AN INVESTIGATION INTO STAFF PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE LEGITIMACY OF ANTI-DOPING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN REGIONAL ANTI-DOPING ORGANISATIONS

Report prepared for the World Anti-Doping Agency

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Abbreviations

WADA	World Anti-Doping Agency
WADC	World Anti-Doping Code
RADO	Regional Anti-Doping Organisation
NADO	National Anti-Doping Organisation
TUE	Therapeutic Use Exemption
CCQ	Code Compliance Questionnaire

Executive Summary

The success of anti-doping efforts under the WADA relies on Code signatories correctly and rigorously implementing policy and procedures stipulated in the WADC. At present, the depth of policy implementation and compliance varies significantly between Code signatories. The challenge facing WADA is to standardise policy implementation across Code signatories operating with significantly different resources, experience, capacity, and political support.

RADOs are tasked with developing policy compliance challenges experienced by early-stage NADOS (i.e., new or inexperienced anti-doping agencies). The experiences of RADO staff remain under-researched, limiting evidence available to guide policy and actions to develop anti-doping efforts globally. Given their developmental role, RADO staff are well informed about the challenges experienced by early-stage NADOs. The purpose of this research is to gain insight into the challenges experienced by RADO and early-stage NADO employees. In doing so, the study identifies the practical challenges that WADA face in their mission to harmonise drug testing practices across NADOs. We address this purpose by developing new knowledge about the perceptions of RADO programme members who are responsible for early-stage anti-doping agencies.

Data were collected via semi-structured interviews from XX RADO managers with direct responsibility for managing RADO activities and XX RADO Chairs or Board Members representing their NADO. Through analysis of the data, four legitimacy dimensions emerged that capture how the actions and outcomes of WADA were judged by participants. The four dimensions were: (1) Objectives and Sanctioning, (2) Organisational Staffing, (3) Anti-doping System Structure, and (4) Local Consideration. The dimensions provide evidence about how participants judged WADA based on the need for a global regulator, WADA's ability to enforce policy violations, the performance of the operational and executive staff, the treatment of the RADOs, and the appropriateness of anti-doping policies in relation to the local working context of NADOs.

Based on these dimensions, we present five recommendations to help WADA in standardising policy implementation between signatories. First, we suggest that WADA undertake a capacity assessment of early-stage NADOs to expose priority areas for resource allocation and provide tangible development objectives for NADOs. Second, fostering increased collaboration between WADA signatories and early-stage NADOs and RADOs can improve implementation by sharing resources and expertise. Third, engaging support from new external parties could reveal new funding sources to allocate to signatories and help address problems stemming from geopolitics. Fourth, effective human resource management and

contingency planning can promote technical development and safeguard accrued knowledge and experience from being lost through retirement or redundancy. Finally, improved diversity across policy making positions will help ensure the realities of early-stage NADOs and RADOs are considered in policies and standards going forward.

Introduction

Anti-doping policies are not implemented consistently across nations (e.g., Dikic, Markovic & McNamee, 2011; Gunnarsson, 2021; Hanstad, Skille & Loland, 2010). In turn, athletes' judgments of WADA's legitimacy are negatively influenced by their perceptions that anti-doping testing conditions across nations are not equal. This undermines (a) drug testing as a deterrent to doping and (b) WADA's legitimacy as the organisation responsible for drug-testing. Problematically, there is a knowledge gap regarding the challenges to anti-doping policy implementation faced by early-stage NADOs (i.e., new or inexperienced). It is this context that motivated WADA to support this project with the purpose of gaining insight into the challenges experienced by RADO and early-stage NADO employees.

The aim of this study is to identify the practical challenges that WADA face in their mission to harmonise drug testing practices across NADOs. We address this aim by developing new knowledge about the perceptions of RADO programme members who are responsible for early-stage anti-doping agencies. This is important, because at present, there is minimal evidence about what criteria RADO programme members' use to judge the legitimacy of anti-doping implementation, or whether they judge WADA's actions positively or negatively.

Through this project we will provide evidence about the challenges created by top-down policy implementation that may ultimately undermine stakeholder perceptions of WADA's legitimacy in regions and nations. The insights we produce will inform recommendations to improve global harmonisation of anti-doping policy, and the legitimacy of WADA. We explore the following research question to understand the challenges RADOs face when implementing anti-doping policies:

1. How do RADO staff and board members evaluate the legitimacy of anti-doping policy implementation?

We address this question in two parts. The first part focusses on RADO managers: the personnel with direct responsible for managing activities in regional organisations. The second part concentrates on RADO Chairs and/or RADO Board Members: individuals that are affiliated with the respective RADO via NADO representation. Incorporating different stakeholders into our design was crucial to develop a broad understanding of the dimensions on which anti-doping policy evaluation is evaluated.

Based on our data analysis, four overarching dimensions were found, reflecting different issues and challenges that were included in evaluations of the legitimacy of anti-doing policy:

1. Objectives and Sanctioning

2. Organisational Staffing

3. Anti-Doping System Structure

4. Local Consideration

Understanding of these four dimensions enables WADA to consider *regional challenges* associated with *implementing anti-doping policy*, as well as providing an evidence base to *directly inform strategies* to improve its legitimacy and, therefore, enhance behavioural support (i.e., actions that RADOs and NADOs engage in to achieve WADA's goals of anti-doping policy compliance). Ultimately, the insights we provide *support successful implementation* and *harmonisation* of anti-doping practices.

Background

The research question is guided by existing literature. The following section is presented in four parts. First, we provide a brief overview of organisational legitimacy and justify its potential to explain issues with anti-doping compliance. Second, based on previous research with athletes, we outline *what is currently known* about perceptions of WADA's legitimacy to demonstrate the importance of this research. Third, we summarise research that has addressed signatory compliance with the WADC. Finally, we identify and address the need for WADA to better understand how regional anti-doping organisations members evaluate the legitimacy of anti-doping policy implementation.

Legitimacy

The popularity of legitimacy as a concept in anti-doping is not surprising given that positive perceptions of legitimacy are theorised to predict behavioural support for organisational goals (Beetham, 2013; Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Gowthorp, Greenhow & O'Brien, 2016; Hurd, 1999; Tyler, 2006). If athletes perceive that the processes and policies of WADA are legitimate, they are likely to attempt to comply with its rules and policies. Individuals render a judgment of an organisation based on available information and cues from other stakeholders (Bitektine, 2011; Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017, Tost, 2011). Legitimacy judgments are formed based on various criteria (e.g., is the organisation's purpose clear?) (Deephouse, Bundy, Tost & Suchman, 2017). When a positive legitimacy judgment exists based on these criteria, individuals provide behavioural support (e.g., Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002).

