

# If you want to fight individual deviance such as corruption and doping in sport: What leadership, governance, and culture might work in sport management?

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## Abstract

There are several leadership styles, governance structures, and organizational cultures discussed in the research literature and applied in sport management. This article asks the question of what might work best in sport management when the focus is on preventing, detecting, and correcting individual deviance, which is a negative phenomenon in sport as it refers to behaviors that go against and violate expectations, norms, values, as well as rules, regulations, and laws. While ethical and democratic leadership styles are normally recommended, sometimes dictatorial and narcissistic leadership styles are needed to fight deviance. While learning rather than punishing, flat rather than hierarchical, and federal rather than unitary governance structures are normally recommended, sometimes the opposite is needed to fight deviance. While inclusion rather than exclusion, equality rather than inequality, and cooperation rather than rivalry are normally recommended for organizational culture, sometimes the opposite is needed to fight deviance.

*Keywords:* ethical leader, narcissistic leader, federal governance, unitary governance, inclusion, exclusions

## Introduction

Individual deviance is a negative phenomenon in sport as it refers to behaviors that go against and violate expectations, norms, and values (Piazza et al., 2024; Rintamäki et al., 2025). Sport management against individual deviance requires an appropriate leadership style, a relevant governance structure, and a supportive organizational culture. Leadership, governance, and culture are at the core of sport management in preventing and detecting individual deviance. For example, when leadership fails such as in the case of the corrupt former president at the international biathlon union, Anders Besseberg (Borgarting, 2025; Perelman, 2025), then governance and culture might compensate for the leadership failure. When culture fails such as in the case of the doped cross-country skier Therese Johaug (Subiotto et al., 2017; Tetlie, 2025), then leadership and governance might compensate for the cultural failure. When governance fails like in the case of corrupt university sport coaches such as Jovan Vavic (Raymond, 2025; State Auditor, 2020), then leadership and culture might compensate for the governance failure. The unit of analysis in this article is the individual offender influenced by leadership, governance, and culture.

Leadership refers to the professional guidance of people and the directed interaction among people to achieve the ambitions and goals of the organization. Leadership refers as well to the facilitation of the working environment for people so that they are enabled to contribute to achieving the ambitions and goals of the organization. The first definition focuses on guidance and direction, while the second definition focuses on facilitation and enabling. The first definition implies that the leader tells people both what to do and how to do it, while the second definition only tells what to do and not how to do it. Typically, in knowledge organizations, the latter definition dominates. Leadership is a “critical success factor of total quality and human resource management in sports organizations” (Djuric et al., 2024:363). Leadership style is the way a leader guides, directs, facilitates, and enables an individual, a team, and an organization. Leadership style is the combination of attitudes, behaviors, methods, and approaches a leader uses to interact with the people when guiding, directing, facilitating, and enabling.

Governance refers to an organization’s institutional framework and decision-making mechanisms, where an institution refers to a system of interrelated elements in relationships between institutional members within which members pursue their mutual interests (Györy, 2020). Gov-

ernance is “steering the overall sport in one or across jurisdictions”, where sport-focused governance research topics include “board composition, representation and management, leadership, motivation and conflict, and strategic capability” (Lefebvre et al., 2024:21). Bayle (2025) referred to three types of governance in sport organizations, where systemic governance addresses enterprise guidelines for guardianship, oversight, and control of various members and their activities; political governance addresses procedures in the relations with public bodies; and organizational governance addresses internal management and administration. Management is then to operate within the governance structure by making decisions and initiating actions. Governance is particularly important in sport organizations as such organizations often are managed by people who are interested in sport as volunteers but lack executive and management interest or experience (Hoye et al., 2022:5): “Governance is a particularly important element of managing sport organizations, many of whom are controlled by elected groups of volunteers, as it deals with issues of policy and direction for the enhancement of organizational performance rather than day-to-day operational management decision-making”.

Culture refers to accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are applied to a variety of situations and that define appropriate attitudes and behaviors for organizational members, as well as generalized rationales and beliefs. “Culture refers to the values which shape a social and psychological environment by helping individuals understand the right or accepted and expected way to behave” (Macintosh et al., 2025:602). Hoye et al. (2022:11) argued that organizational culture might be dominated by strong traditions in sports:

Organizational culture consists of the assumptions, norms, and values held by individuals and groups within an organization, which impact the activities and goals in the workplace and in many ways influence how employees work. Organizational culture is related to organizational performance, excellence, employee commitment, cooperation, efficiency, job performance, and decision-making. However, how organizational culture can be defined, diagnosed, and changed is subject to much debate in the business and academic world. Due to the strong traditions of sporting endeavor and behavior, managers of sport organizations, particularly those such as professional sport franchises or traditional sports, must be cognizant of the power of organizational culture as both an inhibitor and driver of performance. Understanding how to identify, describe, analyze, and ultimately influence the culture of a sport organization is an important element in the education of sport managers.

