

AN ANALYSIS OF BOARD SIZE AND COMPOSITION IN NATIONAL SPORT FEDERATIONS IN MALAYSIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of sports into a high-valued and extremely competitive industry has necessitated a clearer legal framework.³ Good sports governance has become a ‘pre-condition and pre-requisite’ for improving the status and prestige of national sports on a global stage.⁴ This is because sports governance largely impacts various stakeholders such as governments, athletes, coaches, fans, teams/clubs and businesses during the formulation and implementation of sports programs and policies.⁵

As noted by Blanco, sports governance can be defined as ‘an act of manoeuvring, facilitating, and mobilizing the pool of talents, resources, approaches, and processes in a much broader, fuller, and wider continuum of sports actors, agents, and stakeholders across various sectors of society; and it presupposes the interplay of policy-makers and policy-implementers of the sporting world for determination of the achievement of

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³ Ahmad Faisal Mohamed Fiah & Dzulkarnain Mazlan, Norbaizura Osman, *Issues in Malaysian Sports Management*, in RECENT TRENDS IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR SCIENCE (Ford Lumban Gaol et.al eds., 1 ed. 2014).

⁴ Dennis V. Blanco, *Sports Governance: Issues, Challenges and Perspectives*, 17 ASIA- PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW 105, (2017); RUSSELL HOYE & GRAHAM CUSKELLY, SPORT GOVERNANCE (1 ed. 2006).

⁵ Joshua McLeod, Shaun Star & David Shilbury, *Board composition in national sport federations: a cross-country comparative analysis of diversity and board size*, MANAGING SPORT AND LEISURE (2021). DOI: 10.1080/23750472.2021.1970614

excellence in sports not just on an individual or local basis but also on a collective and national level'.⁶

The aim of this paper is to explore sports governance in Malaysia. Specifically, this article will examine the occupational background of board members of National Sporting Federations (NSFs) along with the issue of gender diversity on boards in the Malaysian sport context. The study of sports governance in Malaysia is particularly interesting, given the unique hosting of the Malaysia Cup in post-separation Singapore.⁷ It is indicative of the fact that sports in Malaysia is driven through nation building and has contributed in building a national consciousness.⁸ It would also be seen that certain sports legislations are influenced by the perspective of national cohesion in Malaysia. Further, since sports governance literature is largely dominated by a Western context, this paper shall aim to provide a significant contribution towards understanding and improving knowledge of sports governance in more diverse cultural settings.⁹

From a historical perspective, Malaysia has hosted the Commonwealth Games in 1998, and has been the winner of Olympic medals, predominantly in badminton. This was widely perceived as a welcome change to combat the declining state of Malaysian sport. The Malaysian government and the Ministry of Youth and Sport were the flagbearers for establishing an improved sports governance system for the country through the Sports Development Act.¹⁰ However, scholars have criticized 'poor management' in Malaysian sports for a myriad of reasons, including but not limited to: lack of management skills, incompetency of sports administrators, lack of financial aids, lack of unity, lack of clear direction, and corruption arising from the involvement of politicians in sports.¹¹ Sport

⁶ Blanco, *supra* note 4.

⁷ Mark Emmanuel, *The Malaysia Cup: Soccer and the National Imagining in Singapore*, 84 JOURNAL OF MALAYSIAN BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY 95 (2011).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Ahmad Arif bin Astaman, *Adoption of good governance by national sporting associations: a Malaysian perspective*, 10 BIRKBECK SPORT BUSINESS CENTER (2017).

¹⁰ Joe Chin-Hsung Kao, Megat Ahmad Kamaluddin Megat Daud, *Sport Management Movement in Malaysia*, 1 ASIAN SPORT MANAGEMENT REVIEW (2007).

¹¹ Fiah, *supra* note 3.

management refers to ‘both theoretical and practical regulations for effective and efficient management and arrangements of relations for sport institutions and clubs’.¹²

