

UNDERSTANDING INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN MERGED SPORT
ORGANIZATIONS

by

HYE IN KWON

(Under the Direction of Becca Leopkey)

ABSTRACT

Mergers are considered an effective organizational strategy that help organizations achieve a better fit with their environments. Mergers have also proliferated into the sport context, and accordingly, have become a topic of growing interest in the field. Despite the growing interest in the topic and the potential for merger failure, little research has explored organizational strategies that facilitate merger success in sport. Given that interorganizational relationships (IORs) have been discussed as a possible strategy for sport merger success, the purpose of this thesis was to deepen our understanding of how IORs impact merged sport organizations. An embedded single case study was utilized to explore the merger case of Provincial Sport Council(s) in South Korea. Findings provide an understanding of how forming and managing IORs can help merged sport organizations to pursue their merger goals in addition to understanding how post-merger challenges can impact IORs.

INDEX WORDS: Mergers; interorganizational relationships; sport mergers; Korean sport organizations; post-merger challenges; merger success; case study

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DEDICATION

To my family for their unconditional support and love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this fast-moving world, organizations encounter uncertain situations, limitations in resources, and other issues (Aldrich, 1976). In response, they adopt varied strategies such as mergers, acquisitions, partnerships, strategic alliances, and joint ventures to help cope (Pfeffer, 1972). As these strategies began to gain prominence in the general business domain, managing the impacts and constraints of the external environment on organizations emerged as a topic of interest within the field of organization studies in the 1960s (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Whetten, 1981).

Mergers, in particular, are considered one of the most effective ways for organizations to manage environmental interdependence in terms of growth and competitiveness (Pfeffer, 1972). However, despite their promising competencies, the success rate of mergers is notoriously low. Approximately 55 to 77 percent of all mergers fail to achieve their expected objectives (Carleton, 1997; Cartwright & Cooper, 1993). As a result, a great deal of research focusing on merger success was completed by focusing on the pre-merger planning and post-merger integration stages (e.g., Cartwright & Cooper, 1993; Epstein, 2005; Marks & Mirvis, 2000).

Mergers have also been recognized as an important organizational strategy in the sport context in recent years. Over the past few decades, sport organizations have been “obliged to merge for various reasons” (Boen et al., 2008, p. 166). Hence, research exploring mergers has gained traction and the focus has been on various topics. Extant sport merger studies have

covered topics such as gender issues (e.g., Kihl et al., 2013; Velija et al., 2012), leadership (e.g., Kihl et al., 2013), the merger process (e.g., Stevens, 2006) social identity (e.g., Boen et al., 2008), sport performance (e.g., Kościółek & Nessel, 2015), and post-merger sociocultural integration (e.g., Byun et al., 2022). In doing so, researchers have illustrated the significance of managing organizational integration by focusing on human-related issues.

Kościółek and Nessel's (2015) study discussed the strategic reasons behind why professional sport mergers often fail. Specifically, the authors noted a lack of long-term strategy as one reason for poor performance in merged professional sport clubs. Similarly, Bradbury et al. (2021) found that partnerships, one type of interorganizational relationships (IORs), were an important long-term strategy that facilitated success in merged sport clubs by supporting the development of financial sustainability and the enhancement of operations and performance.

Since IORs can help organizations function in many ways, IOR research in sport has grown significantly across various topics and settings. Much of the existing research has focused on IOR formation, management, and outcomes by examining non-profit sport organizations (i.e., community sport, sport governance, sport clubs) (e.g., Babiak, 2007; Bradbury et al., 2021; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015), sport events (e.g., Byun et al., 2019; Hoff et al., 2020), and sport sponsorship (e.g., McCarville & Copeland, 1994; Wolfe et al., 2002).

Cumulatively, research findings highlight that IORs are essential for sport organizations because they help facilitate mission and goal achievement (e.g., Babiak et al., 2018). Furthermore, managerial and sport specific factors that sustain and promote organizational performance (i.e., sport delivery, services, resource acquisition, awareness improvement) were also emphasized. However, despite the existence of IOR research in the broader sport organization context, research that examines mergers and IORs in this area is limited.

Problem Statement

Pfeffer (1972) argued that “Merger [...] is a strategy to be examined along with other strategies that can be utilized in managing the organization’s environment” (p. 392). However, due to limited research on sport mergers, little is known about sport merger success factors as well as related strategies for managing organizational environments. Thus, it has been argued that “sports mergers are often justified with the same arguments used for business mergers” (Boen et al., 2008, p. 166). Considering that sport organizations require cooperative actions to be competitive and fulfill their central purpose (Chadwick, 2009), it is crucial to comprehend and justify mergers using specific sport focused information and frameworks rather than broader business and management perspectives that focus primarily on competitiveness.

Additionally, IOR specific research focusing on sport mergers is uncommon. Relevant research that combines mergers and IORs is limited to certain types of IORs and settings that focus primarily on partnerships of sports clubs, not merged sports clubs (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2021). Existing findings suggest that IORs (i.e., partnerships) can promote success in merged sports clubs to some extent by enhancing operations in terms of achieving financial sustainability, improving infrastructure, elevating performance, and facilitating sport delivery (Bradbury et al., 2021). Since IORs are a possible strategy for merger success, further investigation into IORs of merged non-profit organizations is warranted.

Particularly, IORs in merged non-profit sport organizations that serve national/state/provincial level sport development and sport governing bodies/infrastructure have not yet been explored. Such non-profit sport organizations have a structural and systematic relationship with the affiliated sport organizations (e.g., national/state/provincial sport governing bodies) which is crucial to their operation. Furthermore, they have other sectoral relationships

(i.e., public, non-profit, and private sector) that provide financing, and project support. For these reasons, further research on IORs in merged sport organizations in the non-profit sector should be conducted to deepen our understanding of the role IORs play in the success of non-profit sport mergers as well as to aid in enhancing the sport specific perspective of mergers and IORs.

Purpose Statement

Epstein (2005) noted that “it is not that mergers cannot succeed. However, there are many barriers to merger success” (p. 45). Therefore, understanding such barriers and implementing adequate strategies are critical to merger achievement. Given that IORs have been discussed as a crucial factor in sport merger success, the purpose of this study is to expand on the existing knowledge about IORs in merged sport organizations. Specifically, three stages of IORs from the management and sport literature: (1) formation (determinants for forming IORs); (2) management (applied managerial skills for facilitating IORs); and (3) outcomes (benefits and achievements of IORs), were used as a foundational conceptual framework to further the exploration and discussion of the identified findings in this case. The following research questions was explored to address this knowledge gap:

1. What type of IORs do merged non-profit sport organizations form and what are their motives and purposes? (Formation)
2. What are the issues experienced by merged non-profit sport organizations when trying to form or maintain IORs, and how do they manage these challenges? (Management)
3. What are the outcomes and benefits of IORs in merged non-profit sport organizations? (Outcomes)

To answer the above research questions, an exploratory embedded single case study examining Provincial Sport Councils (PSCs) in South Korea was built and analyzed. PSCs are provincial-level comprehensive non-profit sport organizations located across South Korea that support sport development and govern provincial-level sport governing bodies as well as municipal sport councils. This case was selected because the organizations' experienced a merger in 2016, after decades as separate provincial-level non-profit sport organizations (i.e., elite and mass sport organizations). As a result of the merger, they now exist in an integrated sport development model of elite and mass sport. Additionally, given that a few years have passed since the establishment of the newly merged organizations, there has been an opportunity for the organizations to form IORs with more public, non-profit, and private sector organizations.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the exploration of IORs in merged non-profit sport organizations, which has been a notable gap in the existing sport merger and IOR research. By supporting the idea proposed by Pfeffer (1972) who highlights the importance of using alternate strategies alongside mergers to manage their environments, this thesis provides important implications of how IORs impact merged non-profit sport organizations.

The main scholarly implications of this study derive from its findings that suggests that IORs can help merged sport organizations achieve their desired outcomes (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2020). By using the three stages of IOR development (i.e., formation, management, outcomes) as a conceptual framework, this study provides a better understanding of what type of IORs merged sport organizations may form, their primary motives, as well as potential issues and how they were managed. Furthermore, this study highlights possible post-merger challenges experienced by existing and newly formed IORs.

While business mergers focus on long-term financial profitability and competitive advantage, sport mergers prioritize the achievement of intangible assets such as team brand value, player contracts, and fan loyalty, as well as financial sustainability and social/community impact. Given the innately collaborative nature of sport organizations, and the distinct objectives of sport mergers, this thesis contributes to building reliable sport-specific insights into mergers. The exploration of PSCs (provincial-level non-profit sport organizations), where a merger was forced by a large-scale institutional change, offers insights by providing possible post-merger challenges faced by merged non-profit sport organizations, as well as practical implications of how IORs can help achieve intangible assets, including operational efficiency, financial stability, and sport and sport for development. Furthermore, since many countries have separate elite and mass sport organizations, this thesis provides further implications into how a merger can benefit the country's sport delivery and operations more efficiently as a singular system by using IORs.

Thesis Outline

This Master's thesis follows a one article-based format consisting of five chapters (See Appendix A for thesis structure). 'Chapter 1: Introduction' provides background on the research, and introduces the research problem, purpose, related research questions and significance of the study. 'Chapter 2: Literature Review' provides an overview of the existing research on mergers and IORs in the general business and sport management literatures. 'Chapter 3: Methods' provides details about the research design, data collection and analysis, and research quality. 'Chapter 4: Research Article' contains a draft version of the completed research article and 'Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion' provides final comments on the project as well as research limitations and suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the purpose of this study, this section presents a general review of relevant literature presented in two major sections: mergers and IORs. In order to provide a thorough overview of these topics, this section begins with a review of merger research within the broader business and management literature, followed by an analysis of research specific to the sport context. A section dedicated to IORs provides an overview of the theoretical framework, which will provide additional foundational information for this study.

Mergers: An Overview

Mergers are often attempted as a strategy to achieve synergy in finances and operational aspects (e.g., Ehrhardt & Brigham, 2016; Trautwein, 1990), enhance performance (e.g., Pfeffer, 1972; Trautwein, 1990), spur organizational growth (e.g., Pfeffer, 1972; Piesse et al., 2013), and cope with external forces such as environmental conditions (e.g., Beckenstein, 1979). While many merger motives have been discussed, Ehrhardt and Brigham (2016) argued that “the primary motivation for most mergers is to increase the value of the combined enterprise” (p. 970) and benefit stockholders from each organization. For these reasons, mergers are mainly discussed as the horizontal integration of two or more organizations to form a new organization for synergies and improved efficiency of combined operations (De Noble et al., 1988; Epstein, 2005).

However, as mentioned previously, approximately 55 to 77 percent of all mergers fail to achieve their expected objectives for various reasons (Carleton, 1997; Cartwright & Cooper 1993). Given the high odds of organizational merger failure, researchers have focused on key managerial factors that can positively impact merger success.

Merger Success Factors

A large portion of literature focuses on merger success factors including the importance of rigorous due diligence (i.e., strategic and financial fit) in the pre-merger stage, integration of organizational cultures, and effective human resource management throughout the merger process (e.g., De Noble et al., 1988; Epstein, 2005; Seo & Hill, 2005). Scholars have also indicated that these factors are critical to organizational performance linked to value creation and goal achievement (Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999).

Due Diligence and Strategic Fit

Merger failures are often caused by a lack of understanding between and due diligence by the merging organizations (Epstein, 2005). Thus, to help mergers succeed and accelerate post-merger integration, careful and thorough due diligence surrounding strategic and financial fit should be performed before executing the merger (Epstein, 2005). Failure to do so could result in a number of post-merger integration issues such as acculturative issues and other human resource management problems (De Noble et al., 1988). These will be further discussed in the next subsection.

Intraorganizational Management

Another factor driving merger success is intraorganizational management which involves managing acculturative problems (i.e., culture clash) and human resource management issues (i.e., anxiety, organizational identification, and role conflict issues) created in the post-merger

integration stage (e.g., Seo & Hill, 2005). However, other unpredictable problems that are related to combination, integration, employee, and performance issues could occur regardless of the degree of merger preparedness (Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999). Therefore, it is important to consider various managerial interventions throughout the merger process (Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999). The most frequently cited merger interventions include facilitative leadership, effective communication systems, and trust (e.g., Schweiger & Denisi, 1991; Mirvis & Marks, 1992; Graebner et al., 2017).

Management literature indicates that strong facilitative leadership is required for merger success (e.g., Bartels et al., 2006; Graebner et al., 2017). Facilitative leadership skills such as monitoring and mobilizing employees are essential for establishing strong organizational identity in mergers (Bartels et al., 2006). This could also help reduce cultural differences between merging organizations by encouraging and motivating employees (Graebner et al., 2017). However, clear and consistent top-down communication should be used as a foundation because it can reduce anxiety, role conflicts, and uncertainty while also facilitating the establishment of a strong organizational identity and generating superior performance (Graebner et al., 2017; Seo & Hill, 2005).

Trust is also an important intervention for merger success. According to Stahl et al. (2011), a high level of trust generates positive and successful post-merger integration efforts. Trust could be enhanced by treating employees with respect and fairness and providing sufficient explanations when change occurs in the merger process (Fried et al., 1996; Gutknecht & Keys, 1993). However, to do so, top management must acknowledge that employees are experiencing challenges adjusting to the merger (Fried et al., 1996; Gutknecht & Keys, 1993).

In addition, providing appropriate support systems and activities are known to enhance employee management during the merger process (e.g., Buono & Bowditch, 2003; Ivancevich et al., 1990; Seo & Hill, 2005). For example, Ivancevich et al. (1990) argued that mental health services (e.g., counseling, training) could help remedy employees' psychological issues caused by mergers. Buono and Bowditch (2003) contend that promoting internal group activities, such as workshops and seminars can also help.

A wide breadth of merger related literature exists in the business and management field. While not to the same extent, research on mergers in the sport management context is also prevalent.

Sport Mergers

Mergers in sport often focus on promoting effectiveness and efficiency through cost savings and resource sharing (Kihl et al., 2013). Existing studies in sport have investigated a number of merger related topics including gender-role and leadership (e.g., Kihl et al., 2013; Velija et al., 2012), merger process (e.g., Stevens, 2006), social identity (e.g., Boen et al., 2008), sport performance (e.g., Kościółek & Nessel, 2015), post-merger sociocultural integration (e.g., Byun et al., 2022), and business model solutions (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2021, Moustakas et al., 2021).

Within this limited literature some significant findings about sport merger success factors are found. For instance, Kihl et al.'s (2013) study on the merger of the men's and women's intercollegiate athletic departments at the University of Minnesota highlighted gender as a powerful influence on the merger process. To better understand the impact of gender issues on the merger, the degree of cultural fit was utilized (Kihl et al., 2013). Outside leadership (i.e., consultants, senior managers) noted the importance of managing gender politics and highlighted

the need for a well-established top-down communication system to help navigate uncertainty and other psychological issues in this case (Kihl et al., 2013).

Stevens (2006) also utilized the concept of cultural fit to explore “the nature of large-scale organizational change within the amateur sport through the analysis of a merger between two Canadian hockey organizations” (p. 75). Findings revealed outcomes in this case were a strategic response to environmental change (Stevens, 2006). Differences in value misalignment, communication issues and cultural conflict emerged as major issues that needed to be dealt with in order to achieve success (Stevens, 2006).

Concentrating more on intraorganizational management, Byun et al. (2022) explored post-merger integration in the Korean Sport and Olympic Committee merger. Three main sociocultural integration challenges emerged including competing values, perceived unfairness, and human resource conflicts. Furthermore, impactful leadership, communication, and cooperation had noted impacts on successful post-merger sociocultural integration. To address the emerging challenges, Byun et al. (2022) revealed several propositions such as promoting shared values, establishing measurable goals, balancing stakeholders needs, and a bottom-up approach to sport mergers to alleviate sociocultural challenges. While merger studies in the broader business and management literature emphasized the importance of top-down approach interventions, Byun et al. (2022) argued that bottom-up interventions were more impactful “especially when the merging organizations are highly dependent on external stakeholders” (p. 19).

Kościółek and Nessel (2015) explored mergers of four professional football clubs. The study resulted in three main findings. First, merger motives in these cases were similar to other industries (i.e., seek economic, financial, and strategic benefits) (Kościółek & Nessel, 2015).