Culture is the outcome of accumulated and shared learning among group members (Grohnert et al., 2025), where learning “commonly refers to relatively permanent change in knowledge or skill resulting from experience”, and “organizational learning is defined as a process referring to the ways in which organizations as collectives learn through interaction within their internal and external environment” (Zeimers et al., 2019:83). Every culture carries a history in terms of the past, present, and future, and not merely learning things together. There is thus an important historical aspect of what constitutes a culture.

This article addresses the following research question: If you want to fight individual deviance such as corruption and doping in sport: What leadership style, governance structure, and organizational culture might work in sport management? The research is theoretical, exploratory, and conceptual rather than empirical by reviewing relevant literature regarding leadership styles, governance structures, and cultural values in sport management. This research is important, as it demonstrates the contingent approach to management where choice of leadership, governance, and culture depends on the situation. Specifically, when the purpose of leadership, governance, and culture is to prevent, detect, and control individual deviance, then certain styles, structures, and values emerge as more important than others. For example, while trust is a value appreciated generally in sport management, distrust and skepticism might be more relevant in fighting individual deviance. Similarly, while ethical leadership is currently often emphasized and favored generally, this leadership style might have disadvantages when the objective is to fight individual deviance. The article starts by reviewing management leadership styles against individual deviance, followed by the review of management governance structures against individual deviance, and the review of management organizational culture values against deviance.

The contingent approach to leadership, governance, and culture is exemplified in the following by the corrupt biathlon president, the doped cross-country skier, and the corrupt sport coaches respectively. The biathlon case needs bottom-up leadership, governance, and culture, while the cross-country case as well as the coach case need top-down leadership, governance and culture, as discussed in this article based on the following short design case descriptions.

The corrupt biathlon president received favors from national biathlon associations in the form of exclusive hunting trips, free BMW car, expensive brand watches, and sexual services by prostitutes, especially in Russia.

Russian biathlon officials expected in return that the president would ignore rumors and evidence of doping among Russian biathletes. The former president was sentenced in criminal court to three years in prison (Borgarting, 2025; Perelman, 2025).

The doped cross-country skier used a cream on her lips that contained a forbidden substance. She blamed the medical doctor for providing the cream to her. However, the panel at the court of arbitration for sport determined a period of ineligibility of 18 months for her because of her negligence. In order to have acted with no significant fault or negligence, an athlete must have exercised considerable caution but still inadvertently violated anti-doping rules (Subiotto et al., 2017; Tetlie, 2025).

The corrupt university sport coaches helped children of wealthy parents to be admitted as students based on fraudulent aptitude tests and qualification schemes for various sport teams at the universities. A businessman running donation organizations connected indirectly the parents with the sport coaches as he sometimes was the organizer of the tests and schemes. Operation Varsity Blues was the code name for the investigation into the criminal conspiracy scandal to influence undergraduate admissions decisions at several top American universities. Most of the coaches, as bribed individuals, as well as most of the wealthy parents, as bribing individuals, were sentenced to prison after the investigation was completed by the federal police (Raymond, 2025; State Auditor, 2020).

## Management Leadership Styles Against Deviance

There are several leadership styles discussed in research literature. The question here is what leadership style might work most efficiently and effectively in preventing, detecting, and correcting individual deviance. As described above, leadership style is the way a leader guides, directs, facilitates, and enables an individual, a team, and an organization. Leadership style is the combination of attitudes, behaviors, methods, and approaches a leader uses to interact with the people when guiding, directing, facilitating, and enabling. Leadership styles range from passive-controlling such as coercive and narcissistic, via active-controlling such as authentic and autocratic, passive-stimulating such as collectivistic and pacesetter, to active-stimulating such as democratic and servant as listed in Table 1 (Gottschalk, 2025, 2026).

Active-stimulating leadership styles seem currently to be recommended by sport management scholars and preferred by many sport organizations. For example, democratic leadership style refers to democracy that is a system of management in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through freely elected individuals such as representatives of various national biathlon associations on the board of the International Biathlon Union (IBU). Servant leadership style focuses on authenticity, stewardship, empowerment, guiding, humility, and involvement. In addition, ethical leadership from the passive-controlling category is often emphasized in sport management where leaders guide and restrict member activities by influencing their morality.

**Table 1.** A large specter of potential leadership styles against individual deviance in sport

<p><b><i>Passive-controlling leadership</i></b></p> <p>Adaptive by interactions in confidence            Charismatic by inspirational vision            Coercive by rewards and punishment            Ethical by norms and values            Narcissistic by arrogance and expectations            Transactional by give-and-take exchanges            Responsible for carrying liability            Accountable by blame attribution</p>	<p><b><i>Active-controlling leadership</i></b></p> <p>Authenticity by guidance towards objectives            Authoritarian by commands and constraints            Authoritative by direction and obedience            Autocratic by making own decisions            Bureaucratic by rules and procedures            Paternalistic by discipline and compliance            Visionary by telling the future            Dictatorial by centralized power</p>
<p><b><i>Passive-stimulating leadership</i></b></p> <p>Benevolent by the common good            Collectivistic by unity and support            Pacesetting by performance goals            Laissez-faire by relaxed obedience            Political by adjusting to situations            Humanistic by developing experience            Humble by admitting mistakes</p>	<p><b><i>Active-stimulating leadership</i></b></p> <p>Affiliative by harmony and avoidance            Pushing by feedback and empowerment            Democracy by inclusion and process            Servant by interpersonal stewardship            Transformational by voluntary alignment            Relational by mutual support</p>

