



A practical example of strengthening governance in Japanese college tennis clubs

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ABSTRACT

In 2019, the Japan Sports Agency formulated the Sports Organizations Governance Code, a code not directly applicable to college sports clubs. However, as seen in the scandal of the American football club of Nihon University, it is necessary to strengthen the governance of all college sports clubs, including tennis. Therefore, we conducted a governance survey at 268 Japanese college tennis clubs in 2021. The representatives of each college were asked to report their demographics and respond to the assessment measures regarding the governance of college tennis clubs. A simple tabulation and cross-analysis were conducted, and the Chi-square test or Fisher's exact test were used at a significance level of five percent. Based on the results of the survey, we developed a "Governance Self-Assessment Sheet" for college tennis clubs. In this study, we introduce the outline of the results of the survey by comparing the governance of sports organizations in different countries. Moreover, a practical case study of Keio University in Japan, which is the world's first university to use the Sheet, will be discussed based on the results of a new survey conducted in 2022.

Key words: college tennis, governance code, governance self-assessment sheet.

Received: 1 June 2022

Accepted: 4 July 2022

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Japanese sports world has had numerous opportunities to be excited by glamorous topics related to mega sporting events, such as the Rugby World Cup and the Olympic Games (Kawabata, 2019). Conversely, there have been a series of scandals in sports organizations such as the Japan Boxing Federation and the American Football Club of Nihon University (Matsuyama, 2019).

Therefore, in 2019, the Japan Sports Agency formulated the Sports Organizations Governance Code (SGC) (Japan Sports Agency, 2019a) to enhance the value of sports through preventing the occurrence of scandals that damage it.

However, the SGC does not directly apply to college sports clubs, but only to "organizations of which the main purpose is to carry out business for the promotion of sport" as referred to in Article 2, Section 2 of the Basic Act on Sports (MEXT, 2011). Other countries such as England (Sport England, 2020) and Canada (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2021) also have governance codes for sports organizations, but they are similar in that they do not directly apply to college sports clubs.

The essence of the SGC is to enhance the value of sports through the prevention of misconduct (Japan Sports Agency, 2019b), and not to limit the number of applicable sports organizations. Thus, it is desirable for college sports clubs to strengthen their governance with reference to the SGC as well.

However, there has been little academic research on the governance of college sports clubs. In fact, excluding James



and Elizabeth (2019), who examine policy change in college sports, and Carnegie and Tuck (2010), who examine the governance of college organizations, most of the previous studies focus on governance in organizations larger than university athletic departments.

Therefore, we conducted a governance survey of Japanese college tennis clubs in 2021 (Hotta, 2022). Based on the results, we developed a "Governance Self-Assessment Sheet" for college tennis clubs in cooperation with Japanese sports lawyers and the All Japan Inter-Collegiate Tennis Federation. In this study, we introduce the outline of the results of the survey by comparing the governance of sports organizations in different countries. Additionally, a practical case study of Keio University in Japan, the world's first university to use the "Governance Self-Assessment Sheet," will be discussed based

on the results of a new survey conducted in 2022 among the members of the Kanto Polytechnic University Tennis Federation.

PROCEDURE

Representatives of 268 college tennis clubs registered in the All Japan Inter-Collegiate Tennis Federation were asked to respond to the questionnaire. There were 110 responses (41.0%), all of which (100.0%) were valid. The survey period was from June 26, 2021 to July 28, 2021. The questionnaire consisted of demographics items, and the Assessment Measures Regarding Governance of College Tennis Teams (AG-CT scale). All items were answered online using the survey form of the Keio University Authentication System. The survey forms are protected by SSL/TLS encryption, server certification, firewall access control, and other security and personal information protection measures.

The AG-CT scale is a 10-item scale of the governance of college tennis clubs, consisting of items related to democratic and crisis management (Table 1). The respondents were asked to self-evaluate their answers by “Yes” or “No” (Yajima et al., 2011), and were to respond to free comments when necessary. The AG-CT scale was developed by two sports jurists with reference to the SGC to ensure its validity.