This paper shall aim to explore these issues and suggest possible methods of redressal for improving sports governance in Malaysia, according to established principles of good sport governance. For context, this paper shall also discuss sport governing bodies and related legislation in Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers have used scholarly material to understand the broad framework of sports governance in Malaysia, which includes issues such as funding and organizational structure. Development planning in Malaysia is done through medium-term plans (each covering five years) and long-term plans (covering ten to twenty years) – and since 1970, the five-year plans were embedded within long-term plans.¹³ The Sixth Malaysian Plan (1991-95) was part of a national development blueprint which was formulated for 10 years (1991-2000) for meeting the objectives of sustained growth and balanced development in accordance with the National Development Policy 1991-2000.¹⁴ This Plan was significant in the context of sport policy as it allocated RM 179 million (Malaysian Ringgit currency) of public funding towards ‘sports program and social development’,¹⁵ resulting in making sports the third-highest program allocation in Malaysia. This plan helped in highlighting the relevance and consequent need for developing a professional sports governance framework in Malaysia.¹⁶ Subsequent plans have sought to build on these policies which aim to develop sport in Malaysia. For instance, the 12th Malaysian Plan laid down its intention to leverage sports as a medium for building an active nation, and stated that the National Sports Vision 2030 (VSN 2030) would be introduced to develop Malaysia as a sporting nation. Further, 33 new sports

¹² Kao, *supra* note 10.

¹³ Cassey Lee, Lee Chew-Ging, *The Evolution of Development Planning in Malaysia*, 34 JOURNAL OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN ECONOMIES 436 (2017).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Fiah, *supra* note 3.

¹⁶ *Id.*

facilities were built and 332 existing facilities underwent renovation to improve the quality of sporting facilities and excellence.¹⁷ The Malaysian Government tabled Budget 2021 which allocated RM55 million to continue the existing sports development programmes, namely, hockey, rugby, badminton and cycling in addition to the women's athlete development programme and esports for 2021.¹⁸

Analysing sports governance invariably entails discussion of sport governing bodies. The Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM), established and registered in 1953, is the sole sports organization in Malaysia which has been recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Sport Federations (IFs) for governing athletes participating in the Olympic Games.¹⁹ OCM is also affiliated with the Association of National Olympic Committee (ANOC), the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), the Southeast Asian Games Federation (SEAGF), the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), and the International Assembly of National Confederation of Sports – which entitle it to the exclusive right of entering athletes for participation in the Asian Games, SEA Games and the Commonwealth Games.²⁰ The members of OCM are the National Sport Associations (NSAs) of Malaysia, and they are recognized by their respective IFs as the sole national governing body for their sport.

Sports governance legislation in Malaysia includes the Sports Development Act (SDA) 1997, the National Sports Policy 2009, and the Code of Good Governance for Societies 2016. The SDA was responsible for setting up the regulatory environment for sport organizations and their governing bodies, and it transferred the function of registration of sports bodies to the Office of the Sports Commissioner (OSC). The SDA also gave significant powers to the government regarding the recognition, registration and suspension of NSAs, along with the power of ministerial intervention for dispute resolution and regulation propagation regarding the duties, powers and functions of sports

¹⁷ *Twelfth Malaysia Plan, 2021-2025: A Prosperous, Inclusive, Sustainable Malaysia*, RMK 12 (Jul. 16, 2021), https://pulse.icdm.com.my/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Twelfth-Plan-Document_compressed-1.pdf

¹⁸ 'Youth and sports minister says Budget 2021 an effort to develop high performance sports in Malaysia', MALAY MAIL (Nov., 07 2020), <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/11/07/youth-and-sports-minister-says-budget-2021-an-effort-to-develop-high-perfor/1920315>.

¹⁹ Olympic Council of Malaysia, *Objectives*, OLYMPIC COUNCIL OF MALAYSIA, <https://olympic.org.my/objectives/> (last visited Feb. 09, 2022).

²⁰ *Id.*

bodies.²¹ The National Sports Policy 2009 listed ‘professional governance practices’ as a policy objective. The aim of the National Sports Policy was to develop a healthy and active society through sports and recreational activities, and it was essentially formulated to fulfil the political objective of ‘nation-building’ through the promotion of national unity.²² Both mass sports and high performance sports were to be carried out simultaneously, differing only in the emphasis and scale. It is important to keep in mind that Malaysia has historically suffered from a turbulent history of racism. Hence, national cohesion through sport was viewed as a viable way to encourage social change.²³

Scholars have observed that the SDA and the National Sports Council Act 1971 (NSCA) have led to external influence over the management of Malaysian NSAs, as it allows the National Sports Council (NSC) to engage/assist in the development of sports through international cooperation.²⁴ The National Sports Institute Act 2011 (NSIA) provides for ‘foundation talent identification programs’, which essentially means that any collaboration with the National Sports Institute can hamper the autonomy of NSAs because they do not have their own talent identification program.²⁵

From a business standpoint, the Malaysian sports industry is a young industry consisting of small and medium sized businesses involved in the manufacture of sporting goods, construction of sporting facilities, sports tourism, and media.²⁶ With the rapid advent of globalization resulting in international diffusion of sports, the Malaysian sports industry can carve a niche for itself by establishing a Sports Industry Research Centre and Statistical Group to ensure that it keeps adapting to the ever-changing sporting industry.²⁷

Malaysia has witnessed conflict amongst its sports associations; e.g. the Malaysian Sports Commissioner’s office faced a conflict with various sports associations such as the

²¹ Astaman, *supra* note 9.