While democratic, servant, and ethical leadership styles might seem appropriate and beneficial in many respects, it is not at all obvious that those styles are best suited to prevent, detect, and correct individual deviance. Relevant leadership styles against corrupt IBU president, doped top cross-country skier, and corrupt university sport coaches, might be very different from what generally can be understood as effective and efficient leadership styles in sport management. For example, to fight a corrupt IBU president, the national biathlon federations would probably need leaders

who are active controlling. Authentic, authoritarian, authoritative, autocratic, bureaucratic, paternalistic, and visionary are some of the leadership styles available in the active-controlling category.

To fight doping in cross-country skiing, relevant management leadership styles might belong to the active stimulating leadership styles such as transformational and relational management. Transformational leadership style focuses on measures to create change. To fight corruption among university sport coaches, not only should the coaches be relieved of the duty to secure funding for their teams. University leadership needs some kind of ethical leadership style. Unethical leadership can have serious consequences, such as fostering moral ambiguity and discouraging followers' willingness to speak up and address ethical concerns. In turn, this is weakening the effectiveness of internal control systems designed to promote democracy, transparency, and integrity.

In the research literature, there are a variety of labels for leadership styles. The typical leadership styles mentioned are listed in Table 1. There are obvious overlaps among several of the styles when it comes to their definitions and characteristics. Therefore, categories are emphasized and labeled to indicate how the styles are distinctly different from each other.

Many sport organizations are "controlled by elected groups of volunteers" who face strong leadership requirements, such as to "influence others", "empower individuals", "deal with conflicts", and "coordinate projects" (Hoye et al., 2022:10). They need to create equity to avoid feelings of discomfort (DeMarco, 2023). It is argued that scandals within sport in recent years have shed light on the need for more ethical leadership (Heres, 2021), where ethical leadership is considered highly important to ensure the organization's well-being (Constandt et al., 2018). There are many ways to define ethical leadership, however, behaviors, motives, and values that reflect being trustworthy, fair, altruistic, and honest are repeated in the literature (Yukl and Gardner, 2020). Altruistic decisions are not necessarily guided by moral standards but rather by the welfare of the beneficiary (Botchkovar et al., 2025).

A leadership style that seems seldom recommended is authoritative leadership in the active-controlling category that refers to a leader who "commands respect from subordinates without displaying faith in their ability" by providing direction and requiring obedience (Mammadov, 2024:157): "Such leadership is useful when time is of the essence, there is a disagreement or dissent among employees, or the participation of multiple individuals in decision-making is likely to do more harm than good".

The contingent perspective on leadership illustrates the relevance of a leadership style such as authoritative leadership that is indeed dependent on the situation. When there are deviant individuals such as doped elite athletes or corrupt university sport coaches, authoritative medical leadership or authoritative university leadership is not necessarily appropriate, but it should indeed be considered.

Similarly, the narcissistic leadership style is seldom recommended. Leaders with the narcissistic personality trait are self-centered and characterized by “grandiosity, arrogance, self-absorption, entitlement, fragile self-esteem, and hostility” (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006:617). However, as argued by Liu et al. (2024), narcissism is a multifaceted personality trait with positive characteristics such as having self-confidence and being visionary. If some of the national representatives on the international board of the biathlon union had demonstrated narcissism by, for example, believing and claiming that they were better qualified for the IBU presidency, then their behavior might have challenged and thus prevented Anders Besseberg as IBU president from accepting bribes. Narcissists exhibit an unusual trust in themselves, believing that they are uniquely special and entitled to more influence than are legitimately available to them (Zvi and Elaad, 2018). While many leaders exhibit uncertainty, avoidance of problems, reluctance to engage in complicated, inflamed, and controversial issues, narcissistic leaders may move directly into confrontations to solve such issues without fear, which in certain situations represents an advantage and strength compared to many other ambivalent leadership behaviors.

Burton et al. (2017) discussed the role of servant leadership in developing ethical climate in sport organizations. Servant leadership has gained renewed attention – at least superficially – as a leadership approach that is rooted in ethics and morality to foster integrity and accountability. Integrity is the quality of acting in accordance with values, norms, and rules (Loyens et al., 2022; Rawski et al., 2024). According to Manoli and Konstantopoulos (2025), there are five dimensions of sporting integrity: organizational, personal, procedural, stakeholder, and inherent integrity in sport.

