Organizational Structure and Management of Athletics Clubs in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Athletics sport, particularly long distance running, has made Ethiopia well known in the World history. Despite the long-standing successes and the increase in the number of youth participants in athletics sports, the number of clubs and their distribution across the regional states of the country is limited. In addition, it is often commented that most of the existing clubs are poorly managed and do not have organizational strength. The purpose of this study was to identify the organizational structure, management challenges and to examine the association between organizational structure and management challenges of athletics clubs in Ethiopia. Survey design with mixed-method approach was used to conduct the study. Questionnaires, interview, observation and document analysis were employed to collect the data. The participants of the study were coaches and managers (n=129) who were selected from 25 sample athletics clubs through stratified sampling and purposive sampling. The researcher employed descriptive statistical method and chi-square test to analyze the quantitative and narration to analyze qualitative data. The organizational structure of the athletic clubs was pyramidal and the clubs’ activities were affected by some management challenges including resource provision. In addition to this, association was found between organizational structure and management challenges of athletics clubs in Ethiopia. For the strength of the athletics clubs, managers need to design an organizational structure based on the clubs strategy, availability of resources which were found as management challenges.

Keywords: sport organization, performance, long-distance, federation, sport facility
1. Introduction

Sport is one of the most growing smokeless industries throughout the world. Again it becomes more complex in the process of structure and management as an organization. The athletics industry is not an exceptional sport. Athletics is one of the oldest sporting activities throughout the world (Wolde & Gaudin, 2007). Sport is a social organization which provides a technical surveillance, which helps to inspect values, socialization, bureaucracy, and stratification to give a name for a structure and processes that exist at the societal level (Wolfe et al., 2005). In line with this, Acimovic, Špirtović, Jonić & Projević (2013, p.251), Gebremeskel, Shivapa, Ibrahim & Dhamadharan (2019), Hoye & Cuskelly (2007) and Wolde & Gaudin (2007) explains that sports clubs are community organizations established by the society where they live and that need proper management system and structure to realize the goals they are intended to meet in different types of competitions. According to Faheln (2006), Hoye, Smith, Westerbeek, Stewart, & Nicholson (2006), Parent & Slack (2007) and Watt (1998) organizational structure explained as it is a framework that outlines how tasks are divided into different departments, grouped, and coordinated in an organization represented in the form of chart to show the duties and responsibilities of staffs in the organization. It is also important to define the responsibility of paid staff and volunteers “fit in” with each other in terms of work specialization, decision making, and flow of collaboration, responsibility, and reporting mechanisms (who is responsible to whom).

The organizational structure should be clear to everyone in the organization. Therefore, organizational structure is important to define where paid staff and volunteers fit in. organizational structure also clarifies the decision-making procedures, the need for collaboration, levels of responsibility and reporting mechanisms (Faheln, 2006). Further, the organizational structure elaborates and serves as a roadmap to show the positions within an organization are related to whom (Hoey & Cuskelly, 2007 and Watt, 1998). In building organizational structure, a club manager may face management challenges and because of this he/she should consider the current realities of the country.

Ethiopia is one of the countries follow developmental state model with 9 regional state and 2 city administrations. It is also one of the eastern and developing African countries. As it is featured in most of these countries, sport including athletics has not been their priority dominantly focused on their countries development. Even though the governments have not given due attention, athletics, specifically long-distance running, has remained to be one of the most all-time growing event in the country and there are most known athletes throughout the world (Gebremeskel et al, 2019 and Wolde & Gudin, 2007).