²² Mohammed Mustafa Ishak, *Sports and Nation Building in Malaysia: A Socio-Political Perspective*, in CULTURAL ISSUES IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT 37-56 (2005).

²³ John O’Leary, Teng Guan Khoo, *Changing the world: sport, racism and law in South Africa and Malaysia*, 13 INTERNATIONAL SPORTS LAW JOURNAL 45 (2013).

²⁴ Astaman, *supra* note 9.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Aminuddin Yusof, Parilah Mohd Shah, *Globalization and the Malaysian Sports Industry*, 8 RESEARCH JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 112 (2008).

²⁷ *Id.*

Malaysian Tae Kwan Do Association and the Malaysian Golf Association.²⁸ Such conflict arises for a multitude of reasons: centralization of power, extreme formalization, organizational differentiation, reliance on common resources and status differences between departments.²⁹ The Ministry of Youth and Sport, the National Sports Council (NSC), and the Malaysian Olympic Council (MOC) are the apex sports bodies in Malaysia, and hold all the authority in a centralized manner. This has the potential for causing dissatisfaction when decisions regarding promotions, wage increases, bonuses, and performance appraisals are made because the subordinates presume abuse of power due to the centralized structure. The reason for this conflict stems from the fact that subordinates have very low decision-making autonomy, and the Ministry of Youth and Sport, NSC and MOC hold the decision making power for conducting appraisals and deciding the salaries of their subordinates in Malaysian sports organizations.

Sometimes, the scope for conflict occurs because Malaysian sports organizations follow the form of functional departmentalization for the division of labour. There are procedural difference between different units/sports; and this often results in a negative comparison between units, especially because all the different departments depend upon common and scarce resources for their functioning. An example of this is the competition between National Sports Council and the National Institute of Sports for common resources and budgetary allocation.³⁰ To combat these issues, the structure of the organization can be modified to include fewer departments and reduce interdependency among departments – this would also facilitate less competition for common resources. Other solutions include implementation of a decentralized structure and usage of collaborative strategies to increase flexibility and reduce the probability of intra-departmental clashes.³¹

²⁸ Aminuddin Yusof, Mohd Sofian Omar-Fauzee, Muhamad Nazrul Hakim Abdullah, Parilah Mohd Shah, *Managing Conflict in Malaysian Sports Organizations*, 4 INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION 1451 (2009).

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers compiled descriptive statistics in the form of bar diagrams to analyse the occupational backgrounds and gender diversity within the boards of NSFs in Malaysia. The research methodology employed for the same involved an analysis of web based secondary data through a positivist descriptive approach. To determine the occupational background of the board members, the researchers relied on Google, LinkedIn, and old sporting records due to the limitation of a proper database on the NSF/NSA members. The researchers then prepared a compilation of the data on Excel, which was consequently collated into Table 1 and Table 2 below. This data has been utilized to derive an analysis of occupational background in Malaysian sports governance, and gender inequality in sports leadership positions in Malaysia. Both of these factors are theorised to impact board performance.³²

The researchers have also relied on scholarly articles to substantiate their findings, and have attempted to use an analytical approach for examining the impact of their findings on sports governance in Malaysia.

4. GENDER DIVERSITY

Table 1 below is illustrative of the gender representation of the Board of NSAs in Malaysia. Female members comprise of 16.16% of the board composition, while male members account for 83.84% of the board composition. Thus, it is statistically evident that there is a lot of scope for increasing the number of female board members to ensure greater equality and gender diversity. Moreover, scholars have observed that some NSAs do not have any female committee members (e.g., tennis, squash, floorball, kabaddi, polo, rowing, silambam, snooker, and billiards) whereas archery, cycling, football, rugby and silat are a few sports associations who have women on their committee.³³

³² McLeod, *supra* note 5.