Second, football teams (one out of four in this case) that achieved an improvement in sport performance utilized “a well-conducted preparation and negotiation process, and the same league division of the merging clubs” (Kościółek & Nessel, 2015, p. 77). Third, reasons for failure included “lack of long-term strategy, the owners’ financial difficulties, and conflicts with the top league governing body” (Kościółek & Nessel, 2015, p. 84). On the other hand, Bradbury et al.’s (2021) study examining the business models of sport clubs in New Zealand highlighted that a merged sport club was able to benefit from establishing partnerships, as an ongoing and long-term strategy (Bradbury et al., 2021). The merged sport club, in this case, was able to achieve financial sustainability and enhance its operations in terms of infrastructure and sport performance as a result of forming a partnership (Bradbury et al., 2021).

Although merger studies in broader business and sport literatures mainly focus on pre-merger planning and post-merger integration as key factors toward success, partnerships (one type of IORs) were also discussed as a way to contribute to the success of merged sport clubs. Thus, the following section provides an overview of IOR research to better understand how IORs impact organizations. First, from the broader business literature, a review of the concept, including types, motives, and IOR success factors are presented. An overview of IOR research specific to the field of sport management is then provided.

Interorganizational Relationships

As attention on managing organizational environments began to expand in the 1970s (Mizruchi & Galaskiewicz, 1993), researchers focused on IORs and how they impact survival and success in organizations (Whetten, 1981). As a result, many studies about IOR formation and related success factors were completed.

IORs are the “relationships between and among organizations” (Cropper et al., 2008, p. 4). However, depending on the purpose of the IOR, its meaning can vary (See Appendix B for a summary of IOR definitions). Given its broader application, the above understanding of IOR will be used in this research project in order to comprehend the term more holistically. In addition to the varied definitions and perspectives on IORs, a myriad of terms linked to the concept exist (Cropper et al., 2008). Cropper et al. (2008) noted that partnerships, alliances, and networks have been frequently used among scholars and in practice. Collaborations, strategic alliances, coalitions, joint ventures, and cooperation are also popular (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2011). Appendix C summarizes the popular types of IORs and their relevant definitions. Next, motives and purposes behind the formation of IORs will be reviewed.

IOR Motives

The determinants of interorganizational relationships can vary depending on the context and the specific organizations involved. As such, IOR studies have been investigated from a variety of theoretical stances. For example, IOR studies have been completed utilizing resource dependence theory (e.g., Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), exchange theory (e.g., Cook, 1977; Levine & White, 1961), network theory (e.g., Gulati, 1998; Van de Ven, 1976), stakeholder theory (e.g., Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Harrison & St. John, 1996), and institutional theory (e.g., Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Wiewel & Hunter, 1985). Moreover, motives and purposes for establishing IORs vary slightly given the perspective that forms the basis of the research.

Resource dependence theory, for example, views organizations as open systems dependent on resources in their environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This perspective highlights how establishing IORs can help organizations acquire resources to reduce uncertainties (Aldrich, 1976; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). From an exchange theory perspective,

motives behind forming IORs are linked to acquiring desired resources for “individual goal attainment rather than joint or collective action” (Galaskiewicz, 1985, p. 284). Network theory perspective explains forming IORs can help increase organizational efficiency, competitive positioning, and market power (Gulati, 1998; Harrigan, 1998). Studies based in stakeholder theory interpret IORs as a network of actors of an organization (Barringer & Harrison, 2000). In this case, IORs are discussed as effective tools for stakeholder management and view organizations as a facilitator for realizing stakeholder interests (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Harrison & St. John, 1996). Institutional theory has also been used to examine IORs. Scholars in this area argued that IORs could work as a powerful force to help enhance organizational legitimacy (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). From this perspective, by forming IORs, new organizations can increase their legitimacy by establishing relationships with recognized intra-industry organizations, as well as improve their image and reputation (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Crawford & Gram, 1978; Wiewel & Hunter, 1985).

From a more strategic stance, Kouwenhoven (1993) summarized two main motives behind why non-profit organizations enter into IORs. The first being “financial-economic motives” (Kouwenhoven, 1993, p. 121) which emerge in non-profit organizations experiencing financial risks (i.e., limitations in funds). Consequently, they adopt IORs as a strategy and provide partners with expected non-financial returns (i.e., social image and awareness improvement) in exchange (Kouwenhoven, 1993). Second, “managerial-strategic motives” stem from the need for more effective and efficient functioning (Kouwenhoven, 1993, p. 122).

Although IOR motives have been fragmented across these broad theoretical and strategic stances, Barringer and Harrison (2000) argued that all organizations establish relationships for multiple reasons. Accordingly, Oliver (1990) integrated the existing literature on IORs into “six

generalizable determinants” to better understand the key factors that influence IOR formation (p. 241). These factors helped researchers better understand the key factors that influence IOR formation in sport (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008; Babiak, 2007; Hoff et al., 2020). The six determinants include necessity, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, stability, and legitimacy (See Table 2.1 for summary).

Table 2.1

Six Determinants that Influence IOR Formation

Determinants	Explanation
Necessity	To achieve necessary legal or regulatory requirements
Asymmetry	To exercise power or control over another organization or its resources
Reciprocity	To pursue common or mutually beneficial goals or interests in a collaborative form
Efficiency	An internally oriented form to improve its internal input/output ratio
Stability	An adaptive form to deal with uncertainty and lack of resource
Legitimacy	To demonstrate or improve its reputation, image, prestige, or congruence with prevailing norms in its institutional environment.

Note. Adapted from “Determinants of interorganizational relationships: Integration and future directions” by Oliver, C. (1990) *Academy of management review*, 15(2), 241-265.

According to Oliver (1990), necessity is related to achieving mandatory legal or regulatory requirements via the formation of an IOR. Asymmetry involves exercising power or control over another organization and/or its resources, whereas reciprocity involves pursuing common or mutually beneficial goals or interests in a collaborative form. Efficiency involves improving the internal input/output ratio so that organizations can achieve their goals more effectively through collaboration than by working alone. The need for stability relates to uncertainty, including a lack of resources. Finally, legitimacy demonstrates a need to improve reputation, image, prestige, or congruence with prevailing norms in an institutional environment.

It is essential to note that multiple determinants can be at play during the formation process to help explain the nature of IORs.

However, once these relationships are formalized, there is a need to observe and manage IORs from a behavioral perspective since relationships and networks are established by human beings (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Ritter & Gemünden, 2003). To better understand these impacts, the following section reviews IOR success factors.

IOR Success Factors

While there are various managerial factors to be considered, a number of studies have indicated interorganizational trust as the most important factor for IOR success. For instance, Hardy et al. (1998) argued that reciprocal trust is critical because it may reduce complexity, resolve conflicts, and stimulate coordination. Others noted that trust reduces risk and enables the creation of long-term relationships (Lane & Bachmann 1998; Ring 1997; Zaheer et al., 1998). Schilke and Cook (2013) emphasized the importance of due diligence when it comes to assessing potential partners' trustworthiness, reputation, and prior interactions. Others have indicated effective and prompt communication as the basis for developing trust (Das & Teng, 2001b; Leifer & Mills, 1996).

Another factor that can hinder IOR success is power. Cook (1977) noted that "power is linked to dependence in exchange formulations" as it concerns the process of attaining or exchanging resources (p. 65). Thus, many scholars emphasized the importance of reciprocal balance in power between organizations (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993; Emerson, 1962). For instance, power imbalance could induce political issues, conflicts and reduce autonomy in the decision-making process (e.g., Emerson, 1962; Gaski, 1984; Hardy et al., 1998). To help address these issues, formalization in relationship structure has been suggested. Moreover, formalization

could help organizations develop mutual understanding, solidify commitment, alleviate conflicts, manage decision-making, and ensure autonomy (e.g., Huxham & Vangen, 2013; Van de Ven & Walker, 1984; Whetten, 1981). Contractual governance has also been proposed as a solution to mitigate power imbalance in IORs (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993; Macneil, 1980). Leadership is also an essential factor for IOR success (Casey, 2008; Huxham & Vangen, 2003; Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Among various types of leadership styles, supportive and facilitative leadership that embraces, empowers, and mobilizes members of an organization to be involved in collaborative work has been emphasized (Huxham & Vangen, 2003).

Similar to the business and management fields, sport management has experienced constant change due to dynamic environments. These changes have served as a catalyst to the increased adoption of IORs as a strategy to secure and maintain business in the field (Alexander et al., 2008). Hence, IORs have become a significant factor in operating and managing many sport organizations (Babiak et al., 2018). To understand the criticality of IORs in sport organizations, the following section presents relevant IOR studies within the sport management context.

IORs in the Sport Context

IORs have been examined in various sport settings (e.g., non-profit sport organizations, sport governance, community sport, sport events, event legacy, and sport sponsorship) to understand the factors that contribute to their formation, and how they can be managed to attain the intended outcomes. Table 2.2 provides a summary of settings and IOR stages discussed in related sport research. Considering the extensive number of studies focusing on IOR in the sport literature, the following subsections review IOR studies specifically related to non-profit sport organizations given the purpose of this study.

Table 2.2***Summary of the IOR Studies in Sport Context based on the Three Stages of IOR Development***

Case settings	Stages		
	Formation	Management	Outcomes
Community Sport	Misener & Doherty (2012), Misener & Doherty (2013), Bradbury et al. (2021)	Misener & Doherty (2012), Misener & Doherty (2013), Doherty et al. (2014), Bradbury et al. (2021)	Misener & Doherty (2012), Misener & Doherty (2013), Bradbury et al. (2021)
Non-Profit Sport Organizations	Thibault & Harvey (1997), Babiak (2007), Alexander et al. (2008), Frisby et al. (2004)	Alexander et al. (2008), Frisby et al. (2004)	Alexander et al. (2008), Frisby et al. (2004)
Sport Governance		Shilbury & Ferkins (2015), O'Boyle & Shilbury (2016)	Shilbury & Ferkins (2015), O'Boyle & Shilbury (2016)
Sport Events and Legacy	Naraine et al. (2016), Byun et al. (2019), Hoff et al. (2020)	Naraine et al. (2016), Byun et al. (2019), Hoff et al. (2020)	Naraine et al. (2016), Byun et al. (2019), Hoff et al. (2020)
Sport Sponsorship	McCarville & Copeland (1994), Cobbs (2011), Wolfe et al. (2002)	Cobbs (2011), Wolfe et al. (2002)	McCarville & Copeland (1994)

Non-Profit Sport Organizations

Most IOR research in this area has focused on cross-sector collaboration or “the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately” (Bryson et al., 2006, p. 44). Initial groundwork in this area was conducted by Thibault and Harvey (1997) on non-profit sport organizations. It focused on the formation of IORs from a resource dependency perspective and argued that non-profit sport organizations need to establish linkages (i.e., networks) with other organizations in the public and private

sectors in order to fulfill their organizational goals and deal with uncertainty. In addition, they elucidated the potential issues associated with these types of linkages including “power struggles, loss of autonomy on the part of organizations, asymmetrical relationships, different levels of commitment in the relationship, conflicting loyalties, changes in resource allocation, resource imbalances, goal displacement, and resistance to change” (Thibault & Harvey, 1997, p. 60).

In the same vein, Babiak (2007) examined the determinants of forming IORs in the Canadian sport system (focal organization: Canadian Sport Centre) in order to gain additional insights on creating and implementing appropriate partnerships. Using Oliver (1990) and Kouwenhoven’s (1993) conceptual framework, the research presented specific insights on why the Canadian Sport Centre established IORs. More specifically they identified interdependence as the primary reason behind the formation of IORs. It was also noted that asymmetry, necessity, efficiency, stability, legitimacy, and “numerous strategic, situational, and resource-based considerations” were instrumental in the development of IORs in this case (Babiak, 2007). Finally, the authors identified several reasons why sport organizations might establish IORs including the provision of efficient sport delivery, resource acquirement, and improvement in sport programs and services (Babiak, 2007).

Alexander et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between non-profit sport organizations and public sector sport organizations in Canada by concentrating on the three stages of IOR development. In their research, IORs were viewed as successful when they helped construct a platform for goal realization and maintain ongoing relationships. More specifically, they discussed how one partner's motive was to “increase legitimacy, while the other partner was interested in reciprocity, efficiency, and necessity” (Alexander et al., 2008, p. 277). Success in

this context was based on management efforts to ensure clarification of authority, responsibilities, prompt decision-making, effective communication system, trust in interdependence, and balance in autonomy (Alexander et al., 2008). However, Frisby et al. (2004) noted that organizations should not create new IORs if they lack capacities such as “planning and policy guidelines, unclear roles and reporting channels, and insufficient human resources” and instead should concentrate on managing existing IORs to facilitate their performance (Frisby et al., 2004, p. 116).

In the non-profit sector, IORs in community sport clubs have been examined primarily by Misener and Doherty. They focused on how IORs help generate social capital in community sport clubs (e.g., Misener & Doherty, 2012; Misener & Doherty, 2013; Doherty et al., 2014). In 2012, they examined community sport clubs' relationships from the social capital perspective and highlighted IORs as an effective mechanism for generating community connections and social cohesion (Misener & Doherty, 2012). In addition, they argued that consistent trust, reciprocity, and engagement are crucial managerial factors for sustaining relationships and developing social capital (Misener & Doherty, 2012). Misener and Doherty (2013) discovered that balance in exchange, leadership, personal relationships, and collaborative competencies such as interpersonal skills (i.e., cooperative, organizing, technical) are also important for IORs in community sport (Misener & Doherty, 2013; Doherty et al., 2014). Service quality, improvement in sport delivery and community awareness were also considered critical outcomes from IORs (Misener & Doherty, 2013).

Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) examined collaborative governance relationships in the federal sport structure in Australia. They described this system as “separate legal entities at state and territory level” that are governed within a federal model (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015, p. 380).

In this structural relationship, the main issue with the collaborative governance approach was long-standing conflict and distrust (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015). As a result, “building mutual respect in terms of interdependence, shared ownership, openness to exploring mutual gains, and arriving at an agreed vision, mission and values” and facilitative leadership were discovered to be important success factors in these relationships (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015, p. 394). O’Boyle and Shilbury (2016) noted that transparency in decision-making is also important because it helps facilitate collaborative governance relationships.

In summary, IOR studies in non-profit sport organizations highlight how to effectively form and manage IORs to enhance organizational performance and generate desired outcomes such as sport delivery, services, resource acquisition, community involvement, and improved awareness. Furthermore, it was noted that IORs may contribute to sport merger success in terms of achieving financial sustainability, membership growth, and infrastructure improvement (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2021).

Given the limitations of the existing research on the topic, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how IOR are utilized in merged sport organizations. To do so, the following chapter provides an overview of the methods used in this study.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Research Design

An exploratory embedded single case study design was employed to address the research questions of this study (Yin, 2018). Exploratory studies are unique and valuable because the case is yet discovered and is constructed through the investigation process (Flick et al., 2004). Moreover, a case study approach is relevant for studies trying to understand how and why a contemporary set of social phenomena occur within the real-world setting (Yin, 2018). An embedded single case study, in particular, is used when attention is given to more than one subunit within a single case (Yin, 2018). This embedded design can help researchers gain insights into the single case or main unit (Yin, 2018). Therefore, given the purpose of this study, an embedded single case study design was used to help generate more robust findings about the PSCs in the Korean sport system. This study aimed to examine three PSCs. Additional information about the subunits of the case included in this study is provided in the next section.

Case Selection

For several decades, the South Korean sport system existed as separate non-profit entities of elite and mass sport governing organizations at three different levels: national, provincial, and municipal. However, in 2016, the South Korean sport system went through an unprecedented merger, integrating elite and mass sport governing bodies at all three levels as a result of ‘Article 33’ of the amended National Sports Promotion Act (MCST, 2017). The reason behind this merger

primarily stemmed from critics arguing about the lack of connection between elite and mass sport which they said resulted in inefficiencies in sport delivery and operations (NARS, 2016). Thus, as a solution, an integrated sport development model was created which involved merging elite and mass sport organizations in the country (MCST, 2016; NARS, 2016). It was expected this merger would expand the base of daily life sport, develop elite sport, and increase the efficiency in sport service delivery (NARS, 2016).