In this respect, the main objective of this study is to investigate the organizational structure in practice, management challenges and the association between organizational structure and management challenges in Ethiopian athletics clubs. In light this purpose, this research aims to:

1. identify the organizational structure of athletics clubs in Ethiopia.
2. identify the major athletics clubs management challenges in Ethiopia.
3. examine the association between organizational structure and management challenges of athletics clubs in Ethiopia.
2. Methodology

2.1. Research context

Ethiopia is a country that grows astounding world-class athletes in, particularly, long-distance runners such as Abebe Bikila, Haile Gebresilase, Kenenisa Bekele, Tirunesh Dibaba, Gebrezgeher Geberemariam and Derartu Tulu. The administrative structure of the country consists of nine regional states and two city administrations. Out of these, the four regions namely Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and South People Nations and Nationalities, and one city administration Addis Ababa have athletics clubs with different types of club structure and ownership. The target population of the study was club coaches, managers, the regional and federal athletics federation officials. In conducting the study, descriptive survey method was employed. Survey research designs are perhaps the most common design for conducting research in social science (Gratton and Jones, 2004; Gray, 2004 & Kothari 2004). The mixed approaches were used. The researcher used Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis approaches. Gray, (2004) also stated that the quantitative and qualitative data are important to substantiate each other. Moreover, the data which are important to quantitative analysis collected through closed-ended items and the data for the qualitative analysis collected through open-ended. The study focused on athletics clubs that met the set criteria of participation in Ethiopian athletics championship competition. The evidence for their participation was obtained from the Ethiopian Athletics Federation competitors list for the year, 2017. In the championship, a total of 27 clubs participated.

The researcher preferred stratified sampling techniques. As explained by Creswell (2012), Kothari (2004) and Ruane (2005), in applying stratified technique, the researcher first forms strata or stratify the population on some specific characteristics and then followed by simple random sampling to select the samples from each sub-groups (stratum) of the total population. To have the representative samples (n= 25), first clubs were chosen as sample based on the regional state stratum. Then, a total of 129 coaches and managers of athletics clubs and managers were selected as samples through census survey. To select the interviewees (non-probability (purposive) sampling technique was employed. Regarding this, Creswell (2012) and Gratton and Jones (2004) clarified that in a non-probability sampling technique is convenient and represent some characteristics the investigator seeks to study.

The researcher used questionnaires, interview, observation and documents to collect data from the athletics clubs coaches and managers. The researcher were collected different documents from the office of clubs, regional and federal athletics federations (for example: athletics clubs organization and structure guideline, strategic plan and annual reports) to collect relevant data for this study. The documents collected for this study were crafted in different years, Athletics clubs organization and ownership structure (2011), Athletics clubs championship competitors list (2017), Tigray athletics federation annual report (2016) and Amhara athletics federation strategic plan (2016) are the most dominantly considered documents in this study to substantiate the data collected through questionnaire, interview and observation.
Defining variables of the study is a very important stepping stone in research. Researchers must operationally define all variables, those measured (dependent variables) and those manipulated (independent variables) (Jackson, 2010). The major variables of this study are: the dependent variable of athletics/organizational structure and the independent variables of the study are: human resource, financial resource, physical resource, communication, decision making, facility, strategy, and working environment of the athletics clubs. For the dependent variable of organizational structure of athletics clubs and for the independent variables (resource, facility, environment, strategy, line of communication and decision making process) data was collected through questionnaire, observation, interview and documents.

SPSS version 20.0 statistical software was used for computing chi-square and descriptive statistical analysis. The immediate narration was made after the interviewee and observation completed by and different documents which support the study were systematically collected used as supportive values. The researchers have followed all the rules and regulations to be considered in securing ethical consideration in research.

3. Results

3.1. Organizational structure in Ethiopian athletics clubs

![Organizational Structure Diagram]
Figure: - 1 Organizational structure of athletics clubs in Ethiopia

(Source: Ethiopian athletics organization and structure guideline, 2011)

The analysis of result of the data revealed, that the organizational structure of athletics clubs in Ethiopia is broken pyramid. That illustrates very wide at its base and narrow at the top. Most of the athletics clubs are responsible to the regional state sport and youth office. But as it is clearly illustrated the Ethiopian athletics federation is organized in the form of association. The figure shows the detachment in between the regional federation which are responsible to organize athletics clubs and the federal federation (See figure 1).

3.2. The management challenges of Ethiopian athletics clubs

Regarding the management challenges, most of the interviewees recognize as:

...management challenges are internal and external. Some of the internal challenges are budget and finance, human resource (professionals), facility (transportation, buildings and training centers), training experts, competition experts and festival experts (AAFM1, TAFM2 & EAFM3, 3/08/2017).