³³ Selina Khoo and Nor Eeza Zainal Abidin, *Sport in Malaysia: towards gender equality*, https://ebrary.net/151539/health/sport_malaysia_towards_gender_equality (last visited Feb. 09, 2022).

Gender	Percentage of Board Members
Female	16.16%
Male	83.84%
Total	100%

Table 1: Gender diversity on boards in Malaysia

Research within this domain has revealed that even though the number of opportunities for women to play sports has increased, the number of women in sport leadership positions has remained low (and the present study corroborates this assertion). Since sports have been traditionally a male-dominated field, stereotypical attitudes towards women are assumed to be a major reason for the lack of women in leadership positions.³⁴ There remains a dearth of research on this topic in non-Western sport contexts, which is why the lived experiences of women leaders in national sports organizations becomes particularly noteworthy.³⁵ Personal limitations, socio-cultural factors, traditional practices (e.g. societal perception), and organizational factors (e.g. all men's network, gender discrimination) further worsen the situation for women aiming to occupy leadership positions as board members.³⁶

According to interviews of women board members conducted by researchers from University Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Mindanao State University, some women themselves turned down roles in higher sports leadership positions because of fear of being discriminated against, even though they were fully qualified. Other self-limiting factors such as lack of self-confidence posed another challenge; overall, this can be classified as a chain effect of Malaysia's traditional social arrangement, wherein positions of authority were inherently occupied by male leaders and it was not considered acceptable for women to have leadership roles.³⁷ There have also been instances of

³⁴ Mirian P. Aman, Suharyanti Hanapi, Aminuddin Yusof, Abu Bakar Razali, & Roxana Dev Omar Dev, *Women in Sport Leadership Positions in Malaysia: Issues and Challenges*, 9 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES 1506 (2019).

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ Mirian P. Aman, Aminuddin Yusof, Abu Bakar Razali & Roxana Dev Omar Dev, *Perceived Incongruity of Gender and Leadership Roles: Experiences of Top Women Leaders in Malaysian Sports Associations*, 9 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES 1429 (2019).

³⁷ Aman, *supra* note 34.

women hesitating to stand for elections in their sports organizations because of internal politics and organizational groupings in favour of men. All of this compounds into an exacerbation of the situation because the all-men's network within sports organizations leads to male leaders promoting more men into top positions during the selection process. Women need to be acknowledged as indispensable human capital in building effective sports governance.

The Ministry of Youth and Sport has launched several programmes such as FITMalaysia, National Sports Day, and Sport for All League in the interest of promoting an inclusive, sport-friendly culture in Malaysia. Women's Sports Day and Women in Sport Convention were held at the Kuala Lumpur Sports City on National Sports Day in 2019; and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government announced plans for developing the first women-friendly sports complex with amenities for a children's nursery, spa, and beauty salon.³⁸ Such activities are a welcome move towards making Malaysian sports a more gender-inclusive environment.

5. OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND AND ITS IMPACT ON MALAYSIAN SPORTS GOVERNANCE

Table 2 below illustrates the percentage of Board Members belonging to a particular occupational background. In Malaysia, 3.68% of Board Members hail from an Academic background, 0.61% are Accountants, 1.23% are Bureaucrats/Public Administration, 22.70% are from Business Operations and Administration, 0.61% are Engineers, 5.52% are Lawyers, 1.23% are from the Military, and 56.44% are Sports/Athletes/Coaches. It is worth noting that the number of board members from journalism, marketing, and medical profession are 0.00%. Elected politicians comprise of 7.98% of the Board – indicative of a heavy political influence over sports governance.

³⁸ Khoo, *supra* note 33.

Occupational Background	Representation on NSF Board
Academic	3.68%
Accountant	0.61%
Bureaucrat/Public Administration	1.23%
Business Operations and Administration	22.70%
Elected Politician	7.98%
Engineer	0.61%
Journalist	0%
Lawyer	5.52%
Marketing	0%
Medical Professional	0%
Military	1.23%
Sports/Athlete/Coach	56.44%
Total	100%

Table 2: Percentage of each occupation on NSF boards in Malaysia

The board members belonging to a political background also include Members of Parliament or state representatives – while some of them are indeed capable of governing a particular sport, many of them are reported to be involved in sports governance merely to use it as a stepping stone for getting promoted to higher positions of power in the government.³⁹ This adversely affects the efficacy of sports governance in Malaysia, because a number of NSA board members have other vested interests for getting involved in sports governance, and do not possess requisite experience and/or sport-specific knowledge. It arguably aggravates the problem of poor sports management and leads to incompetency in sports administration.