Næss and Svendsen (2024:145) found humanistic leadership style relevant for sport organizations: “Humanistic leadership is understood here as a capacity to work for a common good by emphasizing the development of human virtue, as well as oriented to developing meaningful and purpose-

ful human experience, guided by basic values and focused on the common good”.

A leadership style strongly advocated for a while was authentic leadership. Takos et al. (2025:164) referred to authentic leadership as being “characterized by self-awareness, transparency, relational awareness, and the capacity to consume information in an unbiased manner before making a decision”. Authenticity means being true to self at work. However, being a leader is a professional role where the focus on self as distinct from others by “including various role-identities making up an overarching core of self” (O’Neill, 2025:257) might harm rather than help members of the organization.

Based on the literature review of leadership styles by the author presented above, Cedell and Krause-Kamphaug (2025) conducted an empirical study of individual deviance by the former IBU president Anders Besseberg and discussed relevant leadership styles in the scandalized biathlon union. The study focused on leadership styles relevant to prevent, detect, and correct individual deviance in the form of corrupt behavior. The interviewees in their study described Besseberg’s leadership style as authoritarian, charismatic, narcissistic, and undemocratic. The interviewees recommended ethical, servant, bureaucratic, and democratic leadership styles.

In conclusion, to fight corruption at the top of organizations such as the IBU, the bottom-up approach might require active-controlling national federation leaders applying bureaucratic rules and norms internationally that secure control and democratic procedures, thereby enabling influence from nationals on the international scene. To fight doping, top-down control might require active-controlling authoritarian leadership with paternalistic medical supervision by competent executives, thereby enabling discipline, compliance, and conformance. To fight corruption among sport coaches, university managers might need to enter passive-controlling and accountable leadership styles such as ethical leadership by norms and values, thereby encouraging observers of deviance to blow the whistle on corrupt sport coaches.

## Management Governance Structures Against Deviance

There are several governance structures discussed in the research literature (Gottschalk, 2025, 2026). The question here is what governance structure might work most efficiently and effectively in preventing, detecting, and correcting individual deviance. As described above, governance refers to an organization's institutional framework and decision-making mechanisms. Aprile et al. (2025:12) discussed the quality of corporate governance (CG) in the sport sector, where they emphasized that the football industry is one of the sport businesses that is most prone to these problematic governance issues:

Regarding CG quality within sports sector, mainstream research has focused on federations and associations that act as regulatory bodies of organized sports at the national and international levels. Numerous studies have shown how sports federations often do not require sufficiently high standards of good governance, risking failure in the fight against sports misconduct, such as doping, match-fixing, human trafficking and money laundering. Indeed, the environment where sports federations work is subjected to high corruption risk. The transformation of sports into multi-million-dollar businesses as well as the potential political instrumentalization of this industry can incentivize people to be involved in misconduct and corrupt practices.

Parent et al. (2023:1115) studied national sport organization (NSO) design archetypes in Canada and posed three research questions: "(1) what governance design archetypes exist based on the use of more contemporary criteria; (2) how easily can an NSO's archetype be determined; and (3) what are the implications of these new archetypes for researchers and practitioners?" They identified four archetypes:

- Board-led governance: These organizations were focused on stakeholder engagement and governance values.
- Executive-led governance: These organizations were focused more on governance values, followed by stakeholder engagement and values of diversity.
- Professional-led governance: These organizations were focused on stakeholder engagement values despite being average in terms of their degree of stakeholder engagement.

- Corporate-led governance: These organizations were closest to for-profit organizations with high degree of complexity and capacity.

Parent et al. (2023:1118) referred to stakeholders as «those individuals, groups, and organizations that can affect and/or be impacted by a focal organization’s action”. In several more research articles, Parent et al. (2023) have discussed governance in sport organizations, such as in works by Lachance and Parent (2024), Lefebvre et al. (2024), Thompson and Parent (2025), and Thompson et al. (2023).

A governance structure has several elements. In the following, such elements are discussed in terms of scales where the beginning and end of each scale represent opposites. The first scale is *formal–informal* for the governance structure. A formal structure emphasizes rules, procedures, documentation, meetings, and monitoring that often reflects excessively complicated administrative procedures. There is fixed and stringent allocation of decision-making powers that are clarified among organizational units and members. On the other hand, an informal structure emphasizes flexibility, relationships, and creativity. “Informal norms and values influence people’s ability and desire to either accept the status quo or strive for change” (Næss, 2023:3). In our perspective, having a governance structure that works against individual deviance, it is not obvious whether formal or informal should be preferred. An advantage of the formal structure is that what is right and what is wrong seems clarified and thus deviance might more easily be sanctioned. An advantage of the informal structure is that individual deviance might more easily be detected within social structures rather than hierarchical structures. In most situations, neither extreme scale points seem best suited. Too much formality causes an administrative structure mainly occupied with itself, while too much informality causes randomness in deviance prevention, detection, and correction. Therefore, some middle value on the scale formal-informal might seem appropriate.