Perceptions of WADA's Legitimacy

How athletes perceive the legitimacy of WADA anti-doping policies, such as testing, has received considerable academic attention (e.g., Donovan, Egger, Kapernick & Mendoza, 2002; Efverström, Ahmadi, Hoff & Bäckström, 2016; Efverström, Bäckström, Ahmadi & Hoff, 2016; Gucciardi, Jalleh, & Donovan, 2011; Henning & Dimeo, 2019; Jalleh, Donovan, & Jobling, 2014; Overbye, 2016; Overbye & Wagner, 2014; Qvarfordt, 2019). This body of evidence indicates that the athletes surveyed believe in the principles and need for anti-doping but perceive inequality in the quality of testing conditions between nations (Woolway et al., 2020). This stems from WADA's top-down approach to policy implementation. Within this model, equal anti-doping implementation requires all signatories to apply policy in the same way (Gray, 2019; Houlihan, 2014). Athletes hold negative judgments of this approach, because of variations in compliance from one NADO to the next (Henning & Dimeo, 2019). Such issues align with evidence that athletes do not perceive the quality of anti-doping testing to be a deterrent (e.g., Moston, Engelberg & Skinner, 2015; Strelan & Boeckmann, 2006; Westmattelmann, Dreiskämper, Strauß, Schewe & Plass, 2018). Furthermore, it may help explain recent studies estimating past-year doping rates among athletes ranging from 30.6% to 43.6% (Elbe & Pitsch, 2018; Ulrich et al., 2018).

Signatory Compliance

Given that anti-doping policy implementation and signatory compliance with the WADC appear to have a substantial effect on the perceived legitimacy of WADA as well as anti-doping testing functioning as a deterrent, studies on signatory compliance are limited. Houlihan (2002) argued that there are three issues leading to compliance problems with the World Anti-Doping Code: (1) inability, (2) inadvertence, and (3) choice. Inability refers to compliance issues that result from a lack of resources (e.g., human, infrastructure, financial). Inadvertence relates to non-compliance caused by incompetence. Lastly, choice leads to non-compliance because of deliberation between the pros and cons of conforming.

Research suggests that there are differences in anti-doping policy implementation between NADOs (Dikic, Markovic & McNamee, 2011; Gunnarsson, 2021; Hanstad, Skille & Loland, 2010). Previous studies have explored NADO compliance issues, finding that a lack of human and financial resources, governmental support and infrastructure, insufficient staff knowledge, and prioritisation of sporting performance all contribute to harmonisation problems (Cannock, 2021; Fung & Yuan, 2008; Girginov, 2006; Hanstad & Houlihan, 2015; Houlihan,

2014; Gray, 2019; Kustec Lipicer & McArdle, 2014; Star, 2022; Wagner & Hanstad, 2011; Yang et al., 2022; Zubizarreta & Demeslay, 2021). Equally, developing the capacity and quality of a NADO takes a variety of educational, fiscal, and political strategies (Tan et al., 2020). Compliance is further complicated by the increasing complexity of anti-doping policy, the one-size-fits all nature of the World Anti-Doping Code, and limited opportunities to feedback on policy (Zubizarreta & Demeslay, 2021).

Legitimacy and Signatory Compliance in RADO Programme Members

Excluding the insightful case studies presented, there is a significant gap in our knowledge of the challenges to anti-doping policy implementation faced by early-stage NADO programmes. Further, previous research has not attempted to synthesise challenges for NADOs across different contexts (for an exception, see Zubizarreta and Demeslay, 2021). To date, the RADO programme has been absent from studies of anti-doping compliance; however, it encompasses "regional organizations designated by member countries to coordinate and manage delegated areas of their national anti-doping programs" (WADA, 2022, para 1). The exclusion of RADOs from knowledge about anti-doping compliance is a significant oversight. At the time of data collection, 15 RADOs were responsible for supporting and coordinating 134 NADOs to develop compliant anti-doping programmes. The personnel working within a RADO constitute an excellent source of information about the problems and solutions to anti-doping compliance specifically for early-stage NADOs that are new or inexperienced. Equally, each RADO has a board made up of representatives from constituent NADOs. Understanding the experiences and judgments of RADO programme members (i.e., RADO employees and board members) towards WADA can inform WADA strategy going forward to improve compliance by uncovering the dimensions upon which WADA's legitimacy is evaluated by stakeholders.

Given the importance of perceived legitimacy to a regulatory organisation like WADA, and the absence of studies into the implementation challenges faced by early-stage NADOs, there is a clear need to explore how RADO programme members evaluate the legitimacy of anti-doping policy implementation under WADA. This study directly builds on the research presented to develop WADA's compliance strategy by providing data on the realities of anti-doping organisations responsible for implementation. In doing so, we will contribute knowledge to strengthen the global anti-doping regime providing recommendations to improve compliance challenges and WADA's perceived legitimacy. A study of the legitimacy perceptions of RADO programme members also makes a significant contribution to the current body of knowledge by voicing the difficulties faced by member of the organisation who feel

marginalised. The following section details how the methodology utilised to understand the legitimacy judgments of RADO personnel.

Methodology

Research Design

To examine our research question: 'How do RADO staff and board members evaluate the legitimacy of anti-doping policy implementation?', we operationalised Bitektine's (2011) social judgments theory through a qualitative research design. Bitektine argued that individuals are capable of actively assessing organisational processes to render a judgment on their legitimacy. As such, rather than a global judgement that WADA is, or is not, legitimate, this position gives weight to the perceptions of stakeholders with different social and contextual experiences of the organisation (e.g., employees and board members). In this study, we are focussed on the legitimacy judgments of RADO staff and board members in relation to anti-doping implementation. This is because RADO staff and board members have direct experience of the challenges and solutions involved in achieving compliance in nations with early-stage anti-doping programmes—an issue that has continually undermined the legitimacy of WADA from the perspective of athletes.

Legitimacy judgments are composed of varyingly positive and negative appraisals of specific organisational actions. From this position, it is feasible for the same stakeholder to perceive WADA to be legitimate in relation to one action (e.g., creating the living Code), and illegitimate on another (e.g., harmonisation). Determining what criteria and issues RADO staff use to judge the legitimacy of anti-doping implementation, and the extent to which these evaluations are positive or negative, can shed light on challenges created by top-down policy implementation. Adopting an evaluator's perspective, legitimacy is considered a socially constructed phenomenon and requires a research design that factors in such complexity. Consequently, the decision to use *interviews* was considered the most appropriate data collection method due to explore issues in-depth.

Sample Strategy

We used a non-probability purposive sampling technique because we required individuals with specific expertise and experience, therefore, suitable individuals had to be actively identified. Further, the small population size made random and stratified probability-based methods inappropriate as this would exclude to many individuals. As a population sample, RADO staff are defined as anyone employed in a managerial or operational capacity

for a minimum of two years, which excludes administrative staff or assistants. Two years was set as the minimum requirement as it was believed that this would ensure participants had adequate experience in supporting early-stage NADOs and excluding individuals with limited experience from contributing to the research. RADO staff make an excellent sample for the study due to their experience working with multiple early-stage NADO's in different national contexts. These individuals have been exposed to the realities of developing anti-doping programmes within WADA's framework on a daily basis, and thus serve as an excellent source to explore perceptions of WADA's legitimacy.

The first phase focussed on investigating RADO managers: personnel with direct responsibility for managing the RADO activities. The second phase concentrated on RADO Chairs and/or RADO Board Members: personnel affiliated with the respective RADO as part of their member country representation.