The response of the other interviewees agreed with the replies of the first, second and third interviewees. They replied as:

.....different management challenges are hindering the practice and management of athletics clubs. The organizational structure, financial resource, human resource, lack of sponsors, service providers, the action of athletes and staffs, facilities and training centers are some of the major challenges (EAFM1, TAFM5, AAFM1, TAFM2 & EAFM3 24/05/2017)...

In general, the following interview replies summarize the major management challenges of athletics clubs in Ethiopia in line with the replies of fourth interviewees. They reported as:

.....structural gap, lack of professional managers, lack of appropriate decisions, lack of budget and finance, lack of understanding on the social and economic values of clubs, goals, and objectives of athletics sport of the countries. (CC1, 18/05/2017, CM1, 19/05/2017, EAFM2, 22/05/2017, and OAFM6 and 7, 16/05/2017).

The results from observation and documents revealed that there are lack of training resource, facility, transportation, and offices. The analysis result and the texts collected from the regional and federal athletics federations revealed that, club structure, decision making, lack of resource (human, financial and physical resources), unclear directions (strategic values, visions, missions, goals and objectives), environment (actions of athletes, service providers, suppliers) and lack of
knowledge on the social and economic value of athletics sport clubs are the major management challenges in Ethiopia.

3.3. Association between organizational structure and management challenges

The chi-square test was computed with one selected dependent variable and one independent variable questions used to examine the association between organizational structure and management challenges.

Table 1: The association between organizational structure (clear, specific departments) and management challenges of athletics clubs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Association</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear, specific departments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions are made based on evidence</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision made based on the time schedule</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The club takes my opinions into account when making decisions</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentive to what each other says</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient physical resource to manage the athletics clubs</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient facilities to manage the athletics club effectively</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible as a manager to keep the club equipment used by the club</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage all the physical resources and facilities</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take care of the club athletes and employees</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit and hire the qualified professionals for the benefit of the club</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking that my club does not waste financial resources</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise funds for the club besides to the budget the club has</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear directions (vision and mission)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear, measurable and understood values</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The strategy consists of clear objectives and goals</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear environmental management system</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced by the actions of athletes</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced by the actions of service providers</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced by the action of the Federation</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced by the actions of sponsors</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is clearly presented in the table, the chi-square test results shows the association between clear and specific departments with the management challenges of athletics clubs in Ethiopia. Specifically, these results are described as follows with the stated level of significance (p. < 0.05) the athletics club with clear and specific departments could facilitate evidence based decisions, timely and schedule decisions, and the club takes the opinions of all staff into account when making decisions. It has an attentive communication to what each other says, physical resource and facilities to manage the athletics club effectively. Clarify who is responsible to keep the club
equipments used by the club, take care of the club athletes and employees and recruit and hire the qualified professionals for the benefit of the club. Managers and staffs able to make the clubs stop wastage of the financial resources, and raise funds for the clubs besides the budget the club has. Clarify also the directions (vision and mission), the presence of measurable and understood values, the strategies, objectives and goals and the environmental management systems. Lastly, it clarifies the management system of actions of athletes, actions of service providers, actions of the federation and actions of sponsors (see table 1).

In conclusion the organizational structure of the clubs (clear and specific departments) has an association with the variables under management challenges. Specifically, the association was found between decision makings, communication, strategy, resource and environment (particularly with the external environment).