DATA ANALYSIS

Simple tabulations and cross-analysis were conducted on their demographics and the AG-CT scale. From the crosstabulation table of the attributes of their demographics and the AG-CT scale, the chi-square test was used at a significance level of five percent to analyze whether the relationship between their demographics and the AG-CT scale is statistically significant. For cells with an expected frequency of less than five or a minimum expected frequency of less than one, Fisher’s exact test was conducted again to obtain an exact p-value.

Table 1
The contents of the AG-CT scale and its simple tabulation results.

	Items	Yes (%)	No (%)
Democratic management	① Does the club adopt the principle of majority decision-making? (n=110) • How exactly are decisions made? • Situations in which you felt there was a problem with the club's decision-making	73.0	27.0
	② Is the power relationship between the men's and women's clubs equal? (n=87) • Situations where the relationship between the men's and women's clubs was problematic.	87.0	13.0
	③ Is the selection of representative players fair and reasonable? (n=110) • What specific selection methods are used? • Situations where I felt there was a problem with the selection of the representative players	97.0	3.0
	④ Are the rules of the club set forth in the form of sentences? (n=110) • General rules and regulations • Regulations regarding the content and standards of penalties • Regulations for proper accounting and property management • Rules and Regulations for the Selection of the representative players	73.0 72.7 29.0 46.4 10.0	27.0 27.3 71.0 53.6 90.0
	⑤ Are measures taken to prevent abuse by coaches and upperclassmen? (n=110) • Preventive measures actually implemented	7.0	93.0
	⑥ Have there ever been problems of abuse or other behavior? (n=110) • Situations in which you have felt the need to prevent abuse, etc.	7.0	93.0
	⑦ Are precautionary measures in place for accidents during practice, heat stroke, etc.? (n=110) • Specific preventive measures	80.0	20.0
	⑧ Is there a supervisor or responsible person on site during practice? (n=110) • Who exactly are you placing and how often?	36.0	64.0
	⑨ Have you ever had any problems dealing with accidents, heat stroke, etc.? (n=110) • Situations in which you felt it was necessary to take precautionary measures against accidents	6.0	94.0
	⑩ Are records kept for accounting control within the department? (n=110) • Situations in which you felt a problem	77.0	23.0
Risk management			

Cramer’s V, which indicates the strength of correlation between two variables in the L×M contingency table, is also used as reference. The closer Cramer’s V is to one, the stronger the association between the two qualitative variables (Akoglu, 2018), and the specific effect size is considered to be 0.1 for small, 0.3 for medium, and 0.5 for large (Ohbuchi, 2020). The software used for these statistical analyses was R Version 4.1.1.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to the survey, the purpose of the survey, the survey method, and the protection of information were explained in writing to the representatives of the All Japan Inter-Collegiate Tennis Federation, and survey method was discussed. In the survey form, the following explanatory text was placed in a position easily recognizable by respondents: (1) the purpose of the survey, (2) the voluntary nature of the responses, and (3) the fact that the names of individuals and colleges will not be disclosed as identifiable information.

RESULTS

The contents of the AG-CT scale and its simple tabulation results are shown in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the relationships among their demographics and the AG-CT scale. In the analysis, we categorized colleges in division four or lower as “Low Competitiveness (LC)” and those in division three or higher as “High Competitiveness (HC)” based on the median value of “Competitiveness” in their demographics. The median value of the “number of members” was used as a criterion to classify the teams into “Small Teams (ST)” with 19 or fewer members and “Large Teams (LT)” with 20 or more members.

First, to test the hypothesis that “the level of good governance on the AG-CT scale differs between the LC and HC groups,” the Chi-square test or Fisher’s exact test were conducted, and a statistically significant difference was found in the question “Is the selection of representative members fair and reasonable (p<.05) ?” Cramer’s V was 0.445, indicating that more respondents answered “yes” in the HC group than in the LC group.

Next, to test the hypothesis that “the level of good governance in the AG-CT scale differs between the ST and LT groups,” the chi-square test or Fisher’s exact test were conducted, and a statistically significant difference was found in the question “Do you take precautionary measures against accidents and heat stroke during practice (p<.05)?” Cramer’s V was 0.355, and more respondents answered “yes” in the LT group than in the ST group.

Table 2

The relationships among their demographics and the AG-CT scale.