The recruitment process for the first interview phase was initiated by the researchers' WADA contact person to ensure a formal introduction. The research team followed up with the RADO managers separately to introduce the objective of the research and to highlight the researchers' independence. This was important to ensure participants felt psychologically safe (e.g., all comments would be anonymous and not attributable to individuals) so that they could share their thoughts freely. As a next step, suitable dates and times were agreed with RADO managers who declared an interest in participating. At the end of the interviews, RADO managers were asked to recommend RADO Chairs and RADO Board Members for the second interview phase. RADO managers were contacted just prior to the second interview phase to ensure a formal introduction was initiated. The researchers followed up separately with RADO Chairs and/or RADO Board Members using the same process.

For both interview phases, no incentives were offered to participants other than an opportunity to share their experiences that will contribute to the recommendations put forward in the report. Participants were also made aware that they have the right to withdraw their information until the point of publication.

Data Collection

As has been noted, in order to most appropriately answer the research question, the researchers employed a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be most appropriate as participants were able to express their perception and reality of how they viewed WADA's legitimacy. For the first interview round, an interview script was jointly developed by three researchers which was based on theory, previous research (e.g., Cannock,

2021; Dikic et al., 2011; Gleaves & Christiansen, 2019), as well as the report objectives. Interview questions were iteratively improved until the research team was satisfied with them (cf. Exhibit I). Due to language barriers, two interview participants preferred to answer the interview questions in a written format. The interview questions were translated by a native speaker and verified with another native speaker to avoid incorrect translation. The same process was conducted with the interview responses of the participants: they were translated back into English by a native speaker and verified by a second native speaker to avoid incorrect translation.

For the second interview phase, the interview script was slightly adjusted (cf: Exhibit II) to guarantee more appropriate questions were asked given that RADO Chairs and RADO Board Members have less direct touchpoints with WADA as compared to RADO managers. In the second round, one interview participants again preferred to answer the questions in a written format. The same translation process was therefore applied as in the first round.

All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. In total, 19 interviews (average duration 55-minutes) were conducted, and 3 questionnaires distributed that together provided a rich body of data. The breakdown of the interview participants by region and interview round can seen in Table 1:

Region	Amount of Interview Participants	
	1st round of interviews	2nd round of interviews
Africa	5 (including 2 questionnaires)	2 (including 1 questionnaire)
America	2	2
Asia	4	2
Europe	2	-
Oceania	1	2

Table 1: Breakdown of Interview Participants

All interviews were conducted by video-call given the geographical diversity of the interview participants and were all recorded and transcribed verbatim. Throughout the interviews, all efforts were made to articulate that participation was voluntary, it was an independent project, and all responses would be treated confidentially and presented anonymously. This was to ensure that RADO staff members did not feel coerced into participation and felt comfortable sharing their insights.

Data Analysis

Based on previous work exploring perceptions of organisational legitimacy (Bitektine, 2011), we followed Lock et al (2015) inductive "contextually driven, process-based framework to measure the perceived dimensions (i.e., areas of sport organizations' practice) on which constituents scrutinize the legitimacy of sport organizations." (p. 362). Specifically, we employed stages one and two to define context and identify perceived dimensions, but we did not engage in stage three which converts perceived dimensions into quantitative measures because the small population size. From a judgment perspective, stakeholders (i.e., participants) appraise prior organisational actions against different types of legitimacy (e.g., procedural, structural, consequential), expectations derived from similar organisations, and perceived benefits (Bitektine, 2011). Consequently, inductive qualitative identification of perceived dimensions of legitimacy requires identifying critical aspects of WADA that RADO personnel scrutinise, what legitimacy type actions are evaluated against, and whether the judgments are generally positive or negative. Based on previous work (Bitektine, 2011; Ruef & Scott, 1998; Suchman, 1995), Lock et al. (2015) identifies seven types of legitimacy (see table 2).

Legitimacy type	Evaluation	Application to WADA
Consequential	The extent to which the actions of an organisation lead to benefits for the stakeholders it serves?	The extent to which WADA's actions enable RADOs to achieve their goals.
Procedural	The degree to which the processes and procedures of an organisation align with social expectations.	The degree to which WADA adopts processes and procedures that align with the social expectations of stakeholders.
Structural	The extent to which an organisation is perceived as similar to other organisations in a legitimate class	The extent to which WADA is perceived as a transnational regulatory organisation
Personal	The degree to which the representatives of an organisation are perceived to be good ambassadors or leaders	The degree to which WADA staff and representatives are perceived to represent the organisation well to stakeholders
Linkage	The extent to which an organisation connects to other legitimate stakeholders	The extent to which WADA is connected to other organisations perceived to be legitimate in relation to its goals (e.g., governments)
Managerial	The degree to which management operations are perceived to be efficient by stakeholders	The degree to which WADA's stakeholders perceive its management operations in relation to anti-doping implementation to be efficient.

Technical	The extent to which WADA uses appropriate technologies and services	The extent to which WADA uses appropriate technologies and services in relation to RADO and NADO stakeholders.

Table 2: Legitimacy Types

We conducted the qualitative data analysis using NVivo (Version 12). Data from the RADO managers and Board members were analysed simultaneously to identify dimensions that were applicable to WADA across both groups. Participants were assigned a code to differentiate managers and board members to understand if any differences in positive or negative perceptions were linked to the respondent's role. Data were first coded inductively to identify codes from the language and experiences expressed by participants. Codes were then collated into broader dimensions on which the legitimacy of WADA (see Table 1) was evaluated. Each dimension was then considered against the seven types of legitimacy proposed by Lock at al. (2015) to connect the contextual, inductive dimensions with theoretical concepts. After preliminary data analysis, the perceived dimensions were discussed between researchers for critical reflection. These conversations served to challenge interpretations, dimensions, and definitions to ensure that the results presented were trustworthy and representative of the data collected.

Ethical approval was granted by the University Ethics Committee of the first author. All data were fully anonymised and stored on a secure online database only accessible to the research team. Quotes are provided anonymously without a participant number to protect anonymity given the familiarity of the participants with WADA and the potential for retrospective identification by triangulating information in different quotes.

Findings

Dimensions are the areas of organisational behaviour and consequences that stakeholders use to evaluate an organisation's legitimacy (Bitektine, 2011; Lock et al., 2015). By identifying dimensions, they enable us to understand the issues (challenges) that inform perceptions of WADA, and in doing so both the challenges early-stage NADOs face and the legitimacy of WADA can be assessed achieving the aim and purpose of the research. Consequently, the four dimensions can be used as critical points around which recommendations can be structured to develop anti-doping implementation and the legitimacy of WADA. Through the data analysis, we grouped evaluations of organisational action into four perceived dimensions that related to WADA's legitimacy. These dimensions are: (1) Objectives and Sanctioning, (2) Organisational Staffing, (3) Anti-doping System Structure, and (4) Local Consideration. Each dimension is presented independently and offers an explanatory element of the challenges faced by early-

stage NADOs when implementing policy. However, in the context of improving compliance and generating recommendations, it is necessary to consider all dimensions as implementation problems are a complex mix of capacity and willingness. Identifying dimensions also helps to focus on deriving the right actions to bolster legitimacy and help mitigate the risks of future problems as issues that matter to stakeholders become the focus of legitimation strategies. Each identified dimension of WADA's legitimacy is now discussed to answer our research questions of exploring how RADO personnel evaluated the legitimacy of anti-doping policy implementation.