Initially, the merger was to only include the integration of the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC) and the Korean Council of Sport for All (KCSA) resulting in the formation of the Korean Sport & Olympic Committee (KSOC). However, during the pre-merger phase, the Integration Preparatory Committee (IPC) decided to also integrate the other branches of the KOC and the KCSA (NARS, 2016). Consequently, the KSOC, 17 PSCs, 228 Municipal Sport Councils (MSCs), 79 National Sport Federations (NSFs), 1,157 Provincial Sport Federations (PSFs), and 7,654 Municipal Sport Federations (MSFs) underwent significant changes to form the new collaborative governance sport system in the country (See Appendix D for additional pre- and post-merger details).

PSCs previously existed as 34 separate sports organizations (i.e., elite and mass sport organizations) in each of Korea's 17 provinces prior to the merger. After the merger process was completed, 17 PSCs remained, including Seoul, Busan, Daegu, Incheon, Gwangju, Daejeon, Ulsan, Sejong, Gyeonggi, Gangwon, Chungbuk, Chungnam, Jeonbuk, Jeonnam, Gyeongbuk, Gyeongnam, and Jeju Sports Councils (See Appendix E). The resulting merger forced PSCs to undergo numerous changes including elections of new leaders and modifications to their specific organizational and functional goals (SSC, 2020). In addition, the combination of existing

cultures from mass and elite sport impacted the organizations' stakeholders and facilitated the development of new missions and goals.

To explore this level of analysis more in-depth, five PSCs (Seoul Sports Council, Incheon Sports Council, Gyeonggi Sports Council, Jeonbuk Sports Council, and Chungbuk Sports Council) were selected as the subunits of this case. They were established in the mid-1900s and have been serving their roles as sport development non-profit organizations in their respective provinces: Seoul, Incheon, Gyeonggi, Jeonbuk, and Chungbuk. In general, their primary mission is to create value through sport that could contribute to the community. More specifically, they aim to increase sport participation in their community and foster excellent athletes to promote the status of the respective provinces through sport. Specific description of each subunit is provided in the following section.

Single-Case Embedded Design

The Seoul Sports Council (SSC) merged on February 26, 2016. After the transition, they assigned a new president on January 15, 2020. This event forced the organization to restructure and resulted in major personnel changes. In 2022, SSC was linked to various projects supporting 75 PSFs and 25 MSCs in Seoul, hosting a variety of sport events including international events in Seoul, promotion of rights and interests of local athletes, welfare and education-related projects, promotion of community school sports, professional sports and sports-for-all projects, and commissioned business (provincial governments are responsible for this business). In fiscal year 2022, SSC operated 32 projects funded by number of different subsidies/funds (SSC, 2022). Based on their general account estimated revenues document they received resources from the Seoul Metropolitan Government, KSOC, Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism to operate their projects (SSC, 2022).

The Incheon Sports Council (ISC) finalized their merger on December 28, 2015. Their new president was assigned March 25, 2020, as a result of a popular election. ISC's role in their province is similar to SSC; however, ISC is responsible for 73 PSFs and 10 MSCs in their jurisdiction. They also have a sports facilities department that operates 15 sport facilities in their jurisdiction. While they have not officially published 2020, 2021, 2022 business plans or annual expenditure reports, based on their 2019 annual report, ISC was supported by many funds/subsidies helping them to operate a variety of sport projects and events in Incheon (See ISC, 2019).

The Gyeonggi Sports Council (GSC) merged on December 29, 2015. They assigned a new president on January 15, 2020. GSC's role is similar to other PSCs; however, they are responsible for 69 PSFs and 31 MSCs in their jurisdiction. In 2021, GSC facilitated 57 projects linked to supporting PSFs, MSCs, hosting sport events (e.g., youth, mass, and elite sport), promotion of rights and interests of local athletes, welfare and education-related projects, promotion of community school sports, and professional sports and sports-for-all projects (GSC, 2021). Based on their 2022 business and expenditure plan, they received resources from the Gyeonggi Provincial Government, KSOC, Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism to operate their projects (GSC, 2022).

The Jeonbuk Sports Council (JSC) merged on March 3, 2016. They assigned a new president on January 10, 2020. JSC's role is similar to other PSCs; however, JSC is responsible for 71 PSFs and 14 MSCs in their jurisdiction. Although JSC did not specify types of subsidies/funds received in their 2022 general account estimated revenues document, it is possible to assume they received subsidies/funds from the Jeonbuk Provincial Government,

Jeonbuk Office of Education, and KSOC given how similar PSCs received their subsidies/funds (JSC, 2022).

The Chungbuk Sports Council (CSC) merged on March 22, 2016. They assigned a new president on January 22, 2020. CSC is responsible for 61 PSFs and 11 MSCs in their jurisdiction. While CSC has similar roles and responsibilities to other PSCs in South Korea, one significant project is related to developing various activities to establish a foundation for self-reliance. More specifically, these activities are related to forming sponsor relationships to aid in their operations and seeking diversification of projects in new fields (CSC, 2022). According to their 2022 business report, they have established 12 sponsorships with local private organizations. Based on their annual expenditure document, they received most of their financial resources from the Chungbuk Provincial Government and KSOC.

In selecting the above five subunits, several reasons were considered. First, the researcher had personal connections with these designated subunits (See Subjectivity Statement). This facilitated the recruitment of relevant interviewees for the study. Second, PSCs are practice- and administrative-oriented organizations that collaborate with many organizations to operate numerous businesses and programs at the provincial-level. Lastly, based on their business/project plans and budgetary documents, we anticipated they would have a number of varied IOR connections for financial support, operational relationships, and additional opportunities. This supported the researcher(s) exploration of different types of IORs with other public, non-profit, and private sector organizations.

Since each subunit in the case is a separate organization in its own right, it was necessary to value the subjective experience of its members (Flick et al., 2004). Therefore, to comprehend the case appropriately and grasp more noteworthy features and accomplishments relevant to the

purpose of this study, using the proper qualitative methods is crucial (Flick et al., 2004). The methods used for data collection and specific analysis procedures employed for this research will be detailed next.

Data Collection

To develop a better understanding of the case, data from multiple sources (e.g., interviews and archival materials) was collected (Given, 2008). Using multiple sources provides for richer data and aids in improving the trustworthiness of the findings (Yin, 2018). Interviews acted as the primary source of data and were supported by the retrieval and analysis of archival materials for data triangulation.

Archival Materials

Archival materials are useful as a supplementary source of data that can help boost the relevance and consistency of interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Yin, 2018). Moreover, access to such information could play a prominent role in data collection by corroborating information from other sources (Yin, 2018). Therefore, materials such as public documents (e.g., white papers, press release), online print articles and newspapers, and public corporate records were utilized to gain more in-depth information about the case (approx. 331 pages) (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Interviews

Interviews are widely used by qualitative researchers to explore a participant's perspective of a phenomenon in detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Atkinson, 2017). Interviews are valued for their ability to capture “the complexity of the real world by exploring multiple perspectives toward an issue” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 4). Furthermore, interviews are an

informative way for researchers to reconstruct events by depicting ongoing social processes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As such, interviews acted as the primary source of data in this research.

Purposive sampling helps obtain relevant data from a more extensive population by selecting a distinct sample (Given, 2018). Moreover, this sampling approach helps to attain a good understanding of the phenomenon through a range of different experiences (Greenfield et al., 2007). Hence, for this study, purposive sampling was used to select relevant informants who has firsthand knowledge about IORs in the selected merged organizations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviewees were selected in reference to the official documents and based on their current status of employment and general knowledge of the PSC merger. Given the purpose of this study, the sampling criteria was developed to enable the gathering of diverse but homogeneous data from a variety of representatives within each subunit. However, to pursue further accuracy and relevancy, snowball sampling was also used to locate hidden respondents who may have additional information to contribute to the findings of this study (Given, 2008). Once participants were identified, a recruitment script (See Appendix F), approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Georgia, was used to communicate with participants.

Semi-structured interviews were used for the accumulation of relevant and in-depth data as well as for the flexibility between the researcher and the participant by allowing the interviewees to express themselves freely and for the discussion to be less confined (Given, 2008). The semi-structured interviews for this project were based on several open-ended questions in order to build a solid, deep understanding and obtain comprehensive information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). See Appendix G for sample interview questions. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher ensured that all participants provided their consent by signing a

consent form that was approved by the University of Georgia's IRB (See Appendix H). Copies of the signed consent forms were given back to each participant for their personal records. Initially, 9 interviews were scheduled, but to ensure greater accuracy of the emergent findings, five additional participants were recruited using snowball sampling. As a result of the additional recruitment, a total of 14 in-person interviews were conducted with participants from the following groups: SSC ($n=3$), ISC ($n=3$), GSC ($n=3$), JSC ($n=3$), CSC ($n=2$). However, data saturation was achieved by the 13th interview, as no new insights were identified in the 14th interview.

Data Analysis

A content analysis using ATLAS.ti 1.0. 37 for Mac software was used to organize and analyze the collected data. This type of analysis can facilitate observations of the “processes and outcomes across many cases [...] to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 95). Moreover, content analysis is generally used when the study aims “to describe a phenomenon”, especially when “existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). Since the purpose of this study was to better understand the IORs of merged PSCs, this form of analysis helped deepen our understanding by providing relevant themes of insight.

Prior to analysis, the lead author familiarized themselves with the data through recursive reading as this step helps to capture thoughts or concepts relevant to each of the research questions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To do so, interviews were transcribed from the audio recording by the lead researcher using transcription guidelines and techniques from Miles et al. (2020) and Rubin and Rubin (2012). This process is important since “the transcript retains the information you need, from the verbal account, and in a way which is ‘true’ to its original

nature” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Transcripts were reviewed and translated (when needed) by the main researcher who has proficiency in both English and Korean. Subsequently, interview transcripts went through a member check to assure quality and trustworthiness. After doing so, interview transcripts and archival materials were converted into PDF format for efficient and accurate analysis.

Coding occurred in three stages: first cycle, second cycle and third cycle coding. First cycle coding is the first step in the data analysis process (Miles et al., 2020). In this stage, codes were developed based on a combination of deductive and inductive analysis. Deductive coding is a process of developing “a provisional start list of codes” based on the literature review, the purpose of this study, and research questions (Miles et al., 2020, p. 74). The predetermined codes helped guide analysis by identifying relevant and meaningful data (Miles et al., 2020). Inductive coding, on the other hand, is known as a process of discovering emerging codes throughout the data collection (Miles et al., 2020). This process allowed for new ideas or concepts more specific to the case under investigation to be uncovered (Miles et al., 2020). Next, second cycle coding involved detecting recurring patterns and the grouping of these patterns into a few major categories (Miles et al., 2020). These two coding cycles enabled the generation of “more meaningful units of analysis” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 79). Lastly, once these categories were developed, third cycle coding was performed. This involved selective coding to better understand the relationships among the categories from the first and second cycle coding by connecting them to the core themes (Mills et al., 2009). Despite these rigorous procedures, there were several research limitations of this project that were considered including subjectivity and trustworthiness. These will be further explored in the following subsections.

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher's subjectivity has an impactful ability to shape the data (Peshkin, 1994). For this reason, subjectivity could interfere with the collection and analysis of data from being coherent and objective (Given, 2008). On the other hand, subjectivity helps researchers find the best position for the project to produce meaningful data (Freeman et al., 2007). Therefore, to benefit from subjectivity, it is imperative to note and understand the subjectivity of the researcher and to be aware of potential bias throughout the research process (Preissle & deMarrais, 2015).

The main subjectivity of this researcher was their personal experience and connection with the subunits under investigation in this study. Given the fact that the researcher has previously worked for the SSC as an assistant manager for two years, their personal experience facilitated connections to the JSC and GSC. This experience could bias the overall research by interfering with data collection and analysis, so it was essential for the researcher to clarify their role during the research process. Considering the researcher's personal experience and connections, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) indicated that sometimes taking an outsider position facilitates an understanding of the group more broadly. Therefore, the researcher maintained an outsider position by not making any assumptions when collecting and analyzing data to help reduce bias. However, if needed, the research took an insider position to collect and interpret a greater depth of data that may contribute to the richness of this study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Another concern linked to research subjectivity was the nationality of the researcher. Given the fact that the case was based in the same home country as the researcher, many researcher advantages and potential issues have been identified. More specifically, given that most of the relevant archival materials were written in Korean and the interviewees were

recorded in Korean, it may have provided advantages to the researcher while also creating potential issues at the same time. Therefore, the researcher aimed to be transparent, objective and maintain a balanced viewpoint regarding the language and accessibility when translating the data to English since it could impact the overall research.

Research Quality

“Trustworthiness refers to whether the presentation of data was consistent with the participants’ experiences and the context in which they were carried out” (Greenfield et al., 2007). To ensure the trustworthiness of the data and enhance research quality, Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced four criteria of trustworthiness that should be considered: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

First, credibility concerns the probability of producing credible findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this research, data triangulation techniques such as collecting and comparing multiple sources (i.e., interviews, archival materials) and member checking of the interview transcripts were implemented to enhance credibility and accuracy of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

Second, transferability concerns “the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts and situations beyond the scope of the study context” (Given, 2008, p. 886). To increase transferability, a thick description of the research design and methods were provided. In addition, the boundary of the purposive sampling population was designated to pursue homogeneity of the data and escalate relevant data saturation.

Third, dependability refers to the “repeatability of the results if someone else undertook the same study with a similar sample” (Greenfield et al., 2007, p. 49). To pursue dependability, this study was meticulously designed, in terms of sampling and detailed question lists, to be

tested under the same circumstances. For instance, the sampling population, and detailed question list was created before the data collection in order to carry out a consistent investigation and to avoid variations. Additionally, although the cases are different, similarities to Hoff et al.'s (2020) and Bradbury et al.'s (2021) studies on IORs exist and as such this study follows a similar research design.

Lastly, confirmability refers to the credibility of the results to the extent that objectivity was established, and biases were minimized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As previously discussed, the researcher maintained an outsider position when collecting data to help remain unbiased. Data triangulation, iterative analysis and member checking was employed to ensure confirmability by using multiple sources of evidence (i.e., archival materials and interviews).

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CHAPTER 4
STUDY: UNDERSTANDING INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN MERGED
SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

Mergers have long been considered an effective strategic option in business since they help achieve synergies and improved efficiency through a combination of one or more organizations (De Noble et al., 1988; Epstein, 2005). Within sport, there has been a growing demand for mergers as a source of operational efficiency (Boen et al., 2008). Many mergers have occurred in the public and non-profit sectors (i.e., at the community, provincial, and national levels) as a result of institutional change in their embedded environments (e.g., Kihl et al., 2013), while other sport organizations merged to strengthen their competitive advantage in the professional sector (e.g., Kościółek & Nessel, 2015). Given this growing trend in the field, mergers have garnered additional attention in sport scholarship.

Despite the promising benefits mergers bring to the newly formed organizations, the success rate of mergers is notoriously low (Carleton, 1997; Cartwright & Cooper, 1992). In most cases, mergers fail to meet their initial goals due to strategic and financial mismanagement of the organization (Devoge & Shiraki, 2000). Given the amplified importance of mergers in business, understanding the determinants of merger success has been a central area of inquiry in the merger context (e.g., Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006; Epstein, 2005). The growing body of research on sport mergers has shed light on sport merger success by investigating workplace

challenges and effective attributes to mitigate these issues (e.g., Byun et al., 2022, Kihl et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, several precipitating factors that influenced sport merger failure have been identified, including a lack of strategy, financial hardships, and conflicts with governing bodies (e.g., Kościółek & Nessel, 2015). As a possible solution to some of these issues, interorganizational relationships (IORs) were identified as a means to help merged sport organizations fulfill their objectives (e.g., financial sustainability, membership growth, and infrastructure improvement) (Bradbury et al., 2021). This evidence acknowledges the efficacy of IORs in achieving merger objectives. However, despite the emphasis on using alternate strategies alongside mergers to manage their environments (Pfeffer, 1972), a comprehensive understanding of the strategic link between sport mergers and IORs remains less understood, in contrast to the prevalence in sport IOR research. Thus, further examination is required to better comprehend how IORs impact merged sport organizations.

Given the purpose of this study, three stages of IOR development (i.e., formation, risk/management, outcomes) (Babiak & Thibault, 2008; Das & Teng, 2001b; Oliver, 1990) was employed as a conceptual framework to address the following research questions: (1) What types of IORs are formed by merged non-profit sport organizations, and what are the motives and purposes behind their formation; (2) What are the issues experienced by merged non-profit sport organizations when forming and maintaining IORs, and how do they manage these challenges; and (3) What are the outcomes and benefits of IORs in merged non-profit sport organizations? Answering these questions will contribute to broadening sport merger and IOR literature as well as to practice by providing sport-specific implications of how IORs can help achieve merger goals more efficiently.

