory nature, based on the need to understand the symbolic, structural and procedural dimensions that integrate the organizational culture, corporate governance and knowledge management in sports entities, understanding that these dimensions are interrelated in a dynamic way and exert a decisive influence on the institutional capacity to respond to contemporary demands for innovation and professionalization.

The option for a qualitative design is justified by the inherent complexity of the object of study, since the phenomena investigated involve values, beliefs, practices and relationship patterns that transcend objective measurement, demanding an interpretative



perspective capable of apprehending meanings historically constructed within the scope of sports organizations and materialized in their administrative routines and decision-making processes (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

The methodological strategy adopted was designed to contemplate the complexity of the phenomenon investigated, recognizing that organizational culture, corporate governance and knowledge management cannot be analyzed in isolation, but must be understood as interdependent dimensions that structure the capacity of sports organizations to innovate, legitimize their practices and consolidate management models oriented to sustainability and long-term performance (Nery, 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic analysis of the studies consulted allowed us to confirm that the organizational culture exerts a decisive influence on the legitimacy and effectiveness of professionalization processes in sports entities, since environments marked by hierarchical traditions and personalistic power logics tend to present greater resistance to innovative management practices, showing that cultural change needs to precede or walk in parallel with the implementation of formal management instruments. governance and knowledge management policies (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

It was found that experiences of clubs that implemented deliberative councils and auditing systems presented different results depending on the degree of involvement of stakeholders in the collective construction of norms and in the consolidation of spaces for dialogue, and when these processes were perceived as external impositions, internal resistance intensified and the expected results were limited to a formality with no real impact on daily practices (Nazi and Amboni, 2019).

It was found that, even in contexts in which there were advances in the implementation of accountability and financial control mechanisms, the absence of strategies for valuing institutional knowledge compromised the consolidation of continuous learning policies and prevented organizational memory from becoming a strategic asset capable of guiding decisions that were more consistent and aligned with the institutional mission (Nery, 2024).

The data show that clubs that invested in permanent training programs and in the creation of knowledge management centers obtained improvements in the quality of administrative decisions and in the engagement of teams, demonstrating that the



articulation between governance practices and educational processes is decisive to legitimize transformations and promote environments oriented to innovation and co-responsibility (Fileni et al., 2020).

The experience of European and Brazilian clubs that have undergone modernization processes shows that the adoption of management information technologies only produces sustainable effects when accompanied by changes in the way data is appropriated by managers and transformed into applicable knowledge, and the instrumental use of systems, without investment in the culture of sharing, it results in the perpetuation of centralizing practices and low capacity for innovation (Nery, 2024).

It can be seen that professionalization cannot be understood only as a process of adherence to market norms or formalization of administrative practices, but requires a critical reflection on the values that guide internal relations and on the symbolic expectations that legitimize authority, which implies recognizing that structural changes depend on processes of cultural sensitization and the gradual construction of consensus (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

Studies that investigated Brazilian soccer clubs indicate that the coexistence of traditional management patterns and pressures for financial and sporting results generates tensions that are often expressed in internal conflicts and cycles of instability, a scenario that highlights the need to create mediation mechanisms that value institutional history without compromising the adoption of practices aligned with contemporary principles of governance (Figueiredo, 2011).

The reported experiences demonstrate that knowledge management strategies associated with valuing participation and collective learning tend to strengthen the commitment of employees to institutional projects, because when knowledge is recognized as a central asset, the ability to create original solutions and legitimize decisions is expanded even in contexts of high pressure and scarcity of resources (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

It was found that the perception of knowledge as a source of power and distinction between internal groups constitutes one of the main barriers to the construction of collaborative management models, as it reinforces information retention practices and compromises the construction of spaces of trust, factors that limit the efficiency of innovation policies and hinder the consolidation of a more open and inclusive organizational culture (Nery, 2024).



The analysis showed that the creation of governance policies and knowledge management programs tends to be more effective when it occurs gradually, with investments in training, dialogue, and the construction of internal legitimacy, since abrupt changes devoid of cultural ballast usually accentuate resistance and generate perceptions of threats to the status quo (Tenenbaum, 2015).