The next scale is *democratic–dictatorial* for the governance structure. While democratic leadership style refers to individual behavior as discussed above, democracy as a governance mechanism is a system of management in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through freely elected individuals such as representatives of various national biathlon associations on the board of the IBU. Democracy at the state level is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Similarly, democracy in a sport organization is management of the members, by the members, and for the members. Democracy does not mean that all members agree. On the contrary, there are “contradictory

concerns” and “the battle between key opposing practices” where a process of “transformation” of member preferences via a process of “deliberation” can result in a joint decision “that can withstand public scrutiny and test” (Molloy et al., 2024:93). There are “decision-making processes in regard to the allocation of scarce resources through negotiation and bargaining” among members (Schuetz et al., 2024:371).

Dictatorship, on the other hand, is an autocratic form of management that is characterized by a dictator, or a small group of people, who hold executive powers with few to no limitations. To dictate refers to giving orders and telling others exactly what they must do, with total authority. Others are excluded from influence. To prevent individual deviance by others, dictatorial governance tendencies might seem feasible. On the other hand, to prevent deviance by a potential dictator, democratic governance seems indeed appropriate.

The third scale is *compliance–conformance* for the governance structure. While not being opposites, compliance and conformance have very different focus. Compliance is acting according to laws, rules, and regulations to secure the legal license to operate for the organization, while conformance is acting according to norms, values, and ethics to secure the social license to operate for the organization (Durand et al., 2019). Conformance violations tend to have more sudden, unexpected, and surprising negative consequences than compliance violations. Stakeholders and the media quickly tend to mobilize to condemn conformance violations, which quickly force the organization into a scandal and following crisis (Gottschalk, 2024). Compliance violations on the other hand, tend to have predictable consequences in terms of lawyers working on it in the criminal justice system. Therefore, to prevent individual deviance, conformance seems more important than compliance. As argued by Piazza et al. (2024:249), “organizational theory has long emphasized the importance of conformity”.

The fourth scale is *learning–punishing* for the governance structure. When there is individual deviance, the organizational reaction might either be to focus on learning from mistakes or on punishing those responsible for wrongdoing. “Learning commonly refers to relatively permanent change in knowledge or skill resulting from experience”, while “organizational learning is defined as a process referring to the ways in which organizations as collectives learn through interaction within their internal and external environment” (Zeimers et al., 2019:83). Punishing is to discipline or penalize someone because they have done something wrong. Learning influences knowledge and understanding, while punishing influ-

ences strain and pain. In the perspective of individual deviance avoidance, detection, and correction, there is an issue of whether learning or punishing has the greatest effect. Both might deter individuals from deviance. Deterrence is a process in which actions discourage deviant acts (Torres et al., 2024). Deterrence refers to discouraging and preventing someone from doing something wrong and discouraging and terminating wrongdoing by someone who is doing something wrong. Learning as a deterrence mechanism is based on knowledge and understanding, while punishing as a deterrence mechanism is based on strain and pain. Both extremes at the ends of the learning-punishing scale do not seem attractive. However, in learning organizations with relational leadership, there will be a tendency towards the end of learning, while in punishing organizations with transactional leadership, there will be a tendency towards the end of punishing.

The fifth scale is *hierarchical-flat* for governance structure. Hierarchical management governance structure refers to a command-control structure where someone is the boss while others are subordinates at one level, while the subordinates are bosses at the next lower level. Flat management governance structure refers to a coordinated system where people are at the same level. In the hierarchy, people are either above or below, while people in a flat organization are at the same level. In a hierarchy, people are organized into different ranks and thus levels of importance, while in a flat organization, people are ungraded, unordered, and unranked. To fight deviant individuals, ranked power is the mechanism in hierarchical organizations, while social ties are the mechanism in flat organizations. In hierarchies, offenders can claim that “the decision was made with a higher, more socially acceptable, obligation in mind” as an appeal to higher loyalty (Sims and Barreto, 2022:624). In flat organizations, offenders might claim normality of action by arguing that everyone else does it.

In organizations with strong obedience, the hierarchy might work against individual deviance. In organizations with strong social ties, the flat organization might work against individual deviance.

The sixth scale is *bureaucracy-competence* for governance structure. In a bureaucracy, those higher up in the power pyramid have more decision-making powers than those lower down in the pyramid. Their powers are independent of whether they have knowledge and understanding in the areas where decisions are to be made. Incompetent top executives are entrusted with decisions in areas where they may lack substantial insights. Bureaucracy-based governance has fixed decision-making allocation. Competence-based governance has flexible decision-making allocation.

The most competent person or people in the relevant area make the decisions. Benson and Simpson (2018:57) suggested that in contrast to for-profit corporations, many other types of organizations, such as hospitals, universities, and government bureaucracies, are not subject to “such a brutally simple and objective measure of their success”:

Like all organizations, they are goal driven, but it is more difficult to tell exactly how well they are doing relative to their goals and to one another. Hence, we expect the leaders of these organizations to be less pressured to break the law to achieve organizational goals.

