

# **Governance of Sports Institutions in the United Arab Emirates: Between Global Standards and the Authenticity of Islamic Civilizational Values**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the governance of sports institutions in the United Arab Emirates in light of the integration between global governance standards and the authenticity of Islamic civilizational values. It does so by analyzing the conceptual framework of sports governance, assessing its implementation within Emirati sports institutions, and exploring mechanisms to strengthen this integration in a manner that enhances institutional efficiency without compromising value-based identity. The study reviews key global governance principles, including transparency, accountability, and efficiency, and evaluates the extent to which sports institutions in the UAE have adopted these principles, supported by national legislation and policies. The research also highlights the role of Islamic civilizational values, such as justice, integrity, consultation, and responsibility, in reinforcing governance and providing an ethical dimension that enhances its effectiveness and regulates institutional practices. Furthermore, it proposes a set of mechanisms to achieve integration between global standards and Islamic values, including the development of regulatory frameworks, the promotion of value-based leadership, the activation of codes of conduct, and the establishment of value-driven oversight systems. At the same time, the study addresses key challenges facing this approach, such as the gap between formal regulations and practical implementation, competitive pressures, and the difficulty of reconciling international standards with cultural specificity. The study concludes that the Emirati model of sports governance represents a balanced approach that combines organizational modernity with value authenticity, and that strengthening this integration is essential for ensuring the sustainability of sports institutions and enhancing their role in societal development and the promotion of civilizational values.

**Keywords:** Sports Governance, United Arab Emirates, Islamic Civilizational Values, Transparency, Accountability

**Introduction**

Governance in sports institutions has become an urgent and strategically significant area of inquiry in light of the profound transformations reshaping the global sports sector. No longer confined to recreational purposes, sport now constitutes a complex domain with far reaching economic, social, and cultural implications. This shift has generated increasing pressure on sports institutions to adopt governance frameworks that ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency while safeguarding institutional integrity and public trust. Despite the proliferation of international governance standards, questions remain regarding their contextual applicability and actual effectiveness across diverse socio-cultural settings. This study is therefore motivated by the need to critically examine how governance models can be both effective and contextually grounded, particularly in value driven societies.

The importance of this research lies in its attempt to address a critical gap between the universalization of governance standards and the necessity of aligning them with local ethical and cultural frameworks. In this regard, governance is not merely a technical or administrative process, but a value laden practice that directly influences institutional performance, stakeholder confidence, and long-term sustainability. Understanding how governance principles operate within specific cultural contexts is essential for enhancing their practical utility and ensuring that they contribute meaningfully to institutional development. In the United Arab Emirates, the sports sector occupies a central position within the national development agenda, supported by sustained investments and policy attention. The country has actively pursued the adoption of internationally recognized governance standards in an effort to enhance institutional performance and global competitiveness. However, this orientation toward global models exists alongside a deeply rooted system of Islamic civilizational values, including justice, integrity, responsibility, and tolerance. These values are not peripheral, but rather constitute a normative foundation that shapes institutional behaviour and public expectations. Consequently, the integration of governance standards within this value system represents both a necessity and a challenge.

Accordingly, this study is significant in that it explores the extent to which global sports governance standards can be effectively adapted within the Emirati context without undermining its cultural and ethical foundations. It seeks to demonstrate that the effectiveness of governance is not determined solely by compliance with international benchmarks, but also by its coherence with the underlying value system of society. The study is particularly beneficial for policymakers, sports administrators, and regulatory bodies in the UAE, as well as for scholars interested in governance, sports management, and Islamic perspectives on institutional development.

The research problem arises from the ongoing tension between organizational modernization and value authenticity. Specifically, it questions whether sports institutions in the UAE can achieve a functional and sustainable balance between these two dimensions, and whether global governance standards, in their current form, are sufficient to ensure effective institutional performance. By analysing the current state of sports governance in the UAE and examining mechanisms for integrating international standards with Islamic civilizational values, this study aims to contribute to the development of a context sensitive governance model that enhances both efficiency and ethical coherence.

*The Conceptual Framework of Sports Governance in the UAE: Between Global Standards and Islamic Civilizational Values*

Defining the conceptual framework of sports governance in the UAE is essential for understanding the relationship between global governance standards and Islamic civilizational values. This section analyzes the concept of sports governance in light of international standards, outlines its characteristics and objectives, and links it to the Islamic value system that constitutes a core cultural foundation of Emirati society (Al-Kaabi et al., 2023).

Sports governance is defined as a set of rules, systems, and mechanisms that regulate the functioning of sports institutions, determine decision-making processes, allocate authority, and manage resources in a manner that ensures transparency, accountability, efficiency, and integrity. These concepts have evolved alongside the global expansion of the sports sector and its increasing economic and investment significance, necessitating the development of international standards to regulate sports activities and prevent corruption and mismanagement. These standards include principles such as disclosure, oversight, role clarity, and fairness among stakeholders within the sports system.