Objectives and Sanctioning

The first dimension, Objectives and Sanctioning, is comprised of issues related to how participants judged anti-doping based on the need for a global regulator and its ability to enforce policy violations. There was an appreciation among participants that WADA's task of supporting and monitoring compliance for a diverse range of signatories across the globe is an exceptionally tough responsibility (e.g., "When you're talking about harmonisation across the globe, whatever you do, it doesn't really work"). Equally, participants were clear that a global organising body needed to coordinate efforts globally:

> So do we need WADA? Probably. I think we do, because the problem of anti-doping or drug use really basically. And it is real considering that now sport is such a big industry. So we do need to control something.

> I don't think we've ever questioned it. I think we've always taken the approach that this is necessary. Right? There's a reason why we have the United Nations. We do question them [WADA] often, but there's a reason why they have those policies.

> They have developed so many very, very good things. Really, I mean this educational program, technical documents and these guidelines absolutely. Who can collect it and who can standardise that… Only WADA has this experience, has responsibilities and they are doing it.

The reference to the United Nations in the second quote is particularly telling in determining which 'category' of organisations, participants classified WADA alongside. Positive comparisons to other global regulators signified how WADA has achieved structural legitimacy, meaning that it is grouped with other major regulatory organisations. Participants shared a similar perception of the World Anti-Doping Code, recognising the need for such a document, even if it is not perfect:

> You know, it is not perfect, but they try every new code, every new version to fix some issues that they have… I think many things in WADA are similar in that way. They bring us tools or documents that are not perfect, but they are solved in a way.

Participants explained that the revision of the Code as a living document was perceived to enhance the organisation's legitimacy, as policies could be reconsidered when values changed and new issues emerged (e.g., "The revised Code contains more provision that better reflect reality and especially a reduction of sanctions for certain anti-doping rule violations"). The positive views associated with the ongoing review of the Code as the central component suggests positive technical legitimacy as the policy document is appropriate to participant expectations.

Despite general recognition that WADA faced a global challenge and was required as a regulatory body, the organisation's responsibilities had a negative impact on those involved in the RADO programme, which undermined consequential legitimacy. As one participant noted, "I think they have a very difficult job at the moment, which in turn makes our job very difficult because of the rules and guidelines and everything else and resources and knowledge and specialties." From a monitoring perspective, participants felt that the global nature of WADA's objectives hindered the methods used to assess signatory compliance and therefore the organisation's procedural legitimacy, for example, one participant stated,

> One of the key issues we always have with WADA is that sometimes WADA actually tries to measure everyone with the same measuring cylinder that we talk about, which has been raised over and over again, and some of us agree, but some of us don't agree that there should be leeway in doing that.

The Code Compliance Questionnaire, in particular, was felt to be a tool that was not well suited to the experiences of early-stage NADOs within the RADO programme (e.g., "we were expected on our code compliance to answer questions and tick boxes that we had no knowledge of"). More pragmatic queries about the way in which the CCQ is distributed were also voiced:

> For countries that would struggle with the internet and with some of my members who are not very computer literate, the administration of that questionnaire [CCQ] should have had options that would consider such countries. But generally, we had a huge challenge because I think my NADOs at that point, a good number of them were newly appointed, so they did not understand what all those things WADA needed there were. And I think some of them misunderstood.

Additionally, concern was raised about how the CCQ, in tandem with sanctioning for compliance issues may foster concealment of problems:

> If you put that everything is okay, they say everything is okay, but you know that that's not the reality of the country. And when you try to be sincere, they put you on a sanction. So you say, well, I will say that everything is okay.

That is not to say that the outcome of the CCQ was not valued as the expertise and corrective action plans (e.g., "I think this the fact that WADA was providing corrective action plans for each of their questions allowed, it was a huge learning opportunity"), but other procedural methods to achieve this outcome may be better suited.

WADA's actions towards sanctioning were another area of judgment. RADO personnel appreciated previous support from WADA when they had sent letters to motivate public authorities to finance anti-doping activities:

> We can receive a lot of support from WADA, like they always offer, they send the letters to the government and they obligate the government about that. The government should support financially and with the national program to support the national program of the member country.

> WADA becomes this bulldog and you have to appreciate it when it works. Trinidad didn't have the money all the time and we would say, well, no, they don't have the money, but they found it. And so I was like, okay, that has to be our approach now. We need to light a fire to ensure there's political will and that there is there's funding.

For other participants, when problems were identified with a signatories' compliance, there was a perception that WADA had not effectively exercised its ability to sanction. Reluctance to sanction referred to both public authority signatories (e.g., "WADA is not doing enough to raise awareness, educate and sort of hold the authorities accountable in this sense to know what they do, because I think some public authorities are complacent because there are no consequences") and NADOs ("I keep wondering, okay, there seems to be no consequences for code compliance anyway, because it's not like they were stopped from competing at any major sports event"). The need to compel public authorities to support anti-doping was ultimately linked to the ability of NADOs to do their job:

> I'm not sure how WADA is advocating to the public authorities because how do they expect NADOs to implement the code if many governments are actually not even providing any sort of funding or capacity to do so.

The divided views among different participants that sanctioning deterred honest compliance reporting whilst also feeling that WADA did not sanction certain signatories enough demonstrated the challenge global regulators face in satisfying legitimacy concerns. WADA displayed structural legitimacy as participants recognised the need for the organisation. The organisational objectives were also perceived to have technical and consequential legitimacy

when WADA was able to support RADO and NADO activities and development. Yet, monitoring and sanctioning approaches drew procedural concerns because of the challenges present in the RADO programme from inexperienced NADOs completing the CCQ and motivating members to implement policy fully.

Organisational Staffing

The second dimension: organisation and staffing, refers to how participants evaluated the performance of the operational and executive staff employed by WADA relating directly to the managerial legitimacy of WADA. The actions and communication with operational staff working within the departments of WADA generally facilitated positive managerial evaluations from the participants due to the support received. As one participant summarised:

> The staff at WADA have been amazing. I think that's their biggest asset, the staff they have there. I've talked to various people who have probably moved on to other departments or have risen to other responsibilities. But every single person who's come on board to help us with our RADO has been very professional, very patient, very knowledgeable, understanding. They've just been amazing to work with. So I think without a doubt, the personnel at WADA are their biggest, biggest asset.

WADA's position as a source of information (e.g., "The expertise that sits at WADA is, you know, very useful to us as you know") helped foster this positive evaluation of managerial legitimacy. Likewise, frequent meaningful communication with WADA's operational staff also aided positive evaluation of managerial legitimacy:

> There was a RADOs strategy was developed by WADA just recently uploaded and published, and they provided us that document for our feedback and we based considering our local situations and so on, we provided our feedback… So we provide our vision on some particular points and finally we saw that WADA listened to us and they modified and updated that document based on our comments and feedback.

> Overall, I think they listen very well. They take a lot of notes seriously. And if we have any suggestions, and I'm talking about my experience with them, if there's any suggestions from the office or from the board, they really consider whenever they feel it's applicable.