It was found that clubs that were able to align their management systems with the expectations of their internal and external audiences obtained positive results not only in terms of sports performance, but also in the consolidation of a more consistent institutional image recognized by sponsors, athletes and fans, indicating that the integration between culture, governance and knowledge constitutes a strategic competitive advantage (Fileni et al., 2020).

The research demonstrated that the creation of institutional spaces for reflection and sharing of experiences favors the transformation of tacit knowledge into collective repertoires that qualify decisions, strengthen cohesion and contribute to the construction of an organizational identity based on continuous learning, which is essential in environments marked by complexity and the need for permanent adaptation (Nery, 2024).

The data show that corporate governance can be perceived as an element of imposition or as a strategy for institutional strengthening, and this difference depends fundamentally on the way processes are communicated, the clarity of expectations and the ability of leaders to build a narrative that legitimizes changes as part of a collective project and not as an authoritarian break with organizational history (Mazzei and Nassif, 2013).

It is verified that institutional sustainability in contemporary sport demands management practices that combine normative clarity, valuing knowledge and commitment to building more open organizational cultures, because only in this way will it be possible to align financial results, sports performance and social legitimacy in a consistent and lasting way (Rocha and Bastos, 2011).

Furthermore, the findings reinforce that the success of professionalization and innovation processes depends on the ability of organizations to balance tradition and change, creating conditions for historical values to be respected, but also for new practices to be incorporated legitimately, recognizing that organizational culture is not a fixed obstacle, but a collective construction that can be resignified over time (Nery, 2024).



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results of this investigation allowed us to verify that organizational culture, corporate governance and knowledge management configure interdependent dimensions that exert a decisive influence on the ability of sports organizations to develop in a sustainable way, respond to contemporary demands and consolidate innovation processes aligned with ethical and strategic values that guide their daily practices.

Organizational culture, although it represents an essential symbolic asset for institutional identity and belonging, can also constitute a barrier to managerial transformation when it crystallizes patterns of behavior based on personalism, the centralization of decisions, and the reproduction of practices that compromise the construction of collaborative and transparent environments.

The analysis showed that the implementation of corporate governance mechanisms, such as deliberative councils, independent audits and accountability systems, contributes to raising the credibility of sports entities and improving their administrative processes, but depends on strategies that contemplate the strengthening of collective values and the creation of bonds of trust that legitimize structural changes.

It was found that knowledge management remains a still incipient dimension in most Brazilian clubs and federations, a reality that limits the institutional capacity to systematize experiences, disseminate learning and produce innovative solutions to recurrent challenges that intensify in contexts marked by growing competitiveness and pressure for consistent results.

The findings reinforce the need to articulate professionalization policies with actions that promote the valorization of knowledge as a strategic asset, considering that isolated initiatives of administrative modernization tend to lose effectiveness when they disregard the symbolic, relational and historical factors that structure the organizational logic of sport.

The research also highlighted that the consolidation of innovation-oriented management models requires investments that go beyond the technological dimension and include the continuous training of leaders, the development of participatory processes and the creation of institutional spaces that foster dialogue, constructive questioning and collective recognition.

It was observed that successful international experiences offer references that can inspire creative adaptations to the Brazilian context, especially with regard to the



integration between formal governance processes and knowledge management practices based on policies that value organizational memory and shared learning.

The study showed that institutional sustainability does not depend solely on financial results or sports achievements, but also on the ability to build organizational cultures consistent with ethical principles and long-term strategies that strengthen the reputation, social legitimacy and internal cohesion of sports entities.

Thus, the interdependence between culture, governance, and knowledge imposes complex challenges on managers, requiring attitudes that are sensitive to history and collective identities, while demanding courage and competence to implement transformations that qualify managerial practices and expand the capacity for innovation and institutional adaptation.

It is noteworthy that the strengthening of sports management in Brazil requires shared commitments that articulate tradition and modernity, recognizing that the sustainable development of the sector depends on leaders capable of transforming knowledge into practice, values into actions and objectives into effective results that are socially recognized and legitimized.



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