Provincial Sport Councils (PSCs) in South Korea (non-profit sport organizations located across South Korea focusing on elite and mass sport at the regional level) were investigated using a qualitative embedded single case study approach. These organizations existed previously as 17 PSCs (elite sport) and 17 Provincial Councils of Sports for All (community/mass sport) until 2016 when they underwent an involuntary merger due to intense institutional pressures in their environment. As a result, PSCs experienced organizational change via the introduction of new stakeholders, policy creation, and amendments to their governance systems. As such, this setting provided an excellent opportunity to further explore merged sport organizations with a particular focus on the role of IORs within their organizations. Several post-merger challenges that impacted IORs were also identified.

Next, this paper will provide a literature review focused on mergers in the broader management and sport-specific management fields. This is followed by an introduction of the conceptual framework and a review of the methods utilized in this study. The findings and discussion will detail the significant results of this study, ending with a conclusion that will state the limitations and future directions of this study.

Literature Review

Mergers: An Overview

Mergers are a focused context of academic inquiry in the general business and management literature due to their recognition as an impactful strategy for creating financial and operational synergy (e.g., Ehrhardt & Brigham, 2016; Trautwein, 1990), enhancing performance (e.g., Pfeffer, 1972; Trautwein, 1990), spurring organizational growth (e.g., Pfeffer, 1972; Piesse et al., 2013), and coping with external forces such as environmental conditions (e.g., Beckenstein, 1979). Mergers are often implemented “to increase the value of the combined

enterprise” (Ehrhardt & Brigham, 2016, p. 970). More specifically, mergers involve the integration of two or more organizations to form a new organization to achieve synergies and improved efficiency via combined operations (De Noble et al., 1988; Epstein, 2005).

However, approximately 55 to 77 percent of all mergers fail to achieve their expected objectives (Carleton, 1997). Given the high odds of merger failure, researchers have focused on managerial factors that can positively impact merger success. These actions include rigorous due diligence (i.e., strategic and financial fit) in the pre-merger stage, elevated attention to the integration of organizational culture, and ensuring effective human resource management throughout the merger process (e.g., De Noble et al., 1988; Epstein, 2005; Seo & Hill, 2005). Scholars have also indicated that these factors are critical in achieving enhanced organizational performance, value realization, and goal achievement (Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999).

As the field of sport has also experienced mergers for multiple reasons (i.e., institutional change, improve competitive advantages), research exploring mergers has gained traction in sport scholarship, with a central theme of organizational responses to mergers from a sociocultural perspective. Extant studies examined sociocultural challenges related to mergers, including gender politics and relations (e.g., Kihl et al., 2013; Shaw & Dickson, 2021), leadership (e.g., Kihl & Schull, 2011), social identification (e.g., Boen et al., 2008), and cultural/organizational justice issues and individual level conflicts (e.g., Byun et al., 2022).

Sport merger research also emphasizes several factors that influence merger success. Kihl et al.’s (2013) work on the merger of men’s and women’s intercollegiate athletic departments at the University of Minnesota highlighted gender issues as a powerful influence. Their findings indicate that leadership and communication during the merger process, as well as adequate cultural reengineering that considers gender politics as crucial (Kihl et al., 2013). In the same

vein, Byun et al. (2022) indicated appropriate solutions or the lack thereof for post-merger sociocultural challenges can also impact sport merger success, especially when elite and mass sport organizations are involved. Moreover, the authors emphasized establishing shared values, defining measurable goals in all functional areas, balancing stakeholder interests, and utilizing a bottom-up approach as critical elements of the merger process (Byun et al., 2022).

While several sport merger studies focused on resolving cultural and human-related issues, Kościółek and Nessel's (2015) research highlighted the strategic reasons behind the failures of some professional sport mergers from a macro-perspective. Specifically, they noted a lack of long-term strategy, the owners' financial problems, and conflicts with the governing body as reasons for poor performance. In 2021, Bradbury and others found that partnerships, one type of IOR, are an important long-term strategy that can facilitate enhanced performance in merged sport clubs such as financial sustainability, improving facilities and sport performance, and providing a stronger community connection. Despite Bradbury et al.'s (2021) findings that imply that IORs could provide more opportunities for merged organizations to achieve various benefits, this research is limited to certain types of IORs and settings such as sports clubs.

Conceptual Framework

IORs have been described as collaborative "relationships between and among organizations" (Cropper et al., 2008, p. 4) to access information, resources, activities, and capabilities of other organizations (Sowa, 2009). Such collaborative types of IORs include partnerships, sponsorships, governance relationships, strategic alliances, and other cooperative forms of relationships (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Cropper et al., 2008). Given the innately collaborative nature of sport (Chadwick, 2009), IORs are a fundamental concept for sport organizational studies. Researchers in sport have applied knowledge of the three stages of IOR

development (formation, management, outcomes) as a framework to develop a better understanding of the holistic IOR process (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008; Hoff et al., 2020). Our study will also use the three stages of IOR development (i.e., formation, risk/management, outcomes) (Babiak & Thibault, 2008; Das & Teng, 2001b; Oliver, 1990; Misener & Doherty, 2013) to guide our research.

IOR Formation

Since every organization has discrete needs, many different motives behind the formation IORs have been identified. The application of Oliver's (1990) six determinants of IORs; necessity, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, stability, and legitimacy helped researchers better understand the key factors that influence IOR formation in sport (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008; Babiak, 2007; Hoff et al., 2020). According to Oliver, necessity is related to achieving mandatory legal or regulatory requirements via the formation of an IOR. Asymmetry involves exercising power or control over another organization and/or its resources, whereas reciprocity involves pursuing common or mutually beneficial goals or interests in a collaborative form. Efficiency involves improving the internal input/output ratio so that organizations can achieve their goals more effectively or efficiently through collaboration than by working alone. The need for stability is linked to environmental uncertainty, including a lack of resources. Finally, legitimacy demonstrates a need to improve reputation, image, prestige, or congruence with prevailing norms in an institutional environment. It is essential to note that multiple determinants can be at play during the formation process. As such, Oliver's (1990) determinants were used to explain factors that influenced the formation of specific types of IORs in this study.

IOR Management

Researchers highlighted the need to observe and manage IORs once they are formed (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Das & Teng, 2001a; Ritter & Gemünden, 2003). According to Das and Teng (2001a) relational (e.g., trust, conflict, mismatched interests) and performance risks (e.g., failing to achieve objectives) stemming from trust issues and uncertainty are likely to occur. More specifically, relational risk refers to “problems that may hinder the achievement of strategic objectives”, while performance risk encompasses issues linked to “the relationship between the partnership and the environment” (Das & Teng, 2001a, p. 6).

As such, management is understood to be an essential part of the long-term success of IORs (Babiak & Thibault, 2008). For example, undermanaged IORs have led to unachieved objectives (e.g., Frisby et al., 2004). Babiak and Thibault (2008) examined how formal and informal processes affect IOR management in the Canadian sport system. According to their study, formal processes included policies, operational procedures, contracts, and monitoring processes. Informal processes, on the other hand, involved utilizing social interactions (e.g., communication, commitments, and leadership) to maximize trust in relationships.

In order to concentrate on the above factors, our study employed Das and Teng’s (2001b) relational and performance risks concepts to help identify IOR-related challenges, as well as Babiak and Thibault’s (2008) formal and informal processes mechanisms to better understand the potential issues and helpful management skills in the Korean sport context.

IOR Outcomes

While it is difficult to measure and evaluate the success of an IOR, it is possible to concentrate on the benefits and outcomes of this process. In sport, many possible outcomes across tangible and intangible benefits have been determined. However, as organizations form

IORs for various reasons, it is important to understand that IOR outcomes are not limited to specific benefits. For example, organizations focused on hosting sport events can have regional-level sport development and urban development as their desired outcomes (e.g., Hoff et al., 2020). Community-level sport organizations can have increased community sport participation (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008) and heightened reputation and community awareness (e.g., Misener & Doherty, 2013) while club and professional sport organizations can aim for elevated sport performance (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2021) as possible outcomes. Other possible benefits include improved financial stability and sport facilities (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2021). Thus, while these empirical results were used as a helpful reference to guide in our discovery, we explored the IOR outcomes inductively to allow for the possibility of emergent PSC-specific IOR outcomes.

Methods

A qualitative embedded single case study approach (Yin, 2018) exploring PSCs in South Korea was designed to deepen our understanding of IORs in merged sport organizations. A case study approach is relevant for studying how and why specific contemporary social phenomena occur within a real-world setting (Yin, 2018). An embedded single case study is used when attention is given to more than one subunit within a single case. This design can help researchers gather insights from different perspectives of the phenomenon thereby constructing a comprehensive understanding (Yin, 2018). Previous studies (e.g., Hoff et al., 2020) on IORs in sport have experienced success with this approach as it allowed the authors to access more meaningful contemporary data.

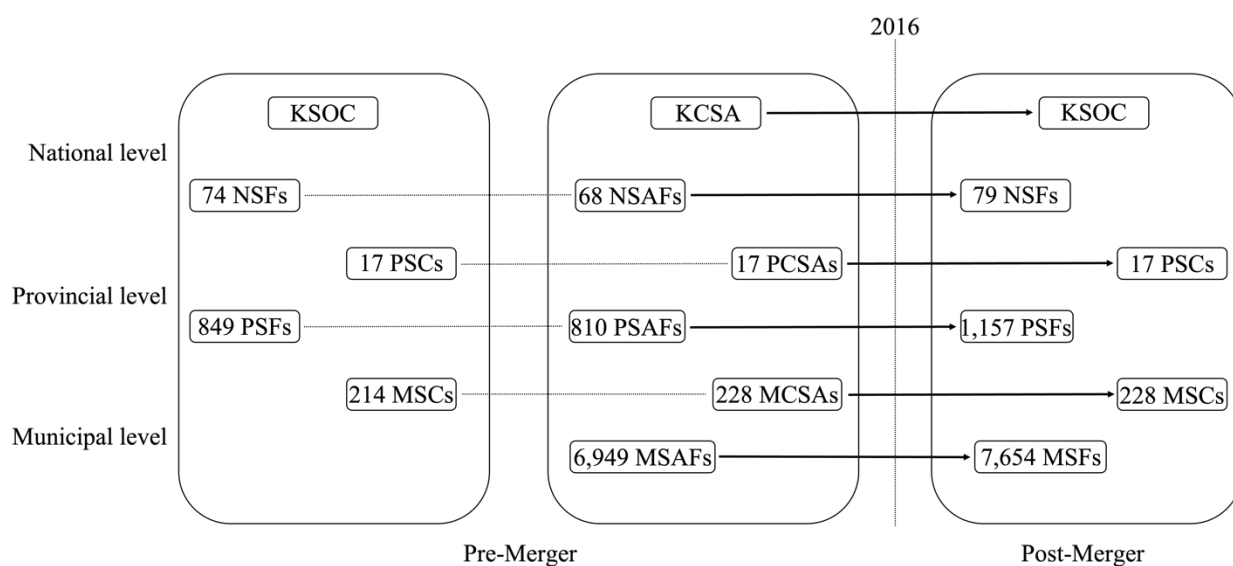
Case Selection

For several decades, sport in South Korea was governed by non-profit organizations that focused on elite and mass sport exclusive of each other at three levels: national, provincial, and

municipal. As a result of Article 33 of the amended National Sports Promotion Act, in 2016, the South Korean sport system went through an unprecedented merger integrating elite and mass sport organizations at all three levels (MCST, 2017) (See Figure 4.1). The purpose of this merger was to develop a new sport paradigm interconnecting mass, elite, and school sport (NARS, 2016). However, many criticisms were raised by different sport stakeholders about this process. For example, worries emerged about the potential inefficiencies in the country's sport system in terms of sport delivery and operations (NARS, 2016).

Figure 4.1

The Breakdown of the Pre- and Post-Merger Process of the Korean Sport System



PSCs previously existed as 17 elite and 17 mass sport organizations in South Korea's 17 provinces before the merger. Seventeen merged organizations now represent Seoul, Busan, Daegu, Incheon, Gwangju, Daejeon, Ulsan, Sejong, Gyeonggi, Gangwon, Chungbuk, Chungnam, Jeonbuk, Jeonnam, Gyeongbuk, Gyeongnam, and Jeju provinces. Since the sport organization merger was forced by a large-scale institutional pressure in the South Korean sport system, the impacted organizations experienced many changes. For example, Provincial Sport

Federations (PSFs) and Municipal Sport Councils (MSCs) also merged as a result of this process. The combination of organizational cultures from the formerly independent community/mass and elite sport organizations impacted many facets of the new organization including an expanded stakeholder group, as well as the creation of new policies (SSC, 2020). Furthermore, PSC's president positions changed from ex-officio, where the Mayor of the Provincial Government acted in this role, to the selection of officials elected via a popular vote in the member organizations (KSOC, 2020).

To explore this phenomenon more in-depth, five PSCs: Seoul Sports Council (SSC), Incheon Sports Council (ISC), Gyeonggi Sports Council (GSC), Jeonbuk Sports Council (JSC), and Chungbuk Sports Council (CSC) were selected as subunits of this case. These organizations were specifically chosen based on their scale of work (e.g., number of ongoing projects and sport events). More specifically, SSC, ISC, GSC were included because they represent three major provinces in South Korea and had more opportunities to host various events (e.g., international, national, and regional level). On the other hand, JSC and CSC, as well as SSC, were included since they recently held the National Sports Festival an event that facilitated additional opportunities to collaborate with organizations.

According to Article 33-2 of the National Sports Promotion Act and their Annual Sport reports (e.g., GSC, 2021; JSC, 2022; SSC, 2022), PSC missions focus on contributing to the expansion of daily sports, developing a foundation for grassroots sport, improving the efficacy of sport service delivery, and contributing to the city's image/status and national prestige by fostering excellent athletes. Their specific role in the South Korean sport system involves conducting and operating sport projects and events to promote daily, elite, and school sports, as well as managing and supporting their member organizations (PSFs, MSCs) in their respective

provinces. After the merger, their roles expanded to also include supporting grassroots sports clubs.

Since each subunit in the case is a separate organization, it is important to value the subjective experience of its members (Flick et al., 2004). Thus, to comprehend the case appropriately and to grasp more noteworthy features and accomplishments relevant to the purpose of this study, appropriate qualitative methods are crucial (Flick et al., 2004). The data collection and analysis procedures will be detailed next.

Data Collection

Data were collected from multiple sources including interviews and archival documents (Yin, 2018). Prior to conducting interviews, a review of archival materials (approx. 331 pages) (i.e., white papers, press releases, online print articles, organizational records) helped identify interviewees, historical information, and current issues related to the PSCs and ongoing sport projects in the country. Purposive sampling supported by the lead researcher's personal network was utilized to recruit current and past employees from varied positions (e.g., Directors, team leaders, assistant managers) with knowledge and experience about IORs in their respective PSC. Snowball sampling (Given, 2008) was also used to uncover additional interview candidates for this project. In total, ($n=14$) semi-structured interviews were completed and served as the primary source of data for this research study (See Table 4.1). The interviews were conducted in Korean and audio-recorded with consent. After doing so, interviews were transcribed. Subsequently, interview transcripts were member checked to assure quality and trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The member checking process is often used to verify and assess the collected data to ensure the interview information has been captured correctly and reflects the interviewees thoughts and feelings (Doyle, 2007). Transcripts were reviewed and translated

(when needed) by the lead researcher who has proficiency in both English and Korean. Data saturation was reached by the fourteenth interview (Guest et al., 2006). At this point, many interviewees shared similar responses and no new emergent themes or information appeared in the data.