The position rather than the competence of people as determinant of decision-making rights can make it less likely that deviant individuals are prevented, detected, and corrected.

The seventh scale is *separation–overlap* for the governance structure. Separation of organizational functions serves efficiency, while overlap of organizational functions serve synergy among various organizational tasks and activities. Synergy refers to interaction and cooperation to produce combined effects with the ambition of effects greater than the sum of separate results. In the perspective of controlling individual deviance, overlap seems more appropriate than separation in the governance structure. However, Becker et al. (2023:1549) referred to the financial challenges of hosting sport events when there is “a problem of insufficient separation between decision-making and decision control”.

The eighth scale is *federal–unitary* for the governance structure. Federal implies delegation of power and authority, while unitary implies single, central power and control (Lachance and Parent, 2024:501):

Two governance systems exist within the sport governance literature: federated and unitary. A federated sport model is the delegation of power and authority from a central authority to various regions usually within a bounded geographical context (...) A unitary sport model refers to a single, central government or organization holding the power and control where minimal power is given to different regions or states across the geographical landscape of a country.

Controlling individual deviance effectively within federal versus unitary governance structures depends on the position of the deviant. In the IBU case, where the president of the international union was the deviant individual (Perelman, 2025), federal governance with strong power and authority might correct the central leadership. In the case of the doped ath-

lete (Subiotto et al., 2017), unitary governance might consistently correct deviant athletes. Similarly in the case of deviant university sport coaches (Raymond, 2025), unitary governance might consistently correct deviant coaches.

The ninth scale is *planning–flexibility* for the governance structure. The typical opposites are long-term planning of organizational actions versus short-term flexibility in organizational actions. Planning is the process of thinking and determining what activities should be carried out in the future. By planning, what an organization does sometime in the future is decided today. Flexibility refers to organizational adaptation to the current situation over time. Planning is proactive, while flexibility is reactive. For example, in crisis management, an organization can plan a response by being proactive, or the organization can adapt by being flexible (Gottschalk, 2024). To control individual deviance, flexibility seems more appropriate than planning.

The tenth scale is *adaptation–submission* for the governance structure. Adaptation implies that everyone adjusts to the current situation while being and remaining independent units and members. Submission implies that everyone submits to the various requirements by seeming accommodated (Long et al., 2021).

The eleventh and final scale is *protection–vulnerability* for the governance structure. Vulnerability refers to “an affective openness to facing uncomfortable truths”, allegations, damage, and harm, where vulnerability is “the realization of the possibility of being harmed emotionally, socially, or materially”, and vulnerability includes “opening oneself up to doubt, confusion, and skepticism” (Endrissat and Lüthy, 2025:6).

Based on the literature review of governance structures by the author presented above, Cedell and Krause-Kamphaug (2025) conducted an empirical study of individual deviance by the former IBU president Anders Besseberg and discussed relevant governance structures in the scandalized biathlon union. The study focused on governance structures relevant to prevent, detect, and correct individual deviance in the form of corrupt behavior. The interviewees recommended change in governance from informal to formal structure emphasizing rules, procedures, and monitoring, from separation of organizational units to overlap of organizational units, from consequence by punishment to learning from mistakes, and compliance focusing on obeying laws, rules, and regulations to conformance focusing on obeying norms, values, and ethics.

In conclusion, to fight corruption at the top of organizations such as the IBU, the bottom-up approach might require a governance structure characterized by formality, overlap, learning, and conformance. To fight doping, the top-down approach might require a governance structure characterized by formality of rules, procedures, and monitoring, separation of organizational units to identify responsible agents, punishment of deviant offenders, and compliance focusing on obeying laws, rules, and regulations. To fight corruption among sport coaches, the top-down approach might require a governance structure characterized by informality to enable whistleblowing, an overlap of organizational units, learning from mistakes, and conformance focusing on obeying norms, values, and ethics.

## Management Organizational Cultures Against Deviance

There are several organizational cultures discussed in the research literature (Gottschalk, 2025, 2026). The question here is what organizational culture might work most efficiently and effectively in preventing, detecting, and correcting individual deviance. As described above, culture refers to accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are applied to a variety of situations and that define appropriate attitudes and behaviors for organizational members, as well as generalized rationales and beliefs (Hoye et al., 2022). “Culture refers to the values which shape a social and psychological environment by helping individuals understand the right or accepted and expected way to behave” (Macintosh et al., 2025:602).

An organizational culture has several elements. In the following, such elements are discussed in terms of scales where the beginning and the end of each scale might be understood as opposite cultural values.

The first culture scale is *inclusion–exclusion* of members in the organization. Inclusion focuses on diversity in the organization. Inclusion refers to being selected, while exclusion refers to being left out. Dawson et al. (2024) argued that there are costs in terms of investments in practices aimed at improving experiences of historically underrepresented groups such as ethnic and racial minorities, less fortunate nations and individuals in sport, and often women. Exclusion by negative interactions means social undermining that refers to “behavior intended to hinder, over time, the ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and favorable reputation” (Ferris et al., 2008:1354).