A perceived lack of communication between WADA's operational staff undermined the organisation's procedural legitimacy as participants felt that information about the RADO programme was not shared well between WADA departments (e.g., "I think the department within WADA needs to speak to each other a little more").

The relationship with WADA's satellite regional offices was also perceived positively (e.g., "We have fairly good relationship with the regional office, also with the head office.")

because of the support provided (e.g., "The RADO/WADA relationship is good because we can benefit from the logistical, technical and administrative support of WADA") and the ability to access individuals quickly (e.g., "I guess it's good because we have regular contact with the WADA [region name removed] office"). The regional personnel were perceived by some to lack the necessary capacity or power to assist which diminished managerial legitimacy:

> I think they [WADA regional office] don't have as much power as WADA have to deal with these kind of issues. When there's a big problem, I think that WADA could be more involved.

> There's two people working there basically. Which is ridiculous.

> If you go through the regional office, you don't know how much of that is actually taken up and then passed on to the central office.

At an executive level, judgments were more critical of personnel, but participants explicitly clarified that executive and operational staff should be differentiated:

> In terms of the people who work with us, so again for our region, we have to separate WADA and sometimes the WADA employees. I think it won't be fair to try to cast this ugly brush and we know that there are so many people within the organization who we get the assistance from.

Criticisms of the Executive positions stemmed from the lack of diversity in executives. Participants evaluated that the lack of understanding of regional context and challenges, indicated in the dimension 'Objectives and Sanctioning' was partly due to inadequate representation and diversity in policy making positions:

> The people who sit at WADA are from countries that have very robust programs, that have been implementing anti-doping programs for years. But I think they need to be space in those decision-making levels for these small countries that are coming up so that they can also accommodate some of the challenges that they are and they are enduring, or to just have a voice on how to help them better achieve what it is that they want to achieve. So perhaps that's something WADA would consider giving a voice to the lesser NADOs and lesser countries in the decision making and in their committees.

> There are very few spaces where you can see somebody who may understand our dynamics. And when you have these international standards with some countries, the budgets for anti-doping and sometimes the budgets for the governments of one of our countries, it's difficult to compete or to match that.

> I think WADA as an organization needs to embrace diversity, not the cliche, you know flavour of the month diversity, where you just put people because they're from a different region. We are talking about, we have competent people in the region that

can make representation for us, but they need equal opportunities to do so and not just you issuing a letter saying we call for nominations because that does not ensure the equality of opportunity people already make.

Overall, the legitimacy dimension of Organisational Staffing related to managerial legitimacy demonstrates the relationships formed between personnel and members of the RADO programme and expertise shared have positively facilitated support for WADA even if the regional offices were at times judged to lack power. The concern over a lack of diversity stemmed directly from attempting to implement policies that did not account for their realities.

Anti-doping System Structure

The third dimension, Anti-doping System Structure, grouped how participants used perceptions of decisions related to the RADO programme's position, stability and role in the global anti-doping network to judge WADA's procedural and consequential legitimacy. WADA's decisions related to the RADO programme were evaluated both positively and negatively. Overall, there was positive recognition of what WADA had done to support the position and role of the RADO programme

> I mean, for every board meeting WADA has supported financially, our trainings of the results management to the panels, the DCOs, WADA has always supported us. So, I mean, I would have a hard time listing all the things that they do for us, but they have really supported our program.

> The RADO programme was set up by WADA and throughout the years, since its inception in 2008 until now, WADA has been supporting and assisting us.

The introduction of the RADO programme strategy, a document designed to increase the capabilities and recognition of the organisations, demonstrated the mixed assessments that accompanied WADA's decisions. Participants expressed positive evaluations towards the stated objectives of attempting to increase RADO capacity:

> I'm happy to see that they're more now focusing building our capacity so that we can deliver the services to the member countries.

> So it's a good improvement, I would say, in terms of the work that we are doing and we are glad that the RADO program strategy makes things even more clearer and it's it is centred on the RADO manager and we have discussed this in terms of the capacity development and capacity building.

> It's from one side, it's for NADOs. It's a little bit you have to do some more. But another good side is that you can present it to your local government to say that you should do it, because in the Code, it is very clear and responsibilities of the NADOs,

RADOs or IOC or, for example, National Olympic Committees, and so on. And that's why, it's now, it's more clear maybe to say, than it was before.

There's been changes and it's been good changes. So I think it's a good idea [RADO Programme Strategy]. I actually I wasn't expecting those changes to happen anyway. We've been complaining about board members and stuff like that, and it all came into this program strategy.

Unsurprisingly, the lack of accompanying resources to achieve the objectives set out in the strategic document generated negative procedural judgments:

I think that the elements of them to really look at the resources available for the RADO to implement it or to be able to help them to fulfil that that strategy is something that needs the 'how' really needs to be considered.

We felt like, oh, okay, they wrote a strategy for RADOs and a lot of it is for us to do it, but they're [WADA] not putting the money to it except for the testing. We feel like puppets. And then that was some of the views from some of the RADOs.

Likewise, from a consequential legitimacy perspective, the decision to place RADOs as delegated third parties in the 2021 WADC attracted differing consequential judgments of WADA's actions:

…some of our member countries are not taking anti-doping very seriously. So to get them to do the requisite walk that is signing the third party delegate agreements, signing ADAMS agreements, doing the delegation of authority in ADAMS, I mean, it's been a bit of a headache and it's taken a lot of time to try and get everybody to do it. But I think it's good even that changed.

Countries can continue to benefit from the services and expertise that is provided by the RADO across various focus areas. But the accountability when we talk of the signatory countries are no longer using RADO rules now.

From 2021, we know, we are supporting, we will ensure that the countries, the NADOs are in compliance with the Code and we are assisting them. But the countries themselves, they need to they need to ensure that they are the managed to corner their obligations that they have. They signed the Code.

On my position, that changed overall in a good way because sometimes some countries confuse our role as RADO because they think that we need to develop their job, but we, our role it's not that. Our role is try to develop every area in their NADOs for their development in their countries.

Equally, participants believed that their ability to support their members had been diminished and their members were not ready for total operational independence. For example:

You are limited in resources like us because you are a DTP. So I'm not happy with that. I'm really not happy with it and this is my honest view. I'm working on a daily

> basis and facing with the countries. Every day, they're [NADOs] asking some questions and so on. And we see that now, sometimes I cannot help them because I am a delegated third party.

> I know like USA and Japan, for instance, a lot of major countries, they can easily establish and have functional independence, NADO and committees, but not in 20 years, like, for instance, in our member countries.

> … almost of our, the duties are the same, the requirements are the same, but we are limited in our, the wording, how to say correctly, we are we have limited resources.

> I am just a sample collection authority and I have no authority to see the result.

The difference in attitudes towards third party delegate status was influenced by the nature of the work RADOs were doing, and for those participants who perceived their members to be unmotivated, the change was positive. Perceptions of the decision to make RADO delegated third parties, which placed more responsibility on member countries, were compounded by the lack of support for contingency planning should RADO personnel leave:

> If I suddenly move out of it now and then stop my services, a lot of institutional memory will be lost in this context… For example, I know [name removed], if [name removed] now retires and they bring in a different person to do [name removed] job, that RADO will just plunge definitely, because there's so much institutional memory.