Table 4.1

Interview Descriptions

Name of the Subunit	Interviewee Position	Interviewee code	Interview method	Interview duration (mins)
PSC #1	Director	1	In-person	91
	Assistant Manager	2	In-person	52
	Assistant Manager	3	In-person	60
PSC #2	Director	4	In-person	78
	Senior Manager	5	In-person	51
	Assistant Manager	6	In-person	53
PSC #3	Director	7	In-person	51
	Director	8	In-person	32
	Director	9	In-person	40
PSC #4	Director	10	In-person	72
	Assistant Manager	11	In-person	59
	Senior Manager	12	In-person	44
PSC #5	Director	13	In-person	68
	Senior Manager	14	In-person	49

Data Analysis

A qualitative content analysis using ATLAS.ti 10.37 for Mac software was used to organize and analyze the collected data. This tool facilitated the grouping of “processes and outcomes across many cases [...] to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 95). A coding scheme was determined through a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive provisional codes (e.g., formation, management, outcomes) were determined in first cycle coding using the existing literature and conceptual framework (Miles et al., 2020). Subsequently, inductive coding

facilitated the detection of emergent codes (e.g., operational capacity, shared understanding, political interference) specific to this case. Next, second cycle coding enabled the grouping of codes into categories and allowed for the creation of higher order sub themes (Miles et al., 2020). Finally, selective coding helped define the relationship between themes and categories and select representative excerpts of the codes to convey the bigger story (Mills et al., 2009).

Findings

Our findings are broken down into three categories based on the initial research questions: IOR formation, issues and managing mechanisms, and outcomes. They are presented in the following sections by highlighting the specificities that are unique to merged sport organizations.

IOR Formation

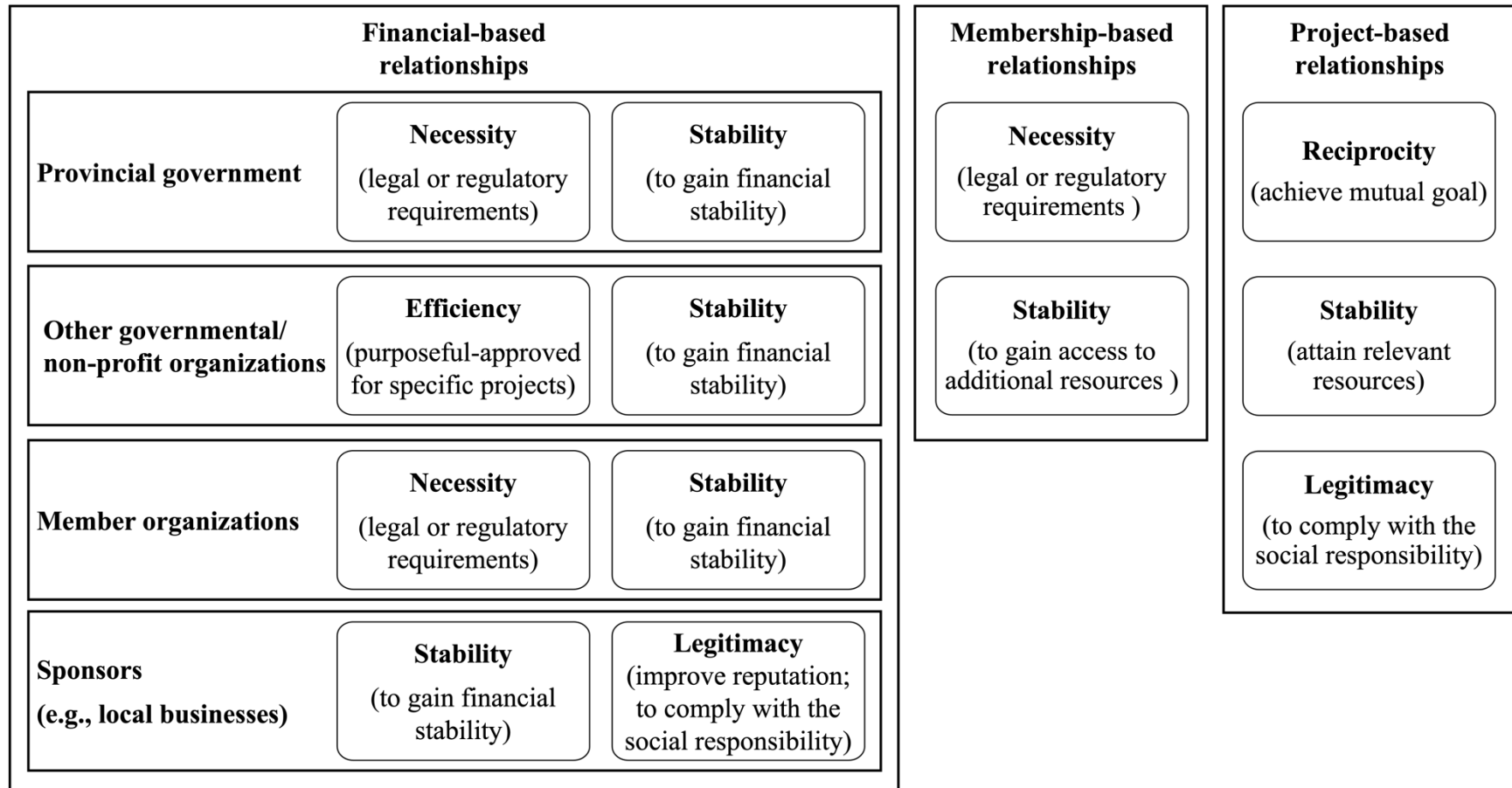
PSCs in this case formed various IORs including financial, membership, and project-based relationships. Using Oliver's (1990) framework, our study determined which factors influenced the formation of identified IORs. Additionally, we discovered that not all IORs were formed voluntarily, and some were highly influenced by institutional forces. See Figure 4.2 for an overview of the identified IORs and the factors that influenced to their formation.

Financial-Based Relationships

Financial governance and sponsor relationships were regularly discussed by interviewees. These relationships were mostly formed with the provincial government, governmental and non-profit organizations (e.g., KSOC), member organizations (e.g., PSFs, MSCs), and local private organizations (e.g., local businesses). Financial stability was a core reason behind the formation of these IORs by the PSCs.

Figure 4.2

An overview of the identified IORs and the factors that influenced to their formation.



Provincial Government. Data suggested that PSC's largest financial contributor is the provincial government since "almost 90% of [PSC's] budget and business expenditures are supported by [them]" (Participant 9). Their strong financial connection derived from Article 2-8 of the National Sports Promotion Act, which stipulates that provincial governments of South Korea are required to provide support to ensure organizational capacity for sport development and promotion. In return, PSCs are subject to an audit by the provincial councils as well as many policy-based procedures including annual financial reports to ensure their continued support. As a result, '*necessity*' (i.e., to meet legal or regulatory requirements) and '*stability*' (i.e., to gain financial stability) emerged as central determinants that contributed to the formation of these IORs.

Other Governmental and Non-profit Organizations. Interviewees also highlighted the IORs between the PSCs and the KSOC (the national sport body), Ministry of Sports, Culture and Tourism (MCST) (central government agency) and the Provincial Office of Education. However, the total financial contributions of these organizations paled in comparison to those of the provincial government. Specifically, participant 6 noted: "I think the funds from the KSOC are only about 5% of our total budget." Nevertheless, they are needed for '*efficiency*' (i.e., to improve financial input/output ratio) and '*stability*' (i.e., to gain financial resources) of the organization. According to participant 11, these funds were for dedicated projects and were considered investments in desired outcomes.

Member Organizations. Financial based IORs were also established with PSCs' member organizations (i.e., PSF and MSCs). These relationships had similar determinants to those of the provincial governments: '*necessity*' and '*stability*.' The formation of the relationships with the member organizations were facilitated by the PSC article of association (1-

4.1) which notes that PSCs must provide guidance and support for activities conducted by their member organizations. In return, member organizations must submit financial documents to the PSCs for governance and monitoring purposes. Participant 10 noted “since the PSFs and MSCs get subsidies from us and require our approval for the sport projects, our relationships with them are closer to a financial governance relationship.”

Sponsors. Sponsorship relationships with local private organizations (e.g., local businesses) were also evident and were linked to securing financial stability in their operations. Particularly, “sponsor relationships were often formed to aid in operating professional teams representing the PSC. In return, local private businesses improved their reputation by engaging in corporate social responsibility” said participant 3. The data suggested these type of sponsor relationships increased after the merger due to the revision of the National Sports Promotion Act (33-2) which allows the organizations to now make profit to some extent within the boundary of their policies. Consequently, ‘*stability*’ and ‘*legitimacy*’ (i.e., to improve reputation; to comply with social responsibility) emerged as influential determinants behind the formation of these relationships. Although sponsor relationships were created with local private organizations, “the usage of the collected donations were tracked and audited by the provincial government” given their affiliation (Participant 3).

Membership-Based Relationships

The South Korean sport system operates as a membership-based system centered around the KSOC, and thus, multiple IORs between member organizations exist “to comply with [their corresponding] rights and obligations,” said participant 4. These are stated in Article 33-2 of the National Sports Promotion Act, which indicates that all members of the system are obligated to support each other in trying to achieve the joint goal of sport development for both elite and

mass sport. Accordingly, membership-based relationships were described as “inseparable relationships” by participant 4. Although these IORs can be seen as forcible and involuntary given the policy links, participant 3 described these IORs as “supportive and cooperative in nature and complementary to each other” since they are vital in their operations. Thus, ‘*necessity*’ and ‘*stability*’ (i.e., access to support and resources) were the main factors influencing the formation of the membership based IORs.

Project-Based Relationships

Project-based relationships were also apparent in the data and were formed to achieve ‘*reciprocity*’ and ‘*stability*’ in this case. This type of IOR were often formed with multiple organizations with similar interests to realize joint goals as illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

When we host international-level sport events in Seoul, we usually work with multiple organizations to successfully host the event. In case of the Seoul International Marathon and the Korea Open Tennis Tournament, we work together with the Seoul metropolitan government, PSCs, national sport federations, international sport federations and the host organization to make the events successful (Participant 3).

In addition to having similar interests, participants commonly indicated that collaborating with organizations that have relevant resources to complete their ongoing sport projects was also crucial. Participant 1 expressed the criticality by using an example:

When we have a large-scale sport event or project like the national sports festival, it is hard for us to take care of every single aspect. For example, in the case of recruiting and managing volunteers, we request cooperation from the provincial volunteer center to carry out the event efficiently.

'Legitimacy' also influenced these IORs in some cases. Participant 12 said that PSCs carry out these charitable projects with the relevant organizations “to lead by example and improve our image in our provinces.” Moreover, participant 10 described how “these charitable activities help us connect with our community and show them what kind of organization we are through sport.”

IOR Management

Emergent themes related to IOR management in this context included several issues (i.e., relational and performance issues), and helpful mechanisms (i.e., informal/flexible processes, and formal/systematic processes) to mitigate these challenges.

Relational Risks

Relational risks are identified as issues (i.e., trust issues, interpersonal conflicts) that could affect the goal achievement of an IOR. Two central relational issues emerged in this case study: absence of shared understanding and trust issues.

Absence of Shared Understanding. Divergence between common understandings, values, and opinions emerged as a problem impacting IOR performance. This issue often came to light in financial relationships due to limited funds and spending control. Thus, varied understandings for the best use of financial resources created issues for the PSCs. According to participant 4 and 5, the PSCs had to “justify the value” of their project by “continuously persuading and communicating with them [i.e., provincial government].” Without a shared understanding of why this project is necessary, the PSCs couldn't move forward with implementation. Additional concerns were raised by participants in a case where financially supporting organizations (i.e., provincial government) have separate divisions for elite and mass sport. Participants perceived that this amplified difficulties in reaching mutually acceptable

understandings, especially for projects that incorporate both elite and mass sport development. As described by participant 5: “Our requests are most likely to get cut off” if they do not see the same value of a project. The following interview excerpt describes the issue more specifically:

We can proceed with our project only when the provincial government approves it. Otherwise, we cannot continue our business since we use their money. In this case, the only way for us to make this work is to justify our validity and communicate with them persistently. (Participant 5)

Similar problems emerged in the membership-based relationships, especially with regards to the relationships with member organizations (i.e., PSFs and MSCs). Participant 8 noted that although PSCs have the responsibility of granting funds to their member organizations, their ability to do so is limited by the insufficient funding they receive from provincial governments to support them. Consequently, conflicts occur when member organizations ask for more funding. Participant 7 lamented “we try to make them understand our current situation as to why we cannot give additional funding.” Others discussed how this misunderstanding led to trust issues and hostile relationships because of perceived unfairness between the PSCs and some member organizations. Participant 7 mentioned that “each member organization has different funding allocated to them depending on their annual sport project plans,” and therefore, some organizations are upset about how these funds are distributed. Hence, “there is always friction going on between us and the member organizations”, as noted by participant 1.

Trust Issues. A number of participants saw trust issues between organizations as the biggest threat to managing IORs since this deficiency creates additional issues and challenges (e.g., uncertainty and conflicts). As described by participant 3, distrust issues seemed to emerge in newly formed IORs as a result of their “unfamiliarity with each other”. For instance,

participant 3 discussed a new partnership with their provincial sports facility management center to gain access and carry out sport events. However, during their negotiation process, conflicts of interest regarding facility usage occurred. Additional interference from a third-party organization hoping to resolve this issue also backfired and ultimately impacted their interorganizational trust. Participant 2 said “this conflict developed into distrust in our relationship and prevented us from advancing our project since we had difficulties communicating.” Accordingly, participant 3 expressed the criticality of building mutual trust between partner organizations: “To be honest, when working with other organizations, I think trust and respect should be laid down as an initial base since most issues involve humans with emotions.”

Performance Risks

Participants indicated that most IORs were in good standing; however, two performance related issues: lack of administrative ability and a high degree of political interference remained.

Lack of Administrative Ability. Although PSCs maintain good interorganizational relationships with the PSFs, poor administrative ability of member organizations created an obstacle in the facilitation of joint projects. In some worst-case scenarios, PSFs’ lack of administrative ability led to interpersonal conflicts between the organizations because PSC staff had to do additional work to cover the PSF’s deficiencies. Participant 10 reported, “there are not many people who are really working for PSFs full-time [...] Most of them have separate jobs or businesses, and at the same time, they work for the PSFs as a side-work in terms of volunteerism”. In addition, participant 5 emphasized that it is hard to carry out their work since “some of the PSFs have no office to work at.” Because of this, they “have poor administrative ability” (Participant 6).

A High Degree of Political Interference. Interference by the provincial government also jeopardized the performance of some IORs in this case. Participants discussed how this issue escalated when the presidential election systems changed from ex-officio to popular elections. As a result, the provincial government's authority to audit became even more strict. In 2020, a special audit conducted by the provincial government on GSC uncovered 22 instances of illegal, unjust, and inappropriate conduct (Lee, 2020), which put GSC in a crisis that could have led to its dissolution. After this, participants said they felt constrained operating their sport projects since many of them involve government money, including joint projects done with partner organizations. In other words, "every activity using government subsidy became a problem." (Participant 4)

Informal/Flexible Processes

Informal and flexible processes helped maintain exemplar relationships with partner organizations. Leadership, meetings, workshops based on constant communication helped them to overcome a number of difficulties and to better facilitate their project.

Communication. As highlighted by participant 10, "The fastest and most reliable way to solve any issues is through communication." Communication was considered critical to building trust and developing a mutual understanding in the relationships. Communication methods varied from meetings and workshops to informal visits and phone calls. Primarily, managers attempted to facilitate their project or work out their problems via phone calls. Informal visits and workshops were helpful in some cases when member organizations lacked organizational capacity (e.g., no office, 100% voluntary employees). Participant 14 said, senior managers "constantly giving the motivation to facilitate their part of the work and monitoring their

progress through communication” was useful in facilitating projects and helped overcome member organization’s lack of managerial competency to some extent.

However, although flexible processes could aid in resolving issues and manage IORs, participants emphasized that it has become harder to leave it to their discretion after the merger due to severe political interference; participant 1 said “we need to judge how far we can use this flexibility discretion” to not result in any insolvable circumstances.

Formal/Systematic Processes

Because flexibility highly depends on one’s subjectivity, informal processes do not include procedures to resolve specific issues, and the scope of where they can be performed remains ambiguous. Thus, several formal processes were also used to help manage and formalize IORs in this context. Participant 6 noted that employing formal processes, such as policy-based decision-making, could undermine the state of the relationship, and thus, emphasized that these processes should be used as a “last resort.”

Providing User-Friendly Manuals. Participant 6 said “providing more user-friendly manuals and guidelines based on policies and regulations” to partner organizations progressed their projects. In the case of member organizations, including examples of how to proceed with the work helped alleviate their deficient administrative abilities. Participant 9 agreed stating “it is easier to advance our joint work more smoothly after giving the member organizations detailed manuals and step-by-step guidelines” even though it takes time for the employees at the PSC to make the manuals and guidelines.