Benefits of inclusion or inclusivity in sport generally was discussed by Hookway et al. (2025:16), arguing that “inclusivity benefits can benefit social groups such as women with caring responsibilities or older people living with disabilities”. To control individual deviance, exclusion might seem more relevant than inclusion in terms of the complexity in preventing, detecting, and correcting deviance.

The second culture scale is *homogeneity–heterogeneity* of members in the organization. Homogeneity focuses on similarity among members, while heterogeneity focuses on dissimilarities among members. Homogeneity is a result of sameness, while heterogeneity is a result of diversity. Homogeneity has the disadvantage of differential association tendencies where homogeneous participants associate with those who agree with them, and distance themselves from those who disagree (Draga and DeCelles, 2024). When individual deviance is the norm among people in the homogeneous group, then no correction will occur. To control individual deviance, heterogeneity might thus seem more relevant than homogeneity in terms of the complexity in preventing, detecting, and correcting deviance.

The third culture scale is *equality–inequality* among members of the organization. Equality refers to the same resources and opportunities given to all members. The terms are slightly different from equity and inequity where it is recognized that each member is in a different situation and therefore is allocated contingent resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome. In the culture scale suggested here, the equity perspective is included in the equality perspective. Therefore, as argued by Cullen et al. (2020:223), “the norm of equity” demands that all members should be treated equally. Equality versus inequality might be measured, for example, by the extent of access to hosting major sporting events and other factors indicating equality versus inequality among member states. An example of inequality is global sport organization leaders who use financial incentives to secure the support of poorer national associations during presidential elections (Gottschalk, 2026). To control individual deviance, equality seems more relevant than inequality as observers of wrongdoing will have resources and opportunities to speak out.

The fourth culture scale is *rivalry–cooperation* among members of the organization. Rivalry refers to a competition where members are against each other. Rivalry creates a competitive environment leading to pressure that creates silos of allies and enemies in the organization who hardly communicate honestly with each other (Dodge, 2009). There are no ties allowing others to act collectively to fight real problems. For example, witness

statements in courts (Buskerud, 2024; Borgarting, 2025) indicated that there was rivalry among IBU officials who accused each other of all kinds of wrongdoing, and several of the rivals had been attempting to take over the position of president for more than a decade before Besseberg finally left the position (Bårtvedt and Stensrud, 2024). Cooperation refers to the action and process of working together to the same end where members are helping each other. Accusations of individual deviance will probably be more frequent in a culture of rivalry than in a culture of cooperation. However, the accusations will have little or no effect. It is more likely that individual deviance detected in a cooperative culture will have consequences for the offender in the organization.

The fifth culture scale is *secrecy–transparency* practiced in the organization. Secrecy refers to “intentionally prevent information or evidence of it from reaching a particular person(s) and therefore could be comprehended as the methods used to conceal and the practices of concealment” (Fan and Liu, 2022:1034). A secret, on the other hand, refers to the content of information that is kept unknown to others. Secrets do not conceal themselves. It is secrecy that conceals secrets. Transparency refers to the characteristic of being easy to see through (Balakrishnan et al., 2019). Transparency allows others to monitor what is going on in the organization. Transparency is the quality of being easy to perceive or detect (Neuberger et al., 2023). While secrecy might prevent control of deviant individuals, transparency might enable detection, control, and prevention of deviance.

The sixth culture scale is *social–systematic* integration in the organization. Integration refers to “the extent to which distinct and independent organizational components” such as member states “adequately respond and adapt to each other while pursuing common organizational goals” (Næss, 2023:2). System integration refers to compatibility between parts, while social integration refers to relationships between member states (Næss, 2023:3):

The level of social integration depends on how the actors conceive the difference in question and how they behave in relation to each other. Informal norms and values influence people’s ability and desire to either accept the status quo or strive for change. The level of system integration, conversely, depends on how deeply the structural parts that facilitate cooperation within the organization are institutionalized.

In the prevention, detection, and correction of individual deviance, social and systematic will work in different ways. Socially revealed, deviance

might either be accepted or condemned. Systematically revealed, deviance will be registered and potentially more likely be acted upon.

The seventh culture scale is whistleblowing *stimulation–deterrence* among organizational members. Whistleblowing refers to the disclosure by an individual in an organization or outside the organization who observes deviance. Whistleblowers stand out as a group of reporters who have made observations and who are willing to disclose what they have observed (Wijayanti et al., 2024). Whistleblowing stimulation refers to mechanisms that make observers willing to report. Whistleblowing deterrence outcomes are mechanisms such as perceived reprisal and retaliation threats. Obviously, to control individual deviance, whistleblowing stimulation is the more relevant organizational culture value since whistleblowers are an important source of information about wrongdoing.