The involvement of government and politics is linked to the funding landscape. Many sports organizations in Malaysia are highly dependent upon governmental financial aid, and in return they have to abide by certain conditions and regulations imposed by the government. Badminton and squash generally garner large amount of financial aids from

³⁹ Fiah, *supra* note 3.

sponsors due to the media coverage, international interest, and stellar athletic performances; however, other sports such as football are falling behind when it comes to funding, due to restrictive policies and poor gate collection in local leagues.⁴⁰ This situation is expected to improve because all football clubs competing in the professional clubs have undergone privatisation in 2020.⁴¹ Corruption and abuse of power, such as match-fixing in football, also pose a challenge to the integrity of Malaysian sports governance. However, it may be argued that sports corruption has been mitigated in Malaysia due to certain measures such as: the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), which along with sport-governing bodies (such as the Football Association of Malaysia), has the power to implement measures for tackling it; and the Corruption-Free Pledge Programme undertaken by the Malaysian Sports Commissioner's Office which aims to ensure that NSAs do not suffer from corruption.⁴²

6. GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SPORT REQUIREMENTS FROM A MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE

When it comes to defining good sports governance, instead of a perfect organizational structure, there is a requirement for designing a governance structure 'capable of being proactive to determine mission, strategy, and policy and be responsive to the internal and external environment, as well as the needs of members'.⁴³ As noted by Sawyer, Bodey, and Judge, good governance has eight characteristics: participatory, responsive, equitable, inclusive, consensus oriented, transparent, accountable, effective, efficient and lawful.⁴⁴ It can also be upheld by implementing the following nine principles: (1) the role

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ Zulhilmi Zainal, *All Malaysian league clubs complete initial privatisation process, seven receive conditional licence*, GOAL (Oct. 06, 2020, 11:03 AM), <https://www.goal.com/en-my/news/all-malaysian-league-clubs-complete-initial-privatisation/cwe9n47ji05qld6rmdra4zhyj>.

⁴² Bernama, *Corruption in Malaysian sports still under control*, NEWS STRAITS TIMES (Feb. 01, 2021, 05:32 AM), <https://www.nst.com.my/sports/others/2021/02/662009/corruption-malaysian-sports-still-under-control>.

⁴³ Thomas H. Sawyer, Lawrence W. Judge & Tonya L. Sawyer, *Sport Governance in North America*, SAGAMORE, <https://www.sagamorepub.com/sites/default/files/2018-07/Sportgov-look-inside-OPT.pdf> (last visited Feb. 09, 2022).

⁴⁴ Thomas H. Sawyer, Kimberly J. Bodey & Lawrence W. Judge, *Sport Governance and Policy Development- An Ethical Approach to Managing Sport in the 21st Century*, SAGAMORE PUBLISHING, L.L.C.,

of the governing body, (2) structure, responsibilities and accountability, (3) membership and size of the governing body, (4) democracy, elections and appointments, (5) transparency and communication, (6) decisions and appeals, (7) conflicts of interest, (8) solidarity, and (9) recognition of other interests.⁴⁵

Improving sports governance goes hand-in-hand with improving sports management. By building a theoretical foundation of sports governance knowledge, and ensuring that it is accepted by the community as an essential element of development, it can be ensured that good governance norms are fulfilled. The establishment of the Malaysian Association for Sports Management (MASMA) in 2006 was a positive step in that direction as it prioritized higher education in the field of sport.⁴⁶

Here, it would be apt to make a reference to the Malaysian Football Association (FAM), which is the governing body for football and futsal in Malaysia. Previously, scholars have argued that the privatisation of Malaysian professional football league sports through application of the media-league model and the limited liability partnership (LLP) model would lead to independent profit making and better sports governance.⁴⁷ Since the media league model is essentially media ownership of professional sports leagues, it would help in reducing legal challenges pertaining to broadcasting, transmission, and anti-trust regulations; and would serve as an economically efficient model. Such discussions are useful because they enable innovative and unique improvements to existing models of sports governance. In fact, such discussions have already led to significant change in the business models of certain sports – one notable example being the Malaysia Super-League (M-League), which is the professional football league in Malaysia. The Football League/M-League in Malaysia has been privatized and the impact of the same has been felt in terms of increased sponsors and increased commercial value for competitions under

<https://www.sagamorepub.com/sites/default/files/2018-07/pages-sportgovernance.pdf> (last visited Dec 17, 2021).