In the Emirati context, sports institutions have adopted many of these global standards in alignment with the state's broader commitment to enhancing governance across sectors. Efforts have focused on strengthening regulatory frameworks, improving transparency, and activating institutional oversight mechanisms in accordance with international best practices. This reflects an awareness of the importance of governance in achieving institutional sustainability, attracting investment, and improving both administrative and athletic performance (Al-Obaidi, 2023).

However, governance in the UAE extends beyond regulatory dimensions to include a strong connection to the society's value system, rooted in Islamic civilizational principles. Values such as justice, integrity, consultation, responsibility, and tolerance provide an ethical framework that guides institutional behavior and regulates administrative practices within sports organizations. These values do not conflict with global standards; rather, they complement them and provide a human-centered dimension that enhances their effectiveness.

An analysis of the relationship between global governance standards and Islamic values reveals significant convergence. Transparency aligns with honesty and integrity, accountability corresponds to responsibility, and justice reflects the core Islamic principle of fairness (Al-Obaidi, 2023). Similarly, participatory decision-making, emphasized in modern governance, is rooted in the Islamic principle of consultation (shura).

Thus, sports governance in the UAE represents a model that combines modernity with authenticity, where global standards are adopted within a value-based framework reflecting societal identity. This integration is not merely theoretical but provides a practical foundation for developing a balanced governance model that achieves administrative efficiency without compromising civilizational values (Treiki et al., 2021).

*The Reality of Governance Implementation in UAE Sports Institutions*

Sports institutions in the UAE have made significant progress in adopting global governance standards, particularly in implementing principles of transparency, accountability, and efficiency. This progress is reflected in the development of regulatory frameworks, the strengthening of oversight systems, and the establishment of clear guidelines for managing financial and human resources. These efforts have contributed to increasing professionalism, enhancing investment attractiveness, and strengthening public trust (Al-Obaidi, 2023).

National legislation and policies play a central role in supporting governance by establishing legal and regulatory frameworks that ensure proper institutional management and limit administrative and financial irregularities. These policies guide institutions toward compliance with global standards while considering local specificities, thereby reinforcing integrity and sustainability (Summerley, 2020).

At the same time, Islamic civilizational values are evident in institutional practices, particularly in leadership behavior and organizational culture. Principles such as integrity, justice, and responsibility are reflected in fair decision-making, respect for regulations, and adherence to professional ethics, alongside the promotion of tolerance and coexistence within the sports environment.

The Emirati model is characterized by its ability to balance global standards with value-based identity. While institutions strive to meet international benchmarks of efficiency and professionalism, they also preserve cultural and ethical distinctiveness by embedding these values into policies and daily practices (Abdel Rashid, 2019; Haydarov et al., 2020).

Despite these achievements, several challenges persist, including gaps between formal frameworks and actual implementation, variations in institutional commitment, competitive pressures that may prioritize outcomes over values, and the ongoing difficulty of aligning global standards with cultural specificity.

Nevertheless, governance has had a positive impact on institutional performance and societal trust, improving efficiency, enhancing decision-making quality, and strengthening accountability mechanisms. These outcomes contribute to the sustainability of sports institutions and reinforce their position within society.

*Mechanisms for Enhancing Integration Between Global Standards and Islamic Values*

Achieving integration requires the development of comprehensive legislative and regulatory frameworks that incorporate both global standards and Islamic values. This involves adapting international models to align with cultural contexts and embedding ethical principles such as justice and integrity into legal and organizational structures (Lee & Price, 2016).

Promoting value-based leadership is also essential, as leaders serve as role models whose behavior reflects institutional values and fosters a culture of trust, respect, and voluntary commitment to ethical standards.

The activation of codes of conduct derived from Islamic values provides practical guidelines for acceptable behavior, promotes institutional cohesion, and ensures accountability when supported by effective enforcement mechanisms (Leşco et al., 2025).

Developing value-oriented oversight and accountability systems further enhances governance by integrating ethical evaluation alongside financial and administrative performance. This includes the use of qualitative indicators, integrity reports, and whistleblowing mechanisms.

Investment in human capital through training programs that combine technical and ethical dimensions is crucial for ensuring effective implementation and fostering a culture of integrity.

Technology also plays a key role in enhancing transparency and accountability through digital systems that facilitate disclosure, documentation, and performance tracking (Bravo & Moreno, 2026).

Finally, strengthening community engagement and promoting value awareness contribute to creating a supportive environment that encourages ethical governance, while continuous evaluation ensures sustainability and ongoing improvement.