The eight scale is *democratic–undemocratic* culture. While democratic leadership style refers to individual behavior, democracy as a governance mechanism is a system of management in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through freely elected individuals such as representatives of various national biathlon associations on the board of the IBU, that was discussed above. As a culture, democracy refers to values such as fairness and justice. For example, a person charged with criminal offenses should be considered innocent until eventually found guilty by evidence beyond any reasonable and sensible doubt. Undemocratic means that the culture does not relate to or is not according to democratic principles. Undemocratic culture might imply violating human rights, restricting freedom of speech, centralized power in the hands of a few individuals, admitting unfair privileges and benefits to some, and ignoring opinions of others (Gottschalk, 2026). Obviously, to control individual deviance, democracy is the more relevant organizational culture value since deviance is considered to violate democratic norms while not violating whatever might be undemocratic norms.

The ninth scale is *activation–passivation* of sponsors. The organization either works to involve sponsors to listen to their views, or works to avoid input from sponsors, whether it represents good or bad feedback. Many sponsors respond to allegations of corruption in sport by a wait-and-see, it-depends-on, or it-does-not-affect-us attitude as in the case of the German car manufacturer BMW sponsoring the IBU as discussed by Gottschalk (2026). Yet there is always a danger of withdrawal of a sponsor causing financial loss to the sponsored organization. Activation of the sponsor to get in dialogue could, however, be a risky action as the sponsored organization

might be reluctant to respond to desires of the sponsor. Generally, sport sponsorship “refers to the financial, material and human support and collaboration between a company and a sport entity, such as an event athlete or sport association” (Varea-Calero et al., 2025:177). To control individual deviance in sport, sponsor activation seems more appropriate than sponsor passivation as the sponsors may potentially react and demand action.

The tenth and final scale is *trust–distrust* among organizational members. Trust implies accepting vulnerability, while distrust is for protection. Generally, trust is the intention to accept (Sala and Pratt, 2023) or the actual acceptance of vulnerability to another’s action (Baer et al., 2021). Trust is “a willingness to be vulnerable and accept risk in relationships” that is typically motivated by an expectation of a positive outcome (Le-good et al., 2023:1). To control deviance, it seems that distrust is more efficient as observers will be more skeptical of their fellow members in the organization.

Based on the literature review of organizational cultures by the author presented above, Cedell and Krause-Kamphaug (2025) conducted an empirical study of individual deviance by the former IBU president Anders Besseberg and discussed relevant organizational culture values in the scandalized biathlon union. The study focused on organizational cultures relevant to prevent, detect, and correct individual deviance in the form of corrupt behavior. Interviewees in the study recommended cultural change from exclusion to inclusion, from rivalry to cooperation, and from secrecy to transparency.

In conclusion, to fight corruption at the top of organizations such as the IBU, the bottom-up approach might require an organizational culture characterized by inclusion, heterogeneity, equality, cooperation, transparency, social integration, whistleblowing stimulation, democracy, activation of sponsors, and distrust. To fight doping, the top-down approach might require an organizational culture characterized by exclusion, heterogeneity, inequality, rivalry, transparency, systematic integration, whistleblowing stimulation, democracy, activation of sponsors, and distrust. To fight corruption among sport coaches, the top-down approach might require an organizational culture characterized by inclusion, homogeneity, inequality, rivalry, transparency, social integration, whistleblowing stimulation, democracy, activation of sponsors, and trust.

## Conclusion

Several leadership styles, governance structures, and organizational cultures were discussed in this article. The article asked the question of what might work best in sport management when the focus is on preventing, detecting, and correcting individual deviance, which is a negative phenomenon in sport as it refers to behaviors that go against and violate expectations, norms, and values, as well as rules, regulations, and laws. While ethical and democratic leadership styles are normally recommended, sometimes tendencies towards dictatorial and narcissistic leadership styles might be needed in certain situations to fight deviance.

While learning rather than punishing, flat rather than hierarchical, and federal rather than unitary governance structures are normally recommended, sometimes the opposite is needed to fight deviance. While inclusion rather than exclusion, equality rather than inequality, and cooperation rather than rivalry are normally recommended for organizational culture, sometimes the opposite is needed to fight deviance. As an exploratory study by theoretical reasoning and conceptual research rather than empirical by reviewing relevant literature, there are several avenues for future research. For example, dependencies and synergies between leadership, governance, and culture might be studied in future research. Another avenue for future research is to argue opposite positions of those presented in this article. For example, it might be the lack of democratic influence – independent of the situation – that makes it difficult to fight deviance. In fact, it may not even be the case that we all agree on what “deviance” really means and based on that one might argue that a more authoritarian conduct would just lead to a higher risk of deviant behaviors, simply because of the lack of trust for the organizations. This is just one example of arguing opposite positions of those presented in this article. Arguing for narcissists in leading positions in general falls short. Narcissism is a personality disorder, and there are many historical and contemporary examples of devastating leadership connected to a person with narcissism. Therefore, the argument is troubling and potentially dangerous in modern organizations. The argument for dictatorship is also troubling in a modern organization, not seldom combined with narcissism.

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