> WADA sponsors a lot RADOs staff at the moment and at any time they might see that they can no longer sponsor such staff or such a program. So I think this is a major concern because a lot of the sponsored staff have really good experience. And if they lose their salaries, they might not be able to continue in a way or another, because there's no financial resources within the RADO to cover for full time staff

The problem of contingency planning was starting to be addressed by some of the RADOs though as one individual explained:

> We have agreed a plan that now we don't send DCOs [doping control officer] to do other training because we don't want the DCO with the education specialist or even the TUE specialists or things like that. So we try as much as possible. We actually separate all those. So we have different people as much as possible.

This dimension demonstrated how organisational actions and decisions taken by WADA that directly influenced the RADO programme impacted procedural and consequential evaluations. Unsurprisingly, decisions that promoted the RADO programme's position, stability and role were viewed as favourable consequential legitimacy, but without the increased resourcing procedural legitimacy was diminished. This dimension also sheds light on some of the specific problems confronting members of the RADO in addition to the lack of resourcing, including the lack of interest from some NADOs, reaching operational independence, and the risk of

inadequate contingency planning should experienced staff leave or retire.

Local Consideration

Local consideration resulted in a clustering of views on how participants judged the appropriateness of WADA's policies against their local working context (i.e., procedural legitimacy). Overall, the lack of consideration for local context undermined WADA's procedural legitimacy. Leniency in compliance standards—as specified by WADA's Prioritization Policy—that divide signatories into different tiers garnered positive evaluations because there was recognition that not all processes were suitable for all members:

> The good thing about WADA is that they have [recognised differences], and it's reflected in the tier system. There's a tier one, tier two, tier three. And because we can't take simply because of how things are arranged in our [nation removed] setting, we just wouldn't be able to achieve some of the things that they require in their strategic priorities as well.

> I think as much as the code is a mandatory document, the fact that it guides us and it allows us to have a vision or a game plan, this is where we want to be. It also allows smaller countries some time to develop their programs… It allows the smaller countries some wiggle room in terms of how soon or how quickly or what they can implement.

Policies designed to overcome regional disparities also aided positive evaluations of procedural legitimacy. The WADA testing grant programme that provided financial aid to NADOs within the RADO programme to conduct tests alleviated some problems:

> WADA supports us with the testing grants. So there are a lot of good things that come out from their policy making, they ensure that there is funding to test.

> Some member countries, they do not have any resources except testing from WADA testing grant or some very rare international federations from testing."

The flexibility and support shown towards compliance was not considered adequate when specific policies and procedures were discussed, as participants still felt their members struggled to achieve the lowest requirements:

> I think that's a concern from my member countries, is that the expectations are too much and again, I think WADA still needs to come down hear us, to really comprehend the reality of our region, because just looking at the Code and my member countries are a bit overwhelmed with that it, it is unrealistic, it is too much.

> When you make these broad generalizations for anti-doping rules, you are understanding that there is a tier system, so we get that you've tried to make accommodations, there still needs to be a caveat in those rules that we will help countries who are not yet at that level get there. And so as an organisation, sometimes we think WADA has not made accommodations for that, but the people within WADA say otherwise.

Further, there was a generalised perception that WADA's global policies dismissed specific, contextual regional problems faced by some RADOs:

> Contexts are really very different. And the support that each country has is also different. It's different who is involved.

> Some of the things that my member countries feel that WADA just is not in touch with our region's reality. They have these expectations. But whether they really are in touch and really comprehend the reality of the member countries trying its best to be Code compliant.

> They do put the policy for the anti-doping program worldwide, I think, very well, they do it very well, but they they're missing just one part, I think, in their program or in their policy that not all countries are the same, because you have more than a lot of varieties between the resources, the nature of how things function and in certain countries is different than the way it's done in another countries.

> We have to be compliant. But our cultural circumstances don't always allow to be compliant.

Participants felt that their role and position in rulemaking was linked to the lack of consideration given to their experiences. Generally, there was a perception that current processes enabled members of the RADO programme to communicate views on policy updates:

> So it would be quite fair and we are listened to, we are heard our voice is heard within WADA and our opinions do count for, you know, for something.

> Yes, I do feel like I am heard by WADA and that I am a stakeholder of WADA.

> The RADO World Conference, this is where even the Director General comes and is listening to us to learn what we are doing, what are the accomplishments, what are the challenges that we are facing.

> …more accessible now, I think accessible in the sense that we share a lot of things and we feel some of our concerns are being listened more often and than it used to be.

However, negative judgments were related to the extent to which participants felt that their voices were influential:

> When it comes to policy making, of course they listen. They have no choice when we submit recommendations. But to take them in, whether or not those recommendations affect policy is something different.

> We have to really fight to make sure that that we can not only get help from WADA directly, but to make our voice heard so that the established NADOs and the NADOs will consider our voice as well in their decision making, because a lot of our examples may not be relevant to them.

> How strong is our Tier 3 voice in WADA's decision making? We're not quite sure because we still see that the other countries or the other well-established NADOs are

very dominant and in in in the overall decision-making and structure and business of WADA.

The opportunity to express views was also not seen as egalitarian with stakeholders possessing greater finances, reputation, and government support being perceived as having more influence:

> That [expressing opinions] comes with spending money to make sure you're at the party. Right. You have to go to the symposium. You have to go to the UNESCO, the COP 8, I think it is this year. We don't have the funding for that. So, unless they have a virtual link, we're not going to be represented. And people tend to look at that and say, well, the region is not interested.

> We felt that a lot of times that WADA the well-established NADOs, they have a lot they have a bigger voice. They have a lot more voice. And because they have more resources to make sure that their voice is heard. And then then you have these NADOs who still have some sort of sustainability coming from government mostly. So they also have a bit more voice in that one. But when it comes to RADO, which represents all these other NADOs that don't have any roots or don't know whether they where they are or they don't have a headquarters. So I just feel that we don't really have that much voice.

The lack of influence in policy creation manifested in specific problems for participants, for example, returning to the WADA testing grant, one participant explained: "the WADA testing grant you can use only in county. But our situation in the region is most of our top elite athletes don't live in our country". The perceived lack of consideration in procedures was argued to be due the absence of diverse perspectives in procedural committees and departments of WADA, similar to the dimension 'Organisational Staffing'. For example:

> There is no fair distribution of the grants, I would say. And I question how a global organisation would function like that if they are looking at global interest really.

> I don't think they have a global view. I feel like they have a very Western centric view, like they only look at a specific part of the world and it's like they don't have global perspectives despite being a global organisation.

> I also hope that WADA takes note of this because I really don't think they are taking the right approach with regards to a global situation, not really focusing on where things are going well, they need to focus more on where things are not moving forward, where things are not okay.

> WADA used to be a community of not that many people, as you may have mentioned, mostly North America and Europe and maybe Australia. And every year we see the same faces. But now we try to make it global. So a lot of people, new people are coming in. But for those people who didn't come in in the beginning, it's really difficult for them.

> It's very clear to us now that instead of RADO telling WADA what is needed in this region, like the formal idea when RADO was set up. Now it's WADA telling RADO what to do.