AG-CT scale	Demographics	Cramer's V
Democratic management	① Does the club adopt the principle of majority decision-making? (n=110)	Competitiveness .057 Number of members .048
	② Is the power relationship between the men's and women's clubs equal? (n=87)	Competitiveness .344
		Number of members .255
	③ Is the selection of representative players fair and reasonable? (n=110)	Competitiveness .445 *
		Number of members .047
	④ Are the rules of the club set forth in the form of sentences? (n=110)	Competitiveness .192
		Number of members .007
	Risk management	⑤ Are measures taken to prevent abuse by coaches and upperclassmen? (n=110)
Number of members .055		
⑥ Have there ever been problems of abuse or other behavior? (n=110)		Competitiveness .036
		Number of members .087
⑦ Are precautionary measures in place for accidents during practice, heat stroke, etc.? (n=110)		Competitiveness .139
		Number of members .355 *
⑧ Is there a supervisor or responsible person on site during practice? (n=110)		Competitiveness .063
		Number of members .034
⑨ Have you ever had any problems dealing with accidents, heat stroke, etc.? (n=110)		Competitiveness .248
		Number of members .023
⑩ Are records kept for accounting control within the department? (n=110)	Competitiveness .072	
	Number of members .138	

Note: * : p<.05

DISCUSSION: DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT

In the section on democratic management, the respondents were asked about (1) appropriate decision-making and (2) the maintenance of rules and regulations.

Appropriate Decision-making

First, approximately 70% of the colleges answered that they adopt the principle of majority decision making in their college tennis clubs. Conversely, there were responses such as “the coach makes decisions unilaterally.” Next, approximately 90% of the colleges answered that the power relationship between men and women is equal in tennis clubs in which men’s and women’s clubs are active jointly. However, some respondents reported that women’s clubs often have fewer members than men’s clubs, and that this disadvantages their voice relatively more.

Accordingly, referring to the SGC, in Principle 2, it is stated that a system should be established to ensure appropriate organizational management, including an external director, a female director, and an athletes’ committee. In other words, the decision making of the association should be conducted under a system that reflects diverse opinions. However, some college tennis clubs did not have a sufficient system, as shown in the responses such as “decisions are made by the coach’s own judgment without listening to the opinions of the club members.” Such a situation is considered to be inappropriate for maintaining and improving group condensation (Carron, 1982) among members of college tennis clubs.

Therefore, we propose that tennis clubs in each college be examined by a third party who is not the head or the director in the decision-making process. Such a third party is expected to play a role in pointing out problems in organizational management, which cannot be discovered and improved by students who have close relationships with each other.

Maintenance of Rules and Regulations

Next, more than 90% of the colleges answered that the selection process of representative players in their college tennis clubs was fair and reasonable. However, there was also a report that “the representative players are selected according to whether the coach likes their style of play,” and some members of the clubs are dissatisfied with the process. In the cross-analysis, the percentage of respondents who answered “fair and reasonable” was higher in the HC group than in the LC group, which may reflect the fact that the competition for representation in the department is fiercer.

Next, we asked whether the rules of college tennis clubs are established in written form, and approximately 70% of the colleges responded that they are. However, only 10% of the colleges had “rules for the selection of representative players,” and only approximately 30% of the colleges had “rules for the content and standards of penalties.”

Accordingly, referring to the SGC, it is stated in Principle 3 that rules for the fair and reasonable selection of representative players should be established. Additionally, Principle 10 states that a disciplinary system should be established. The contents of the disciplinary measures and the procedures leading up to them should be set forth in writing and widely publicized. The governance codes of the United Kingdom (Sport England, 2022) and Canada (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2021) also



emphasize “transparency” and “accountability” as the purpose of their codes and require that sports organizations publicize their articles of incorporation and rules.

Therefore, we propose that each college tennis club should set forth the method of selection of representative players and the contents and procedures of penalties in written form, such as club rules. At the very least, it is desirable to establish a policy on what standpoints should be emphasized in the selection process when the final decision is made at the subjective discretion of the leader, after setting up guidelines for competition results and rankings.

DISCUSSION: RISK MANAGEMENT

In the section on risk management, we asked about (1) the prevention of abuse, etc., (2) accident prevention, and (3) proper accounting management.

Prevention of abuse, etc.