Contracts & Official Documents. Contracts and official documents were regularly used to legally manage IORs in the PSC context. Specifically, contracts such as a memorandum of understandings (MoUs) were established with private sector organizations to formalize details

about the relationship. In cases with public or non-profit organizations, participant 6 described, “official (electronic) documents with an organization’s official seal” are also used to legally secure the agreements made with them. Since official documents act as “contracts and legal evidence,” participant 8 told how sending out official electronic documents regarding work requests often facilitated their work systematically with the partner organizations.

Policy-Based Decision-Making. When problems remained after using the regular informal processes listed above, participant 4 said that “we have no choice but to apply formal mechanisms involving policies and regulations into our decision-making process.” However, these procedures differ based on whether they are a PSC member and whether they have established a contractual agreement. For example, member organizations are guided by internal policies (e.g., articles of association, membership policies). When contracts exist with the partners “contractual agreements or policies” form the basis for further action (Participant 3). Participant 1 said that “seeking advice from the relevant standing committee is very useful in making ambiguous decisions” since they are professionals in their respective areas. Participant 5 argued that these formal interventions should be executed in a way where the partner’s authority isn’t violated.

IOR Outcomes

Four main IOR outcomes related to achieving PSC’s merger objectives emerged in the data analysis. These included contributing to the development of a new sports paradigm interconnecting mass, elite and school sport and increasing operational efficiency. Financial stability, increased community participation, improved service and delivery, as well as the promotion of sport diversification and grassroot sport clubs were also apparent. These outcomes will be further detailed in the following sections.

Financial Stability

Due to the regulatory bonds between the provincial governments and the PSCs, interviewees highlighted financial stability as a major outcome of IORs. These particular relationships helped PSCs supplement and subsidize ongoing projects. This was described by participant 13, who said there was an “increase in sponsor relationships with local private organizations after the merger which aided the PSC’s financial status to some extent.” However, “the perception of financial stability may differ from one employee to another” since employees manage different projects with various levels of financial support (Participant 10).

Increased Community Participation

Many community-level sport events across all age levels occurred as a result of IORs formed by the PSC resulting in increased community participation in sport after the merger. Participant 10, detailed how youth participation in sport increased because they were able to create more sport talent donation programs where “elite sport athletes representing our province visit schools to give students opportunity to experience and learn their sport as well as to promote a healthy lifestyle.” This program also targeted adults and seniors by: “promot[ing] a healthy lifestyle and encourage[ing] residents in our province to play sport in their daily lives.” (Participant 5). Other programs focused on seniors and were aimed at getting them more involved in sport: “several sport and physical education classes for the seniors in our province where we visit the senior citizen center in the purpose to promote not only wellness but also to promote joy in their lives.” (Participant 8). The number of classes also seems to be gradually increasing each year due to increased demand from senior participants.

Improved Service and Delivery System

IORs helped the PSCs improve their overall services by making delivery more efficient. Participant 4 emphasized challenges with planning and implementing a sport event without cooperating with member organizations “because they know more about the characteristics, infrastructure, systems, clubs, and human resources of their respective sport than we do.” Participant 6 discussed the improved quality by indicating that “the results of our evaluation usually show a high satisfaction towards our service.” This was supported by participant 2 who said, “we always undertake a survey, to measure service satisfaction, once the event/project are completed” to help improve future projects and events. However, “it is difficult for us to trust the results 100% since most of the people who participated in the event usually give positive responses” (Participant 6); thus, there is a need to critically review the results in order to provide elevated services to the community.

Promotion of Sport Diversification & Grassroot Sport Clubs

“The key to becoming an advanced country in sport depends on the diversification of sports and the promotion of more grassroot sport clubs across the nation,” said participant 3. Before the merger, there weren’t many opportunities for people to enjoy sports because “psychological accessibility” (Participant 4) created a barrier to participation. Many thought that engaging in sport activities meant they had to become an elite athlete in that discipline. After the merger, relevant divisions and/or teams were added to focus on diversifying sports and building a grassroot sport system “to help establish an active environment where now people can do sport just because they enjoy it without having any pressure to become an elite athlete” (Participant 4). To do so, PSCs are currently developing and promoting more than 10 sports in their province and establishing sport clubs by cooperating with “the KSOC, national sport federations, various

provincial organizations, including provincial government, office of education, member organizations, sport facility management office, and, in some cases, the international federations” (Participant 3). As a result, participants said that various unpopular sports have gained attention, and sport clubs have increased in quantity and provided “a platform where they can learn and enjoy sport and socialize with people through similar interests in sport in our community at all age levels” (Participant 7).

Interviewees purported that cooperating with other organizations helped to achieve these outcomes successfully and thus pursuance of their merger goals more efficiently. These findings also reveal that managing potential IOR issues with a combination of formal and flexible mechanisms is crucial to achieving their desired outcomes. While we only specified the IOR outcomes related to the pursuit of the PSC merger goals, participants indicated additional benefits that have been created as a result of forming IORs, including job creation for retired athletes, facility improvement, and utilization. Detailed implications regarding the project’s findings will be provided in the discussion section next.

Discussion

First, understanding the difference between sport mergers and business mergers is important because they have different objectives and outcomes (Slack, 2002). Business mergers are primarily aimed at achieving long-term financial profitability and competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1972; Sudarsanam, 2003). Mergers in sport prioritize the attainment of intangible assets such as enhancing team brand value, securing player contracts, and strengthening fan loyalty (e.g., Boen et al., 2008), the achievement of financial sustainability, and generating greater social and community impact (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to note that

understanding differences between sport and business mergers ensures appropriate strategies are developed and implemented to achieve merger goals in the sport context.

With this stance, the main scholarly implications of this study derive from its findings that suggest that IORs can help merged sport organizations achieve their desired outcomes (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2020) by providing a comprehensive understanding of how IORs impact merged sport organizations. We did not limit our inclusion of IORs by using the following definition: “relationships between and among organizations” (Cropper et al., 2008, p. 4). This allowed us to have a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation in the study. Consequently, we suggest several determinants that influenced the formation of IORs (financial, membership, project-based), potential issues (relational/performance), managerial skills (informal or formal) required to achieve the desired outcomes of the merger goals, as well as how post-merger challenges may impact IORs. A more detailed review of these findings and their implications is presented in the following section.

IOR Formation

Oliver’s (1990) determinants allowed us to examine many motives (i.e., stability, necessity, legitimacy, efficiency, reciprocity) that supported IOR formation in our case. These were categorized into three broad groupings: financial-based relationships (to pursue financial stability), membership-based partnerships (to conform to membership obligations), and project-based partnerships (to increase operational efficiency for service delivery). In line with Barringer and Harrison’s (2000) findings, PSCs formed IORs to gain access to resources, improve operational efficiency or to attain other desired outcomes including legitimacy. ‘Stability’ was the most significant determinant for all IORs in this case, while ‘necessity’ also played a distinct role in financial-based relationships (formed with public, governmental, and non-profit

organizations) and membership-based relationships given their regulatory bonds (i.e., National Sports Promotion Act, article of association). Moreover, our study found that not all IORs were formed voluntarily. Although IORs based on necessity were formed as a result of their policies (i.e., National Sports Promotion Act), we found that they can also have a strong cooperative and voluntary nature, depending on the way the policies and regulations were written (cf. Babiak, 2003; Hoff et al., 2020). ‘Reciprocity,’ ‘stability,’ and in some cases, ‘legitimacy’ were the focal reasons for establishing project-based partnerships.

IOR Management

Our study also determined several issues (i.e., relational and performance risks) that impacted IOR performance. Relational risks, precipitated by the lack of common interest and understanding of mutual goals, delayed IOR progress. This issue was mainly found in financial-based relationships formed by ‘necessity’ which often led to divergent motives and goals (e.g., Babiak, 2007; Moshtari, 2006). Regarding this issue, Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) indicated the importance of having similar values and shared understanding through constant face-to-face communication since it is more effective in the immediate achievement of outcomes such as taking their plan and work to the next step.

Distrust also created conflict between managers and eventually impacted the overall performance of IORs. Participants disclosed that distrust must be managed since this often negatively affects IOR outcomes. Thus, establishing good interpersonal relationships with managers from partner organizations was emphasized by participants as vital in stimulating effective coordination of IORs. Regarding this, Hardy et al. (1998) noted that reciprocal trust is critical because it can reduce complexity, resolve conflicts, and help maintain relationships in the long-term. In this study, trust issues often emerged in newly formed IORs since the organizations

were less familiar with each other. This finding supports Schilke and Cook's (2013) research which emphasizes the importance of constructing initial trust between partner organizations to avoid additional conflicts since facilitating IORs depend on personal connections. According to Jap and Anderson (2003), this can be achieved through clear and open communication, sharing mutual understanding of their roles and goals in their relationships. In sum, as Hardy et al. (1998) noted, building mutual trust through ongoing communication was vital for long lasting cooperative relationship in this case.

Two significant issues (i.e., lack of administrative ability and high degree of political interference) hindered relationships in this case. A lack of administrative ability commonly emerged in IORs with the member organizations of PSC (i.e., PSFs). Although they had good relationships, in reality, their organizational capacity was impacted by workplace limitations and inadequate staffing. Many researchers have highlighted that partnering up with organizations that have balanced organizational fit in terms of managerial compatibility can aid in achieving goals more efficiently (e.g., Barnes & Fisher, 2006; La Piana & Hayes, 2005).

Other issues highlighted in the research findings was a high degree of political interference by the provincial governments and councils. Two main reasons behind why this issue became intensified emerged. First, more than 90% of PSC's annual budgets are subsidized by provincial governments. Thus, they must adhere to a number of rules and policies set forth by the provincial government. Second, changes to the PSCs' presidential election system (ex-officio to popular election) intensified the interference. As a result, their annual audit became stricter and has had a direct impact on every aspect of PSCs activities, including collaborative projects that use subsidies provided by the provincial government. A similar incident was presented in Ivašković & Čater's (2018) study. The study demonstrated that sport clubs that heavily depended

on public funds had a negative impact on their performance since the public agencies held a significant influence over the organization. Thus, while these issues are PSC-specific results, these can be a useful reference for non-profit sport organizations since they heavily rely on subsidies provided by the public and governmental organizations (e.g., Berrett & Slack, 2008).

A number of helpful mechanisms (i.e., informal and formal processes) were utilized by organizations in this case to deal with IOR management problems (i.e., relational and performance risks). PSCs tended to rely on informal processes to resolve issues because they facilitated the development of trust. Similar to Hoff et al.'s (2020) results, communication was important tool used to manage IORs in this case in terms of increasing the level of trust and commitment. Different methods of communication (i.e., meetings, workshops, informal visits, and phone calls) were successful in facilitating projects, motivating partners with a lack of organizational capacity, and when constructing shared understandings of their roles and goals in an IOR.

Although it was not a mandatory task for managers at the PSCs, considering the poor working environment of the member organizations, making and providing user-friendly manuals by reinterpreting policies and regulations into simplified versions was helpful in facilitating joint projects. On the other hand, formal processes, including contracts, official documents and policy-based decision-making helped formalize IORs by describing roles and tasks, as well as by facilitating work in a systematic way. Babiak and Thibault (2008) noted that informal processes allow organizations to overcome challenges and tension between partners and can help develop trust in these forms of relationships. In the same vein, participants in this case demonstrated that informal processes ensured their relationships more friendly, interactive and motivated (cf. Hoff et al., 2020).

IOR Outcomes

As a result of implementing various mechanisms to enhance efficacy in their goal achievement, PSCs were able to gain various benefits. Among all, financial stability was perceived as a major benefit since it contributed highly to PSCs' operations. By achieving increased community participation, promotion of sport diversification and grassroots sport clubs, PSCs were able to contribute to developing a sport paradigm that interconnects elite, mass, and school sport since many projects regarding these outcomes incorporated all three aspects of sport. In addition, participants highlighted other benefits that resulted from forming and managing IORs, including job creation for retired athletes, and improved awareness of human rights in sport.

Regarding the job creation for retired athletes, participant 1 noted that a considerable number of athletes who dedicated their entire lives to training for their sport faced the challenge of not knowing what to do after retirement. To address this issue, retired athletes were provided with employment opportunities in collaboration with job consulting and professional education companies. Various sport talent programs and sport instructor education coordinated with member organizations were also conducted to help retired athletes connect their skills to their profession and give back to the community through sport. Consequently, the established support system has resulted in an increase in the number of athletes who have successfully undergone “resocialization” (Participant 10.)

After the tragic death of triathlon elite athlete Suk Hyun Choi, new policies were added to the National Sports Promotion Law in 2022 to protect human rights in South Korean sport community. The Korea Sport Ethics Center was established in 2020 to promote human rights awareness among elite sports teams, and PSCs have been working with them. Participants

acknowledged ongoing education efforts to improve human rights awareness in sport, despite the difficulty of quantifying the effect.

The achievement of IOR outcomes were possible since many IORs were formed with organizations that required resources (i.e., tangible and intangible assets) that added “strategic, functional, and operational value” to the PSCs (Babiak, 2007, p. 368). Moreover, as many sport IOR researchers (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008; Hoff et al., 2020; Misner and Doherty, 2013) emphasized the importance of the interconnectedness of the IOR development process (i.e., formation-management-outcomes), our study also demonstrated that not only forming IORs but detecting issues and managing relationships by using both informal and formal mechanisms was the key to gaining fruitful benefits. Consequently, findings provide practical implications of how IORs can help achieve intangible assets, including operational efficiency, financial stability, and sport and sport for development.

Impact of Post-Merger Challenges

The exploration of the merger case of PSCs (provincial-level non-profit sport organizations), where a merger was forced by a large-scale institutional change, offers insights into the practice by providing possible post-merger challenges faced by merged non-profit sport organizations. Specifically, this study determined that post-merger challenges can directly impact existing and new IORs.

According to participants, the most substantial post-merger challenge faced by PSCs was political intervention, via financial audits, by the provincial government and councils. The revisions made to the PSC’s presidential election systems, aimed at enhancing political autonomy of the PSCs, inadvertently intensified this challenge. The environmental uncertainty

created by these interventions affected both existing and new IORs since there were concerns about future government funding.

After PSCs were designated as non-profit organizations with special status (a legal basis for conducting profitable businesses) in 2021, participants noted they are currently developing explicit policies and legal guidelines to help manage this uncertainty. Their main objective is to secure additional sponsorships to achieve financial self-sufficiency in the long term. Although this initiative is still in its early stages, as of 2022, CSC has established 12 sponsor relationships with local businesses in their province. This highlights the importance of implementing well-planned, long-term strategies (such as IORs in this case) to facilitate the success of sport mergers, as emphasized by Kościółek and Nessel (2015).

While various IOR issues were highlighted, the PSC merger (merging of elite sport and mass sport organizations) also exacerbated the lack of shared understanding, particularly with organizations responsible for financial resources (i.e., provincial government). This challenge made it difficult for PSCs to reach mutually acceptable agreements, especially with projects designed to link both elite and mass sport. The persistent exchange of communication contributed to mitigating this problem by establishing mutual understanding regarding their respective roles and objectives inside their IORs.

IORs as a Catalyst for Achieving Sport Merger Goals

Importantly, IORs played a crucial role in pursuing the merger goals in this case. The purpose of the PSC merger is to contribute to creating an innovative sport paradigm that interconnects mass, elite, and school sport. IORs that were created after the merger allowed the PSCs to contribute to the development of a sport paradigm that interconnected all three sports. Specifically, incorporating mass, elite, and school sports into various projects and initiatives has

been a common feature since the merger. This has enabled the successful implementation of initiatives aimed at increasing community sport participation, promoting sport diversification, developing grassroots sports clubs, and making a platform where everyone can enjoy sports. Since many countries have separate elite and mass sport organizations, this research provides further implications into how a merger can benefit the country's sport delivery and operations more efficiently as a singular system by using IORs.

Conclusion

Our study explored the impact of IORs on merged sport organizations. Findings highlighted that IOR determinants differed across different types of relationships. Moreover, they can also be influenced by national, provincial, organizational level policies. In addition, post-merger challenges influenced existing IORs and created barriers to the formation of new ones. An absence of shared understanding and distrust were identified as relational issues that were critical to IOR performance. Even organizations that had 'good' existing relationships experienced issues due to partners' lack of administrative abilities and intensive political interference. A series of strategies (i.e., informal and formal processes) to manage these challenges were apparent. Findings emphasized the importance of using informal processes (i.e., communication and providing reproduced easy-to-comprehend manuals) first since they helped establish interactive relationships. As a result of forming and properly managing relationships, PSCs did have some fruitful outcomes that were related to their merger goals. As such, our study argued that IORs can help merged sport organizations achieve their merger goals.