Educational processes were most commonly cited as misaligned with the reality of participants. Misalignment stemmed from language barriers and divergences in local customs leading to negative evaluations:

> If we take the education tools from WADA it's not adapt to our realities, because in our region ADEL, it doesn't work well, because it is taught in a, in a language that in reality, is not part of our reality. It is a shock in culture, our way, language way, in the way they expressed it, it doesn't adapt it to our region, so we try to make our own tools, our own education tools, to bring that knowledge to our athletes, to our sports community.

> They [WADA] have all these resources, educational resources, which are really very good. But then again, I would say that the approach is very Eurocentric because of the languages that the materials are available in.

> We have a lot of resources developed by WADA and other leading NADOs, but you have the language barrier because Arabic speaking countries doesn't have that much of Arabic ready-to-use educational materials.

The outcome of misalignment between WADA procedures and regional realities led to the prioritisation of compliance over actions that would serve the region better: "most of the decisions we do now is more like how to implement the code and the standard rather than what would be good for the region". Evidently, WADA's procedural legitimacy amongst participants was heavily influenced by the need for Local Consideration in the global anti-doping system. The challenges to compliance generated by variation between NADOs, staff inexperience, and language barriers were amplified by a perceived lack of influence in policy creation.

In conclusion, the four dimensions presented here on which stakeholders evaluated the legitimacy of WADA emerged from our interviews with RADO staff and chair/board members. The dimensions that emerged from our analysis suggest that—among RADO participants— WADA is perceived to have structural legitimacy (i.e., it is categorised alongside other transnational regulatory organisations) as the lead regulator of anti-doping policy globally. This is supported by positive relationships with WADA personnel that, through their professionalism and support to RADOs, contributed to evaluations of the organisation's technical and managerial legitimacy. Participants involved in the RADO programme had greater concern about WADA's procedural legitimacy (i.e., congruence between WADA's processes and procedures and participants expectations) due to the challenges faced by particular RADOs and early-stage NADOs because of misalignment between member realities, organisational capacity, compliance expectations, resourcing, and global policy making influence

<center>**Recommendations**</center>

Based on the data collected in this research five recommendations are suggested to support early-stage NADOs and the RADO programme whilst also safeguarding the legitimacy of WADA from concerns about procedural legitimacy:

1. Capacity Assessment
2. Collaboration between WADA signatories
3. Support from external parties
4. Human resource management
5. Diversity across policy making positions

These recommendations will now be discussed.

Capacity Assessment

Our analysis demonstrated that there is considerable variation between early-stage NADOs in resources and capacity that undermine their ability to comply with the WADC. Robinson and Minikin (2011) have previously suggested that the organisational performance of developing sport federations can be differentiated into eight different capacity areas: governance, management, physical resources, human resources, finance, communication, sport activity, and values. Although some of these capacity areas are not relevant to early-stage NADOs, we recommend that WADA invests in creating a diagnostic tool to assess the capacity of individual nations and organisations. Through the implementation of this tool, WADA could undertake a comprehensive assessment of NADOs within the RADO programme to develop clear pathways to capacity development that will, over time, enhance the potential for harmonisation in doping policy globally. This assessment should be separate from the CCQ to avoid encouraging desirable responses and delivery could be facilitated by the RADO programme via existing connections. An international assessment would then help identify any assumptions that currently underpin WADA strategy (e.g., levels of computer literacy), expose priority areas for resource allocation, and help provide tangible objectives for NADOs to achieve.

Collaboration between WADA Signatories

The second area for development is fostering further collaboration between different Code signatories to share expertise and resources. Previous research has demonstrated how partnerships between established and early-stage NADOs can increase capacity levels (e.g., provision of resources) and accelerate development (e.g., provision of technical knowledge)

(Hanstad & Houlihan, 2015). WADA has supported NADO-NADO partnerships previously (e.g., Egypt-South Africa) and there was a desire from both NADO and RADO participants for greater support from established NADOs. WADA's partnerships programme could be extended to better involve other notable signatories to the WADC including International Federations and Major Event Organisations. In certain regions, specific sports retained a privileged position due to their popularity. Where feasible, greater collaboration between International Federations and developing programmes can accelerate the development of NADO and RADO employees. Regional sporting events were also seen as prime learning opportunities, but events were not frequently held in the countries of early-stage NADOs typically involved in the RADO programme. Enhancing opportunities to embed NADO and RADO staff as observers in anti-doping activities at major sporting events can enhance experience. Partnerships can also extend to anti-doping procedures as well, for example, joint Therapeutic Use Exemption committees that cover multiple countries in a region can facilitate knowledge exchange and lessen the burden on individual countries. All of these suggestions for collaboration require a commitment of time, effort, and money from all parties involved, which in some cases may not be forthcoming due to political and resource constraints. However, ultimately, fostering collaboration provides low-cost, high-impact opportunities to address procedural challenges related to resourcing and expertise.

Support from External Parties

There is a need for support from 'external parties' that can aid in addressing problems that stem from resourcing and global policy making influence. Sponsors and broadcasters are the first notable external party that has historically benefitted from sporting products, but not contributed to anti-doping efforts. Both stakeholders generate profit from the popularity of sport, but rarely financially contribute to anti-doping efforts. Levies that are redistributed to early-stage NADOs and RADOs could provide one source of remittance to improve organisational capacity and fund staff development and recruitment. If income is generated through these stakeholders, there is an obvious need to ensure that new conflicts of interest are not created and that NADOs have the expertise to utilise increased resources. If the capacity is not present, a proportion of these resources should be dedicated to supporting early-stage NADOs. Second, it was noted that the European Union was the only major International Bloc that had an active and united presence in anti-doping discussions. Participants felt that WADA could better engage regional unions to avoid Eurocentrism and diversify opinions in policymaking (e.g., The African Union; Association of South-East Asian Nations; The

Community of Latin American and Caribbean States). Equally, the RADOs could attempt to engage these stakeholders; however, the challenge remains of convincing these parties that anti-doping is an issue worth dedicating energy towards, which may be problematic given the plethora of other regional issues to be managed, lack of major sporting nations in certain blocs, and geopolitical tensions between nations.

Human Resource Management

Human resource management refers to the need to ensure that the expertise and institutional memory associated with the RADO programme is safeguarded for future use. Contingency planning may involve diversifying responsibilities so that individuals do not become the sole point of expertise, ringfencing RADO programme funding for employees, and pre-emptively identifying suitable candidates for roles. These solutions rely on their being a large enough of pool of interested and capable of individuals in each region, therefore, it is beholden upon anti-doping organisations, including WADA, to attract young management professionals into the anti-doping industry. The turnover in NADO staff was also problematic and contributed to the 'lack of expertise' challenge that led to negative judgments. It is harder to influence these decisions when they are determined by national and political decisions, however, the provision of resources to educate new NADO representatives and an online database for NADO information sharing globally could help with training efficiency. Alternatively, the potential for larger NADOs to manage processes for small NADOs (e.g., TUE approval) or smaller NADOs sharing technical resources (e.g., educational materials) may help reduce the resource burden. Again, both these options rely upon a high level of trust and understanding between signatories, which in some cases will require time to develop or may not be possible at all.