First, less than 10% of the colleges answered that they have implemented preventive measures against abuse by coaches and upper-class students. Conversely, less than 10% of the universities have ever punished their members due to problems of abuse and other behaviors. However, there were also cases reported, such as “There was harassment by a senior member, and I think guidance is needed, such as by setting up a course,” and “There was a case of slandering a specific member on social networking services (SNS), which was discovered by accident when I was consulted on a certain occasion.” Prevention is indispensable because such incidents can constitute serious problems if they occur.

Accordingly, referring to the SGC, Principle 5 states that compliance education should be enhanced. In fact, some of the participants pointed out that “guidance is needed,

such as setting up a course.” Therefore, we recommend that each college tennis club should conduct compliance training for their members. Furthermore, as shown in the case of “slandering and defaming a specific member on SNS, which was discovered by accident when the case was discussed with us,” it is difficult to discuss matters such as abuse and to identify them. Therefore, Principle 9 of SGC states that a reporting system should be established. Based on this principle, it would be desirable to appoint a person overseeing confidentiality counseling at each college tennis club, such as in the executive year.

In this respect, efforts related to SafeSport are a worldwide trend. For example, the International Olympic Committee offers a training course for safeguarding officers (Sportsoracle, 2022). The International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) offers a safeguarding course that is available to anyone worldwide (FIFA, 2022). The 2021 revision of the UK Code of Governance, mentioned above, requires that the Board of Directors employ a Welfare and Safety Lead Director and that the Legal Policy include a Safeguarding Act for both children and adults (with appropriate policies and procedures) (Sport England, 2021). Furthermore, the British Tennis Association (LTA) is actively publishing its policies and procedures on safeguarding (LTA, 2022). Thus, efforts to prevent harassment and abuse are being made in many parts of the world, notably including the creation of an independent Safe Sport Mechanism. In the U.S., the U.S. Center for SafeSport (USCSS, 2022) was established as a specialized organization to prevent abuse against athletes. In Canada, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) was established to provide a unified definition of abuse and harassment. The Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC, 2021), a sports dispute resolution organization in Canada, has been commissioned by the government to establish a unified system to handle everything from reporting harassment to investigation and disciplinary action (SDRCC, 2021). It is true that it may be difficult to establish such a large-scale system in each college tennis club. However, it would be possible to establish a similar system in the organizations that oversee college tennis clubs, such as the All Japan Inter-Collegiate Tennis Federation in Japan or the NCAA in the United States. We look forward to further progress in this area.

Prevention of accidents

Next, 80% of the colleges answered that they have preventive measures against accidents and heat stroke during practice. The percentage of the LT group was higher than that of the ST group, which may be because the tennis clubs with more members take more systematic measures.

Approximately 40% of the colleges answered that they have a supervisor or a person in charge on site during practice. However, even among such colleges, only approximately 10% of the total number of cases had such a person in place for every activity. Conversely, less than 10% of the colleges answered that they have had problems in addressing accidents and heat stroke.

Referring to the SGC, Principle 12 states that a crisis management system should be established. Therefore, we recommend that each college tennis club prepare a crisis management manual that describes how to deal with accidents and heat stroke. The manual should be prepared under the

guidance of a specialist as much as possible and should be available at all times at practice sites and club rooms. There were also responses such as “All members had a classroom lecture on accident prevention,” “All members consulted the materials on measures against heat stroke,” and “A trainer or manager is assigned to the team.” It is indeed desirable to hold lectures and study sessions by medical experts. For example, it is considered that requiring a practical training course on cardiopulmonary resuscitation including AED would greatly contribute to improving the possibility of life saving actions by bystanders (Mathias et al., 2017).

Proper accounting management

Finally, approximately 80% of the colleges answered that they keep records for internal accounting control. However, some respondents answered that “there is a problem with the management system because of theft.” Considering this, referring to the SGC, Principles 6 and 4 of the SGC for general sports organizations state that a system should be established for appropriate accounting procedures. Therefore, we would like to recommend that each college tennis club establish a system of record-keeping of club expenses by multiple members to prevent unaccounted money and theft.

GOVERNANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT SHEET

Based on the above findings, we developed a “Governance Self-Assessment Sheet” (Figure 1) for college tennis clubs in cooperation with Japanese sports lawyers and the All Japan Student Tennis Federation. In Japan, Keio University, a member of the Kanto Polytechnic University Tennis Federation, implemented an initiative in which students who belong to the tennis club fill out the sheet themselves and disclose their governance self-assessment on the official website of their tennis club (Keio University Yagami Tennis Team, 2022).

As a result, this college tennis club has developed a manual for penalties and accidents, and 95% of the members evaluated that they felt the effect of the improvement of governance. From this standpoint, we can expect that the use of this sheet is highly effective in strengthening the governance of the college tennis clubs. Furthermore, by using this “Governance Evaluation Sheet,” students themselves will be able to learn the concepts of compliance and the rule of law. This is expected to positively affect the governance of their workplaces when they graduate from colleges and start working in companies. In this sense, the sheet is being improved so that it can be used in other sports than tennis, and it is also being explored for use in sports teams in junior high schools and high schools. Furthermore, the sheet is currently being translated into multiple languages and being used in countries other than Japan.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analysis helped identify the actual state of governance in Japanese college tennis clubs, and the following recommendations for good governance were made. First, a third-party review should be conducted in the decision-making process. Second, the “Methods of selection of representative players” and “Details and procedures of penalties” should be documented. Third, compliance training should be provided to the members. Fourth, a person overseeing confidential

consultations should be appointed in the executive grade and so on. Fifth, study sessions should be held by experts on sports accidents and heat stroke. Sixth, a crisis management manual should be established in case of accidents and heat stroke. Seventh, a system should be established to manage the records of club expenses by multiple members.

Based on these recommendations, we developed a "Governance Evaluation Sheet" for college tennis clubs, which proved to be effective to a certain extent at Keio University in Japan. In the future, we hope that this kind of practical application will be further promoted, and that good governance will spread in college sports worldwide.

Governance Self-Assessment Sheet for College Tennis Clubs	
Club :	
Date of entry :	
Self-evaluation of response status A : Fully compliant B : Partially compliant C : Not compliant Status of compliant	
(1) Third-party review should be conducted in the decision-making process · It is appropriate to have a review by an outside coach or an alumnus/alumnae	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(2) "Methods of selection of representative players" and "Details and procedures of penalties" should be documented	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(3) Compliance training should be provided to the members	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(4) A person in charge of confidential consultations should be appointed in the executive grade and so on · abuse, etc. are difficult to consult with and difficult to understand due to their nature.	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(5) Are sanctions for abuse included in the club rules? · The details and procedures of disciplinary actions should be included in the club rules, and the members should be informed in advance.	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(6) Hold study sessions by experts on sports accidents and heat stroke · Practical training on cardiopulmonary resuscitation, including AED, is also recommended for all members.	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(7) Establish a crisis management manual in case of accidents and heat stroke · The crisis management manual should be available at all times in the practice rooms and club rooms. · AED locations and emergency contact information should be shared with all club members and posted prominently at activity sites.	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(8) Is there objective monitoring of the practice by the coach?	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	
(9) Establish a system to manage records of club expenses by multiple members	
(Current status of efforts, items to be improved in the future, etc.)	

Figure 1. "Governance Self-Assessment Sheet" for college tennis clubs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Professor Daisuke Hirata of Senshu University and Associate Professor Daisuke Mitsuhashi of the University of Tsukuba for their cooperation throughout the execution of this study. We also thank Professor Hiroyuki Hirano of Keio University, Professor Yoshiharu Yamamoto of the University of Tokyo, Professor Masaaki Katsuno of the University of Tokyo, and Research Assistant Professor Ichiro Hidaka of the University of Tokyo, as well as Ms. Kaya Kudo of Keio University, and Attorney Yuri Yagi of the Yagi Law Office for their detailed advice on this research. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ms. Keiko Ueno, Secretary General of the All Japan Inter-Collegiate Tennis Federation, and the members of the tennis clubs of each college for their cooperation in this research, as well as to the many other people whose support has made this study possible.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

This study was conducted as part of “A Survey on Good Governance in College Tennis Teams” and was supported by the 2019 JAPAN SOCIETY ON TENNIS SCIENCE Research Grant.

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