Impacts of Implementing Sports Governance in the UAE in Light of the Integration Between Global Standards and Islamic Civilizational Values and Associated Challenges

First: Enhancing Institutional Integrity and Transparency

One of the most significant impacts of implementing integrated governance in Emirati sports institutions is the enhancement of institutional integrity and transparency. The combination of global standards and Islamic values creates an administrative environment grounded in clarity and honesty (Abdel Rashid, 2019). While international standards emphasize disclosure and oversight, Islamic values reinforce self-regulation based on integrity and accountability. This integration reduces opportunities for corruption and misuse of authority and contributes to building strong trust between sports institutions and stakeholders, including the public, investors, and regulatory bodies.

*Second: Improving Institutional Efficiency and Sustainability*

The implementation of balanced governance contributes to improving institutional performance by organizing administrative processes, clarifying responsibilities, and enhancing resource management. Commitment to Islamic values such as excellence and diligence further encourages quality beyond minimum performance requirements. This approach supports institutional sustainability, enabling sports organizations to grow and compete effectively without compromising ethical principles (Al-Obaidi, 2023).

*Third: Promoting Institutional Justice and Equal Opportunities*

The integration of global standards and Islamic values reinforces the principle of justice within sports institutions. Rules are applied equally, and opportunities are granted based on merit and competence. This fosters a sense of fairness among employees and athletes, reduces internal conflicts, and enhances institutional stability. As a core Islamic value, justice adds a moral dimension to administrative practices, making adherence a matter of internal conviction rather than mere legal compliance.

*Fourth: Building a Positive Sports Culture in Emirati Society*

The impact of governance extends beyond institutional boundaries to society at large,

contributing to the development of a positive sports culture characterized by respect, discipline, and fair competition. When institutions adhere to ethical values, they provide role models that influence the behavior of athletes and fans. This helps reduce manifestations of intolerance and violence while promoting values of tolerance and coexistence, thereby strengthening social cohesion (Lee & Price, 2016).

*Fifth: The Challenge of Formal Versus Substantive Implementation*

Despite the presence of advanced governance frameworks, a key challenge lies in the risk of superficial implementation. Some institutions may adopt global standards in form without embracing the underlying ethical principles, which weakens governance effectiveness. This highlights the need to reinforce the value-based dimension to ensure genuine rather than symbolic implementation.

*Sixth: Balancing Competitive Pressures with Ethical Commitment*

Sports institutions face intense competitive pressures that may at times encourage prioritizing rapid results over ethical considerations. The challenge lies in maintaining a balance between achieving sporting success and upholding ethical standards, ensuring that values are not sacrificed for short-term gains. This requires strong managerial awareness that places values at the core of institutional practice (Haydarov et al., 2020).

*Seventh: Reconciling Global Standards with Cultural Specificity*

Aligning global governance standards with the cultural specificity of Emirati society remains an ongoing challenge, as some international models may not fully align with the local context. This necessitates the development of a flexible governance model that draws on global expertise while preserving Islamic civilizational values as a fundamental component of societal identity.

*Eighth: The Need for Continuous Development and Adaptation*

Value-based governance is not a static process but requires continuous development to keep pace with changes in the global sports environment. This includes updating legislation, enhancing oversight mechanisms, and strengthening training programs to ensure that sports institutions remain adaptable while maintaining a balance between modern standards and authentic values.

**Conclusion**

This study concludes that the governance of sports institutions in the United Arab Emirates represents an advanced model that seeks to balance adherence to modern global standards with the preservation of authentic Islamic civilizational values. This integration is not merely theoretical but constitutes a practical foundation that enhances institutional performance, strengthens integrity and transparency, and promotes justice within sports organizations. The findings indicate that adopting global governance standards improves managerial efficiency and decision-making quality, while Islamic values add an ethical dimension that regulates institutional behavior and reinforces self-accountability. The Emirati model thus emerges as a distinctive experience that harmonizes organizational modernity with value-based identity, reflecting societal specificity and supporting the sustainability of sports institutions.

At the same time, the study identifies several challenges, including the gap between formal frameworks and actual practice, competitive pressures that may undermine value commitment, and the difficulty of fully reconciling certain global standards with cultural specificity. However, these challenges do not diminish the importance of this approach; rather, they highlight the need for continuous development of regulatory mechanisms and the تعزيز of value awareness within sports institutions.

Accordingly, the success of sports governance in the UAE depends on the ability to translate this integration between global standards and Islamic values into sustained and effective practice. This can be achieved through strengthening value-based leadership, developing legislative frameworks, activating oversight and accountability mechanisms, and investing in training and capacity building. In doing so, a comprehensive governance model can be established that combines efficiency with authenticity, enhances the UAE's position in regional and international sports, and positions sport as a powerful instrument for promoting societal values and sustainable development.

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