Although the examination of the PSC merger case offered insights into how IORs impact merged sport organizations, several limitations were noted. Our findings are limited to one specific merger case, where a merger was forced by large-scale institutional change.

Additionally, this case is embedded in the South Korean sport context, where non-profit sport organizations are highly influenced by their institutional environment. Hence, results can be contingent depending on the type of organization, national context, institutional background, and the extent of control and impact of related stakeholders. Therefore, conducting further investigations of sport merger cases in diverse contexts is crucial to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of IORs in merged sport organizations.

Moreover, despite the increasing attention given to sport merger studies, it has been suggested that “sports mergers are often justified with the same arguments used for business mergers” (Boen et al., 2008, p.166), which is common in nascent research fields, resulting in a paucity of literature on this topic. Considering the acknowledged importance of using alternate strategies alongside mergers to manage their environments (Pfeffer, 1972) and the high failure rate of mergers regarding internal integration and performance, one suggestion is that future research should concentrate on exploring strategies that help merged sport organizations thrive in diverse environments. Another suggestion is to extend the current sport merger research by investigating the factors that lead to their success, including sociocultural integration (e.g., Byun et al., 2022), leadership (e.g., Kihl et al., 2013), and relevant strategies (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2021; Kościółek & Nessel, 2015) to deepen our understanding and provide reliable sport-specific insights into mergers.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Mitigating negative factors that facilitate merger failure has been a major concern in business for several decades. As a result, much of the work focusing on mergers explores merger success factors and in particular the significance of the ‘fit’ between merging organizations (Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006). Mergers in the sport industry have also been apparent in recent years (Boen et al., 2008). Despite this growth, and the high potential of merger failure (Epstein, 2005), there is a scarcity of research exploring strategies to help merged sport organizations facilitate merger success. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact of IORs on merged sport organizations. An embedded single case study exploring the unique merger case(s) of PSC(s) in South Korea was developed and explored using the three stages of IOR development as a framework. This approach extended on existing research utilizing the IOR development process as a framework to aid in examining sport-specific findings (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008; Hoff et al., 2020; Misener & Doherty, 2013).

Discussions and Implications

First, it is important to note the difference between sport mergers and business mergers. Business mergers are predominantly pursued with the objective of augmenting firms’ competitive advantage and pursuing long-term financial profitability (Pfeffer, 1972; Sudarsanam, 2003). In contrast, mergers in sport prioritize the attainment of intangible assets. For example, when sport teams merge, their primary objectives may include enhancing team brand value,

securing player contracts, and strengthening fan loyalty (e.g., Boen et al., 2008). In the case of non-profit sport organizations, mergers may be driven by a desire to achieve financial sustainability and generate a greater social and community impact (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2008). While this may not hold much relevance in the context of business mergers, it is crucial to comprehend how merged sport organizations can effectively attain their merger objectives from a sport specific perspective.

The main scholarly implications of this study derive from its findings that suggests that IORs can help merged sport organizations to achieve their desired outcomes (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2020). This research provides a better understanding of what type of IORs merged sport organizations may form, their main motives, as well as potential issues and how they manage them. In doing so, the findings of this study shed light on the role of IORs in enhancing the effectiveness of achieving merger goals for PSCs. This study also highlights the impact of post-merger challenges on existing as well as new IORs. Furthermore, given the innately collaborative nature of sport organizations, and the distinct objectives of sport mergers, this study contributes to building reliable sport-specific insights into mergers. A more detailed review of these findings and their implications is presented in the following section.

IOR Formation

Using Oliver's (1990) determinants, data revealed that a variety of motives (i.e., stability, necessity, legitimacy, efficiency, reciprocity) encouraged the formation of IORs in the PSC case including financial-based relationships (to pursue financial stability), membership-based relationships (to conform to membership obligations), and project-based relationships (to increase operational efficiency for service delivery). As Barringer and Harrison (2000) denoted, organizations collaborate to achieve desired outcomes including access to resources. Thus,

‘stability’ was an important reason to secure IORs in this case. In addition, ‘necessity’ was particularly important for financial-based relationships (formed with public, governmental, and non-profit organizations) and membership-based relationships since they were impacted by significant institutional pressures including the National Sports Promotion Act and articles of association. This suggests that not all IORs in this case were established voluntarily, but were formed under pressure from other factors in their organizational environment. Despite this, IORs were found to maintain a cooperative and voluntary nature (cf. Babiak, 2003; Hoff et al., 2020). In project-based relationships, IORs were created with organizations that have relevant resources and similar interests to support various initiatives. In this case, many project-based relationships were formed to host various sport events (i.e., international, national, and community level), and to carry out charitable projects that help connect with the community and improve their image. As such, ‘reciprocity,’ ‘stability,’ and in some cases, ‘legitimacy’ was critical to their formation.

IOR Management

The analysis of the PSC case revealed several issues (i.e., relational and performance risks) that had the potential to impact IOR management. A number of helpful management mechanisms (i.e., informal and formal processes) also emerged. Relational risks included a lack of common interest and understanding between the partners in the IOR. This was mostly found in IORs based on ‘necessity’ such as financial-based relationships with the provincial government, other public/governmental organizations, and member organizations. This issue was particularly critical since they were not formed voluntarily but rather as a result of their existing policies (e.g., Babiak, 2007; Moshtari, 2006). Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) indicated the importance of having similar values and a shared understanding because it can facilitate the immediate achievement of outcomes related to the progression of their work.

Distrust also emerged in this case. This issue created conflict between managers and eventually impacted the overall performance of IORs in this case (e.g., Ring & Van De Ven, 1994; Von Krogh et al., 2000). Trust issues typically emerged in newly formed IORs where the organizations were not familiar with each other. Thus, participants disclosed that interorganizational trust needed to be managed in the initial formation stage. This finding supports Schilke and Cook's (2013) research that emphasizes the importance of constructing initial trust between partner organizations to avoid additional conflict. Hardy et al. (1998) also noted that reciprocal trust is vital for long lasting cooperative relationships.

Two performance issues (i.e., lack of administrative ability and high degree of political interference) also emerged. A lack of administrative ability in partner organizations was mostly found in the IORs between member organizations of PSCs (i.e., PSFs and MSCs). Despite their strong and positive relationships, the unfortunate reality of member organizations' capacity including proper workplaces and low numbers of full-time/paid staff delayed the achievement of their goals. Many researchers have highlighted that partnering with organizations with a similar organizational fit in terms of managerial compatibility can aid in achieving goals more efficiently (e.g., Barnes & Fisher, 2006; La Piana & Hayes, 2005).

Another performance risk that our findings highlighted was a high degree of political interference by the provincial government and council. Two main reasons behind why this issue became intensified were detected. First, PSCs are highly subsidized by the provincial government and are required to participate in required audit practices. Second, change in the PSCs' presidential election system (ex-officio to popular election) after the merger intensified the interference since provincial mayors no longer represent the PSCs within the government system. As a result, their annual audit is more extreme than before the merger, and this has

impacted many activities including collaborative projects. Although these performance risks are PSC-specific results, these findings can be a useful reference for non-profit sport organizations that are highly involved with public and governmental organizations.

Both informal and flexible mechanisms were utilized to help manage IORs with regards to their relational and performance challenges. In this study, informal processes are described as flexible mechanisms that depends on one's subjectivity and judgement. They were used primarily to resolve surface issues and were helpful in growing trust in relationships and on an interpersonal level. Similar to Hoff et al.'s (2020) results, communication was important for successful management of IORs in this case. Implementation of various methods of communication (i.e., meetings, workshops, informal visits, and phone calls) was useful in facilitating projects, motivating partners that lacked organizational capacity, and even when constructing shared understandings in the IOR. Although not mandatory, considering the poor working environment of the member organizations, making and providing user-friendly manuals by reinterpreting the policies and regulations into visual displays and simple language were helpful in facilitating their joint projects more effectively without and without delays.

On the other hand, formal processes, including contracts, official documents and policy-based decision-making helped formalize IORs and facilitate their work in a systematic way. Babiak and Thibault (2008) noted that informal processes allow organizations to overcome challenges and tension between partners and thus help grow trust in their relationships. In the same vein, participants in this case illustrated that informal processes helped ensure their relationships were more friendly, interactive and motivated (cf. Hoff et al., 2020). Moreover, participants argued it was important to use these flexible mechanisms first followed by the

formal processes as a last option since they were more useful in creating interactive relationships.

IOR Outcomes

By implementing various mechanisms to enhance efficacy in their goal achievement, PSCs were able to gain financial stability, and other objectives that align with their merger goals. These objectives include increased community participation, improved service and delivery, and promotion of sport diversification and grassroots sport clubs. Findings from this study indicated that IORs appeared to facilitate merged sport organizations in accomplishing their merger objectives. Additionally, participants highlighted other benefits that resulted from forming and managing IORs such as job creation for retired athletes, and improved awareness of human rights in sport.

Regarding the job creation for retired athletes, participant 1 noted that a considerable number of athletes who dedicated their entire lives to training for their sport faced the challenge of not knowing what to do after retirement. To address this issue, retired athletes were provided with employment opportunities in collaboration with job consulting and professional education companies. Various sport talent programs and sport instructor education coordinated with member organizations were also conducted to help retired athletes connect their skills to their profession and give back to the community through sport. Consequently, the established support system has resulted in an increase in the number of athletes who have successfully undergone “resocialization” (Participant 10).

Another important benefit was improved awareness of human rights in sport. After the tragic death of a triathlon elite athlete, Suk Hyun Choi, in 2022, new policies were added to the National Sports Promotion Law to protect all human rights in South Korean Sport. To further

promote human rights awareness among elite sports teams, including athletes and coaches, the Korea Sport Ethics Center was established in 2020, and PSCs have been working with them. Despite the difficulty of quantifying the effect of such awareness, the participants acknowledged that education efforts have been ongoing, leading to an improvement in human rights awareness in sport. Participant 5 stated, “Human rights education in sport has only been around for two to three years nationwide. I believe this education has raised awareness of human rights among athletes and team leaders.”

The achievement of IOR outcomes were possible since IORs were formed with organizations with relevant resources (i.e., tangible and intangible assets) that added “strategic, functional, and operational value” to the PSCs (Babiak, 2007, p. 368). Moreover, as much of the sport IOR research (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008; Hoff et al., 2020; Misner and Doherty, 2013) has emphasized interconnectedness at each stage of the IOR development process is important. Specifically, our research findings demonstrated that detecting IOR issues, including post-merger challenges, and managing relationships by using both informal and formal mechanisms is the key to gain fruitful benefits at the end. As a result, findings provide practical implications of how IORs can help achieve intangible assets, including operational efficiency, financial stability, and sport and sport for development.

The Impact of Post-Merger Challenges

The exploration of the merger case of PSCs (provincial-level non-profit sport organizations), where a merger was forced by a large-scale institutional change, offers insights into the practice by providing possible post-merger challenges (i.e., increased political intervention, non-profit with special status, amplified lack of shared understanding, new presidential election system of PSCs) faced by merged non-profit sport organizations.

Specifically, this study determined that post-merger challenges can directly impact existing and new IORs.

The most substantial post-merger challenge experienced by PSCs was the increased political intervention (e.g., via financial audits) from the provincial government and councils. Participants noted this issue intensified following revisions to the PSC's presidential election systems (i.e., from ex-officio to popular election). Modifications to the election system were intended to enhance PSC's political autonomy, however, they actually resulted in intensified political interventions. These interventions impacted both existing and new IORs because of the uncertainty generated about obtaining future government funding.

Following the creation of a policy designating PSCs as non-profit organizations with special status (a legal basis for conducting profitable businesses) in 2021, participants noted that PSCs are currently exploring and creating explicit policies and legal guidelines to help mitigate this uncertainty. Particularly, their main purpose is to secure additional sponsorship in order to become more self-sufficient in the long run. While these efforts are in the early stages, CSC has already formed 12 sponsor relationships with local businesses in their province to help deal with this issue as of 2022. This finding reinforces the importance of implementing carefully prepared long-term strategies (i.e., IORs in this case) to aid in sport merger success (cf. Kościółek & Nessel, 2015).

While various IOR issues emerged in this study, the lack of shared understanding was further amplified after the PSC merger (merging of elite sport and mass sport organizations). Concerns were expressed about the challenges created by a lack of shared understanding with financial supporting organizations (i.e., provincial government) that have separate divisions for elite and mass sport. This difference made it more difficult for PSCs to reach mutually

acceptable agreements with these organizations, particularly since various projects have been designed to link both elite and mass sport after the merger.

IORs as a Catalyst for Achieving Sport Merger Goals

In this study, IORs were discovered to play a crucial role in supporting the achievement of merger goals. The purpose of the PSC merger was to contribute to creating an innovative sport paradigm that interconnects mass, elite, and school sport. IORs that were created after the merger allowed the PSCs to contribute to the development of a sport paradigm that interconnected all three sports. Specifically, incorporating mass, elite, and school sports into various projects and initiatives has been a common feature since the merger. This has enabled the successful implementation of initiatives aimed at increasing community sport participation, promoting sport diversification, developing grassroots sports clubs, and making a platform where everyone can enjoy sports. Since many countries have separate elite and mass sport organizations, this research provides further implications into how a merger can benefit the country's sport delivery and operations more efficiently as a singular system by using IORs.

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Directions

Given the lack of knowledge on the role of IORs as a strategy for merged sport organizations, the primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact of IORs on merged sport organizations, by closely looking at the merger case of PSCs in South Korea. As Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) said, "all value creation takes place after the acquisition" (p. 15). Thus, the IOR development process (formation, management, outcomes) was used as a lens to investigate the drivers of IOR formation, issues that hindered the development process, and managerial mechanisms that assisted in mitigating the surfaced issues in order to achieve desired outcomes.

Findings highlighted the varied determinants behind the formation of IOR in this context. Moreover, policies at the national, provincial, and organizational levels were discovered to have an impact on IOR formation. Furthermore, post-merger challenges, such as increased political intervention, changes in policies (i.e., PSC's presidential election system, non-profit with special status), and lack of shared understanding, had impact on existing IORs and worked as a determinant in the formation of new relationships. Absence of shared understanding and distrust was identified as relational risks that had the potential to impact IOR performance. Additional environmental factors such as partner's lack of administrative ability and intensive political interference also had the potential to hinder IOR performance. A series of mechanisms (i.e., informal and formal processes) to manage these challenges emerged. Findings emphasized the importance of using informal processes (i.e., communication and providing reproduced easy-to-comprehend manuals) initially since they helped establish interactive relationships. As a result of forming, mitigating issues and managing relationships between organizations, PSCs had multiple fruitful outcomes that were related to their merger goals. As such, this study suggests that IORs can help merged sport organizations pursue their merger goals.

Although the examination of the PSC merger case offered insights into how IORs impact merged sport organizations, several limitations were noted. The findings of this study are limited to one specific merger case, where a merger was forced by large-scale institutional change. Additionally, this case is embedded in the South Korean sport context, where non-profit sport organizations are highly influenced by their institutional environment. In other words, results can differ depending on which specific case is selected. For example, the results can vary by type of organization (e.g., public, private, or non-profit), the institutional environment, and the degree of power and influence related stakeholders. Thus, to provide a more comprehensive understanding

of how IORs impact merged sport organizations, additional sport merger cases in alternative contexts (e.g., different country, different type of organization, voluntary mergers) should be examined to expand our knowledge in this area.

Moreover, although sport merger studies have been gaining traction in recent years, it has been argued that “sports mergers are often justified with the same arguments used for business mergers” (Boen et al., 2008, p. 166). As this is often the case with emerging research areas, the specific body of literature is scarce. Considering the acknowledged importance of using alternate strategies alongside mergers to manage their environments (Pfeffer, 1972) and the high failure rate of mergers regarding internal integration and performance, one suggestion is that future research should focus on exploring strategies that help merged sport organizations to survive in varied environments. It would also be important to expand existing sport merger studies by conducting additional research on the factors that drive sport merger success. Previous sport merger studies indicated the importance of sociocultural integration (e.g., Byun et al., 2022), leadership (e.g., Kihl et al., 2013), implementing pertinent strategies (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2021; Kościółek & Nessel, 2015). This will allow us to not only deepen our understanding but also provide robust sport-specific insights into mergers.