4. Discussion

From the results of the analysis and the documents collected from the regional and federal athletics federations, the organizational structure of athletics club is broken pyramidal. Wolde & Gaudin (2007) finding shows similar result. The organizational structure of athletics clubs in Ethiopia was pyramidal wider at its base. The current finding elaborates the detachment between the federal and regional federations. This detachment can harm the decision making process and flow of communication between the federations, clubs and sport and youth office. Sport (athletics) is not a priority of developmental state and developing countries, because the sport needs huge capital investment. The athletics club structure is pyramidal. The athletics club formation and organization should structure in schooling system as it is clearly illustrated in the Ethiopian youth and sport policy (Wolde and Gaudin, 2007). The second finding about management challenges of athletics clubs revealed that: decision making, lack of resource (human, financial and physical resources), unclear directions (strategic values, visions, missions, goals and objectives), and actions of athletes, service providers and suppliers are the major management challenges of athletics clubs in Ethiopia. Furthermore, lack of knowledge and understanding on the social and economic values of athletics, facility (transportation, buildings (office) and documentations are the other contributing factors. This result is in agreement with Faheln (2006) and Gebremeskel et al (2019) which pin point that, traditionally organizational structure is a formal characteristic of an organization and has been used in numerous studies from many different perspectives (resource, institutionalism, strategic choice).

Hannan and Freeman (1977) & Miles, et al (1978) results shown that the effect of environment on the organizational structure has a central place in organizational theory. Wicker and Breuer (2011) substantiated as most of clubs affected by resource (financial, human and infrastructural resource). Papadimitriou (2002) also identified many management challenges in the voluntary Greek sports clubs. These challenges emerge not only from their changing external environment but also from the newly approved sport. Volunteers and employees in sports organizations are the mixes which make them distinct from many mainstream organizations as many sport organization (Colyer, 2000). Mintzberg (1979, 1980 & 1981) also strengthen the issue of organizational environment varies from time to time and place to place based on its degree of complexity. In line with this Faheln (2006) explains, effect of organizational structure to the individuals working in the organization following individuals experience.
The third result discloses that, association was found between organizational structure and some management challenges. As it is clearly presented in the Ethiopian athletics club ownership and structure guideline objective 1, 2, and 3 there are different types of athletics clubs ownership and organizational structure. Having such variety increases the athletics club management challenges. The reason is the clubs organized for different purposes with a variety of mission, vision, and goals. As a result of the chi-square test result there is an association between organizational structure and management challenges. This result implies that, the stakeholders should give enough focus structuring clubs considering the factors which challenge the management of athletics clubs. According to Lorsch (1977), Faheln (2006), Hoey et al (2006), Wicker & Breuer (2011), Wolde & Gaudin (2007), Gebremeskel et al (2019) and Parent & Slack (2007) the organizational structure should be contingent to the current situation of the clubs. the degree of association between organizational structure and management challenges left to other researchers for further study.

5. Conclusion

This study is conducted to examine the organizational structure, identify the major management challenges and investigate the association between Organizational structure and management challenges of athletics clubs in Ethiopia. An increasing number of world-class athletes in Ethiopia promote the involvement of athletes in athletics sport, mainly in long distance running. Most of the professionals also called Ethiopia as long distance federation than athletics federation (Wolde and Gudin, 2007). One of the major priorities of the Ethiopian government is to produce elite athletes from the clubs in the country (MCYSP, 1998). Towards this end, there is a mismatch between the policy, guidelines and organizational structure of athletics clubs in Ethiopia.

In this respect, there is lack of coordination between the federal and regional athletics federations in structuring clubs. Research participants recommended that the need to organize the athletics clubs into different types of structure by considering the management challenges could occur in the near future. Finally, association was not found between the organizational structure and management challenges in Ethiopian athletics clubs. Athletics clubs should be structured by considering all the athletics events. The organizational structure should be revised and restructured in the form of schooling, community, and educational institutions. Stakeholders should design mechanisms to minimize the management challenges.

To sum up, the study contributes both to the existing body of knowledge and stakeholders as far as properly designed the types of athletics club organizational structure considering the very important and valuable resources, strategy and working environment of the athletics clubs is look upon. Furthermore, this study tries to fill the research gap identified and has many limitations in terms of the scope of the study, and the use of cross-sectional data. Consequently, future researchers may look on the effectiveness of organizational structure of athletics clubs and designing of the better organizational structure models, to what extent the structure and management challenges are associated in Ethiopian context. Finally, athletics clubs can be linked to the economic and social development of the country.
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