⁴⁵ Eddie T. C. Lam, *The Roles of Governance in Sport Organizations*, 2 JOURNAL OF POWER, POLITICS & GOVERNANCE 19 (2014).

⁴⁶ Fiah, *supra* note 3.

⁴⁷ Zaidi bin Hassim, Wan Syazana Akmal Wan Roslan, *Privatisation of Sports Leagues in Malaysia: Governance Structure and Stakeholders Right*, 4 KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW CONFERENCE 124 (2015).

the league.⁴⁸ Moreover, the privatisation process has resulted in the Football Association (FA) developing into a Football Club (FC) instead, which is expected to compete in the 2021 Super League and Premier League – thus impacting the sports governance model.⁴⁹ Bidding processes have been carried out to determine the main sponsor, commercial partner, and broadcasting partner for the M-League.⁵⁰ However, the purported improvements of the governance model under the newly privatized league should not necessarily be taken at face value. Indeed, several commentators are of the view that the privatization of the football league is a façade, wherein the changes can only be seen on paper, rather than in practice.⁵¹ A major reason for this belief is that the Malaysian football league still significantly relies on government funds, and the state football associations continue to rely on financial support from state governments.⁵² Another reason for the concern pertaining to the authenticity of the privatization process stems from the fact that the president of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) – Mr. Datuk Hamidin Mohd Amin – was also elected as president for the Malaysian Football League (MFL).⁵³ He replaced Chairman Tunku Ismail Ibni Sultan Ibrahim, who had also been involved in both FAM and MFL.⁵⁴ It could be argued that the sharing the FAM and MFL sharing the same president is a conflict of interest, and not in the best interest of good governance. Thus, despite efforts to privatize some sports in Malaysia, there is still scope for improvement from a good governance perspective.

⁴⁸ Bernama, *Privatisation process: 21 football teams now FCs - Reezal Merican*, ASTRO AWANI (Nov. 11, 2020, 16:02 AM), <https://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/privatisation-process-21-football-teams-now-fcs-reezal-merican-267943>.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ Farah Azharie, *TMJ speaks out against privatisation of M-League clubs*, NEW STRAITS TIMES, (Nov. 4, 2020, 5:30 AM), <https://www.nst.com.my/sports/football/2020/11/637852/tmj-speaks-out-against-privatisation-m-league-clubs>.

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Donning two hats – FAM president Hamidin will lead MFL*, THE STAR, (Sept. 15, 2019), <https://www.thestar.com.my/sport/football/2019/09/15/donning-two-hats--fam-president-hamidin-will-lead-mfl>.

⁵⁴ *Id.*

7. CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this paper enhance our understanding of sports governance in Malaysia. The paper has elucidated existing flaws within the Malaysian sports governance system, along with the possible reasons for their occurrence. Sports governance in Malaysia has the potential of benefiting greatly from the solutions proposed within the paper.

The foremost areas for improvement lie in the excessive politicization of Malaysian National Sports Associations, along with gender inequality. Sincere efforts need to be made for tackling the underrepresentation of women in NSAs – elimination of the pipeline problem would be the best way to go about this. The pipeline theory posits that due to fewer women at the lower level, very few are able to reach the top level of leadership.⁵⁵ Hence, mentoring and social networking amongst women at the lower levels ought to facilitate the training of young women leaders through role models; and brighten the outlook for gender equality. Secondly, the relatively high number of powerful board members from a politically-oriented background is arguably a factor leading to inefficiency in sports governance. Strategically changing this situation would arguably result in better funding and future growth of Malaysian sport.⁵⁶

The paper has also reviewed the various governing bodies and sport legislations in Malaysia. Lastly, the paper makes a reference to alternative models of sports governance, and explores the possibility of the media-league model and the limited liability partnership model. It is hoped that the paper proves to be a valuable contribution to sports governance literature.

⁵⁵ Mirian P. Aman, Aminuddin Bin Yusof, Maimunah bt Ismail, and Abu Bakar Bin Mohamed Razali, *Pipeline Problem: Factors influencing the Underrepresentation of Women in the Top Leadership Positions of Sport Organisations*, 7 MALAYSIAN JOURNAL OF MOVEMENT, HEALTH & EXERCISE 151 (2018).

⁵⁶ Chee Ee Laine, *The Growth and Sustainability of Small Sports Organizations: An Analysis of Malaysia Ice Hockey Federation*, CREATIVE COMMONS (2015).