Diversity Across Policy Making Positions

Diversity across policy making and positions of influence, including but not limited to, the Executive Committee, Foundation Board, standing committees, working groups, and advisory groups can ensure that the realities of RADO programme members are embedded into policy and technical documents. This includes ensuring that all NADOs have the organisational resources and capacity to engage with technical documents. From a governance perspective, protected positions for representation of tier 3 signatories and RADOs would provide a solution. Therefore, ensuring that all policy making and influencing positions have a mandated number of positions for tier 3 anti-doping programmes and RADO staff will promote diversity of

experiences. Representation is not to lessen anti-doping rigour but ensure that suitable support and consideration is given to a wider body of stakeholders. It is recognised that there may be political opposition from organisations who contribute more financially to WADA and committees should be held to a limited size to avoid becoming impractically large. Equally, individuals' assuming policy making roles should hold the requisite level of experience required to be effective which may be a challenge given human resourcing problems previously noted, but despite these challenges the need for diversity is pressing to ensure anti-doping policy is created cognisant of the breadth of regime members.

Future Research and Limitations

It is recommended that follow-up research using the findings from this study is conducted to better understand the severity and intensity of challenges the RADO programme faces in the anti-doping ecosystem. Using the recommendations presented and limitations identified in this research we propose several key areas for future research. First, interviews were the dominant form of qualitative research which naturally limit topics discussed, even when following a semi-structured protocol. Alternative qualitative methods such as observations at meetings and conferences or fieldwork in NADO/RADO offices could offer different views. Third, interview data and legitimacy judgments can be unduly influenced by current events (i.e., recency bias). Longitudinal research tracking attitudes and sentiment towards the legitimacy of WADA and compliance challenges could provide information on what actions are most scrutinised as well as what compliance issues are consistent problems. Last, collaboration between different anti-doping signatories has been proposed as a method to support compliance with anti-doping responsibilities, however, little is known about best practice in terms of anti-doping collaboration which was beyond the remit of the current work. Future studies could explore how to best structure and manage anti-doping partnerships. Failure to address the challenges identified here may widen the gap between established and early-stage NADOs, potentially undermine WADA's legitimacy amongst different stakeholder, and could ultimately compromise anti-doping efforts globally.

Conclusion

The research began with the aim of identifying the practical challenges WADA faces in harmonising drug testing practices across NADOs. To do this, we developed new insights about the perceptions of RADO programme members, responsible for early-stage anti-doping agencies. Participant perceptions of anti-doping under WADA were thematised into four

dimensions (Objectives and Sanctioning; Organisational Staffing; Anti-doping System Structure; Local Consideration) that capture which of WADA's actions and decisions are scrutinised, what expectations are used in this evaluation, and the outcome of judgments. The dimensions display that WADA retains support from members of the RADO programme given the perceived need for a global regulator and the support provided; however, the biggest threat to the agency is the misalignment between policy expectations for anti-doping policy implementation and NADO capacity. Consequently, increased collaboration and diversification within WADA and with external stakeholders can strengthen the procedural legitimacy of the agency. Though certain regions participated by questionnaire due to language barriers (i.e., French-speaking regions in Africa), the data saturation across participants in terms of key topics raised supports the trustworthiness of the novel insights provided and the applicability to other regions.

Exhibit

Exhibit I – Interview Protocol Round I

Introduction
1. **Project recap, opportunity to reinforce anonymity, independence from WADA and provide room for their questions.**

Ice Breaker
2. **Tell us about your background and any previous relevant experience in sport:**
   - How did you end up in this role?
   - Why did you decide to work for this organisation?
3. **Tell us about your current role:**
   - How long have you worked in this role?
   - What are your daily job duties?

WADA as an Organisation
4. **What are your perceptions of WADA as an organisation in general?**
   - How do you see WADA as an organisation and its activities?
   - What are your thoughts on WADA's responsibilities in fulfilling its mission?
     - *WADA's Mission: The World Anti-Doping Agency's mission is to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport.*
   - Have you ever questioned WADA's authority and (policy) decisions? If so, please give an example and the outcome.
5. **As a stakeholder, do you feel WADA listens to you? Can you explain why?**
   - What relationship do you have with WADA in a hierarchical sense?
   - Can you give us some examples, positive or negative ones?
6. **As a stakeholder, do you feel WADA listens to you? Can you explain why?**
   - What relationship do you have with WADA in a hierarchical sense?
   - Can you give us some examples, positive or negative ones?

WADA Code
7. **What are your views on the revised 2021 World Anti-Doping Code?**
8. **How much does the Code consider the challenges and ambitions of your respective RADO?**
   - Can you give us some examples, how it has/hasn't?
9. **What are the biggest challenges to Code compliance for your members? Can you explain why?**
   - Considering the local context, are there other/ additional challenges?
   - How do you perceive the provided support?
   - What are the biggest challenges of the new WADC?
10. **How does your RADO currently support its members in regard to Code compliance?**
    - Which actions and measures do you take to ensure Code compliance among your RADO members?

11. What are your views on the RADO strategy?

- What does it mean to you?

12. In your own words, what is your RADO's vision and mission?

13. What do you think are RADO's responsibilities towards athlete education, and why?

Future of Anti-Doping

14. What do you see for the future of anti-doping in your region and why?

15. How do you see your relationship with WADA evolving in the future?

16. How do you think WADA and RADOs can work better together?

- Is WADA necessary or could compliance be de-centralised?
- What can be improved?

Cool Down/ End of the Interview

17. Are there any areas of concern to you as a RADO director not covered in the questions?

18. Is there anything else you would like to add to this topic?

19. We would like to talk some other members of the board to understand the full picture of your work and your connection to WADA. Could you identify and connect us to suitable candidates?

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- What relationship do you have with WADA in a hierarchical sense?
- Can you give us some examples, positive or negative ones?

WADA Code

6. What are your views on the revised 2021 World Anti-Doping Code?

7. As a RADO board member, how much does the Code consider the challenges and ambitions of your RADO? In your respective RADO region?
- Can you give us some examples, how it has/hasn't?

8. What are the biggest challenges to Code compliance for your RADO's members? Can you explain why?
- Considering the local context, are there other/ additional challenges?
- How do you perceive the provided support?
- What are the biggest challenges of the new WADC?

9. How does your RADO currently support you and its other RADO members in regard to Code compliance?
- Which actions and measures do you take to ensure Code compliance among your RADO members?

RADO Board

10. How would you describe your collaboration with the RADO Manager and other RADO Board members?

11. For RADO Chair only: Why have you decided to candidate for RADO Chair? What was your ambition?

- Are you aware of your RADO's vision and mission?

12. How would you describe the collaboration between your RADO and WADA?

13. How do you think WADA and RADOs can work better together?

- Is WADA necessary or could compliance be de-centralised?
- What can be improved?

14. What do you think are your RADO's responsibilities towards athlete education, and why?

Future of Anti-Doping

15. What do you see for the future of anti-doping in your region and why?

Cool Down/ End of the Interview

16. Are there any areas of concern to you as a RADO chair/ board member not covered in the questions?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add to this topic?

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