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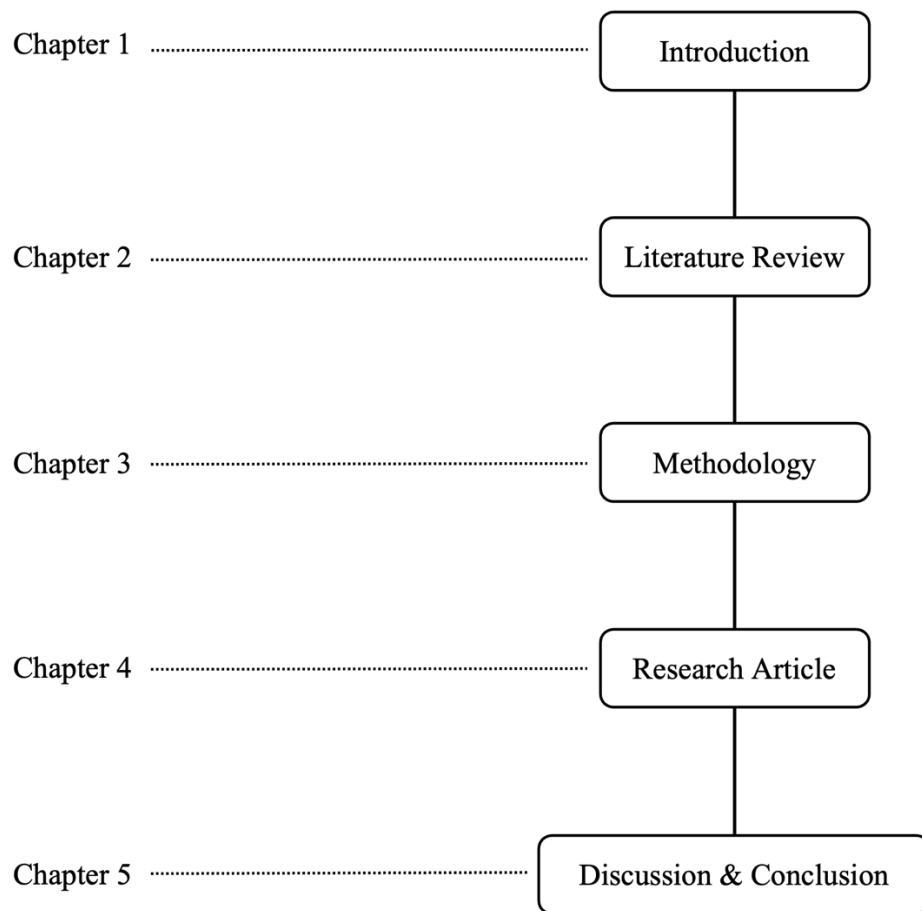
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Thesis Structure



APPENDIX B

A Summary of IOR Definitions from the General Management Literature

Sources	Definition
Emerson (1972, p. 3)	“interactive relations between two parties based upon reciprocal reinforcement”
Pfeffer (1976, p. 398)	a relationship “to manage inter-organizational interdependence”
Van de Ven (1976, p. 25)	“a social action system on the premise that it exhibits the basic elements of any organized form of collective behavior” “temporary or long-lasting” relationship of organizations to “transact resources among each other”
Cook (1977, p. 62)	“networks of exchange relations”
Hardy et al. (2003, p. 323)	“a cooperative, inter-organizational relationship that is negotiated in an ongoing communicative process, and which relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control”

APPENDIX C

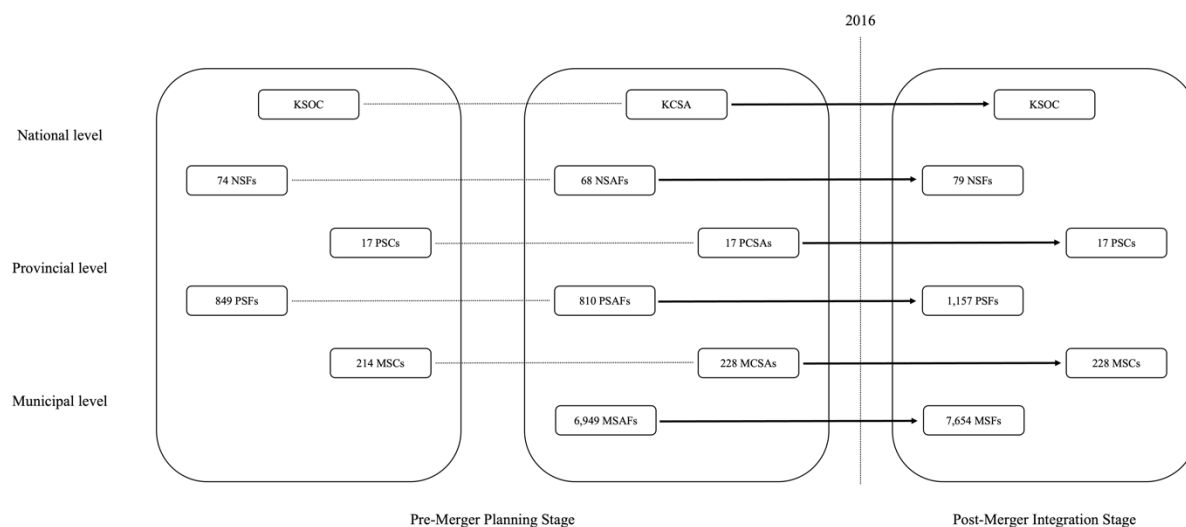
Popular Types of IORs and Definitions

Type of IORs	Definition	Sources
Collaboration	“A collection of loosely connected or closely knit organizations that share resources, which may help member organizations achieve some strategic objectives.”	Arya & Lin, 2007, p. 698
Cooperation	“The process by which individuals, groups, and organizations come together, interact, and form psychological relationships for mutual gain or benefit.”	Smith et al., 1995, p. 10
Partnerships	“Purposive strategic relationships between independent firms who share compatible goals, strive for mutual benefit, and acknowledge a high level of mutual interdependence.”	Mohr & Spekman, 1994, p. 135
Strategic alliances	“Strategic alliances are voluntary cooperative interfirm agreements aimed at achieving competitive advantage for the partners.”	Das & Teng, 2000, p. 33
Joint Ventures	“The joint venture concept involves the creation of a new, separate, organizational entity, jointly owned and controlled by the parent organizations.”	Pfeffer & Nowak, 1976, p. 400
Coalition	“Coalitions are temporary, means oriented, alliances among individuals or groups which differ in goal.”	Gamson, 1961, p. 374

APPENDIX D

The Breakdown of the Pre- and Post-Merger Process of the Korean Sport System

The below figure describes the numeric changes in organizations based on the pre- and post-merger process of the Korean Sport System.



Note. PCSA: Provincial Council of Sport for All, MCSA: Municipal Council of Sport for All, NSAF: National Sport for All Federations, PSAF: Provincial Sport for All Federations, MSAF: Municipal Sport for All Federations.

APPENDIX E

The List of Current 17 Provincial Sport Councils in South Korea

No.	List of Provinces in South Korea	List of Provincial Sport Councils (Pre-Merger: 34)	List of Provincial Sport Councils (Post-Merger: 17)
1	Seoul	Seoul Sports Council Seoul Council of Sports for All	Seoul Sports Council
2	Busan	Busan Sports Council Busan Council of Sports for All	Busan Sports Council
3	Daegu	Busan Sports Council Busan Council of Sports for All	Daegu Sports Council
4	Incheon	Incheon Sports Council Incheon Council of Sports for All	Incheon Sports Council
5	Gwangju	Gwangju Sports Council Gwangju Council of Sports for All	Gwangju Sports Council
6	Daejeon	Daejeon Sports Council Daejeon Council of Sports for All	Daejeon Sports Council
7	Ulsan	Ulsan Sports Council Ulsan Council of Sports for All	Ulsan Sports Council
8	Sejong	Sejong Sports Council Sejong Council of Sports for All	Sejong Sports Council
9	Gyeonggi	Gyeonggi Sports Council Gyeonggi Council of Sports for All	Gyeonggi-do Sports Council
10	Gangwon	Gangwon Sports Council Gangwon Council of Sports for All	Gangwon-do Sports Council
11	Chungbuk	Chungbuk Sports Council Chungbuk Council of Sports for All	Chungbuk Sports Council
12	Chungnam	Chungnam Sports Council Chungnam Council of Sports for All	Chungnam Sports Council
13	Jeonbuk	Jeonbuk Sports Council Jeonbuk Council of Sports for All	Jeonbuk Sports Council
14	Jeonnam	Jeonnam Sports Council Jeonnam Council of Sports for All	Jeonnam Sports Council
15	Gyeongbuk	Gyeongbuk Sports Council Gyeongbuk Council of Sports for All	Gyeongbuk Sports Council
16	Gyeongnam	Gyeongnam Sports Council Gyeongnam Council of Sports for All	Gyeongnam Sports Council
17	Jeju	Jeju Sports Council Jeju Council of Sports for All	Jeju Sports Councils

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Dear (name of potential participant),

My name is Hye In Kwon and I am a master's student in the Kinesiology Department at the University of Georgia. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Becca Leopkey on the interorganizational relationships in merged sport organizations. As part of my thesis research, I am conducting interviews with employees/stakeholders that are involved with operating the merged sport organizations. Your participation in this study will help provide us with key information on identifying and understanding the formation, management, and outcomes of interorganizational relationships that may have a significant impact on the management of merged sports organizations.

As you have been identified as a current employee or stakeholder in a merged sport organization, I would like to speak with you about your experience in your respective organization.

Background Information:

- Interviews would take place in June 2022 – August 2022
- The interview would last about an hour and would be arranged at a time and place that is convenient for you.
- The questions are quite general and will concentrate on discussing interorganizational relationships in your respective organization, how they got formed, what are the challenges and how they are managed overtime, and what are the impacts on the merged sport organization.
- Involvement in this interview is entirely voluntary and this study will not subject you to any foreseeable risks.
- With your permission, the interview will be recorded. Otherwise, I will simply take notes during the interview.
- All information you provide will be considered confidential and kept in my office at all times under lock and key.
- You are not obligated to participate in this study and, if you opt to participate, you are free to refuse to answer particular questions or withdrawal from the study at any time for any reason.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the Institutional Review Board from the Human Research Protection Program at the University of Georgia. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, my supervisor and I may be contacted. Ethical concerns regarding my participation in the study should be directed to

the Office of Research, University of Georgia, Tucker Hall, 310 East Campus Road, Athens, Georgia 30602, telephone: 706-542-5969, email: ovpr@uga.edu.

If you would be interested in participating in this interview, please contact me by either responding to this email (katehyeinkwon@uga.edu) or by calling me at +1 706-202-9408 (or +82 10-6241-7297). I have attached an information sheet, as well as a consent form for your review so that we can set up a time for the interview. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Hye In Kwon
Master's Student
University of Georgia

APPENDIX G

Semi Structured Interview Guide

All interviewees will be asked identical questions for consistency of the data collection. The semi-structured interview guide is divided into three areas based on the purpose of this study:

1. General information about interviewee
2. Information about the interorganizational relationships with other organizations
3. Correlations with the outcomes of interorganizational relationships (IORs) and merger success

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to partake in this research. With your permission, this interview will be recorded so I can accurately transcribe our discussion.

Purpose

The purpose of this interview is to explore and gain further insight into the topic of interorganizational relationships linked to the XXX Sport Council following the 2016 merger. I hope to focus on the different types of interorganizational relationships, the issues and challenges experienced when trying to form or maintain these relationships, how they are managed, and the (expected) outcomes from each of the relationships you identify. It is important to note that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I am simply interested in your opinions, knowledge, and perspective of this topic. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, please let me know and we will move on to the next one.

Statements and Questions upon Recording

- General information of the date and interviewee
 1. Today's Date and Time
 2. Name
 3. Which Provincial Sport Council do you currently work at?
 4. What are you responsible for in your job?
 5. Does your work (job responsibility) require a high degree of collaboration with other organizations?

Before we move on to the next questions, I would like to inform you that the following questions will be broken down into three sections: IOR formation, management, and outcomes for better understanding of the interorganizational relationships in your respective organization.

- IOR Formation
 1. What kind of IORs do you form with other organizations based on what work/project you do? Additionally, please talk about other team's relationships with other organizations that is based on other team's work or projects if you are knowledgeable.
 - a. Which sector do they represent? (e.g., public, non-profit, private sector)

- b. What type of relationship are they? (e.g., coalitions, partnerships, collaboration, strategic alliances)
 - 2. What are the motives and purpose behind these relationships?
 - a. Financial aspects
 - b. Resource acquisition aspects
 - c. Operational aspects (e.g., sport delivery, organizational performance)
 - d. Social responsibility aspects
- IOR Management
 - 1. How long have these relationships existed?
 - a. Long-term: +3 years
 - b. Short-term: $0 < 3$ years
 - 2. What kind of issues or challenges exist in this relationship?
 - 3. How are these relationships managed? (e.g., contracts or informal contracts)
- IOR Outcomes
 - 1. What are the (expected) outcomes from these relationships?
 - a. Do they align with the motives and purposes of forming IORs?
- Correlations with the IOR outcomes and merger success
 - 1. Do the mentioned outcomes align with the mission/vision of the XXX Sports Council?
 - 2. Did the relationships with other organizations help enhance organizational performance and achieving goals and objectives of the XXX Sports Council?
 - i. If so, how?
 - ii. If not, why?
 - 3. Do you think the financial sustainability and organizational efficiency have improved after establishing these relationships?
 - iii. If so, how?
 - iv. If not, why?
 - 4. Lastly, can you highlight any significant changes linked to operations and integration of elite sport and mass sport after the merger?

Thank you for your valuable time in walking me through the process today.

APPENDIX H

Participant Consent Form**Researcher's Statement**

I am/We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Becca Leopkey
Department of Kinesiology
Email: bleopkey@uga.edu
Office: 706-542-1224

Co-Investigator:

Hye In Kwon
Department of Kinesiology
Email: katehyeinkwon@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the interorganizational relationships in merged sport organizations as a result of the merger in 2016. You are being asked to participate after being identified as a current employee or stakeholder that has knowledge and experience about the interorganizational relationships in merged sport organizations.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- Voluntarily partake in a semi-structured interview.
- The duration of the interviews will be one session for approximately 60 minutes long.
- A semi-structured interview will be conducted since it is useful to explore valuable information from your experiences. An example of the interview question is "What kind of interorganizational relationships did your respective organization build?"
- Upon your consent, this interview will be audio recorded.

Audio/Video Recording

Audio recording will be used as a means reference. Parts of the audio, if not all, will then be transcribed. Upon the completion of the research, the audio recordings will be archived after the transcribing process is done. These recordings could be used in the future as an analysis tool when comparing and contrasting employee/stakeholder experiences regarding interorganizational relationships in sport organizations. In this case, the information will be used and/or shared with

other researchers and/or future studies after the identifiers of the participants have been removed without additional consent from the participant.

Participation is Voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

Also, you might be contacted in the future about other studies that will be related to the topic of this study. Your involvement in the future studies will be voluntary as well. Please check the box below if you agree to be contacted in the future:

- I do not want to be contacted in the future.
 I am willing to be contacted in the future.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research. However, if discomfort arises during participation, you have the right to stop the interview at any time and may choose not to no longer partake in the study.

Benefits

You may find it beneficial to share your experience and knowledge that may have a significant impact on the management of merged sports organizations. Additionally, given that the demand for employing mergers and the role of interorganizational relationships has become more crucial in operating sports organizations, your insights may help improve the operations of merged sports organizations, and finding other benefits and opportunities. By doing so, you will have an opportunity to contribute to expand the body of knowledge related to sport mergers and interorganizational relationships.

Privacy/Confidentiality

The responses or information may be linked to an individual participant by the researcher(s) through the interview process that will be done via face-to-face, Zoom, Skype or over the telephone. The responses or information collected through any form of mechanisms indicated above will be audio recorded with consent and be kept in a locked/private file in a secure flash drive (e.g., USB) for thorough confidentiality. Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law. Moreover, this study claims that this research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Dr. Leopkey, a professor and advisor of Hye In Kwon at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Leopkey at 706-542-1224, bleopkey@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may

contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706-542-3199 or by email at irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form and have had all of your questions answered.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please keep one copy and return the signed copy to the researcher.